

***Report on the ST&D 2020 Special  
Topics Discussion on Representation  
and Social Justice in the Society***

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Prepared for the Society for Text and Discourse by:

Catherine Bohn-Gettler, Jason L. G. Braasch, Kate  
Cain, Joseph P. Magliano, Michael C. Mensink,  
Chantel Prat, and Emily Smith

## I. Introduction

Systemic racism is an ongoing trauma that goes against all that the ST&D community values. To begin the process of setting and achieving our shared goal of realizing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community, the Society held a special discussion on representation and social justice on July, 21st, 2020. It was attended by 60 members and attendees of the 2020 Annual Conference.

The purposes of this discussion were to: 1) establish common ground on key concepts associated with racism, representation, and social justice, and 2) identify ways in which the society is contributing to racism and social injustice. The results of this discussion will serve as the basis for identifying initiatives for ST&D to take forwards, as we work towards our collective goal of being an inclusive and anti-racist community.

The discussion was structured around establishing definitions for the important concepts followed by breakout discussions directed at responding to the following three questions:

1. How does racism show up in our field and research?
2. How does ST&D continue to perpetuate and contribute to racism?
3. What is your role in upholding such racism as a member, and how do you benefit from it?

In this report, we provide the agreed upon definitions for the concepts necessary to have a productive discussion on racism and social justice and summarize the major themes that emerged from responding to the three questions. The responses that were derived from the discussion are by no means comprehensive, but are representative of the discussion and provide valuable insights into how to become a society that promotes representation and social justice.

## II. Important Definitions

**Anti-Blackness:** Anti-Blackness represents the specific ways in which Black people, culture, and politics are institutionally surveilled, harmed, and oppressed.

**BIPOC:** An acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

**Equity:** Equity ensures that groups are provided the resources and support necessary to make up for structural barriers and historical exclusion.

**Racism:** Racism is a combination of biases against a group and the power to execute that bias.

**White Supremacy:** White supremacy reflects the ways that White-culture ethos and beliefs are unconsciously and consciously embedded into our culture and politics. Additionally, the social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable White people to maintain power over people of other races

## III. Responses to Discussion Questions

### 1. How does racism show up in our field and research?

*1A. Research can be biased in terms of research questions, research designs, materials used, and the sampling of participants.*

*1B. Insufficient efforts to increase the accessibility of research to scholars and disciplines that focus on race and equity, but whose research is not traditionally represented in the society.*

*1C. The field has not put forth sufficient efforts to recruit and subsequently mentor minoritized students and early-career faculty.*

**2. How does ST&D continue to perpetuate and contribute to racism?**

*2A. The society has failed to provide an explicit statement regarding the importance of representation.*

*2B. The society has put forth insufficient efforts to pursue scholars from minoritized groups to be keynote speakers.*

*2C. The society has put forth insufficient efforts to emphasize topics that are of specific interest to scholars who study the impact of race and racism on discourse processes.*

*2D. The society is biased towards methodological approaches that are not well suited to study the complexities of how race and racism may affect discourse.*

*2E. While the society has taken steps to increase mentorship of junior scholars (students, post-doctoral fellows, assistant professors), it has put forth insufficient efforts to provide mentorship to minoritized scholars.*

**3. What is your role in upholding such racism as a member, and how do you benefit from it?**

*3A. White members of the society have benefited from a recruitment system that inherently benefits them and perpetuates it by continuing those practices.*

*3B. It is easier for members to rely on the existing systems to support research and mentorship within their university, the discipline writ large, and ST&D than it is to address systematic racism.*

*3D. The research valued by the society enables them to ignore studying the complex issues associated with the role of racism in discourse processing.*

## **IV. Next Steps**

In the coming months, the committee will work with our Society members on the initial steps to create more equitable representation for underrepresented colleagues and students dedicated to research in text and discourse comprehension.

We will:

- Provide a statement that makes our position as a Society clear: Black Lives Matter. ST&D is dedicated building an anti-racist community. Our statement will appear on the Society's website and in all correspondence moving forward.
- Recruit and mentor underrepresented students by providing networking opportunities.
- Develop funding opportunities to support BIPOC students.
- Build relationships with underrepresented scholars who are focused on research that is not traditionally represented in the society, especially research that centers race, equity, and social justice in discourse studies.
- Invite BIPOC scholars to speak at the 2021 annual meeting and beyond.
- Continue and expand diversity, inclusion, and equity conversations with our members, including how the Society will respond to additional inequities identified in the initial discussion.