



## Reports

## Evaluating the contributions of members of mixed-sex work teams: Race and gender matter

Monica Biernat <sup>a,\*</sup>, Amanda K. Sesko <sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> University of Kansas, USA<sup>b</sup> University of Alaska-Southeast, USA

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Participants evaluate the competence of members of mixed-sex work teams.
- ▶ Theoretical perspective on the intersection of race and gender is examined.
- ▶ Gender bias was evident only when White women were teamed with White men.
- ▶ Black women's nonprototypicality may buffer them from negative gender stereotypes.

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 26 July 2012

Revised 11 December 2012

Available online 22 January 2013

## Keywords:

Stereotyping

Gender

Race

Intersectionality

Evaluation

## ABSTRACT

Gender- and race-bias have often been studied as separate phenomena, but examining intersections of race and gender is critical given that people always belong to many social categories simultaneously. In two studies, we focus on the evaluation of mixed-sex work teams, and examine how race and gender of team members affect the evaluations they receive. Participants read about a pair of employees assigned to work together on a “masculine” task on which they either succeeded (Study 1) or failed (Study 2). Mixed-sex teams included White pairs, Black pairs, or mixed race pairs (White woman–Black man; Black woman–White man). In both studies, pro-male gender bias was evident only in the White male–White female work pair. We suggest that rather than suffering the double jeopardy of dual subordinate identities, Black women were buffered from the effects of gender bias by virtue of their non-prototypicality or invisibility.

© 2013 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

Racial and gender stereotyping have often been studied in isolation from each other: Researchers may investigate race bias, typically considering only *male* targets, or gender bias, typically considering only *White* targets. A recent analysis of publications on race, gender, ethnicity, racism, or feminism indexed in PsycINFO found that only a small minority addressed *both* constructs (Silverstein, 2006).

But increasingly, scholars have called for the simultaneous consideration of multiple categories as they influence judgment and other outcomes (Cole, 2009; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). This “intersectionality” perspective notes that the experiences and perceptions of individuals from any one social group may vary depending on the other social categories to which they belong (gender, race, age, social class, sexual orientation). In the present research, we consider the joint effects of gender and race (Black, White) on perceivers' judgments of employee competence in workplace teams.

A key question in research taking an intersectionality perspective is how categories combine to influence experience and perceptions.

With regard to race and gender, one model points to the “double jeopardy” of being *Black* and *female*—taking a double hit of racism and sexism (e.g., Beale, 1970; Epstein, 1973; Settles, 2006). In contrast, the “subordinate male target hypothesis” highlights the negative outcomes faced by *Black men*, based on an evolutionary account of intergroup conflict (Navarrete, McDonald, Molina, & Sidanius, 2010). Still another perspective is that one category may dominate the other. For example, with regard to perceptions of discrimination, the “ethnic prominence” hypothesis suggests that race matters more than gender (Levin, Sinclair, Veniegas, & Taylor, 2002).

It may also be the case that racism and sexism are simply experienced differently depending on one's race and gender. Theory and research in this regard have highlighted the case of Black women, suggesting that their dual subordinate identities make for qualitatively different experiences of prejudice, compared to the experiences of Black men and White women. As non-prototypical of both their race and gender categories, Black women may be “invisible” (Bell, 1992; Davis, 1981; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010; see also Fryberg & Townsend, 2008, for a more general discussion of invisibility).

Prototypicality varies as a function of how many attributes or features an individual is perceived to share with a category (Cantor & Mischel, 1977; Rosch, 1975), and research suggests that stereotypes of Black

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [biernat@ku.edu](mailto:biernat@ku.edu) (M. Biernat).

women often do not fit core attributes of the categories of “women” or “Black” (Binion, 1990; Landrine, 1985). The invisibility perspective suggests that this lack of fit may serve to buffer Black women from typical forms of gender and race discrimination: “The social invisibility of people with intersectional disadvantaged identities may allow them to more easily escape many of the active discriminatory practices that target their groups compared to members who more closely fit the prototypes of these groups” (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008, p. 382). Of course, invisibility may result in negative consequences as well: Invisible targets are less likely to be represented in public discourse (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008), and, as documented in two studies, Black women’s faces may be less easily recognized and their contributions to discussion less well-remembered (Sesko & Biernat, 2010; see also Goff, Thomas, & Jackson, 2008; Johnson, Freeman, & Pauker, 2012). In this sense, the invisibility perspective points to a complex set of experiences—some positive and some negative—for Black women.

Recent research on perceptions of leaders has highlighted some of this complexity. Livingston, Rosette, and Washington (2012) argue that because Black women are less bound by proscriptions against dominance than White women and Black men, they do not experience “backlash” for exhibiting dominant leadership behavior (see Rudman & Fairchild, 2004 for a discussion of backlash against agentic women). Indeed, Black female leaders were judged equal in competence to White male leaders, whereas dominant White women and Black men were penalized (Livingston et al., 2012). In another study, however, failure was less tolerated in Black female than other leaders: Black women heading an unsuccessful corporation were judged less effective than White men and women and Black men (Rosette & Livingston, 2012).

Results such as these suggest that the pattern of race/gender interaction may depend on a number of features of the situation, including salience of group stereotypes and valence of the performance being evaluated. In the two studies reported here, we examined how race and gender matter for the evaluation of mixed-sex work teams, using a paradigm developed by Heilman and Haynes (2005). The use of work teams is common in organizational settings (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999), but as Heilman and Haynes note, evaluating team product is rife with ambiguity, as it is unclear who contributed what. Ambiguity enhances the influence of stereotypes; biased expectations are more likely to color judgment when conditions are ambiguous as opposed to clear-cut (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Heilman, 1995; Kunda & Thagard, 1996). Thus, the evaluation of work teams provides an interesting context in which to examine the joint influences of race and gender categories.

In Heilman and Haynes’ (2005) research, participants evaluated male–female dyads that had successfully completed a “masculine” work project (e.g., creating an investment portfolio). Race of targets was unspecified, but presumably the default assumption was “White.” Across three studies, the female member of the work team was evaluated more negatively—given less credit for the successful work product—than her male partner, unless evidence clarified that she was competent and contributed to the project.

In the present research, we examine whether this tendency to devalue women’s contributions to team product is unique to White women paired with White men, or whether it extends to other mixed-sex partnership combinations, including Black women paired with Black or White men, and White women paired with Black men. What might we expect? The double-jeopardy hypothesis suggests that Black women may suffer even more than White women, especially when paired with White men. But the invisibility perspective suggests a potential advantage to Black women in this masculine work setting: Black women’s non-prototypicality of their gender (and race) categories may buffer them from the negative stereotypes that apply to White women. Note that we do not predict literal invisibility of Black women in this context—denial of their involvement in the team product. Negative consequences of invisibility have been documented in measures of attention and memory (e.g., Sesko & Biernat, 2010), but our focus here is on

workplace evaluation. The distinction between attention/memory and evaluation may be important: Less attention may be paid to a non-prototypical (e.g., Black female) target, but given attention to her (as when information is offered about her performance and a judgment is requested), evaluations may be less likely to be driven by gender or race bias.

Because we focus on masculine work domains, we do not expect that Black men will be devalued in mixed-sex teams. And because our targets are average employees rather than company leaders, we do not expect the proscription against dominance to work against Black men (Livingston et al., 2012; Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Instead, we suggest that gender rather than racial stereotypes will be most relevant in our studies, and that mixed-sex work teams make the gender distinction even more salient (Hogg & Turner, 1987).

The two studies reported here use identical paradigms, in which participants evaluate both members of a mixed-sex work team on overall competence and salary recommendations. Study 1 uses the “team success” scenario of Heilman and Haynes (2005); in Study 2, the team is described as performing more poorly. This additional scenario allows us to test the generalizability of any partner race and sex effects.

## Study 1

### Method

Participants were 142 undergraduates at the University of Kansas (61 females; age  $M = 19.42$ ,  $SD = 2.33$ ; 83.45% White) who were told that the study was about “identifying the most efficient ways to maximize assessment accuracy” in organizations. Participants received a packet containing a description of a team task, background information about two employees assigned to work as a team on the task, and a task feedback form.

The team task, designed to be masculine in nature, was “to design, develop, and maintain a new application system for an evolving software program. The software system is intended to be used for a large corporate laser engineering company...” Employee background information included job title (software engineer or software analyst and developer), years at current job (3 or 2.5), specific duties and responsibilities (programming and consulting or testing support, development, and maintenance), educational background (Bachelor of Science in Engineering, specializing in computer engineering or specializing in software engineering), and hobbies (swimming, reading, and music or reading, travel, and tennis). Assignment of resumes to team members was randomized and counterbalanced.

Target race and gender were manipulated by including a photo of the employee, using a set of pre-tested images selected to be equal in perceived competence, attractiveness, and age.

Participants were exposed to one of four mixed-sex team types: Black female and Black male (BF–BM), Black female and White male (BF–WM), White female and Black male (WF–BM), or White female and White male (WF–WM).<sup>1</sup>

Participants were also provided with information indicating that the team performed successfully: A “trained observer” gave the team a score of 92%, and rated it highly (4s or 5s on a 1–5 scale) on eight dimensions (e.g., “sound knowledge of industry standards”; “software quality assurance”).

### Dependent variables

To assess overall competence, participants rated each employee on eight attributes using 1–9 rating scales: incompetent–competent, unproductive–productive, ineffective–effective, the extent to which the employee “was influential in determining the final outcome of the

<sup>1</sup> Additional participants were exposed to same-sex/mixed-race work teams (Black female–White female; Black male–White male). No race or sex effects emerged in these data ( $M$  salary = 85,347,  $SD = 18,373$ ;  $M$  competence = 6.89,  $SD = .71$ ).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10468508>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10468508>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)