

2022 SPSP Advocacy Priority Areas

- **Promoting sustainable behavior and pro-environmental action**
 - Mitigating the effects of environmental harm, including but not limited to climate change, over-reliance on plastics, and ecologically unsustainable resource use, will require major behavioral shifts at the individual and societal level. Personality and social psychologists should play a crucial role in ensuring that legislation and policies designed to change people's environmental impact is evidence-based, consistent with known mechanisms of social cognition and behavior (e.g., social norms, self-regulation, motivation), and positioned to drive meaningful, lasting change.

- **Addressing systemic racism and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion**
 - Systemic racism and injustice have been at the center of the systems governing the United States since its inception, and are pervasive in many other nations and cultures as well. Findings central to personality and social psychology research document cognitive, social, and situational mechanisms by which inequities are perpetuated (e.g., implicit bias, attribution biases, intergroup anxiety, stereotype threat). Social and personality psychology research also provides evidence regarding intervention approaches that are likely to advance DEI goals and positive intergroup relationships – as well as those that are not. These findings should inform policy-making designed to support people who have historically been marginalized and mistreated.

- **Tackling ideological polarization**
 - Political and ideological polarization are growing rapidly, both within the U.S. and in other regions. Personality and social psychologists can provide evidence regarding mechanisms promoting polarization, including geographical sorting based on ideology, as well as a more general withdrawal from non-ideological institutions. Polarization has also been exacerbated by anonymous, fragmented, and targeted digital environments (e.g., social media, YouTube) in which users are deliberately guided toward content that reinforces existing preference and beliefs, and hostility can be expressed without the social consequences that typically characterize real-life interaction and communication in ongoing relationships. Findings from personality and social psychology on intergroup attitudes and interactions can help policy-makers understand the processes behind the spread of polarization, and guide us toward solutions that help bridge the divide between those who disagree.

➤ **Promoting societal health and well-being**

- The impact of behavior on physical health, and power of preventive measures in reducing the burden of disease, are increasingly recognized by policy-makers. From global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic to the ongoing need to promote healthy diet, exercise, and other preventive measures, public health policy aims to encourage behavior most conducive to physical well-being. Social and personality psychology offers great expertise regarding the communication and environmental intervention approaches that are most likely to be efficacious in promoting desired behavior change (e.g., persuasion, normative and other social influence, environmental “nudging,” adaptation to cultural context). Communicating these findings and their implications to public health policy-makers in a clear and actionable way, and helping to guide development of efficacious interventions, is an important policy area for SPSP.
- Researchers in personality and social psychology, especially those within the affective science domain, have developed a strong evidence base regarding the cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors that facilitate psychological health and well-being, at both the individual and group/community levels. Personality and social psychologists can also investigate key factors that affect well-being, including satisfaction and meaning in life, as well as social capital and pro-social behavior. This work should be at the forefront of growing efforts to promote widespread well-being as a societal aim on par with economic growth.

➤ **Battling the disinformation epidemic**

- The explosive expansion and fragmentation of the media environment, as well as growing distrust of institutions in the U.S. and beyond, has led to increasing spread of disinformation. Evidence from social and personality psychology addresses fundamental social cognitive mechanisms by which disinformation takes root (e.g., confirmation bias, identity-related processes); and research on social influence, in particular, offers many lessons as to communication techniques that are and are not likely to be effective at combating the spread of disinformation.