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The Importance of Research About Research on Culture: A Call for Meta-research on Culture

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Objectives: It is crucial to examine how research on culture is fueled by assumptions, policies, and practices. The goal of this article is to promote meta-research on culture, the critical study of how investigations on culture are performed and interpreted, how scientific knowledge about culture is produced and transmitted, and the importance of scrutinizing assumptions, policies, and practices in a way that challenge views of minoritized groups as deviant and pathological. **Method:** We define key concepts, such as meta-research, culture, and meta-research on culture. **Results:** We approach cultural research as a system of people (researchers, participants), places (academic institutions, journals), practices (sampling, comparing groups), and power (legitimizing some groups as normative and others as deviant). We discuss assumptions, policies, and practices, and review landmark studies and methods. **Conclusions:** Meta-research on culture is an emerging field that can improve scientific understanding of human culture, guide efforts to elevate the perspectives of people who have historically experienced marginalization, inform institutional support and the creation of nurturing academic spaces, and guide the implementation of better research and training practices.

Public Significance Statement

It is critical to study of how investigations on culture are performed and interpreted, how scientific knowledge about culture is produced and transmitted, and the importance of scrutinizing assumptions, policies, and practices in a way that challenge views of minoritized groups as deviant and pathological.

Keywords: meta-research, culture, meta-research on culture

Research on “culture” is crucial to understand development and health (García Coll et al., 2000; Kagawa Singer et al., 2016; Nagayama Hall et al., 2016). However, some cultural research can reinforce views of minoritized groups as deviant and pathological. Researchers’ prejudices and implicit biases, related to their own racial, gender, and class identities can systematically impact participant recruitment, data collection, analyses, and interpretations (Does et al., 2018; Ferguson et al., 2019). Research on culture can misrepresent minoritized groups that have historically experienced “marginalization” and legitimize their subordination to dominant groups (García Coll et al., 2000).


Although a growing body of research has documented assumptions, policies, and practices in cultural research that can incorrectly reinforce views of minoritized groups as deviant and pathological


(Graham, 1992; Guthrie, 1976; Hegarty & Buechel, 2006; McLoyd & Randolph, 1984, 1985; Said, 1978), some of these efforts have not been recognized. Furthermore, independent studies from different disciplines can reinforce a fragmented view of the research enterprise, failing to see how these components are part of a system. For this reason, it is crucial to approach research as a cultural system with underlying values, assumptions, and expectations that impact how research is carried out and how the research community interacts between members and institutions (Arzubiaga et al., 2008).


Our goal in this article is “to promote meta-research on culture to better understand this system” and offer recommendations to improve science. Meta-research on culture is the critical study of how investigations on culture are performed and interpreted, how scientific knowledge about culture is produced and transmitted, and the

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importance of scrutinizing assumptions, policies, and practices in a way that challenge views of minoritized groups as deviant and pathological.

First, we define meta-research, culture, and meta-research on culture. Second, we discuss the impact of researchers' assumptions, research policies, research practices, and power on research on culture. Finally, we discuss limitations, conclusions, and future research directions. Table 1 provides a glossary that defines all of the concepts that are in quotes. Our approach is informed by the work of Du Bois's (1935) and Arzubiaga et al.'s (2008) approach to research as a situated cultural practice, and Causadias's (2020) systemic approach to culture. Our discussion is situated within the United States, although we challenge Euro-centric views and prioritize perspectives from scholars who are "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)."

What Is Meta-research?

Conducting research on the scientific method itself is fundamental for its improvement. Although studies centered on subject matter questions are crucial, methodological articles are some of the most used articles across fields of science, with several scientific awards being granted for the advancement of research methods (Ioannidis et al., 2015). Meta-research is the practice of conducting research on research itself, examining the scientific process, and using different techniques to understand how to conduct, communicate, verify, assess, and reward research (Ioannidis et al., 2015). Meta-research employs interdisciplinary perspectives to study, promote, and defend reliable science (Ioannidis, 2018).

Meta-research has become more relevant over the last decades because of the explosive increase in scientific output across disciplines (Ioannidis et al., 2015). This evidence has substantially contributed to understanding the research process. For instance, meta-researchers have argued that many findings across fields of science have low reproducibility, partly because of the rising complexity of research designs and analyses (Fanelli, 2012; Ioannidis, 2005). This can result in considerable financial cost, as over 85% of investment in biomedical research is lost every year because of avoidable problems such as ignoring existing evidence or underreporting disappointing results (Chalmers & Glasziou, 2009).

Meta-researchers often focus on documenting and avoiding some research-related biases, including publication bias, reporting bias, and selection bias (Ioannidis et al., 2015; Munafò et al., 2017). However, meta-researchers have paid less attention to "bias" and questionable research practices in cultural research (Syed & Kathawalla, 2020), perhaps because appeals to scientific rigor often reflect scientific perspectives that are informed by colorblindness (Neville et al., 2013), deny the role of power in science, neglect the experiences of BIPOC people, and enforce hegemonic psychological science that "privilege" White scholars and scholarship (Adams & Salter, 2019).

Gjerde (2004) raised important questions about the neglected role of power in cultural research in fields like psychology:

Why do most cultural psychologists shy away from analyses of conflict and power? Is the positivistic belief in a value-free science still so deeply inscribed in the beliefs of cultural scholars? Or does this absence reflect the dominant instrumental role of most American intellectuals,

who emerge from their academic institutions only as "experts" without any self-perceived political legacy? (p. 153).

Perhaps the answers to these questions lie in the way researchers define culture and the role of power.

What Is Culture?

Defining culture is a notorious challenge for social scientists because of the many ways culture is conceptualized and measured within and between scientific disciplines (Cohen, 2009; Cooper & Denner, 1998; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Nagayama Hall et al., 2016; Syed & Kathawalla, 2018), and because culture is a "fuzzy concept," with different meanings according to situations (Causadias, 2020; Gjerde, 2004; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). We define culture as a system of people, places, and practices, for a purpose such as enacting, justifying, or resisting power (Causadias, 2020). This definition connects four components of many conceptualizations and research on culture.

First, the concept of culture often refers to people, including in-group and out-group dynamics, social relationships, identity, and belonging (Causadias, 2020). For this reason, cultural research often focuses on differences and similarities between groups, as well as variation and unique experiences of BIPOC people (Adams & Markus, 2004; Nagayama Hall et al., 2016; Sue, 2009). In fact, culture is often used interchangeably with other concepts related to people, such as race and ethnicity (Quintana et al., 2006). From this perspective, population and group dynamics are central to understand culture.

Second, the concept of culture often refers to places, including ecological influences, institutional dynamics, and how contexts shape behavior (Causadias, 2020). For this reason, cultural research often studies the role of environments—homes, neighborhoods, schools—in facilitating or inhibiting learning and cognitive development (Duncan et al., 2017; Nagayama Hall et al., 2016; Super & Harkness, 1986). The importance of culture in places is exemplified by prominent conceptualizations of culture that emphasize how different environmental systems shape individual development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Third, the concept of culture often refers to practices, including participation in community activities and engagement in behaviors that provide meaning (Causadias, 2020). For this reason, cultural research often focuses on the role of agency in the involvement in everyday activities in the family and the community (Alcalá et al., 2014). The importance of practices is also exemplified by landmark conceptualizations of culture that underscore the role of action in the emergence of language among individuals and societies (Vygotsky, 1997).

Fourth, the concept of culture often refers to power, the asymmetric relation between groups in which one that is dominant forces others into compliance, controls access to places, and behaves as desired (Causadias, 2020). Power provides meaning and structure to culture, as stratified societies legitimize power imbalance through the use of policies and procedures that benefit the dominant group (Roscigno, 2011). The significance of power is illustrated by formulations that highlight the forces that give rise to culture, the importance of acknowledging history, and the position of scientists in legitimizing or denouncing inequalities (Gjerde, 2004).

Table 1*Glossary of Key Terms*

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- Androcentric thinking*: are the biases in which researchers assume males to be the norm and ascribe the source of gender differences to females, it is expressed in the use of male pronouns to refer to groups, and it strengthens the scientific dominance of men in science (Hegarty & Buechel, 2006).
- Bias*: implicit prejudice and stereotyping that affects cognition and behavior (Fish & Syed, 2020).
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)*: refers to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, African Americans, Indigenous, Hispanic, Latinx, Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), and bi- or multiracial people (APA, 2019).
- Colorblindness*: is the racial ideology that provides a justification for ignoring racism, disregarding power, denying racial inequalities, bolstering the myth of meritocracy, and enforcing the idea that we live in a postracial society (Neville et al., 2013).
- Culture*: the web of values, traditions, rituals, and other practices that are transmitted and updated from one generation to the next (Helms & Cook, 1999).
- Cultural awareness*: is the knowledge and understanding of the unique history, practices, and shared meanings of cultural groups (Christopher et al., 2014).
- Deficit models*: a broad spectrum of pseudoscientific frameworks that should be challenged, as they use genetic, ecological, and cultural arguments to erroneously justify a view of minoritized groups as inherently dysfunctional, lacking positive resources, and failing (Causadias, Korous, et al., 2018; Coll et al., 1996; García Coll et al., 2000).
- Ethnicity*: the grouping of people based on shared culture and identity, as well as the experiences, feelings, and ideas in connection to belonging to a group of people (Phinney, 1996), who have a common national origin (Betancourt & López, 1993).
- Emic perspectives*: are those related to indigenous movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that emphasize local realities, constructs, and methodologies over imported concepts, models, and theories formulated by White scholars in the United States and Europe (Cheung, 2012).
- Epistemological violence*: is a form of indirect and nonphysical aggression in which researchers commit violence by mis-interpreting data in a way that justifies the inferiority of a group of people framed as the Other, and pass this as scientific knowledge (Teo, 2010).
- Epistemological racism*: is the systematic disregard and erasure of knowledge produced by scientists in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, women scholars of color, and other minoritized groups in favor of Euro-centric hegemonic knowledge (Kubota, 2019).
- Etic perspectives*: are the approaches that assume universal realities and cross-cultural invariance of concepts, models, and theories formulated by White scholars in the United States and Europe, and seek to replicate and impose them to explain culture in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Cheung, 2012).
- Fuzzy concept*: refers to concepts that lack clear boundaries, so there is no sharp distinction between membership and nonmembership (Bellman & Zadeh, 1970).
- Gender*: refers to the mindsets, emotions, and behaviors that a culture links with the sex of a person, such as conduct aligned with cultural roles, ideals, and expectations about that group are considered gender normative, while those that are not are comprise gender nonconformity (APA, 2012).
- Intersectionality*: argues that individuals are situated within social categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class) related to cultural systems of oppression and domination that generate related, additive, and interactive experience that are different than the sum of individual experiences and identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).
- Historical trends analysis*: also known as secular trends (McLoyd & Randolph, 1985), is a method to examine continuity and change over time in cultural research, such as how a particular cultural construct is studied, the composition of research participants, the reliance on group comparisons, or the use of theories and methods that support or challenge marginalization.
- Marginalization*: is a complex and constantly changing set of processes of oppression, exclusion, and subordination, rooted in power differences, and directed toward specific groups and individuals, with probabilistic implications for health and adaptation (Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018).
- Meta-analysis*: is a statistical procedure centered on estimation that combines numerical data from multiple independent studies into summaries of effect sizes, ideally in the context of systematic reviews of the literature (Siddaway et al., 2019).
- Multiculturalism*: is an ideology, often contrasted to colorblindness, that emphasizes the importance of diversity, the value of acknowledging the perspectives and experiences of BIPOC, and the celebration of group differences and unique cultures (Plaut, 2010).
- Prejudice*: refers to preconceived and unsupported opinions based on perceived differences, attitudes and perceptions toward groups, that can be negative or positive, and are linked to emotional reactions (Fish & Syed, 2020).
- Privilege*: unearned power in which some people benefit from being part of a dominant group within cultural systems (Bailey, 1998; Johnson, 2018).
- Questionable research practices*: are unjustified group comparisons (McLoyd, 2004), employing demographic variables as proxies for cultural processes (Causadias, 2013), arbitrary selection of outcomes and intervention goals (Sroufe, 1970), and unfair interpretation of findings (García Coll et al., 2000).
- Race*: a social and political construction that has been challenged over its supposed biological support, that is used in reference to physical appearance, skin color, or social disadvantages (Helms et al., 2005).
- Race comparative designs*: are the types of studies that include data from participants from different racial/ethnic groups and in which their data are compared with each other (McLoyd & Randolph, 1984, 1985).
- Race homogeneous designs*: are the types of studies focused exclusively on a single racial/ethnic group (McLoyd & Randolph, 1984, 1985).
- Race heterogeneous designs*: are the types of studies that include participants from different racial/ethnic groups, but their data are analyzed separately and not compared with each other (McLoyd & Randolph, 1984, 1985).
- Racism*: is a system that perpetuate inferiority of a racial/ethnic group, directly or indirectly, through institutional, cultural, and structural means (Neblett, 2019). For a review of definitions, see Bonilla-Silva (2001).
- Sex*: refers to the biological characteristics of a person and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex based on physical traits such as sex chromosomes, sexual or reproductive glands, reproductive organs, and genitalia (APA, 2012).
- Sexual differences-as-deficit assumption*: is the erroneous notion in American psychology that is used to explain differences between sexual majorities (i.e., heterosexuals) and sexual minorities (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual) as evidence of problems of the latter, as a way to legitimize heterosexism and stigmatize departures from it (Herek, 2010).
- Social categories*: are the group classifications proposed on surveys, official records, and censi to encapsulate important individual traits, which are frequently taken for granted and presented as natural despite being socially constructed (Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015).
- Surveys*: a method used to collect participants' responses to quantitative and qualitative questions, such as questionnaires that can be self-administered or administered by the research staff either in-person, over-the-phone, or using online survey platforms (see Krosnick, 1999; Ponto, 2015).
- Systematic reviews*: a method of collecting, appraising, and synthesizing evidence to answer a question, by searching and locating all relevant published and unpublished data, and describing and synthesizing findings (Siddaway et al., 2019).
- Social stratification*: is the aggregation of people who have related positions into groups based on the power of cultural dimensions such as race/ethnicity, sex/gender, socioeconomic status, and many others (Lenski, 2013).
- White supremacy*: is a global project that relies on cultural, scientific, political, economic, and military strategies and arguments to justify, establish, and maintain the domination of people of European descent (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Mills, 2014).
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In this article, we take an inclusive approach to the concept of culture, encompassing issues related to “race” and “ethnicity”¹. We also include as forms of culture issues related to “sex” and “gender,” socioeconomic status, disabilities, and other dynamics connected to the experience of groups that have historically experience marginalization (Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). These experiences cannot be simply reduced to or explained by biological processes, but are better understood as part of cultural systems of “social stratification” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Kendi, 2017; Roscigno, 2011).

What Is Meta-research on Culture?

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was a prominent African American sociologist, historian, civil-rights activist, and philosopher. He was also a true pioneer: the first African American to earn a doctorate at Harvard, the leader of a collective of African American activists who fought for equal rights for African Americans in the early 1900s (the Niagara Movement), one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and an innovator who made landmark contributions in social theory, the philosophy of the social sciences, the diagnosis of social problems, and American historiography (Gooding-Williams, 2020; Lewis, 1993). He was also a pioneer in meta-research on culture.

A widespread academic stance in service of supporting “White supremacy” argued that the Reconstruction period (1860–1880) was a failure, minimizing the contributions of African Americans, and blaming them for its demise. In *Black Reconstruction in America*, Du Bois (1935) used evidence to challenge this narrative. In its last chapter entitled *The Propaganda of History*, Du Bois (1935) discussed textbooks and research that misrepresented African Americans as ignorant, deviant, and incompetent. He dissected the main problems of research on this period: he documented flawed assumptions among historians, the policies of academic institutions that supported this perspective, and the widespread use of questionable research practices that obscured reality. This research was: “. . . one of the most stupendous efforts the world ever saw to discredit human beings, and effort involving universities, history, science, social life and religion” (p. 595).

Du Bois (1935) established a rich tradition of what we define as meta-research on culture, the critical study of how scientific knowledge about culture is produced and transmitted, and the importance of scrutinizing assumptions, policies, and practices in cultural research. Unlike primary research that studies culture in the general population, meta-research on culture focuses on how researchers study culture, with special attention to the work that has dominated mainstream science. While recent contributions have proposed novel guidelines for research on racism² (Miller et al., 2019; Neblett, 2019) and have emphasized the need to internationalize psychology (Cheon et al., 2020; Cheung, 2012; van de Vijver, 2013), our aim is to promote meta-research on culture, the enterprise of cultural research on itself and the rich tradition of scholarship that supports it.

Meta-research on culture can improve our critical understanding of how research on culture is conducted, addressing the role of people, places, and practices, as well as power. In fact, Du Bois (1935) engaged all of these components of the scientific enterprise. He examined the role of people by criticizing researchers who misrepresented this period:

White historians have ascribed the faults and failures of Reconstruction to Negro ignorance and corruption. But the Negro insists that it was Negro loyalty and the Negro vote alone that restored the South to the Union; established the new democracy both for White and Black, and instituted the public schools (Du Bois, 1935, p. 584).

Du Bois (1935) focused on places by censuring academic institutions that supported this endeavor: “The real frontal attack on Reconstruction, as interpreted by the leaders of national thought in 1870 and for some time thereafter, came from the universities and particularly Columbia and John Hopkins” (p. 588). He also underlined practices by documenting the use of questionable research methods. Of one scholar, Du Bois says: “His method was simple. He gathered a vast number of authorities; he selected from these authorities those whose testimony supported his thesis, and he discarded the others” (p. 587).

Finally, Du Bois (1935) articulated the role of power by framing the motivation of the research system to impose a false narrative as objective science:

But why? Because in a day when the human mind aspired to a science of human action, a history and psychology of the mighty effort of the mightiest century, we fell under the leadership of those who would compromise the truth in the past in order to make peace in the present and guide policy in the future (p. 596).

Informed by Du Bois’s (1935) approach and our understanding of culture as a system (Causadias, 2020), we also frame the research enterprise as a cultural system of people, places, practices, and power. For an alternative approach to research as culture, see Traweek (1993).

The *people* in this system are the researchers, research assistants, and research staff who perform the studies, the research participants who participate in research studies, the journal editors and reviewers who oversee the publication process, the grant-officers reviewers who determine which research is worth funding, and the administrators in academic institutions that support or starve programs focused on culture from the perspective of BIPOC scholars such as African American or Chicano studies. These have been framed by Syed and Kathawalla (2020) as representation of researchers and representation of samples.

The *places* in this system are the research and/or academic institutions that create research guidelines and training programs, the journals that legitimize studies through publication standards, and the professional societies and conferences that enforce research standards in conferences. This component of the research system includes grant agencies that, through the enforcement of funding policies, prioritize some lines of research over others (Hoppe et al., 2019). Grant agencies ultimately sustain and are sustained by a grant culture that can have a corrosive impact on science (Lilienfeld, 2017). These have been framed in terms of institutional cultures by Arzubigi et al. (2008).

The *practices* in this system are the research methods and procedures used to conduct the research activities, such as community engagement, formulating research questions and hypotheses,

¹ For a discussion of the intimate relationship between culture, ethnicity, and race, see APA (2019), Betancourt and López (1993), and Nagayama Hall et al. (2016).

² For a discussion of the distinction between racism, discrimination, and prejudice, see Fish and Syed (2020).

population sampling, data collection, statistical analysis, interpreting data, and implementation of findings (Graham, 1992; McLoyd & Randolph, 1984, 1985). It also includes other research-related activities, such as reviewing and rewarding research (Roberts et al., 2020), and citing and implementing research, teaching, and training guidelines (Fouad et al., 2017).

The *power* in this system is the enforcement of the advantaged position of dominant groups over others through research, such as racial/ethnic and sexual/gender majorities over minorities, or American and European scholars over scholars in the developing world (Adams & Salter, 2019). Often, power has been overlooked in research on culture in psychology (Gjerde, 2004), and is also sustained by a lack of representation of the conceptual and theoretical perspectives of scholars who have historically experienced marginalization (Nagayama Hall et al., 2016; Syed et al., 2018; Syed & Kathawalla, 2020).

Although we focus mostly on cultural research in psychology, sociology, and history, meta-research on culture is a transdisciplinary endeavor that can be applied to cultural research from other social sciences and humanities, including anthropology and economy. We argue that meta-research on culture can be useful in exposing researchers' assumptions, research policies, and research practices ("see" Figure 1).

(Who) in the System? Examining Assumptions

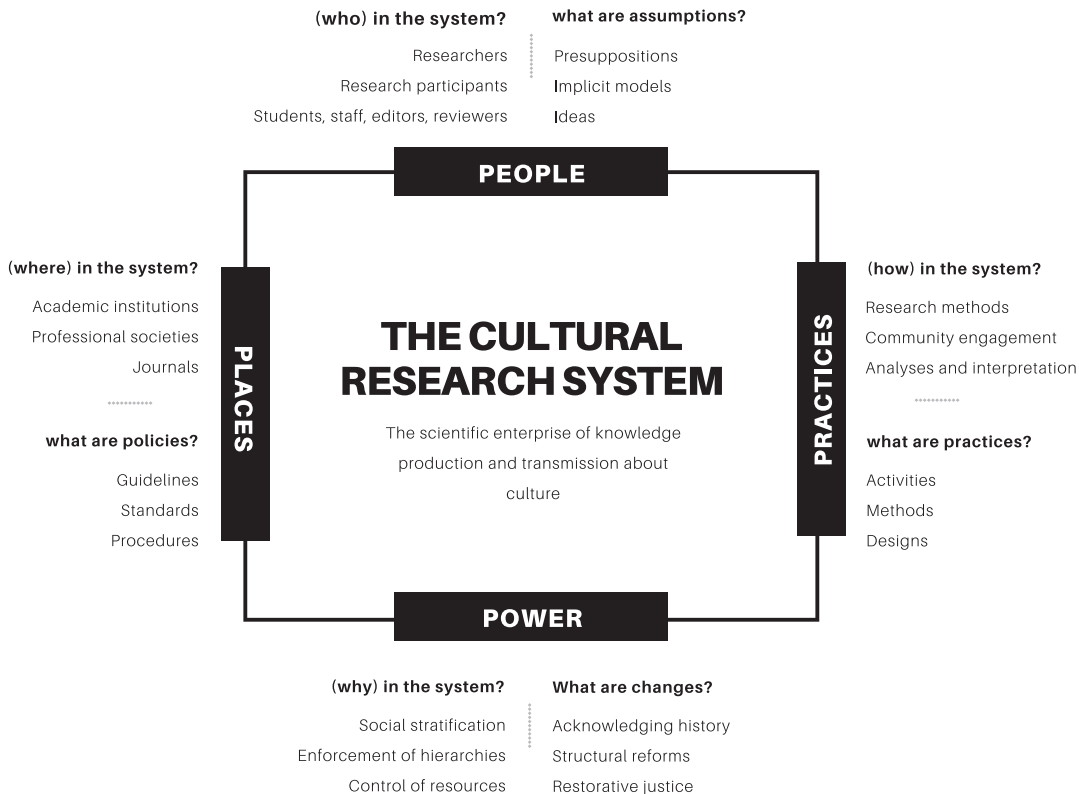
Researchers' assumptions are the presuppositions, implicit models, and ideas that inform research on culture (Arzubiaga et al.,

2008). Some are driven by biases, misconceptions, and unsupported notions, especially when researchers lack sufficient "cultural awareness" (Arzubiaga et al., 2008; Christopher et al., 2014). These assumptions can distort the representation of the experiences of minoritized people and justify their subordination, a pervasive challenge in cultural research.

One of the landmark treatments of assumptions in cultural research was Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, in which he documented the creation of a research field by European scholars representing people and culture from the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia in a patronizing and exotic manner that dehumanize them. According to Said (1978), this scholarship was part of an imperial project of domination in which White people are agents (e.g., subjects of research) and people of "The East" are passive, inferior, and incapable of self-representation (e.g., objects of research). This is encapsulated by Marx's quote: "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (Said, 1978).

Orientalism is a source of erroneous cultural representations that exaggerate differences, assume the superiority of European culture, and employ racist clichés of people from the Middle East (Said, 1978). This is consistent with White supremacy as a global enterprise aimed not only at the domination of people of European descent, but also of their culture (Mills, 2014). This results in "epistemological racism," the erasure of knowledge produced by minoritized groups in favor of knowledge centered on European traditions (Kubota, 2019). The assumptions challenged by Said (1978) are prevalent in other social sciences, such as psychology, which are plagued by ideas that are not supported by evidence (Lilienfeld et al., 2011).

Figure 1
The Cultural Research System



These assumptions often take the form of implicit conceptualizations and theories. This is the case of “deficit models” that misrepresent BIPOC people as inferior (García Coll et al., 2000), and surplus models that portray Whites as superior and the standard for comparisons (Causadias, Korous, et al., 2018). Furthermore, cultural assumptions and ideologies fuel interpretations of socioeconomic differences in academic performance. For instance, America’s emphasis on individualism drives the notion that parents dealing with poverty should provide the best environment for the development of their children, and any failure to do so is their sole responsibility, not of the society that fosters inequality (Kuchirko & Nayfeld, 2020). Moreover, the “sexual differences-as-deficit assumption” has driven psychiatrists and psychologists to misinterpret variation between heterosexual and gay people as evidence of the pathologies of the latter (Herek, 2010), while with “androcentric thinking” researchers assume males to be the norm and ascribes the source of gender differences to females (Hegarty & Buechel, 2006).

Researchers’ assumptions can be investigated with different methods. For instance, “surveys” have documented that some therapists erroneously believe lesbian and gay clients are more mentally ill compared to straight clients (Garfinkle & Morin, 1978), some psychologists, university professors, and college students tend to exaggerate the rationality of men compared to women (Tredinnick & Fowers, 1997), and some psychology faculty in the United States endorse the misplaced belief that culture is more important for BIPOC people than for Whites (Causadias, Vitriol, et al., 2018).

“Systematic reviews” and “meta-analyses” are additional methods to investigate researchers’ assumptions. They have been used to estimate the magnitude of differences between men and women across domains of psychological functioning (Hyde, 2005), the degree to which Whites and minorities score higher on measures of “individualism” and “collectivism” (Oyserman et al., 2002), and to determine if there is larger variation within than between BIPOC people (Causadias, Korous, et al., 2018).

Despite the potential strengths of surveys, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses, it is insufficient to pursue innovation in meta-research on culture solely using these methods, as they can intentionally or unintentionally produce and transmit knowledge that reinforces social stratification ideologies that stigmatize minoritized groups as nonnormative and pathological. For this reason, researchers interested in applying these methods to understand research about culture should be committed to stand against White supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of hate, and also committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

An alternative to ensure that these methods are not used to reinforce deficit models of minoritized groups is to prioritize the perspectives of the people represented in these places and through these practices. Meta-researchers on culture should incorporate the perspective of community members and/or scholars throughout the research processes and not wait until the findings are published to engage them as part of dissemination strategies. In addition to balancing “emic and etic perspectives” (Cheung, 2012; Harris, 1976), a community-centered approach requires engaging quantitative, qualitative, and/or mixed methods. For example, challenging assumptions by using “autoethnographies” (Chang, 2016). Cokley’s (2015) *The Myth of Black Anti-Intellectualism* challenges this myth with autobiographical reflections about what it means to go through the American education system as a Black man, combined with

a comprehensive review of the literature on Black identity and academic achievement.

(Where) in the System? Examining Policies

Research policies are the explicit or implicit guidelines, standards, and procedures in academic institutions, journals, grant agencies, and professional societies that enforce a hegemonic view of culture, disregards the cultural scholarship of people who have historically experienced marginalization, and justifies the status quo (Adams & Salter, 2019; Nagayama Hall et al., 2016; Syed et al., 2018). These include conceptual and theoretical models that take a prescriptive role on how research is and should be conducted.

One of the landmark treatments of research policies was Guthrie’s (1976) *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology*, in which he exposed the pervasive exclusion of African American scholars and scholarship from mainstream psychology in the U.S. Guthrie (1976) documented a long history of racist research in American psychology aimed at legitimizing White supremacy, spreading the myth of Black inferiority, and supporting the oppression of African Americans. Guthrie (1976) also cataloged the neglected contributions and successes of early Black psychologists and social scientists in research on African American culture, such as Kenneth and Mamie Clark, Allison Davis, and Inez Beverly Prosser, and the growth of psychology at historically Black colleges and universities.

These policies also include the institutional disregard for rural locations in favor of research in urban contexts (Stein et al., 2016), the academic neglect for the perspectives of minority scholars (Syed et al., 2018), the systemic imposition of White middle-class values as the cornerstone of treatments for “struggling” minorities (Sroufe, 1970), and the organizational endorsement of training and teaching programs that elevate Euro-centric scholarship over all other perspectives (Elder, 1971; Scrase, 1993). An illustration of the impact of research policies comes from evidence that funding agencies like the National Institutes of Health are less likely to fund proposals to study racial health disparities formulated by Black applicants compared with studies that Black applicants are less likely to propose, such as proposals on molecular biology and genetics (Hoppe et al., 2019).

Research policies can be studied using different methods. Barnett et al. (2019) employed “historical trends analyses” to document the role of institutional policies in cultural research. They examined the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people of color in the U.S. in studies published in journals from the APA between 1969 and 2018. Their findings suggested that the body of literature including LGBT people of color has grown, particularly in the last 10 years. The authors attributed this growth in representation to change in scientific policies, such as increases in U.S. federal funding for research with these groups, as well as institutional changes in some divisions of APA that focused on minoritized identities and their journals, and more appropriate consideration of “intersectionality” in research (Barnett et al., 2019).

Research policies can also be interrogated by examining the implementation of guidelines, such as those aimed at promoting “multiculturalism” in research and education (e.g., American Psychological Association [APA], 2003, 2017). Fouad et al. (2017) investigated this issue and found that most articles cite

the guidelines to state that culture needs to be considered, but few articles framed research around specific guidelines (2003–2016). Unfortunately, most of the research on policies we identified has been conducted in the U.S. This is a serious shortcoming because many, if not most, investigations on culture are conducted in other countries. Although some issues we discussed are also relevant to that work (e.g., epistemic violence, Teo, 2010), many are not. Meta-research on culture conducted by scholars in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa are critical to improve understanding additional assumptions, policies, and practices (Cheon et al., 2020; van de Vijver, 2013). Following Du Bois's (1935) tradition, we should challenge Euro-centric narratives and embrace research from the perspective of scholars from the Global South (see Lasso, 2019; Maalouf, 1984).

(How) in the System? Examining Practices

Research practices are the activities, methods, designs, and analyses implemented in cultural studies. These practices also include other research-related activities, such as training (undergraduate and graduate education), reviewing (journal and grant peer-review), and rewarding (awards) cultural research. These practices are the enactment of the assumptions and policies we discussed earlier. Although they are presented as objective scientific activities, decisions about data collection, analyses, and procedures are often influenced by personal biases, social interactions, and ideology (Arzubiaga et al., 2008). “Questionable research practices” are those activities, methods, designs, and analyses that have negative effects on cultural research.

One of the landmark treatments of these practices was Graham's (1992) “Most of the subjects were White and middle class,” in which she documented a declining representation of African Americans in research from 1970 to 1989 in six journals of the American Psychological Association (APA). She found that these studies that included African American samples focused on topics such as social behavior, psychometric properties of standardized tests of intelligence and personality, and individual differences. However, these studies did not advance scientific understanding of the processes that account for healthy development and competent performance among African Americans. Graham (1992) also revealed the dominant use of racial comparisons (e.g., White versus Black) over racial homogeneous designs (e.g., variations among African Americans), and the lack of measurement of socioeconomic status leading to conflation of race and class effects.

These questionable practices are connected to policies. Deficit models contrast dominant groups to people who experience marginalization, assuring the normativity of the former and the deviancy of the latter (Medin et al., 2010). These models should be challenged rather than justified. Deficit models rely on group comparisons that frame BIPOC people as deviations from White people (McLoyd, 1990, 2004; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990), women as deviations from men (Bailey et al., 2019), and queer people as deviation from heterosexual people (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012). Other questionable research practices include group comparisons in cultural research that overrely on null hypothesis significance testing rather than effect sizes of the magnitude of differences (Matsumoto et al., 2001), and framing questionnaire items that reproduce assumptions about “social categories” (Benincasa, 2012; Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015).

Research practices can be studied by using different methods in meta-research on culture, such as historical trends analyses. For example, McLoyd and Randolph (1984) published a pioneer study using historical trends to document questionable research practices in studies on culture. The authors examined differences in studies published between 1973 and 1975 that compared Black children with children from another racial/ethnic group (“race comparative designs”) versus studies that just comprised Black children (“race-homogeneous designs”). They found that both race-comparative and race-homogeneous studies were based on deficit models, but race-homogeneous studies were more likely than studies using race-comparative designs to focus on low-income children, attempt to address variables confounded in previous research, and examine internal validity issues (McLoyd & Randolph, 1984). This study was followed by another pioneer investigation on historical trends in research with Black children (McLoyd & Randolph, 1985).

Research practices can also be interrogated by using surveys, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses. Choi et al. (2006) surveyed school psychologists to understand the impact of training in attitudes and feelings about gay and lesbian parents and their children, and found that those with some training reported more positive attitudes than those without it. Korous et al. (2017) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to examine if certain research designs were better at capturing the impact of racial discrimination on cortisol output, finding that studies using experimental designs revealed larger effects than nonexperimental designs.

(Why) in the System? Examining Power

The use of power in cultural research is related to “epistemological violence,” the research practices that misrepresent groups as inferior and foreign (Teo, 2010). Epistemological violence takes place at the institutional level, in the way academic organizations create and reproduce practices that subordinate minoritized groups (see Arzubiaga et al., 2008). Those in power have positioned themselves as the objective reference, while those with less power have been framed as departures from the norm (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012; Bailey et al., 2019; Cokley, 2015; Said, 1978). The goal of meta-research on culture is to denounce and document these traditions of epistemological violence and racism, and foster a new culture of research in which people who have historically experienced marginalization can formulate more accurate assumptions and conceptual models, transform policies and create new research institutions, share their indigenous research practices and traditions, and leverage their power to research their own culture (Nagayama Hall et al., 2016).

Interrogating power in cultural research can inform more accurate and fair conceptualizations of culture, and inform scale construction and validation (Cheung, 2012). Researchers embarking on studies that measure culture in different groups should engage in critical meta-awareness and reflect on their own role as cultural producers (Arzubiaga et al., 2008). This awareness is crucial for helping researchers understand how their social position and location in academic institutions shape their method and interpretation of findings (Arzubiaga et al., 2008). Meta-research on culture can play a role in increasing reflexivity in cultural research by identifying which aspects of the scientific process are compromised and to what degree. This can be accomplished by using innovative conceptual frameworks such as intersectionality, in which multiple

cultural systems of oppression, and their interactive effects, are approached simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1991).

Perhaps the main challenge scholars face is changing power dynamics in research on culture by transforming people, places, and practices. Some of the concrete steps in this direction include acknowledging history, structural reforms, and restorative justice. Recognizing and understanding the history of the field is crucial to appreciate the impact of racism (Nelson et al., 2013), to improve our understanding of development in context (Kiang et al., 2016), and to get a better sense of the contributions of minoritized groups in society (Du Bois, 1935). Structural reforms of the cultural research system are needed to promote equity in access to opportunities and resources through funding, hiring, tenure and promotion, and publishing. Restorative justice initiatives that bring together researchers and communities can be useful in repairing harm and creating trust.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Directions

We argue that meta-research on culture can help improve equity and quality in research on culture. It can also guide efforts to elevate the perspectives of scholars who have historically experienced barriers to conduct cultural research with their own communities, help portray the experiences of minoritized people with fairness, inform institutional support and the creation of academic spaces, and support the implementation of better research practices. However, we recognize several limitations with our current approach.

First, despite the fact that we discussed them separately, researchers' assumptions, institutional policies, and questionable research practices are engaged in a feedback loop of mutual determination (see Overton, 2010). Assumptions frequently justify and inform the institutional policies that lead to the exclusion of scholars from cultural research on their own communities. In turn, institutional policies diminish opportunities for intergroup contact, which can exacerbate biases (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Ultimately, these assumptions, policies, and practices are articulated by power, the ability to control what is considered knowledge and to present it in a way that appears normal and normative, rather than an artificial construction (Gjerde, 2004).

Second, another important limitation to our current approach to meta-research on culture is that it is reactive: It documents these problems after they have occurred. To make meta-research on culture not only an innovative approach, but an effective tool in bringing social change, its findings need to be proactive. It is important to move from knowledge (logos) into action (praxis). In addition to documenting researcher's assumptions, meta-research on culture should continually engage scholars through improved cultural training and education that can challenge the cultural transmission of these assumptions from one generation of scientists to the next.

Examining the system of cultural research as a whole is imperative because researchers' assumptions, institutional policies, and questionable research practices are interdependent and reinforce each other. For instance, a recent review of over 25,000 empirical articles published the past 5 decades in top journals in psychology revealed that most published research on race has been handled by White editors and written by White authors (Roberts et al., 2020). In turn, White editors have been responsible for fewer publications that

emphasize race, and White authors have employed fewer minority participants (Roberts et al., 2020).

For these reasons, it is important to increase representation and promote participation of BIPOC scholars and members of minoritized groups in editorial boards and other positions of power in academia. These efforts can help dismantle the use of cultural research to legitimize subordination (Okazaki et al., 2008; Said, 1978). Meta-research on culture can play a decisive role in promoting critical consciousness and awareness of how research on culture is and has been conducted, continuing an illustrious scientific tradition pioneered by Du Bois (1935).

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