

Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

One size may not fit all: Exploring the intersection of race and gender and effective role models in STEM companies

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Recommended Citation

Pietri, E.S., Johnson, I.R., and Ozgamus, E. (2016). *One size may not fit all: Exploring the intersection of race and gender and effective role models in STEM companies*. Paper presented at Closing the Gender Gap: Advancing Leadership and Organizations. DOI: 10.5703/1288284316065

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Black women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Consequently, developing efficacious techniques to attract Black women to STEM companies is critical. Featuring positive role models on science companies' websites may be one way to recruit Black women; yet, little research has explored whether the race and/or gender of a role model is most critical for Black women. In two experiments we explore who acts as an effective and identity-safe role model for Black women at a fictitious science and technology company. Experiment 1 found Black women predicted they would feel more trust and belonging at a STEM company with a website featuring a Black woman or Black man scientist compared to a White woman scientist or no scientist. In experiment 2, we found relative to viewing no scientist, Black women predicted they would feel more trust and belonging when a STEM company highlighted a Black woman scientist, or White woman scientist who expressed allyship with Black women (i.e., stating Black women bring important perspectives to science). Interestingly, across both experiments we found stigma consciousness (i.e., sensitivity to the possibility of experiencing discrimination) moderated these results, and had important implications for Black women's reported feelings of trust and belonging. Practical implications for recruiting Black women at STEM companies are discussed.