

Mini-Conference: Race and Organizations

Organizers:

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Call for Papers

When researchers analyze race and organizations they primarily do so at the individual level. Sociological studies confirm that organizations produce inequality or systematic disparities between racial groups. In particular, all else being equal, Whites have far better experiences and outcomes with the organizations – firms, schools, hospitals, etc. – that we have come to depend upon for our livelihood than racial minorities.

Though necessary, focusing on the individual level has its limitations.

By confining race to an individual level property, we highlight the reality that people have a race and this influences their organizational experiences. Yet, this is just one of the many ways that race intersects with organizations. If we situate race as a property that operates at other, higher levels of analyses we can develop an even deeper understanding of how race affects organizations.

There have been few efforts to conceive of race as a characteristic that organizations also possess or at the very least a characteristic that exists at the institutional level with which organizations must contend. In the United States especially, this belies our history. Homer Plessy and Rosa Parks both chose organizations – the East Louisiana Railroad and the Montgomery Bus Line respectively – as sites to challenge racial practices. In both instances, defying an organizational rule reshaped the discourse and laws pertaining to race, regionally first, then nationally.

A ruling against Homer Plessy's constitutional right to sit in the "Whites Only" car had far reaching consequences, most of which were enacted through organizations. This ruling racially marked organizations and organizational practices as "Black" or "White", essentially "racing" organizations. Despite the undoing of legally sanctioned racial segregation, we continue to use such demarcations to classify organizations – Black colleges (e.g., Howard University, Hampton University) or Black media companies (e.g., Ebony, The Root).

Sociology is ill equipped to explain how a person's quest to sit wherever they choose could have such far-reaching consequences in part because there has been little effort to build bridges between those studying the problems of race and those studying the problems of organizing. Consequently, we cannot adequately speak to how race affects organizations, markets, or institutions with the same confidence that we can for people.

The mini-conference will bring together scholars to interrogate the relationship between race and the organizing process for the founding of both informal and formal organizations, the organizational pursuit of human, financial, or political resources, organizational choices regarding strategic orientation and structural configurations, and the role of institutional logics that saturate organizations, industries, and markets with racialized ideologies, among other topics.

Scholars are encouraged to consider questions along the following lines:

- 1) What does “race” mean when extended beyond people? To understand how race affects organizations and the organizing process, do we need to develop new definitions of this concept?
- 2) How organizations get ‘raced’ and who does that work? How does race become infused into organizational life? What processes lead an organization to become identified with one racial group as opposed to another?
- 3) How does race structure economic, political, and cultural life? How does race affect the organization of institutions, markets, and industries?
- 4) How do organizations use racial discourse to create division, how organizations support and/or challenge existing racial logics?
- 5) How do organizations produce racial inequality beyond their ability to allocate rewards in a racially stratified manner?

In addition to the paper sessions, the mini-conference will begin with an informal writing session. The goal will be to dedicate time to writing and exchanging ideas together before we dive into the more formal presentations of our research. All mini-conference participants are welcome to attend the writing session.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Those wishing to present papers in this mini-conference should submit an abstract of no longer than 250 words by October 30, 2018 through the ESS submission portal at <https://www.meetingsavvy.org/ess>. Proposals not accepted for the mini-conference will be submitted to the ESS general call for submissions.

To submit to this mini-conference, select "Mini Conference Presentation" in the "Submission type" drop-down menu. Supply your title and abstract. After hitting "Next", select the name of the mini-conference from the keyword drop-down menu.

Please direct all inquiries to Melissa Wooten and Lucius Couloute at raceorgsminiconference@gmail.com.