Examining Perceptions of Black Women Managers and the Identity Politics That Drive Them

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Abstract

In light of previous related research that has demonstrated that men are seen as having significantly more in common with successful managers than women; also that Whites are seen as having significantly more in common with successful managers than Blacks, it is hypothesized that to neither be a man, nor White, could impact the characterizations of Black women. As opposed to the glass-ceiling phenomenon that has been observed for White women and men of color, women of color may very well face more of a brick wall when contending against stereotypes against both of these identities, which are salient in certain contexts. This research is a first attempt to gather information about the stereotype content of Black women managers. Results suggest that Black women managers are characterized differently than both their gender and race counterparts.

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In the fifty years since the feminist and civil rights movements in the United States, much progress has been made in increasing workplace diversity to reflect the increasingly multicultural demographic makeup of the population. Though diversity management research is thriving, there has not been much diversification of leadership in many organizations that are disproportionately composed of White men (Maume, 1999; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). There are myriad factors that contribute to the persistence of the glass ceiling that women and people of color continue to face (Maume, 1999), and the problem persists even when controlling for various human capital factors (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Intraindividual processes and perceptions that affect workplace outcomes are often overlooked by the business-case model approach to diversity management (Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Yet, one consistent and powerful psychological factor is the reliance on stereotypes that aid in decision-making (Mccauley & Stitt, 1978).

Scholars have long noted the gender stereotypes that prevent women from advancing in organizations (Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Schein, 1975). More recently, there has been research on the racial stereotypes that Black people and other people of color from advancing in organizations (Block, Aumann, & Chelin, 2012; Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005; Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & Adeyemi-Bello, 1998). Two of the identities of the leader prototype in the United States is to be white and male (Rosette et al., 2008). Taken together, it is not far-reaching to assume that to neither be a man, nor White, results in a serious disadvantage for women of color who do not fit the manager prototype. As opposed to the glass-ceiling phenomenon that has been observed for women and people of color, women of color may face more of a brick wall when contending against stereotypes against both of the salient identities of race and gender (Roberts, 1998).

Diversity management research in the United States has primarily followed an etic approach, with very little attention given to intersections of identity beyond race or gender (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Race-based and gender-based identity politics have made substantial strides in increasing opportunities in the workplace for people of color and women. However, very little research has been done on the stereotypes that exist at the intersection of one’s race and gender and its effect on organizational advancement for women, people of color, or women of color, namely Black women (Kennelly, 1999; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Intersectionality is an anti-essentialist identity-based politic, manifesting from the “interlocking systems of oppression” expressed in the Combahee River Collective Statement (1977), which explores the experiences of those with intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1991). While established in Black/feminist studies and law (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005), intersectionality has not been widely addressed in psychological or organizational studies (Cole, 2009; Holvino, 2008; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Of the few studies that have looked at intersectionality of race and gender in the workplace, much focus is on the experiences of those with intersecting identities (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), rather than how they are perceived. The purpose of the present research is to examine how people are perceived at the intersection of their race and gender.

This project aims to uncover the stereotype content of Black women managers and investigates how these specific stereotypes differ from that of White women managers, as well as from Black and White men managers, and the differences in stereotype content among managers when both race and gender are simultaneously considered. Once the content of the stereotypes are known, then will we be able to address how to respond to and mitigate the power of these stereotypes in the workplace.

*Social Perception at Work*

Due to the patriarchal society in which we live and work, there exists a “people = male” hypothesis such that non-gender-specific terminology results in the assumption that, generally speaking, people are male (Merritt & Kok, 1995). It is arguable that this phenomenon occurs more frequently when the term in question has historically been applied to one group of people, i.e. managers being men. Similarly, because of the racial construction of our world, in which being White is seen as “normal,” the resulting notion is that people, in general, are White; and even more so, that leader = White (Rosette et al., 2008). Exploring another salient identity may very well further exacerbate these assumptions. For instance, when exploring women managers, by and large, the assumption is often made that those women are White. Likewise, when looking at the race of managers, it is arguable that the people = male hypothesis is also strengthened such that those black managers are assumed to be men. In essence, this rings true the adage that “all the women are White, [and] all the Blacks are men” (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982).

There is a substantial amount of research demonstrating that women and people of color experience differential organizational advancement in organizations than white men, encountering a glass ceiling in male- and white-typed occupations, whereas inversely, white men benefit from a sort of glass escalator in female-typed positions (Maume, 1999; Williams, 1995). One plausible explanation for this is based in the stereotype of what is deemed proper managerial material. It is a reinforcing stereotype that whites (men) are seen as having more in common with successful managers than people (men) of color (Block et al., 2012; Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005); also that (white) men are perceived to have significantly more in common with successful managers than (white) women (Heilman et al., 1995) such that white men are the disproportionately selected as managers.

White women’s exclusion from the workplace is not shared history with Black women who have traditionally worked outside of the home at a higher rate than white women (Crenshaw, 1989; Holvino, 2008; Jones, 2009). As a result, Black women are penalized on two counts: by taking on responsibilities and thus appearing less feminine, as well as failing to live up to the norms of womanhood. By assuming an “inappropriate” role for women – even if such characteristics are viewed as positive in men – Black women are deemed as less than women (Crenshaw, 1989; Higginbotham, 1982). Black women are also viewed as possessing all of the negative characteristics of white women, without any of their redeeming qualities (Giddings, 1984). Pointedly, white women were able to advance in equality with white men by transferring female-typed jobs onto poor women of color, such that female-typed jobs became raced and classed (Crenshaw, 1989).

*Stereotyping at Work*

There has been substantial research that investigates the role of stereotyping in organizations across gender lines (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995; Heilman et al., 1989; Schein, 1975); and across racial lines (Block et al., 2012; Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005; Tomkiewicz et al., 1998), as well as other singular identities. Following the logic that people = male = White, this research has demonstrated that not only are men seen as having significantly more in common with successful managers than women (Duehr & Bono, 2006; Heilman et al., 1995), but also that Whites are seen as having significantly more in common with successful managers than Black managers (Block et al., 2012; Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005).

Since stereotypes serve to help us simplify and categorize information, rarely are they treated with the complexity that intersectionality requires. Though we all hold intersectional stereotypes, few researchers have explored the stereotypes associated with multiple, simultaneous identities of Black women. The negative stereotypes of Black women as listed by the Combahee River Collective include mammy, matriarch, Sapphire, whore, and bulldagger (1977). Melissa Harris-Perry (2011) recounts these common misperceptions: jezebel (sexually promiscuous, transformed into to the welfare queen stereotype), mammy (asexual, unattractive, happy to care for white families), sapphire (angry, emasculating and domineering), and reiterates a fourth stereotype created and reinforced by Black women themselves: the strong Black woman. Black women managers are seen as strong, self-sufficient, and care taking (Holvino, 2008; Bell and Nkomo, 2001). The perception of female-headed households as a result of sexual promiscuity is yet regarded as a central problem in the advancement of the Black community, further pathologizing the Black family and affecting career outcomes for Black women (Harris-Perry, 2011; Kennelly, 1999).

Stereotype threat, the burdened belief that one’s performance will confirm a negative stereotype about one’s group of reference, is research that has only been demonstrated among single axes of identity, mostly along race or gender and negative stereotypes about performance, which exists at work (Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Steele, 1997, 2010). At a book talk in 2010, Claude Steele was asked by an audience member about the effects of stereotype threat on Black women facing the negative stereotypes concerning two identities, e.g. Black women taking a math test. His position that “the first cut is the deepest” is antithetical to intersectional research that Black women experience either their race or their gender first, and anything else is secondary or less deep. Margaret Shih and colleagues (1999) studied the experience of Asian-American women and stereotype lift and threat on a mathematics test. Though, both racial and gender identities were explored, they were primed individually such that each participant was only primed on either their ethnic identity or gender identity, not on both at the same time. The simultaneous experience of two identities on a particular task, one associated with a positive stereotype and one associated with a negative stereotype can also be addressed through an intersectional lens.

The stereotype content model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) locates various groups of people on the axes of warmth and competence. On this plane, Black professionals are higher in warmth than businesswomen. Fiske’s model locates subtypes within a group, such as social status, age, and religious distinctions, but not gender (Fiske, 2012). For instance, where would a black woman professional locate herself, would she align herself with her race or her gender? With the stereotype content model, Black women may be perceived the same as or different from their racial and gender counterparts, or they could be perceived as the inverse; to be high or low on both warmth and competence.

*Intersectionality and Organizational Outcomes*

Over time, many scholars have gradually (and rightly) focused on the experiences of the targets of stereotypes while decreased attention is given to the perceivers. However, perceivers are the ones who ultimately shape these experiences; therefore, it is necessary to continue to examine perceptions, especially those who hold decision-making power in organizations. Up to this point, intersectionality theory has primarily focused on the experiences of individuals and groups of people with simultaneous and intersecting identities. Since the beginning of the Black feminist movement, intersectionality has been a source of community and power for those with multiple identities who have been subsumed in singular identity movements (Crenshaw, 1991). There has been very little attention given, however, to how people with multiple identities are perceived. When it comes to organizational outcomes, such as advancement and promotion or hiring and firing, perception on the part of decision-makers is key. In order to better understand the exclusion or inclusion of certain groups with multiple identities, it is necessary to look at how they are perceived on the basis of those identities.

Black men and white women do indeed have intersectional experiences on account of their multiple identities, but they rarely face intersectional disempowerment on account of their race and sex (Crenshaw, 1991). The narrow “top down” approach to how discrimination is defined lends itself to the “but for” analysis to examine the impact of race and sex discrimination, such that the system privileges individuals who are privileged “but for” their race or sex (Crenshaw, 1989). Similar to the glass ceiling analogy, Crenshaw (1989) describes a basement containing people who are disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, stacked on top of one another with those who are disadvantaged by multiple factors at the bottom, with the heads of those who are oppressed by only one factor brushing the ceiling, upon which is the floor that those without any disadvantage stand. Affirmative action and other programs and movements that aim to correct this system of inequality by allowing those who, “*but for*” the ceiling, would be on equal standing with the powers that be by crawling through a hatch that can only be reached by those who are already touching the ceiling due to their singularly burdened identity and privileged position in comparison to those at the bottom of the basement, who would have to align themselves with the more privileged groups in order to gain access to the opening in the ceiling.

Crenshaw (1989) advocates for a “bottom-up” approach to battling discrimination in the workplace, reasoning that all employees stand to gain more by collective action against hierarchy rather than by waging individual fights in order to protect one’s privilege within the system. She posits that Black women are best positioned to challenge discrimination due to intersectionality, though they are often isolated because those with some privilege in organizations, i.e. white women and Black men, are too busy vying for the few positions available to them (Crenshaw, 1989).

There are few management studies that attempt to address the intersectionality of race and gender in management attainment (Holvino, 2008). Intersectionality has yet to be fully utilized in the organizational discipline (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Of the few that have looked at this, the experiences of Black women and women of color, are yet subsumed within the larger categories of race or gender (see Maume, 1999). This cultural “whitewashing” of inequality characterized in women’s management and leadership research reinforces the white male standard of leadership (Holvino, 2008). Acker (2006) terms “inequality regimes” as the intersecting practices and processes that maintain and legitimize inequalities within organizations, be they by race, gender, or class. By increasing the visibility and reducing the legitimacy of inequality, it is hoped that such regimes can be dismantled.

As with previous studies on intersectionality and its effects on organizational outcomes, the primary focus for this research is on race and gender and the perception of black women, white women, black men, and white men managers. Having been examined in the humanities and gender studies, as well as the fields of law and politics, intersectionality has only begun to be explored in psychology (Cole, 2009; Sesko & Biernat, 2010), and even more recently in organizational and management studies (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Holvino, 2008). As intersectionality centers the experience of people who have existed at the margins for so long (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1984), the time is ripe for intersectional analyses to be applied fully to psychology and other social sciences where this theory can be used to understand how social identity categories simultaneously work to shape perception, and subsequently, experiences (Cole, 2009).

Hypotheses

H1: The perception of Black women managers will be significantly different from the perceptions of White women managers;

H2: The perception of Black women managers will be significantly different from the perceptions of Black men managers;

H3: The perception of Black women managers will be significantly different from the perceptions of White men managers.

Methods

*Participants and Design*

The sample consisted of 90 participants who were all graduate students enrolled in courses offered by a department of organization and leadership at a graduate school in the northeast. Sixty-three percent of the sample was employed, 27% of which were employed full-time. Twenty-four percent of the sample had managerial experience, ranging from 1-25 years. Thirty percent of the sample ranged in age from 18-24, 58% were between ages 25 and 34, and 10% were older than 35. Sixty-four percent of the participants were female, 35% male. Fifty-six percent of the sample identified as White, 20% Asian, 7% Black, 6% multiracial, 3% Latino, and 8% declined to respond.

Consistent with previous research on stereotype content, data was collapsed across demographics such as race, gender, age, and employment. Taking into account the reality that everyone possesses gender and racial stereotypes, whether or not they identify with the groups being assessed, this further supports the strength of the stereotypes (Block et al., 2011; Martin, 1987).

The experimental design treats race of the manager as a within-subjects factor (Black and White) while gender varied between subjects (Women or Men). Therefore, each participant responded to one of the following conditions: Black and White Women Managers (n=44), or Black and White Men Managers (n=46). Participants were randomly assigned to either gender condition and the order in which the race was presented in each condition was counterbalanced.

*Procedure*

The measurement instrument was administered via an online survey. Participants were offered extra credit for completing the survey. An introduction to the study was provided at the beginning of the survey. In accordance with the diagnostic ratio approach, participants were asked to indicate the percentage of the group in the presented condition they think typically possess each characteristic (Martell & DeSmet, 2001; Martin, 1987; Mccauley & Stitt, 1978). Each group condition was rated on all characteristics separately. Participants were asked to respond to each characteristic as quickly and accurately as possible, as in previous studies utilizing the diagnostic ratio approach (Block et al., 2011; (Heilman et al., 1989). They were also asked not to indicate their name anywhere on the survey to ensure anonymity. Demographic information was collected after the ratings were made, and the final page of the survey explained the purpose of the study and offered further reading and an opportunity to contact the researcher with any further questions.

*Measurement Instrument*

The diagnostic ratio approach is a Bayesian measure of stereotypes based on the idea that stereotypes are probabilistic distinctions of groups, such that social identity information serve as heuristics that a person is likely to possess certain characteristics (McCauley, Stitt, & Segal, 1980; Mccauley & Stitt, 1978). According to this approach, if a characteristic is perceived to be more probable in one group compared to another group, the characteristic is said to be indicative of the stereotype content of that particular group (Block et al., 2012). The diagnostic ratio approach has been advocated in stereotype-related research in social and organizational psychology as more effective at assessing stereotypes than lykert-type scales (McCauley & Stitt, 1978; McCauley et al., 1980; Martin, 1987; Martell & DeSmet, 2001) because it is sensitive to the idea that stereotypes are not universal, but rather based on a probabilistic view of stereotypes. Though the diagnostic approach has been utilized to gather information about the stereotype content of singular identities (Block et al., 2012; Heilman et al., 1989; Martel & DeSmet, 2001), this research employs this method to explore intersections of identity by making both race and gender explicit in each group condition. In order to determine if there exists both a racial and gendered stereotype of managers, it is necessary to examine if being a member of two identity groups influences the likelihood that a characteristic would be seen as more probable for Black women managers versus White women managers and men managers of both races.

For example, the diagnostic ratio of a managerial characteristic such as firm, is determined by dividing the estimated percentage of Black women managers who possess this attribute by the estimated percentage of White women managers who possess this attribute, such that:

dr (firm) = p(firm | Black women managers)

p(firm | White women managers)

A diagnostic ratio significantly different from 1 indicates that there are racial differences in the perceived probability of managers, with a ratio less than 1 being more characteristic of White women managers and a ratio greater than 1 indicating that the characteristic is more diagnostic of Black women managers (Block et al., 2012).

Race-related and gender-related managerial characteristics were derived from research focused on the stereotypes of men and women (Heilman et al., 1989; Schein, 1975), as well as black and white managers (Block, et al., 2012). In addition to these established stereotypes, specific characteristics gathered from literature specifically on Black women and studies exploring stereotypes of Black women (Scott et al., 1982; Crenshaw, 1989; Maume, 1999; Harris-Perry, 2011) were added to determine their applicability to managerial roles and in an attempt to uncover the stereotype of black women. The instrument contained 56 characteristics listed in randomized order. Each form of the instrument contained identical instruction, except for the information about the group condition.

Results

Modeled after Block et al. (2012), diagnostic ratios were calculated by dividing the percentages within subjects given for Black women as compared to White women, and for Black men as compared to White men. Diagnostic ratios were then calculated between subjects (as discussed in McCauley & Stitt, 1978) to compare within race for Black women and Black men, as well as White women and White men. Finally, to examine differences at the intersection of race and gender, diagnostic ratios were analyzed between subjects: White women to Black men, and Black women to White men. The diagnostic ratios were centered zero by way of a transformation (Martin, 1987; Martell & Desmet, 2001; Block et al., 2011) and analyzed, such that a transformed diagnostic ratio differing significantly from zero indicates that the characteristic is diagnostic of the stereotype content for managers by their race and/or gender. Significance was tested using one-sample t-tests (McCauley & Stitt, 1978, McCauley et al., 1980; Martin, 1987) and transformed diagnostic ratios greater than 0.0 are diagnostic of the top group condition, and transformed diagnostic ratios less than 0.0 are diagnostic of the bottom group condition, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 presents all of the diagnostic ratios for each condition. Tables 2 and 3 present the 16 various characteristics with significant diagnostic ratios within gender for Black women and White women (Table 2) and for Black men and Black men (Table 3).

*Black women managers compared to White women managers* are perceived to speak loudly (dr = .96, p<.001), to be self-controlled (dr = .66, p<.05), unmotivated (dr = .55, p<.01), straightforward (dr = .54, p<.01), community-oriented (dr=.47, p<.01), the head of household (dr=.37, p<.05), strong-willed (dr =.35, p<.01), talkative (dr = .30, p<.001), assertive (dr = .23, p<.01), and firm (dr =.13, p<.01); while White women managers compared to Black women managers are seen as skilled in business matters (dr = -.11, p<.05), creative (-.16, p<.05), career-oriented (dr = -.24, p<.001), organized (dr = -.31, p<.01), naïve (dr = -.47, p<.01), and manipulative (dr=-.66, p<.01).

*Black men managers compared to White men managers* are perceived as community-oriented (dr = .84, p<.001), bitter (dr = .60, p<.05), aware of others feelings (dr = .53, p<.05), angry (dr = .50, p<.05), to speak loudly (dr = .39, p<.001), and to be talkative (dr = .30, p<.001); whereas White men managers compared to Black men managers are seen as self-controlled (dr = -.18, p<.05), ambitious (dr. = -.21, p<.01), career-oriented (dr = -.23, p<.01), organized (dr = -.23, p<.01), logical (dr = -.25, p<.001), practical (dr = -.25, p<.01), deceitful (dr = -.32, p<.05), manipulative (dr = -.33, p<.05), and they are perceived to desire responsibility (dr = -.39, p<.001).

Tables 4 and 5 present the within race, between-subject characteristics with significant diagnostic ratios for Black women and Black men managers (Table 4); as well as for White women and White men managers (Table 5).

*Black women managers compared to Black men managers* are perceived to be community-oriented (dr = .45, p<.05), high in moral character (dr = .28, p<.01), honest (dr = .26, p<.05), talkative (dr = .21, p<.01), and strong-willed (dr = .15, p<.05); while Black men managers compared to Black women managers are seen as unmotivated (dr = -.61, p<.05) and egotistical (dr = -.99, p<.001).

*White women managers compared to White men managers* are perceived to be aware of others’ feelings (dr =.82, p<.001), community-oriented (dr = .64, p<.01), creative (dr = .39, p<.01), and organized (dr = .23, p<.001). White men managers compared to white women managers are seen as decisive (dr = -.19, p<.05), logical (dr = -.23, p<.001), to speak loudly (dr = -.42, p<.05), to be egotistical (dr = -.62, p<.05), unmotivated (dr = -.63, p<.05), the head of household (dr = -.68, p<.001), and poorly-groomed (dr = -.78, p<.05).

Tables 6 and 7 present the significant between-subject, between race and between gender intersectional diagnostic ratios for White women and Black men managers (Table 6), and Black women and White men managers (Table 7).

*White women managers compared to Black men managers* are perceived as irrational (dr = .62, p<.05), manipulative (dr = .50, p<.01), organized (dr = .47, p<.001), aware of others’ feelings (dr = .35, p<.01), curious (dr = .29, p<.05), ambitious (dr = .16, p<.05), and career-oriented (dr = .14, p<.05). Compared to white women managers, Black men managers are seen as strong-willed (dr = -.15, p<.05), straightforward (dr = -.35, p<.01), the head of household (dr = -.57, p<.001), angry (dr = -.58, p<.05), poorly-groomed (dr = -.70, p<.05), egotistical (dr = -.73, p<.001), loud speakers (dr = -.79, p<.001), and unmotivated (dr = -1.06, p<.001).

*Black women managers compared to White men managers* are seen as community-oriented (dr = 1.06, p<.001), aware of others’ feelings (dr = .69, p<.01), loud speakers (dr = .49, p<.01), talkative (dr = .45, p<.001), loyal (dr = .41, p<.05), sociable (dr = .22, p<.05), high in moral character (dr = .20, p<.01), straightforward (dr = .20, p<.05), and strong-willed (dr = .15, p<.01). Comparatively, White men managers are perceived to be decisive (dr = -.15, p<.05), practical (dr = -.21, p<.05), ambitious (dr = -.21, p<.05), the head of household (dr = -.31, p<.05), to desire responsibility (dr = -.34, p<.001), to be logical (dr = -.35, p<.01), self-controlled (dr = -.37, p<.01), career-oriented (dr = -.38, p<.001), manipulative (dr = -.53, p<.05), and egotistical (dr = -.82, p<.01).

Discussion

It is apparent that the stereotype content of Black women managers differs significantly from White women managers, Black men managers, and White men managers, in support of the hypotheses. It is important to note that there are characteristics among all of the groups where no significant differences were found, and that there existed more differentiation between races than gender and less within race; and even more so between Black women managers and White men managers than between White women managers and Black men managers. Many of the results were surprising based on common stereotypes of Black women being angry or bitter that were not found to be significantly characteristic of Black women managers, yet they were found to be characteristic of Black men managers. Further research should explore whether or not the title of manager mitigates the stereotype for Black women.

Black women managers confirm the Strong Black Woman narrative (Harris-Perry, 2011) by being perceived as significantly more firm and assertive than White women managers, seen as more straightforward than White women and men managers, and as more strong-willed than White women managers and Black and White men managers. Black women managers were also seen as being significantly more likely to be the head of household than White women managers, but not compared to men managers of both races, with White men managers perceived to be the head of household significantly more so than Black women managers.

Another characteristic that Black women managers shared with men managers, but differed with respect to White women managers is that of speaks loudly, where as White men managers are perceived to speak more loudly than White women managers, and Black women and men managers were perceived to speak more loudly than White men managers. Scholars discuss the reality that voices that are often silenced feel the need to be forceful in order to be heard (Harris-Perry, 2011). Similarly, both Black women and men managers were seen as more talkative than White managers, yet Black women managers were seen as more talkative than Black men managers. Black women managers were also seen as more sociable than White men managers.

Black women managers were also seen as more naïve, unmotivated, and unmannerly compared to White women managers. However, they were seen as honest, loyal, and possessing high moral character in comparison to Black and White men managers. Additionally, Black women were perceived as more community-oriented than White women managers, as well as Black and White men managers.

Having further established the stereotype content of Black women managers, we can depart from examining the differences between Black and white women, and explore the diversity among Black women (Holvino, 2008). Intersectionality links contemporary politics to postmodern theory, disrupting the tendency to see categories as mutually exclusive (Crenshaw, 1991). Presently, intersectionality can apply to the intersection of several identities, regardless of oppression and privilege. Though it has often been used to highlight the experiences of the multiply oppressed, intersectionality theory can also be used to understand interlocking systems of privilege (Cole, 2009). And often times, when identity politics do not succeed, it is not because of the social construction of categories that were assumed to be natural, but because the politics were based on the experiences of those with the privilege within these categories (Crenshaw, 1991). One obvious limitation of this research is also an agenda for future research to explore the experiences of others with differing intersection identities, other women of color not withstanding (Holvino, 2008).

There are cases of Black women becoming executives and CEOs of major companies where they are not only the first Black person, but also the first woman to hold these positions. Further research should investigate the politics behind these “doubly desirable tokens” (Combahee River Collective, 1977) as the powers that be could be trying to make up for multiple practices of exclusion in one fell swoop embodied in one person. Or as this research explores, it could be that Black women are perceived to have varied leadership characteristics from Black men and white women. The truth remains, however, that when and where the Black women enters, everyone else enters with her (Giddings, 1984).

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Table 1: Means of transformed diagnostic ratios

| Characteristic item | Black women  White women | Black men  White men | Black women  Black men | White women White men | White women  Black  men | Black women  White men |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Logical | -.06 | -.25\*\*\* | -.07 | -.23\*\*\* | .01 | -.35\*\* |
| Talkative | .30\*\*\* | .30\*\*\* | .21\*\* | .15 | -.11 | .45\*\*\* |
| Stubborn | .14 | .02 | -.09 | -.20 | -.24 | -.04 |
| Desire Responsibility | -.21 | -.39\*\*\* | .04 | -.18 | .23 | -.34\*\*\* |
| Sociable | .06 | .25 | .02 | .15 | -.07 | .22\* |
| Skilled in business matters | -.11\* | -.12 | -.08 | -.06 | .05 | -.18 |
| Objective | .13 | -.04 | -.07 | -.30 | -.21 | -.13 |
| Respectful | -.19 | .13 | -.04 | .16 | .07 | .03 |
| Naïve | -.47\*\* | .03 | -.04 | .34 | .45 | -.07 |
| Self-reliant | .10 | .03 | .09 | .00 | -.04 | .07 |
| Poorly-groomed | .39 | -.19 | -.32 | -.78\* | -.70\* | -.40 |
| Irrational | -.13 | -.07 | .17 | .46 | .62\* | .05 |
| Industrious | -.08 | .02 | -.10 | -.07 | -.05 | -.13 |
| Career-oriented | -.24\*\*\* | -.23\*\* | -.12 | -.09 | .14\* | -.38\*\*\* |
| Authoritative | .04 | -.10 | .02 | -.10 | -.00 | -.06 |
| Creative | -.16\* | .12 | .17 | .39\*\* | .28 | .23 |
| Practical | -.00 | -.25\*\* | .05 | -.18 | .06 | -.21\* |
| Ambitious | -.14 | -.21\*\* | .01 | -.06 | .16\* | -.21\* |
| Knows ways of the world | .03 | -.10 | .13 | -.06 | .03 | -.05 |
| Decisive | .09 | -.11 | -.01 | -.19\* | -.09 | -.15\* |
| Manipulative | -.66\*\* | -.33\* | -.27 | .14 | .50\*\* | -.53\* |
| Organized | -.31\*\* | -.23\*\* | .14 | .23\*\*\* | .47\*\*\* | -.07 |
| Vigorous | -.04 | -.05 | .05 | .00 | .04 | -.04 |
| Aware of others’ feelings | -.15 | .53\* | .32 | .82\*\*\* | .35\*\* | .69\*\* |
| Firm | .13\*\* | .06 | .05 | .01 | -.08 | .12 |
| Moody | -.09 | -.01 | .12 | .21 | .19 | .11 |
| Assertive | .23\*\* | -.17 | .14 | -.15 | -.06 | .01 |
| Curious | -.11 | -.04 | .20 | .18 | .29\* | .12 |
| Competent | -.07 | -.08 | .05 | .02 | .11 | -.05 |
| Loyal | .16 | .20 | .22 | .25 | .00 | .41\* |
| Deceitful | .17 | -.32\* | -.17 | -.41 | -.11 | -.42 |
| Consistent | -.12 | -.07 | .01 | .04 | .13 | -.06 |
| Speaks loudly | .96\*\*\* | .39\*\*\* | .11 | -.42\* | -.79\*\*\* | .49\*\* |
| Open-minded | -.09 | .18 | .04 | .18 | .07 | .12 |
| Persistent | -.02 | -.11 | .11 | -.01 | .09 | -.05 |
| Honest | .04 | .07 | .26\* | .10 | .10 | .14 |
| Argumentative | .27 | .17 | .02 | -.11 | -.22 | .14 |
| Unmannerly | .66\* | -.04 | -.04 | -.43 | -.51 | .04 |
| Strong-willed | .35\*\* | .03 | .15\* | -.14 | -.15\* | .15\*\* |
| Unmotivated | .55\*\* | .30 | -.61\* | -.63\* | -1.06\*\*\* | -.35 |
| Straightforward | .54\*\* | .10 | .13 | -.30 | -.35\*\* | .20\* |
| Well-informed | -.04 | -.15 | .04 | -.07 | .07 | -.14 |
| Critical | -16 | -.17 | -.13 | -.10 | .06 | -.30 |
| Self-controlled | -.17 | -.18\* | -.16 | -.22 | -.03 | -.37\*\* |
| Leadership ability | -.24 | -.18 | .02 | -.01 | .21 | -.24 |
| Egotistical | -.15 | .07 | -.99\*\*\* | -.62\* | -.73\*\*\* | -.82\*\* |
| Demanding | .19 | .00 | .06 | -.10 | -.11 | .07 |
| Angry | .40 | .50\* | -.21 | -.03 | -.58\* | .32 |
| Bitter | .33 | .60\* | -.28 | .25 | -.52 | .26 |
| Emasculating | .24 | -.02 | .05 | -.09 | -.13 | .15 |
| Domineering | .18 | -.03 | -.15 | -.35 | -.34 | -.13 |
| Resourceful | -.12 | -.06 | .08 | .11 | .20 | -.04 |
| Independent | -.06 | -.09 | -.03 | -.07 | .04 | -.13 |
| Community-oriented | .47\*\* | .84\*\*\* | .45\* | .64\*\* | -.06 | 1.06\*\*\* |
| Head of household | .37\* | -.06 | -.23 | -.68\*\*\* | -.57\*\*\* | -.31\* |
| High moral character | .14 | .02 | .28\*\* | .08 | .10 | .20\*\* |

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Black women/White women and Black men/White men ratios were analyzed within subjects, while the remaining ratios were analyzed between subjects.

Table 2: Selected diagnostic ratios for Black women and White women managers

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic Item** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | ***ES*** |
| 1. Speaks loudly | .96\*\*\* | 1.18 | .81 |
| 2. Self-controlled | .66\* | 2.01 | .33 |
| 3. Unmotivated | .55\*\* | 1.28 | .43 |
| 4. Straightforward | .54\*\* | 1.09 | .50 |
| 5. Community-oriented | .47\*\* | 1.02 | .46 |
| 6. Head of household | .37\* | .98 | .38 |
| 7. Strong-willed | .35\*\* | .72 | .49 |
| 8. Talkative | .30\*\*\* | .49 | .61 |
| 9. Assertive | .23\*\* | .47 | .49 |
| 10. Firm | .13\*\* | .31 | .42 |
| 11. Skilled in business matters | -.11\* | .36 | .31 |
| 12. Creative | -.16\* | .50 | .32 |
| 13. Career-oriented | -.24\*\*\* | .42 | .57 |
| 14. Organized | -.31\*\* | .56 | .55 |
| 15. Naïve | -.47\*\* | 1.03 | .46 |
| 16. Manipulative | -.66\*\* | 1.31 | .50 |

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Transformed diagnostic ratios greater than 0.0 are diagnostic of Black women managers; those less than 0.0 are diagnostic of White women managers.

Table 3. Selected diagnostic ratios for Black men and White men managers

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic Item** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | ***ES*** |
| 1. Community-oriented | .84\*\*\* | 1.38 | .61 |
| 2. Bitter | .60\* | 1.62 | .37 |
| 3. Aware of others’ feelings | .53\* | 1.41 | .38 |
| 4. Angry | .50\* | 1.41 | .35 |
| 5. Speaks loudly | .39\*\*\* | .70 | .56 |
| 6. Talkative | .30\*\*\* | .60 | .50 |
| 7. Self-controlled | -.18\* | .55 | .33 |
| 8. Ambitious | -.21\*\* | .46 | .46 |
| 9. Career-oriented | -.23\*\* | .48 | .48 |
| 10. Organized | -.23\*\* | .52 | .44 |
| 11. Logical | -.25\*\*\* | .49 | .51 |
| 13. Practical | -.25\*\* | .59 | .42 |
| 14. Deceitful | -.32\* | 1.00 | .32 |
| 15. Manipulative | -.33\* | .93 | .35 |
| 16. Desire Responsibility | -.39\*\*\* | .65 | .60 |

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Transformed diagnostic ratios greater than 0.0 are diagnostic of Black men managers; those less than 0.0 are diagnostic of White men managers.

Table 4. Selected diagnostic ratios for Black women and Black men managers

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic Item** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | ***ES*** |
| 1. Community-oriented | .45\* | 1.39 | .32 |
| 2. High moral character | .28\*\* | .63 | .44 |
| 3. Honest | .26\* | .81 | .32 |
| 4. Talkative | .21\*\* | .51 | .41 |
| 5. Strong-willed | .15\* | .40 | .38 |
| 6. Unmotivated | -.61\* | 1.99 | .31 |
| 7. Egotistical | -.99\*\*\* | 1.53 | .65 |

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Transformed diagnostic ratios greater than 0.0 are diagnostic of Black women managers; those less than 0.0 are diagnostic of Black men managers.

Table 5. Selected diagnostic ratios for White women and White men managers

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic Item** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | ***ES*** |
| 1. Aware of others’ feelings | .82\*\*\* | 1.50 | .55 |
| 2. Community-oriented | .64\*\* | 1.39 | .46 |
| 3. Creative | .39\*\* | .98 | .40 |
| 4. Organized | .23\*\*\* | .45 | .51 |
| 5. Decisive | -.19\* | .55 | .35 |
| 6. Logical | -.23\*\*\* | .43 | .53 |
| 7. Speaks loudly | -.42\* | 1.25 | .42 |
| 8. Egotistical | -.62\* | 1.61 | .39 |
| 9. Unmotivated | -.63\* | 1.93 | .33 |
| 10. Head of household | -.68\*\*\* | 1.04 | .65 |
| 11. Poorly-groomed | -.78\* | 2.14 | .36 |

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Transformed diagnostic ratios greater than 0.0 are diagnostic of White women managers; those less than 0.0 are diagnostic of White men managers.

Table 6. Selected diagnostic ratios for White women and Black men managers

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic Item** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | ***ES*** |
| 1. Irrational | .62\* | 2.06 | .30 |
| 2. Manipulative | .50\*\* | 1.09 | .46 |
| 3. Organized | .47\*\*\* | .63 | .75 |
| 4. Aware of others’ feelings | .35\*\* | .88 | .40 |
| 5. Curious | .29\* | .95 | .31 |
| 6. Ambitious | .16\* | .48 | .33 |
| 7. Career-oriented | .14\* | .46 | .30 |
| 8. Strong-willed | -.15\* | .49 | .31 |
| 9. Straightforward | -.35\*\* | .73 | .48 |
| 10. Head of household | -.57\*\*\* | .89 | .64 |
| 11. Angry | -.58\* | 1.66 | .35 |
| 12. Poorly-groomed | -.70\* | 2.24 | .31 |
| 13. Egotistical | -.73\*\*\* | 1.29 | .57 |
| 14. Speaks loudly | -.79\*\*\* | 1.04 | .76 |
| 15. Unmotivated | -1.06\*\*\* | 2.06 | .51 |

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Transformed diagnostic ratios greater than 0.0 are diagnostic of White women managers; those less than 0.0 are diagnostic of Black men managers.

Table 7. Selected diagnostic ratios for Black women and White men managers

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic Item** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | ***ES*** |
| 1. Community-oriented | 1.06\*\*\* | 1.33 | .80 |
| 2. Aware of others’ feelings | .69\*\* | 1.48 | .47 |
| 3. Speaks loudly | .49\*\* | .97 | .51 |
| 4. Talkative | .45\*\*\* | .62 | .73 |
| 5. Loyal | .41\* | 1.20 | .34 |
| 6. Sociable | .22\* | .65 | .34 |
| 7. High moral character | .20\*\* | .49 | .41 |
| 8. Straightforward | .20\* | .52 | .38 |
| 9. Strong-willed | .15\*\* | .34 | .44 |
| 10. Decisive | -.15\* | .47 | .32 |
| 11. Practical | -.21\* | .58 | .36 |
| 12. Ambitious | -.21\* | .59 | .36 |
| 13. Head of household | -.31\* | .81 | .38 |
| 14. Desire Responsibility | -.34\*\*\* | .60 | .57 |
| 15. Logical | -.35\*\* | .75 | .47 |
| 16. Self-controlled | -.37\*\* | .92 | .40 |
| 17. Career-oriented | -.38\*\*\* | .73 | .52 |
| 18. Manipulative | -.53\* | 1.63 | .33 |
| 19. Egotistical | -.82\*\* | 1.70 | .48 |

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Note: Transformed diagnostic ratios greater than 0.0 are diagnostic of Black women managers; those less than 0.0 are diagnostic of White men managers.

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