Same Behavior, Different Expectations, Different Outcomes: Predicting Intersectional Employees' Networks, Salary, and Performance Ratings

Meredith L. Woehler
Purdue University, mwoehler@purdue.edu

Courtney Hart
University of Texas at Arlington, courtney.hart@uta.edu

Julia Stevenson-Street
Purdue University, steve243@purdue.edu

Rebecca Ponce de Leon
Duke University, rmp31@dule.edu

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Abstract

Among the explanations for racial and gender disparities in employee outcomes is the long-standing concern that employees of color and women neither develop nor benefit from professional networks as white men do (Combs, 2003; Ibarra, 1993; McDonald et al., 2009). Research on networks and the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) has converged on the notion that people are more willing to develop relationships with and provide resources to 'loveable stars' – employees who are perceived as being both warm and competent (Casciario & Lobo, 2008, 2008; Cuddy et al., 2007). However, this strategy overlooks the fact that communicating with warmth and competence may be undermined by racial and gender stereotypes that suggest neither Black, Hispanic, nor White men or women are expected to be high in both warmth and competence (Cuddy et al., 2011). Drawing on SCM and Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT; Bettencourt et al., 1997; Jussim et al., 1987), we theorize that stereotype-based expectations of an employees' warmth and competence determine whether communicating with (i) more warmth and less competence or (ii) more competence and less warmth enables employees to develop more beneficial networks (i.e., larger networks, more well-connected contacts, and more high-ranking contacts).

Specifically, negative stereotype-based expectations are that Black employees and White men are lower in warmth, whereas Hispanic employees and White women are lower in competence. EVT suggests that coworkers have extremely positive reactions to employees who violate these negative stereotypes. Therefore, in line with EVT, we posit that coworkers will be more willing to connect with employees who engage in *positive expectancy-**violating** communications* – Black men and women and White men communicating more warmth;

Hispanic men and women and White women communicating more competence –leading to larger networks, and more well-connected, higher-ranking contacts. Additionally, we predict that these three types of network growth (hereafter called 'network growth' for simplicity) will positively relate to employee salary and supervisor-rated performance.

Extending EVT, we theorize that *positive expectancy-**confirming** communications* – communications confirming stereotype-based expectations of Hispanic employees' and White women's higher warmth or Black employees' and White men's higher competence – remind coworkers of this positive stereotype, which coworkers are likely to accept as accurate. However, in accepting this positive stereotype, coworkers simultaneously accept negative group stereotypes (Kay et al., 2013). Thus, employees' positive expectancy-confirming communications prime coworkers to apply both positive and negative stereotypes, making coworkers less willing to connect with them, thus limiting their network growth. Ultimately, we predict that this limitation of network growth will negatively impact employee annual salary and supervisor-rated performance.

Lastly, we hypothesize that expectancy-confirming communications impact the relationships between positive expectancy-violating communications and network growth. Specifically, expectancy-confirming communications prompt coworkers to expect behavior consistent with one's positive and negative stereotypes in the future, diminishing coworkers extremely favorable reactions to current positive expectancy-violations.

To test our predictions, we first plan to sample American adults from Prolific and utilize the Princeton Trilogy method (Devine & Elliot, 1995; Katz & Braly, 1933) to validate the previously discussed competence and warmth stereotypes for six intersectional groups: Black, Hispanic, and White men and women in a professional setting. Next, we employ a (previously

collected) multi-source study, incorporating over 10 million email communications amongst over 1,000 professionals in an international organization over 10 months. We use a custom LIWC dictionary developed by Dupree and Fiske (2019) to identify the extent to which communicating with warmth and competence enables the network growth of these six intersectional groups – and, in turn, increase their salary and supervisor-rated performance.

This research contributes to our knowledge of the ways in which race- and gender-based expectations can subtly, yet pervasively, impact employees in organizations. Specifically, our initial findings suggest email communications can be charged with race- and gender-based expectations that have far-reaching consequences for both network growth and ultimate career success. Thus, illuminating these race- and gender-based differences is crucial in order to give employees a clearer path to drive changes in their networks and workplace benefits. Our findings regarding how communications of warmth and competence enable employees in six intersectional categories to change their networks, and which network characteristics benefit salary and performance ratings for employees in these intersectional categories are actionable for employees, managers, and organizations. The differential reception of warmth and competence communications constitutes a subtle, yet detrimental form of interpersonal discrimination (Avery et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2017), presenting organizational leaders with a variety of policy interventions to address biased reactions, rooted in racist and sexist stereotype-based expectations (Roberson et al., 2020).