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FlashReport

Gendered race prototypes: Evidence for the non-prototypicality of Asian men and Black women

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HIGHLIGHTS

- We examine gendered race prototypes of Asian men and Black women.
- Statements made by Asian men were least likely to be remembered.
- Participants generated more Asian female and Black male protagonists vs. Whites.

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ABSTRACT

Previous research from the perspective of gendered race theory has demonstrated that stereotypes about race often contain a gendered component, whereby certain racial and ethnic groups are stereotyped as more masculine or feminine. In particular, in North American contexts, Blacks tend to be associated with masculinity, while Asians tend to be associated with femininity. In this paper we present the hypothesis that Asian men and Black women are deemed less prototypical of their overarching racial groups due to the mismatch between their identities and gendered race stereotypes. First, we show evidence demonstrating that Asian men face invisibility at the cognitive level, consistent with previous theory and research related to Black women (Study 1). Second, we present direct evidence that participants are more likely to imagine a man when thinking of a Black individual and less likely to think of a man when imagining an Asian individual, relative to the frequency of Whites (Study 2). Overall, our results support the hypothesis that Asian men and Black women are viewed as less prototypical of their race categories. We discuss implications and future directions for work on intersectionality and gendered race theory.

In 2012, the basketball world was deep in the craze of "Linsanity". This surge of media attention surrounding Jeremy Lin, an Asian-American professional basketball player, emerged from a narrative of spectacular skill and the novelty of an Asian-American man playing a professional sport. Yet, Lin's popularity came later in his career: early on, despite his strong performance, Lin suffered from consistently being passed over for promotion to professional play. In an exposé on Lin, Time writer Sean Gregory stated, "[Lin] was scrawny, but don't doubt that a little racial profiling, intentional or otherwise, contributed to his underrecruitment" (Gregory, 2009). Gregory's implication that Lin's race affected his prospects in professional athletics suggests that Lin remained "invisible" to recruiters due to his race and the non-prototypicality of an Asian-American basketball player in a sport dominated by Black and White athletes.

Lin's experience with invisibility is reflected in findings from gendered race theory, a theoretical framework which proposes that racial stereotypes contain a gendered component whereby certain racial groups are represented as more feminine or masculine. For instance, Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy (2013) demonstrated that Blacks are implicitly associated with masculinity, and Asians with femininity, such that these overlaps predict imbalances in the domains of marriage, leadership, and tellingly in Lin's case, athletics. Johnson, Freeman, and Pauker (2012) also showed that ambiguously gendered Black and Asian faces were more frequently categorized respectively as male and female, suggesting that associations between gender and race influence social perception. Given the overlap between gender and race, we hypothesize that Black women and Asian men are deemed less prototypical of their respective racial categories, and present two studies which test this hypothesis.

Previous literature has used the notion of non-prototypicality to examine the experiences of Black women. Building upon intersectionality, or the study of individuals with multiple minority identities (Cole,

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2009), this research on "intersectional invisibility" finds that Black women are frequently overlooked and rendered invisible due to their non-prototypical status in relation to Black (prototyped as male) and female (prototyped as White) identities (Hooks, 1989; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). This "non-prototypicality hypothesis" has also been used to predict cognitive processes such as memory (e.g., Silvera, Krull, & Sassler, 2002), as greater difficulty in processing non-prototypical stimuli results in cognitive deficits (Fiske, Neuberg, Beattie, & Milberg, 1987; Posner & Keele, 1970). Linking non-prototypicality and intersectionality, Sesko and Biernat (2010) showed that statements by Black women were less well remembered than statements by Black men and Whites overall, providing evidence that Black women suffer from intersectional invisibility, presumably as a result of non-prototypicality.

In this research, we seek to address two main questions. First, we examine whether the effects of non-prototypicality extend to Asian men, as predicted by gendered race theory. Thus, in Study 1 we test whether statements made by Asian men are less likely to be accurately remembered than statements made by Asian women or Whites. Second, while previous studies circuitously suggest the operation of non-prototypicality by finding memory deficits for non-prototypical categories (Sesko & Biernat, 2010), as well as overlap between race and gender stereotypes (Galinsky et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2012) these studies fail to directly test the proposition that Black women *and* Asian men are viewed as less prototypical. Thus, in Study 2 we assess the use of gendered race prototypes, hypothesizing that Asians will be more likely to be prototyped as female, and Blacks as male, relative to Whites.

Study 1

In Study 1, we examined whether invisibility, a predicted effect of non-prototypicality, would be observed for Asian men. A previous study examining the impact of non-prototypicality on invisibility (Sesko & Biernat, 2010) found that statements by Black women were less likely to be remembered and correctly attributed relative to statements made by Black men and Whites, suggesting that non-prototypical gendered members of racial groups suffer from invisibility. Following this study, we employed a Who-Said-What paradigm to test whether participants would be more likely to attribute statements made by Asian women to the correct speaker, relative to Asian men and Whites, as predicted by the non-prototypical invisibility hypothesis.

Participants & method

Sixty-nine (47 women) non-Asian undergraduates (M age = 19.95, SD = 2.03) were recruited from a mid-sized university in the United States. Data were not analyzed until the entire sample was obtained. No participant was excluded from the statistical analyses. Participants were presented with a Who-Said-What task (Klauer & Wegener, 1998) in which they watched a three-minute video of a conversation about a trip to a park. The conversation consisted of sixteen audio statements presented via headphones; each statement accompanied an image of one of eight speakers, two for each race (Asian, White) and gender (male, female) combination. Statements followed the same sequential order and the statement–speaker pairing was pseudo-randomized such that no speaker uttered back-to-back statements (for detailed information about stimuli and procedures see Supplemental materials).

After viewing the video, participants were presented with 32 statements (16 originals and 16 distractors) one at a time, and identified whether they heard the statement during the conversation or not. If participants indicated that they heard the statement, they were presented with a matrix of the eight faces seen during the conversation and asked to indicate who said the statement.

Results & discussion

We used multinomial modeling analyses to examine source memory for gender as a function of race (see Klauer, Ehrenberg, & Wegener, 2003), specifically whether participants were more likely to misremember statements made by Asian men relative to other groups. We sought to examine differences in the degree to which participants remembered statements made by members of each group, following research suggesting that statements made by individuals deemed prototypical of their racial group (Black men) are more likely to be remembered and attributed than statements made by individuals who are deemed less prototypical of their racial group (e.g., Sesko & Biernat, 2010).

In order to test our hypotheses we first created a baseline model against which we imposed restrictions. Our model consisted of five trees, one for each race/gender combination, and one tree representing distractor statements; branches for each tree represent probabilities for specific category memory or guessing, ultimately leading to correct identification or errors (see Fig. 1). To avoid an arbitrary choice and following previous work (e.g., Klauer, Hölzenbein, Calanchini, & Sherman, 2014), all item memory parameters were set equal. As there was little evidence of categorization by race, we set parameters d (category memory for race) equal to zero. For the same reason (there was little evidence of category memory for race), e (category memory for gender given memory for race) was set equal to zero. As a consequence, the baseline model effectively considers only categorization by gender. The results indicated that our baseline model was a good fit for the data $\Delta G^2(11) = 11.593$, $p = .04$. See supplementary materials for the specifics of the model.

To test for individual effects, we imposed additional model restrictions and examined whether these restrictions significantly decreased the goodness of fit statistic ΔG^2. The results indicated that restricting gender categorization effects to be equal across groups did not result in a significant loss of fit $\Delta G^2(3) = 3.06$, $p = .38$, while restricting effects for person memory in this way significantly decreased the fit $\Delta G^2(3) = 10.69$, $p = .01$. Testing for pairwise effects, the results indicated that parameter c_1 (person memory for Asian women) significantly differed from c_2 (person memory for Asian men) $\Delta G^2(1) = 6.19$, $p = .01$. An inverse pattern was observed for parameters c_3 and c_4 (person memory for White women and men, respectively) whereby White men speakers were more likely to be correctly identified relative to White female speakers, although this effect did not reach statistical significance $\Delta G^2(1) = 3.71$, $p = .054$. Estimates for parameters c are shown in Fig. 2.

The results show that participants were less likely to correctly remember statements by Asian men compared to Asian women, a finding in line with the non-prototypical invisibility hypothesis. In addition, our results indicate that memory for statements by White men is higher, albeit marginally so, compared to White women, reinforcing previous work showing that White men are more prototypical in terms of the category White/personhood (e.g., Hamilton, 1991). Overall the results indicate that, in support of the non-prototypical invisibility hypothesis and congruent with previous results for Black women (Sesko & Biernat, 2010), statements made by Asian men were less likely to be correctly identified and attributed in a Who-Said-What paradigm.

Study 2

The finding that both Asian men (Study 1) and Black women (Sesko & Biernat, 2010) are misremembered in a memory task suggests that Asian men and Black women are viewed as less prototypical of their respective racial groups. However, these prior studies examined only a potential effect of non-prototypicality (i.e., memory errors), at best providing an indirect test of whether Asian men and Black women are viewed as less prototypical for their respective racial groups. In Study 2 we directly assessed the non-prototypicality of Asian men and Black women.