Reports

Getting a word in group-wise: Effects of racial diversity on gender dynamics

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ABSTRACT

In three studies, we examined the effects of racial diversity on gender dynamics in small mixed-sex groups. In all-White groups in Study 1, White men spoke significantly more than White women and were rated as more persuasive; however, in racially-diverse groups, White women and White men spent equal amounts of time speaking and were rated as equally persuasive. Video clips of the group members were rated for confidence and anxiety in Study 2, and Study 3 explored more directly how group composition shapes individuals' perceptual and cognitive tendencies. Members of diverse groups were perceived as more anxious than members of all-White groups, and White women were perceived as more anxious than White men. However, White women in diverse groups showed increasing confidence over time. These results suggest that racial diversity has benefits beyond just racial inclusion: it may also promote greater gender equality.

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Introduction

Under the spell of that illusion, I thought, looking out of the window, half the people on the pavement are striding to work… They start the day confident, braced, believing themselves desired at Miss Smith's tea party; they say to themselves as they go into the room, I am the superior of half the people here, and it is thus that they speak with that self-confidence, that self assurance, which have had such profound consequences in public life… (Woolf, 1929, p. 36).

Over 80 years ago, Virginia Woolf observed how the self-confidence exhibited by men due to their higher social status impacted both personal interactions and public life. In the intervening decades, while there has been considerable progress in terms of achieving gender equality, barriers still remain. Men continue to hold the majority of top-level positions in business and government (Catalyst, 2008; IPU, 2010) and are paid about 25% more than women in the same jobs (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2010). In social settings, people tend to assume that men are more competent, knowledgeable, and intelligent than women, and in accordance with these gender-based expectations, grant males more authority and prestige (Carli & Eagly, 1999; Driskell & Mullen, 1990).

These different expectations of men and women also impact group functioning (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Men tend to exercise greater influence in mixed-sex groups than do women (Pugh & Wahrman, 1983; Strodtbeck & Mann, 1956; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2004). In one study, for example, men were five times more likely to influence others' opinions than were women (Walker, Ilardi, McMahon, & Fennell, 1996). In another study, information introduced by men was up to six times more likely to influence the group decision than the same information introduced by women (Propp, 1995). Speaking time, another measure of behavioral dominance, shows similar results: men talk significantly more than women in social interactions (Hall, 2006; Leaper & Ayres, 2007; Schmid Mast, 2001). There are, however, important qualifications to this pattern of gender-based behavioral dominance. The context of the interaction may substantially impact gender dynamics.

In the present research we examined the effects of racial diversity on gender dynamics in small groups. For many individuals, interracial interactions are associated with social anxiety and are construed as stressful (Plant & Devine, 2003; Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Specifically, White individuals are often concerned with being perceived as racist by members of other groups (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Monteith, Sherman, & Devine, 1998; Shelton & Richeson, 2006), a concern that arises spontaneously given the likelihood of evaluation by an outgroup member (Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). When interacting with other-race partners, White individuals report more anxiety and discomfort than when interacting with same-race partners (Toosi, Babbitt, Ambady, & Sommers, 2012; Trawalter & Richeson, 2008).

However, women seem to react very differently to race-related social concerns than men. For example, one study found that White

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women responded to intergroup anxiety by acting friendlier toward an other-race partner in contrast to White men, who became less friendly (Littleford, Wright, & Sayoc-Parial, 2005). Greater endorsement of a feminine self-concept has been linked with higher internal motivation to avoid prejudice (Ratcliff, Lassiter, Markman, & Snyder, 2006) and less support for social inequalities (Foels & Pappas, 2004), and in general, women report more positive race-related attitudes than men (Eagly, Diekman, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Koenig, 2004; Johnson & Marini, 1998; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1994).

We propose that racial diversity in small groups may impact gender dynamics in several ways. One possible explanation is increased social complexity. Whereas men emerge more often as leaders of groups performing masculine or gender-neutral tasks, women are more likely to emerge as leaders when tasks are more interpersonal in nature and contain some element of social complexity (Eagly & Karau, 1991). Eagly and Karau suggest that this is due to socially-prescribed gender roles that place men in agentic roles where assertiveness and competence are valued, while social and affiliative roles are allotted to women—a division of roles often seen in group settings (Dovidio, Heltman, Brown, Ellyson, & Keating, 1988; Wood & Karten, 1986). In scenarios requiring more diplomatic and interpersonal skills, women will be more likely to demonstrate leadership behaviors. Because interracial interactions present more social concerns (e.g. concerns about being seen as racist), this may increase women's behavioral dominance in group settings.

Another possibility is that racial diversity decreases gender disparities in group behavior by reducing the salience of gender as a social identity cue. In other words, the presence of Black individuals may bring racial concerns to the foreground for White participants, and lead White women and White men to see each other more as members of the same racial in-group than as members of different genders. This reduced salience of gender might then have the effect of reducing the impact of gender-role norms and status differentials on behavior.

A third possibility is that in racially-diverse groups, tolerance norms become more salient. The presence of racial outgroup members may remind White individuals of social norms of equity that were not activated by the presence of group members of a different sex (e.g., being confronted about race-related bias leads to more guilt than equivalent cases of gender-related bias; Czopp & Monteith, 2003). These tolerance norms might then lead all group members to behave in ways that facilitate equal sharing and participation. This would therefore affect gender dynamics as well as interracial interactions.

To explore these questions, we conducted three studies to examine behavioral and cognitive tendencies of White males and females in racially diverse and homogeneous groups. For the first study, we examined the behavior and ratings of mock-jury members who deliberated on a case in racially-diverse or all-White groups. In the second study, video-clips from the first study were viewed by a new group of participants who rated the group members on confidence and anxiety. We hypothesized that in a racially-diverse group, typical gender dynamics would shift and the gap in behavioral dominance between men and women would close, such that White women would speak up more and behave more confidently in racially-diverse groups than in racially-homogeneous groups. The third study used hypothetical group settings to explore how racially-diverse and all-White group compositions shape perceived social complexity, gender salience, and salience of tolerance norms.

Study 1

In the first study we examined differences in men's and women's behavior in racially homogeneous and diverse groups in the setting of a mock trial. Using a mock-jury dataset first analyzed by Sommers (2006), we examined group members' speaking time as a measure of behavioral dominance, and other group members' ratings of persuasiveness as a measure of influence.

Method

Participants

A total of 168 participants (87 White females, 53 White males, 15 Black females, 13 Black males) were recruited from individuals called for jury duty in Southeastern Michigan, with the cooperation of local judge and jury-pool administrators, or through newspaper advertisements in the same area. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 78, $M = 39.96$ years ($SD = 15.37$), and were reimbursed $10 per hour for their time.

Procedure

Participants were assigned to groups of six people, randomly selected allowing for the constraints of racial composition. Half the groups had six White members, while the other half included four White members and two Black members. Gender composition of groups was matched across conditions. These groups formed mock juries and watched a video trial summary about a case of sexual assault with a White female victim and a Black male defendant before proceeding to deliberate about the case while seated around a rectangular table so all jury members could see each other. Deliberation sessions were videotaped and ended either when the jury had come to a unanimous verdict or after 60 min. Trained research assistants later created transcripts of the deliberation sessions and calculated how much time, in seconds, each person spoke. In addition to this behavioral data, all participants completed a questionnaire after the deliberations providing, among other measures, their responses to the statement "Jury member X was persuasive" for each of their fellow jury members, on a scale of 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 9 *(strongly agree)* with a midpoint of 5 *(neutral)* (for more details, see Sommers, 2006). Because Black jury members were only present in the racially-diverse condition, analyses focused on White jury members in order to compare behavior across both all-White and racially-diverse mock juries.

Results and discussion

Speaking time

To examine the effects of group diversity on gender dynamics, we first examined the amount of time that each individual spent speaking. We utilized multi-level models to account for the presence of both group- and individual-level factors. Because participants were clustered into groups, scores could not be assumed to be completely independent of each other; therefore the group itself was included as a random-effect factor. We included gender (female or male) as an individual-level fixed factor, group racial composition (diverse or homogeneous) as a group-level fixed factor, and the interaction of the two terms in the model. The final model was a restricted maximum-likelihood mixed model. Degrees of freedom were approximated using the Satterthwaite method which resulted in non-integer values.

Neither gender nor group racial composition alone significantly impacted each participant's time spent speaking, $Fs < 1$, $ps > .33$. There was, however, a significant interaction, $F(1, 118.55) = 6.62$, $p = .011$ (See Fig. 1). Follow-up analyses showed that in all-White groups, the traditional gender difference was observed, with men ($M = 525.61$ s, $SD = 360.02$) speaking significantly more than women ($M = 375.08$ s, $SD = 324.38$), $F(1, 117.45) = 5.02$, $p = .027$. However, in diverse groups, there was no significant difference between average speaking time for White women ($M = 590.03$ s, $SD = 399.25$) and White men ($M = 490.40$ s, $SD = 243.21$), $F < 0.3$, $p > .5$, *n.s.* White women in diverse groups spoke significantly more than those in all-White groups, $F(1, 38.84) = 5.66$, $p = .022$, but White men showed no differences by group composition, $F < 0.3$, $p > .5$, *n.s.* White women spoke up more in racially-diverse groups than they did in racially-homogenous groups, while men stayed relatively constant.

In a separate analysis looking only at members of the diverse groups, speaking time for White and Black women and men were