

Communicating More Than Diversity: The Effect of Institutional Diversity Statements on Expectations and Performance as a Function of Race and Gender

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The present studies examined whether colorblind diversity messages, relative to multicultural diversity messages, serve as an identity threat that undermines performance-related outcomes for individuals at the intersections of race and gender. We exposed racial/ethnic majority and minority women and men to either a colorblind or multicultural diversity statement and then measured their expectations about overall diversity, anticipated bias, and group task performance (Study 1, $N = 211$), as well as their expectations about distinct race and gender diversity and their actual performance on a math test (Study 2, $N = 328$). Participants expected more bias (Study 1) and less race and gender diversity (Study 2) after exposure to a colorblind versus a multicultural message. However, the colorblind message was particularly damaging for women of color, prompting them to expect the least diversity overall and to perform worse (Study 1), as well as to actually perform worse on a math test (Study 2) than the multicultural message. White women demonstrated the opposite pattern, performing better on the math test in the colorblind versus the multicultural condition, whereas racial minority and majority men's performances were not affected by different messages about diversity. We discuss the importance of examining psychological processes that underscore performance-related outcomes at the junction of race and gender.

Keywords: colorblind, multicultural, diversity, women of color

Over the past few decades, racial/ethnic minorities and women have made slow strides toward equal representation and parity in the U.S. workplace (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009, 2010). In the workplace specifically, there is significant field and experimental evidence to document the existence of both racial and gender prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Catalyst, 2012; Deitch et al., 2003; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Greenwald, 2011; Pager & Shepard, 2008; U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). These barriers persist even as women enter U.S. colleges and universities in equal or even greater numbers on average than their male peers (Lewin, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), suggesting that equal gender representation and achievement in colleges and universities is not enough to redress women's (or racial minorities') prospects in the workplace. In fact, a recent audit study of more than 6,500 professors at nearly 90 U.S.

universities found that professors ignored requests to discuss research ideas when they came from racial minorities and women more frequently than when they came from White men (Milkman, Akinola, & Chugh, 2014). This work demonstrates that racial and gender biases are healthy and alive in academia and underscores the importance of examining the challenges associated with attempting to enter academia or the workplace.

To combat the underrepresentation and undervaluation of people of color and women, institutions often articulate their organizational commitments to diversity and inclusion through *diversity statements*, and researchers have examined the ways in which such statements shape the diversity climate and impact the experiences and outcomes of racial minorities (e.g., Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Plaut, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008). However, research has yet to examine how the messages about diversity that are commonly communicated at universities and workplaces shape undergraduates' expectations about their ability to enter or excel in college and beyond. Certain types of diversity messages may cause underrepresented group members to experience vulnerabilities or to expect fewer opportunities, which may curtail their abilities to thrive in academic or workplace contexts (e.g., restrain their successful entrance into challenging fields, accomplishment of important career goals, or ability to hold leadership positions). Also, although women of color may be included in research on diversity statements (or race or gender more broadly) as part of the minority sample, their specific expe-

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periences are not often systematically examined (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). This is surprising because women of color possess two stigmatized identities (i.e., race and gender) and women are included among the sociodemographic groups that most diversity programs seek to include. We also know of no research investigating how White women experience diversity messages. In the present research, we sought to fill these empirical gaps by systematically examining how diversity messages impact the expectations and performance of individuals at the intersections of racial majority/minority status and gender groups.

Diversity Messages as Identity Threats

In the workplace and in educational institutions, many organizations have responded to increasing gender and racial/ethnic diversity by reinvigorating their commitment to improving the representation and retention of historically underrepresented individuals (including both racial minorities and women). Two common models of diversity management have arisen: multiculturalism and colorblindness. *Multiculturalism* is primarily rooted in the idea of valuing diversity, and as such it recognizes, emphasizes, and values group differences, and underscores racial and cultural inclusion (Markus, Steele, & Steele, 2000; Plaut, 2002; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). Proponents of multiculturalism assert that such an ideology leads to more positive and secure ethnic identities for minorities (Verkuyten, 2005); critics assert that such ideologies reify race and social identity, leading to fault lines (e.g., Brewer, 1997) and to minorities being valued solely or primarily by virtue of their minority status (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

In contrast, *colorblindness* is mainly based on the theory of assimilation, and as such it minimizes the existence and significance of race by stressing commonalities among individuals and promotes racial and cultural assimilation (Markus et al., 2000; Plaut, 2002; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko et al., 2000). Proponents of colorblindness assert that such an ideology downplays group differences by focusing on individuals, whereas critics note that such an ideological approach underplays the significant challenges associated with minority group identity (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2006). It is important to note that, although their overarching philosophies underscore group differences and group similarities, respectively, multicultural and colorblind approaches are not mutually exclusive (Plaut, 2010). At their core, both colorblind and multicultural approaches attempt to reduce discrimination and increase diversity, but they attempt to do so by adopting distinct ideological perspectives (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

Colorblind philosophies are more common than multicultural messages in the United States today (Plaut, 2010).¹ However, despite their well-intended aims, research has shown that colorblind messages, relative to multicultural messages, are harmful to racial minorities by undermining their engagement (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), ethnic identification and evaluations of in-group members (Verkuyten, 2005), and even cognitive performance (Holoien & Shelton, 2012). Moreover, for Whites, colorblind messages are associated with greater implicit and explicit racial bias (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), negative affect (Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009), and in-group identification and negative out-group evaluations

(Verkuyten, 2005). In addition, colorblind messages lead to race avoidance (i.e., not using race when it may be relevant to describe a person; Norton, Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura, & Ariely, 2006) among Whites as well as less detection and effective reporting of racial discrimination (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, & Ambady, 2010). To our knowledge, research has yet to examine the specific effects of colorblind or multicultural diversity statements on either women in general or women of color in particular, even though women are often identified as one of the disadvantaged groups that diversity policies seek to include.

Expectations of Diversity, Bias, and Performance

We suggest that diversity messages should affect the diversity expectations, anticipated bias, performance expectations, and actual performance of racial minority individuals. However, we were unsure whether this effect would be moderated by participant gender. On the one hand, one could expect that racial minorities would experience identity threat after exposure to a colorblind message. In this case, racial minorities would expect less diversity but more bias, and would also expect to perform worse after exposure to a colorblind (vs. multicultural) message regardless of their gender. Prior research has found that colorblind diversity messages operate as identity threats for racial minorities, supporting this idea. However, it is unclear whether the colorblind message itself is sufficient, or whether an additional identity cue is also needed to induce identity threat. For example, colorblind messages have been shown to lead African Americans to feel less trust and comfort in and make more attributions to discrimination regarding a fictitious corporation that ostensibly endorsed the colorblind beliefs, but only when coupled with low minority representation (i.e., less racial diversity; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). In a real-world setting, Whites' endorsement of colorblindness was also associated with increased perceptions of bias and decreased psychological engagement among racial minorities who worked at the same company, but racial minorities were also underrepresented (comprising approximately 21% of the company) relative to Whites (Plaut et al., 2009). Colorblind messages have also

¹ We collected the diversity statements from the Websites of a representative sample of 108 U.S. colleges and universities (57 private, 51 public) and coded the content of those messages to confirm that colorblindness does in fact exist at the university level. The universities were randomly selected from among the *U.S. News and World Report's* 2010 Top List of Colleges and Universities, and they were geographically distributed across the Northeast (43), the South (19), the Midwest (22), and the West (24). An independent rater unfamiliar with the current studies coded the diversity statement of each college as being either colorblind, multicultural, both, or neither. A statement was coded as colorblind if it emphasized the sameness of people, that racial categories should be ignored or avoided, and that differences based on social identity should be assimilated into an overarching unifying category. A statement was coded as multicultural if it explicitly acknowledged differences among groups and promoted the notion that differences associated with social identities should be valued and even celebrated. Of these colleges, 27 (25%) espoused a colorblind message, 78 (72%) a multicultural message, two (2%) both messages, and one (1%) neither a colorblind nor a multicultural message. Based on this representative sample of diversity messages, multicultural ideologies may be more common than colorblind messages in U.S. colleges and universities today, but colorblind messages are advocated by a sizable minority (a quarter of the universities sampled), posing a real threat to women of color.

been shown to depress the cognitive performance of both African Americans and Asians via increased levels of prejudice among White interaction partners (Holoien & Shelton, 2012). In these examples, minorities' reactions to colorblindness were a function of an additional cue (e.g., representation, prejudice).

If an additional cue is necessary to induce identity threat among minorities, women of color, but not men of color, may experience identity threats after exposure to a colorblind message. In this case, the additional stigmatized gender identity that women of color possess may act as the additional "cue" to incite an identity-threatening expectation, particularly when messages about diversity make both their race and gender salient (as is often the case in organizational diversity statements). In support of this notion, recent research exploring social perception at the intersection of race and gender categories suggests that race and gender are confounded (Johnson, Freeman, & Pauker, 2012) and interrelated (Galinsky, Hall, & Cuddy, 2013). Other work finds evidence of a combined race/gender identity for both Black women (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Settles, 2006) and Asian women (Woollett et al., 1995) in identity-threatening situations (e.g., expecting to experience bias). Taken together, these findings suggest that women of color could experience unique identity threats because of their dually stigmatized race and gender identities, and that they may be particularly sensitive to messages about diversity that implicate both race and gender. This research also highlights the importance of examining gender and race in unison and from the perspective of those who are uniquely stigmatized.

Thus, we compared four demographic groups (i.e., White women, women of color, White men, and men of color) to examine how diversity messages may affect the diversity expectations, anticipated bias, performance expectations, and actual performance of these groups. We examined racial and ethnic minority (i.e., non-White) versus majority (i.e., White) status, as opposed to race and ethnicity per se, because the workplace representation and college enrollment of all non-White racial and ethnic groups (including Asians) continues to lag behind those of Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Also, Asians' beliefs about diversity are often more similar to those of other racial minorities (e.g., Blacks and Latinos), as opposed to Whites (e.g., Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 1997; Binning & Unzueta, 2013; Unzueta & Binning, 2010, 2012). This approach enabled us to examine for the first time whether (a) the identity threat experienced by racial minorities varies according to gender, and (b) White women, who possess a stigmatized gender but not racial identity, experience an identity threat as a result of such messages.

Colorblind diversity messages emphasize assimilation to an implied White and male norm, so individuals—but perhaps particularly those from underrepresented groups—may not expect high levels of diversity in those contexts relative to contexts that express more multicultural philosophies. Expectations of gender diversity in an academic setting may also vary by diversity statement ideology even though women are well represented among the student body of most U.S. colleges and universities overall (Lewin, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This is because colorblind statements, relative to multicultural statements, place less value on diversity, so they may be viewed as less welcoming to, and thus less populated with, low-status groups.

Study Overview

The present studies examined whether colorblind messages, relative to multicultural messages, serve as an identity threat (i.e., a cue that an individual may use to infer or expect a vulnerability or decreased opportunity in a given context) that undermines the performance expectations and actual performance of racial/ethnic minorities and women. We compared the effect of exposure to colorblind versus multicultural diversity statements on the expectations (for diversity, bias, and performance) and actual performance of racial majority and minority women and men (i.e., White women, women of color, White men, and men of color). Study 1 measured participants' expectations about overall diversity, likelihood of encountering bias, and their future performance on a group task. Study 2 measured participants' specific expectations of gender versus racial diversity to test for any potential differences between those constructs. It also included a measure of actual performance on a math task.

We predicted that when exposed to colorblind versus multicultural messages, women of color would be affected by the colorblind diversity message, relative to the multicultural message, and that this identity threat would impact performance-related expectations that may have implications for their abilities to thrive in future educational and workplace contexts. Specifically, we expected that the colorblind message would diminish their expectations for diversity, increase their expectations of encountering bias, and dampen their anticipated performance on a group task, as well as actual performance on a math test. For men of color (and White women), the anticipated effect of diversity messages was less clear, because one aspect of their identity is advantaged and thus, potentially unthreatened by colorblind messages in the absence of an additional identity cue. As reviewed earlier, prior research has suggested that for individuals with only one stigmatized identity, an additional contextual cue, such as low minority representation or actually experiencing prejudice, may also be necessary to induce threat or hamper performance (Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Plaut et al., 2009; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Thus, men of color may not experience performance-related detriments as a result of exposure to a colorblind versus multicultural message alone if an additional identity cue is necessary to induce threat in colorblind contexts. White women may also not experience identity threats in colorblind contexts if they also expect such environments to have equal levels of gender diversity, or if they focus on the extent to which colorblind messages emphasize adherence to their advantaged race identity, because in such cases their identity should not be stigmatized. Highlighting group differences (multiculturalism) as well as taking an assimilationist perspective (colorblindness) should both emphasize White men's advantaged status and thus not affect them differentially. White men should not be negatively affected by messages about diversity because they possess an advantaged racial and gender identity.

Therefore, Study 1 provided an exploratory examination of whether all people of color would experience identity threat when exposed to colorblind (vs. multicultural) messages, or whether the effect of different diversity statements would be moderated by gender. It also provided a preliminary test of whether colorblind messages could serve as an identity threat for White women, who have both an advantaged race and disadvantaged gender identity.

Study 1

Method

Participants. Undergraduates ($N = 211$) enrolled in a large state university participated in this study in exchange for research participation credits. The racial composition of the 117 female participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 31 years ($M = 18.78$ years, $SD = 1.65$, $Mdn = 18$ years), was 31.6% White/Caucasian, 28.3% Asian, 12.0% multiracial/biracial, 11.1% Hispanic/Latino, 11.1% Black/African American, and 6.0% (non-White) other. The racial composition of the 92 male participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 22 years ($M = 18.79$ years, $SD = 1.07$, $Mdn = 18$ years), was 46.7% White/Caucasian, 28.3% Asian, 10.9% Hispanic/Latino, 6.5% Black/African American, 5.4% multiracial/biracial, and 2.2% (non-White) other. Two participants did not report their gender.

Procedure and materials. Participants were recruited for a study ostensibly examining college students' opinions of universities based on their marketing materials. Participants were told that they would review prospective marketing materials for an unnamed university and then answer questions about their impressions of the university and what it would be like to attend the university. Prior to engaging in the task, participants read and signed an electronic informed consent form. Participants were randomly assigned to review a college brochure that promoted either a colorblind or a multicultural message, which were adapted from those used in Purdie-Vaughns et al. (2008; see Appendix). An independent sample of university students ($N = 53$, $M_{age} = 18.31$ years, $SD_{age} = 0.64$, $Mdn_{age} = 18$ years; 53.8% male; 40.4% White, 40.4% Asian, 9.4% Black/African American, 5.8% Latino/Hispanic, 3.8% American Indian/Alaska Native; one participant did not report demographic data) evaluated the extent to which the message in each brochure stressed cultural and/or racial diversity, strength in differences, cultural and/or racial assimilation, and strength in similarities on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We averaged the first two and last two items to create two distinct scales of multiculturalism, $r = .66$, $p < .001$, and colorblindness, $r = .30$, $p = .03$. We confirmed that the multicultural message ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.50$) was viewed as more multicultural in tone than the colorblind message ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.78$), $t(51) = 6.64$, $p < .001$, whereas the colorblind message ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.38$) was viewed as more colorblind in tone than the multicultural message ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.53$), $t(51) = -6.92$, $p < .001$. In each condition, the diversity message was displayed over approximately one half of the brochure, with three photographs of collegiate scenes (e.g., a college building, a library, and a sports stadium) shown in the space remaining. Because we wanted to measure participants' expectations about race and gender diversity, no photographs of people were shown. After reviewing the brochure, participants completed all measures and then were thanked and fully debriefed.

Diversity expectations. Participants imagined themselves as a student at a university that promoted the diversity message they read in the beginning of the study, and then provided an estimate of how diverse they expected the university to be overall, rated on a scale of 1 (*not at all diverse*) to 7 (*extremely diverse*).

Bias expectations. Participants imagined themselves as students at the university, and then indicated the extent to which

they expected that they would encounter bias on three items using a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale reliability was good ($\alpha = .71$), and a mean score was computed for each participant such that high scores reflected greater expectations of bias. The exact questions were "I think that I would encounter bias at this university," "I think that other people would treat me fairly" (reverse-coded), and "I think that other people at this university would hold biased or prejudiced views."

Performance expectations. Participants imagined that they were working on an unspecified joint project with a group of peers at the university, and indicated the extent to which they expected the group to perform well with eight items on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale reliability was good ($\alpha = .95$). However, because the novel performance scale assessed multiple types of ideas about performance (i.e., "We will perform well, be successful, be effective, accomplish the task very well, have novel ideas, come up with inventive ideas, break new ground, be creative"), we conducted a factor analysis to confirm the scale's unidimensionality. Using varimax rotation, factor analysis revealed a single factor accounting for 73.65% of the variance with all eight performance items loading above .76 on the dimension. Mean scores were calculated, such that high scores reflect greater levels of expected performance.

Results

Means and standard deviations for all study variables are shown in Table 1, and zero-order correlations are shown in Table 2. Both tables present the information by participant race (i.e., White vs. racial/ethnic minority) and gender. To examine whether exposure to colorblind versus multicultural messages resulted in differential expectations of diversity, bias, and performance, we conducted separate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) on each dependent variable, with diversity statement, participant gender, and participant race as the between-subjects factors. All reported group comparison analyses employed adjustments for unequal cell sizes.

Diversity expectations. We found a significant main effect of condition, $F(1, 201) = 16.73$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.64$, such that participants in the multicultural condition expected more diversity than participants in the colorblind condition. There were no other significant main effects ($ps > .13$). However, a marginal three-way interaction emerged, $F(1, 201) = 3.40$, $p = .07$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Investigating the interaction separately for White and minority participants revealed that among minority participants, there was a significant main effect of condition, $F(1, 125) = 11.95$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.69$, that was qualified by a marginal two-way interaction between condition and gender, $F(1, 125) = 3.09$, $p = .08$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Follow-up analyses revealed that women of color reported greater diversity expectations in the multicultural condition than the colorblind condition, $F(1, 78) = 18.08$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.96$. Minority men did not show an effect of condition, $F(1, 47) = 1.16$, $p = .29$. For White participants, there was also a significant main effect of condition, $F(1, 76) = 5.90$, $p = .02$, $d = 0.55$, such that they expected more overall diversity in the multicultural ($M = 6.02$, $SD = 1.08$) versus colorblind ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.98$) condition.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for All Variables by Participant Race, Gender, and Diversity Statement Condition (Study 1)

Variable	Minority		White		Total	
	Colorblind	Multicultural	Colorblind	Multicultural	Colorblind	Multicultural
Women						
<i>n</i>	36	44	19	18	55	62
Expected diversity	4.44 (1.75) _a	5.86 (1.23) _b	5.53 (1.84) _b	6.06 (1.35) _b	4.82 (1.84)	5.92 (1.26)
Expected bias	3.45 (1.31) _a	3.20 (1.22) _{a,b}	3.23 (1.18) _{a,b}	2.57 (0.98) _b	3.38 (1.26)	3.02 (1.18)
Expected performance	4.75 (1.00) _a	5.18 (1.12) _a	5.02 (1.23) _a	5.24 (0.96) _a	4.84 (1.08)	5.20 (1.07)
Men						
<i>n</i>	29	20	20	23	49	43
Expected diversity	5.14 (1.64) _a	5.60 (1.19) _{a,b}	4.80 (2.09) _a	6.00 (0.85) _b	5.00 (1.83)	5.81 (1.03)
Expected bias	3.22 (1.21) _a	3.25 (1.06) _a	3.38 (1.33) _a	2.90 (1.14) _a	3.29 (1.25)	3.06 (1.11)
Expected performance	5.49 (1.19) _a	5.15 (0.99) _{a,b}	4.77 (1.35) _b	5.34 (1.08) _{a,b}	5.20 (1.3)	5.25 (1.03)
All						
<i>n</i>	65	64	39	41	104	105
Expected diversity	4.75 (1.72) _a	5.78 (1.22) _b	5.15 (1.98) _a	6.02 (1.08) _b	4.90 (1.83)	5.88 (1.17)
Expected bias	3.35 (1.26) _a	3.22 (1.16) _a	3.31 (1.24) _a	2.76 (1.07) _b	3.33 (1.25)	3.04 (1.15)
Expected performance	5.08 (1.14) _a	5.17 (1.07) _a	4.89 (1.28) _a	5.29 (1.02) _a	5.01 (1.19)	5.22 (1.05)

Note. Standard deviations appear within parentheses. Within each row, means with differing subscripts differ at $p < .05$ based on least significant difference post hoc comparisons.

There was no interaction of condition and gender for White participants, $F(1, 76) = 0.89, p = .35$.

We also investigated the three-way interaction separately by diversity statement condition. This analysis revealed a marginal interaction between participant race and gender in the colorblind condition, $F(1, 100) = 3.75, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .04$ (main effect $F_s < 1.03, p_s > .31$). Decomposing the interaction between participant race and gender in the colorblind condition, we found that women of color expected significantly less diversity than White women, $F(1, 53) = 4.60, p = .04, d = 0.61$, but men's diversity expectations did not differ by race, $F(1, 47) = 0.40, p = .53$. There were no main effects or interactions between participant race and gender in the multicultural condition ($p_s > .23$).

Bias expectations. There was a main effect of condition on expected bias, $F(1, 201) = 3.79, p = .05, d = 0.24$, such that participants in the colorblind condition expected more bias than participants in the multicultural condition. No other main effects or interactions emerged ($F_s < 2.24, p_s > .14$).

Performance expectations. There was a marginal three-way interaction of condition, race, and gender on expected performance, $F(1, 201) = 2.98, p = .09, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Decomposing the interaction revealed a marginal two-way interaction of condition and gender among racial minority participants, $F(1, 125) = 3.73, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .03$, but no effects for White participants. Specifically, minority women expected to perform marginally better in the multicultural condition than in the colorblind condition, $F(1, 78) = 3.16, p = .08, d = 0.40$, whereas minority men showed no effect of condition, $F(1, 47) = 1.12, p = .29$. No other main effects or interactions emerged from the main analysis ($F_s < 1.81, p_s > .18$).

We also investigated the three-way interaction separately by diversity statement condition. This analysis revealed a significant interaction between participant race and gender in the colorblind condition, $F(1, 100) = 4.32, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .04$ (main effect $F_s < 1.07, p_s > .30$). Decomposing the interaction between participant race and gender in the colorblind condition, we found that women of color expected to perform significantly

Table 2
Correlations Among All Study Variables by Participant Gender and Race (Study 1)

Variable	1	2	3	4
Women				
1. Condition (0 = colorblind; 1 = multicultural)	—	.41***	-.10	.20 ⁺
2. Expected diversity	.11	—	-.42***	.48***
3. Expected bias	-.30 ⁺	-.39*	—	-.25*
4. Expected performance	.10	.30 ⁺	-.26	—
Men				
1. Condition (0 = colorblind; 1 = multicultural)	—	.12	.01	-.15
2. Expected diversity	.32*	—	-.36*	.28*
3. Expected bias	-.20	-.11	—	-.24 ⁺
4. Expected performance	.23	.51***	-.42**	—

Note. For both men and women, correlations are shown below the diagonal for White participants and above the diagonal for minority participants.

⁺ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

worse than men of color, $F(1, 63) = 7.41, p = .01, d = 0.68$, but White men and women's performance expectations did not differ by condition, $F(1, 37) = 0.36, p = .55$. There were no main effects or interactions between participant race and gender in the multicultural condition ($ps > .58$).

Discussion

Across race and gender groups, participants expected more bias when exposed to a colorblind versus a multicultural message. However, women of color appeared to be marginally more threatened by the colorblind diversity message than the other demographic groups. Specifically, when exposed to a colorblind diversity message, women of color expected less diversity and poorer performance compared with when exposed to the multicultural diversity message. After exposure to a colorblind message, women of color also expected significantly less diversity than White women and expected to perform significantly worse than men of color. We did not find a similar pattern of message condition effects for the other groups (White men, White women, or men of color).

Together, results from Study 1 suggest that environments promoting colorblind messages may pose particular challenges for women of color, which may disproportionately hinder their abilities or desire to achieve in academia or the workplace. However, a limitation of Study 1 is that it only assessed participants' imagined performance in a hypothetical setting rather than their actual performance in a threatened domain (e.g., a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics context for women of color). Beliefs about one's own ability to perform can shape actual academic performance (e.g., math tests) and has the potential to shape actual performance in the workplace (e.g., Brown & Lee, 2005; Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Therefore, we sought to determine whether colorblind diversity messages may particularly affect the actual performance of women of color, whose performance has been shown to vary greatly depending on the ways in which messages about race and gender are communicated. For example, when Asian women's race and gender identities were evoked via benign cues (e.g., questions about non-English languages spoken at home), they performed better on a math task when their race was primed, yet worse on the task when their gender was primed, relative to a control group in which no identity was primed (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). In contrast, when their race was primed in a way that clearly and publicly invoked the commonly held stereotype about Asians' mathematical abilities (i.e., via direct questions about their racial identity), Asian women performed worse compared with the control group because they experienced apprehension about their ability to conform to the stereotype (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Research has also shown that African American women performed worse on a verbal test when their African American identity was made salient, but better when their female identity, an identity associated with verbal talent, was made salient (Shih, Richeson, Ambady, & Wout, 2003). In addition, Study 1 did not assess specific expectations of racial diversity and gender diversity, which would have allowed us to examine the extent to which individuals experienced their specific race or gender identities as threatened in a colorblind context.

Thus, in Study 2 we sought to replicate the general pattern of results found above, suggesting that colorblind messages serve as a particular identity threat to women of color. Study 1 was an exploratory study, and the three-way interactions between diversity statement condition and participant race and gender only reached marginal significance. In Study 2, we sought to increase the sample size to provide a more conclusive test of whether men of color (or White women) would also be affected by diversity statements, or whether women of color were particularly affected by colorblind messages. We also examined (a) the potential impact of the diversity message manipulation on participants' actual performance and (b) the specific expectations participants had about race and gender diversity.

Study 2

Method

Participants. Undergraduates ($N = 328$) enrolled in a large state university participated in this study in exchange for research participation credits. The racial composition of the 177 female participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 40 years ($M = 18.84$ years, $SD = 2.69$, $Mdn = 18$ years), was 43.8% White/Caucasian, 27.8% South Asian, 11.4% Black/African American, 10.2% Hispanic/Latino, 1.7% East Asian, 0.6% Pacific Islander, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 4.0% (non-White) other. The racial composition of the 148 male participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 25 years ($M = 18.64$ years, $SD = 1.27$, $Mdn = 18$ years), was 40.8% White/Caucasian, 27.9% South Asian, 8.2% Black/African American, 12.2% Hispanic/Latino, 1.4% East Asian, and 9.50% (non-White) other. Three participants did not provide demographic information.

Procedure and materials. The procedure directly replicated Study 1, except that we separately measured expectations of race and gender diversity, assessed participants' actual performance on a math task (described below), and did not measure expected bias or expected performance.

Race diversity expectations. Participants imagined themselves as a student at a university that promoted the diversity message they read in the beginning of the study, and then provided an estimate of how diverse they expected the university to be in terms of race, rated on a scale of 1 (*not at all diverse*) to 7 (*extremely diverse*).

Gender diversity expectations. Participants also provided an estimate of how diverse they expected the university to be in terms of gender, rated on a scale of 1 (*not at all diverse*) to 7 (*extremely diverse*).

Actual math performance. To measure participants' performance, we selected math questions from Scholastic Assessment (SAT) Reasoning Test study guides. We used SAT items to assess performance because most participants in the participant sample were first-year undergraduates and thus had recently taken the SAT. In addition, standardized tests such as the SAT or Graduate Record Examination are reliable measures of cognitive performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). For each participant, we scored each of the questions and calculated a percentage of correct responses for the math items. The average participant correctly answered 52% ($Mdn = 67\%$) questions correctly. The percentage of correct answers ranged from 0% to 100%.

Results

Means and standard deviations for all study variables are shown in Table 3 and zero-order correlations are shown in Table 4. Both tables present the information by participant race (i.e., White vs. racial/ethnic minority) and gender. To examine whether or not exposure to colorblind versus multicultural messages would result in differential expectations of race and gender diversity and actual performance, we again conducted separate analyses ANOVAs on each dependent variable, with diversity statement, participant gender, and participant race as the between-subjects factors. All reported group comparison analyses employed adjustments for unequal cell sizes.

Race diversity expectations. There was a main effect of condition, $F(1, 298) = 18.47, p < .001, d = 0.47$, such that participants in the multicultural condition expected more racial diversity than participants in the colorblind condition. No other main effects or interactions emerged for race diversity expectations ($F_s < 2.06, p_s > .15$).

Gender diversity expectations. There was a main effect of condition, $F(1, 299) = 5.60, p = .02, d = 0.28$, such that participants in the multicultural condition expected more gender diversity than participants in the colorblind condition. There was also a marginal interaction of condition and gender on gender diversity expectations, $F(1, 299) = 2.85, p = .09, \eta_p^2 = .01$, such that women expected more gender diversity in the multicultural versus colorblind conditions, $F(1, 162) = 8.67, p < .01, d = 0.46$, but men did not differ by diversity statement condition in their gender diversity expectations, $F(1, 139) = 0.14, p = .71, d = 0.07$. No other main effects or interactions emerged on gender diversity expectations ($F_s < 2.06, p_s > .15$).

Actual math performance. A main effect of gender, $F(1, 315) = 4.13, p = .04, d = 0.21$, and a marginal main effect of participant race, $F(1, 315) = 3.27, p = .07, d = 0.24$, revealed that men ($M = 54\%, SD = 25$) performed better than women ($M = 49\%, SD = 23$) and minorities ($M = 54\%, SD = 24$) performed better than Whites ($M = 48\%, SD = 24$). These effects were

qualified by a three-way interaction between condition, gender, and participant race, $F(1, 315) = 4.11, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .01$, on actual math performance. Decomposing the interaction, we found that men showed no effects of condition or race in math performance ($F_s < .40, p_s > .53$); however, women showed a significant main effect of race, $F(1, 172) = 4.38, p = .03, d = 0.35$, with minority women scoring higher than White women. In addition, among women participants, we found a significant interaction of race and condition, $F(1, 172) = 7.82, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$. White women scored higher on the math questions when exposed to the colorblind condition as compared with the multicultural condition, $F(1, 75) = 3.94, p = .05, d = 0.45$; women of color showed the opposite pattern, scoring higher in the multicultural condition as compared with the colorblind condition, $F(1, 97) = 3.95, p = .049, d = 0.41$ (see Figure 1).

Decomposing the three-way interaction between condition, gender, and participant race in another way, we also found that racial minorities performed better than Whites in the multicultural condition, $F(1, 158) = 5.15, p = .03, d = 0.45$. However, this was qualified by a significant interaction with gender, $F(1, 158) = 3.86, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .02$. In the multicultural condition, women of color performed better than White women, $F(1, 94) = 14.02, p < .001, d = 0.81$, but men of color and White men performed equally, $F(1, 64) = 0.03, p = .86$. There were no main effects of or interactions between participant race and gender in the colorblind condition ($F_s < 2.63, p_s > .11$).

Discussion

Of importance, Study 2 replicated the general pattern found in Study 1, suggesting that colorblind contexts serve as a particular identity threat to women of color, which impugns their prospects not only in an imagined context (i.e., Study 1, a hypothetical university setting) but also in their actual performance (i.e., Study 2, a math test). Specifically, Study 2 found that minority women performed worse, but that White women performed better, on a math test after exposure to colorblind versus multicultural mes-

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations for All Variables by Participant Race, Gender, and Diversity Statement Condition (Study 2)

Variable	Minority		White		Total	
	Colorblind	Multicultural	Colorblind	Multicultural	Colorblind	Multicultural
Women						
<i>n</i>	42	46	38	39	80	85
Expected race diversity	4.50 (1.78) _a	5.28 (1.50) _{b,c}	4.76 (1.76) _{a,b}	5.59 (1.23) _c	4.63 (1.77)	5.42 (1.38)
Expected gender diversity	4.43 (1.56) _a	5.33 (1.32) _b	4.76 (1.42) _{a,b}	5.10 (1.21) _b	4.59 (1.50)	5.22 (1.27)
Math performance	48% (23%) _{a,c}	57% (22%) _b	50% (23%) _{a,b}	40% (20%) _c	49% (23%)	50% (23%)
Men						
<i>n</i>	44	38	36	24	80	62
Expected race diversity	4.70 (1.68) _a	5.11 (1.29) _{a,b}	4.60 (1.67) _a	5.67 (1.01) _b	4.66 (1.66)	5.32 (1.21)
Expected gender diversity	4.98 (1.15) _a	4.92 (1.15) _a	4.86 (1.38) _a	5.13 (1.23) _a	4.93 (1.25)	5.00 (1.17)
Math performance	57% (26%) _a	54% (24%) _a	53% (22%) _a	53% (31%) _a	55% (24%)	54% (27%)
All						
<i>n</i>	86	84	74	63	160	147
Expected race diversity	4.60 (1.72) _a	5.20 (1.4) _b	4.68 (1.71) _a	5.62 (1.14) _b	4.64 (1.71)	5.38 (1.31)
Expected gender diversity	4.71 (1.39) _a	5.14 (1.25) _b	4.81 (1.39) _{a,b}	5.11 (1.21) _{a,b}	4.76 (1.39)	5.13 (1.23)
Math performance	52% (25%) _{a,b}	56% (23%) _b	51% (22%) _{a,b}	45% (26%) _a	52% (24%)	51% (24%)

Note. Standard deviations appear within parentheses. Within each row, means with differing subscripts differ at $p < .05$ based on least significant difference post hoc comparisons.

Table 4
Correlations Among All Study Variables by Participant Gender and Race (Study 2)

Variable	1	2	3	4
Women				
1. Condition (0 = colorblind; 1 = multicultural)	—	.23*	.30**	.20*
2. Expected race diversity	.27*	—	.75***	.15
3. Expected gender diversity	.13	.61***	—	.10
4. Math performance	-.22*	-.16	.06	—
Men				
1. Condition (0 = colorblind; 1 = multicultural)	—	.13	-.03	-.06
2. Expected race diversity	.35**	—	.40***	-.02
3. Expected gender diversity	.10	.52***	—	-.03
4. Math performance	.00	.01	-.13	—

Note. For both men and women, correlations are shown below the diagonal for White participants and above the diagonal for minority participants.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

sages. Men were not nearly as affected by the diversity message manipulation, showing few effects.

Consistent with the results for expected overall diversity found in Study 1, Study 2 found that participants expected less race diversity and less gender diversity when exposed to a colorblind versus a multicultural message. However, unlike the results for expected overall diversity found in Study 1, we did not find that women of color particularly anticipated less race diversity and less gender diversity in the colorblind condition when these constructs were measured separately (i.e., we replicated the main effects of condition, but not the three-way interaction of condition, participant race, and participant gender). Study 2 also found that women were particularly affected by the diversity message manipulation, as women expected less gender diversity in the colorblind as compared with the multicultural condition than did men.

General Discussion

As organizations demonstrate increasing commitment to diversity and inclusion efforts, it is critical to explore the ways in which diversity messages may differentially and paradoxically impact the expectations and performance of individuals from various sociodemographic groups. In the present research, we highlight the particularly insidious relationship between diversity statements that create identity-threatening contexts (i.e., colorblind vs. multicultural; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008) and performance detriments for

women of color. Across two studies, we found that all participants expected less race diversity and more bias, and that women expected less gender diversity, when prompted to imagine their experiences in a setting that promoted a colorblind versus a multicultural philosophy. However, women of color expected less diversity overall and to perform worse, as well as actually performed worse on a math test, in a setting that promoted a colorblind versus a multicultural philosophy. White men, White women, and men of color did not experience similar performance detriments after exposure to colorblind messages, with men's performance on the math test being unaffected by the differing messages about diversity.

Furthermore, whereas the colorblind message was found to generally hinder the performance-related outcomes of women of color, a different pattern emerged for White women. Specifically, White women expected less race diversity, less gender diversity, and more bias, but actually performed better on a math test when exposed to a colorblind (vs. multicultural) message. We also found that, in the multicultural condition, White women performed worse on the math test compared with women of color. Thus, to some extent, the colorblind message benefitted, and the multicultural messages disadvantaged, White women. Because White women imagined lower levels of both race and gender diversity in the colorblind condition, it is possible that, when prompted to take a math test, they shifted their focus to emphasize their advantaged race identity and de-emphasize their disadvantaged gender identity. Indeed, research has demonstrated that Whites experience performance boosts when White identity is made salient (e.g., Walton & Cohen, 2003). Future research should examine the extent to which identity shifting is observed. As expected, White men were largely unaffected by messages about diversity.

Our findings are consistent with prior work demonstrating the negative effects of colorblind philosophies on racial minorities (e.g., Holoien & Shelton, 2011; Plaut et al., 2009; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Verkuyten, 2005). New to this research, we found that exposure to a colorblind message alone was sufficient to damage the performance-related outcomes for women, but not men, of color. Prior work has found negative effects of colorblind messages for racial minorities, but only when such messages were paired with low minority representation or racially prejudiced interactions (Holoien & Shelton, 2011; Purdie-Vaughns et al.,

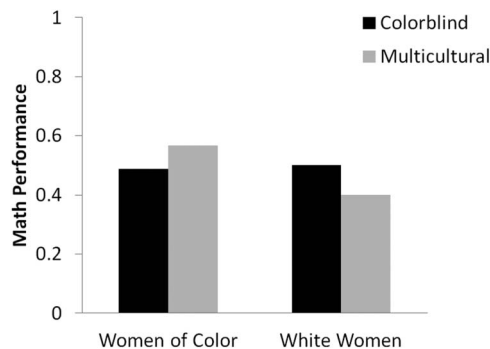


Figure 1. Interaction of participant race and diversity statement condition on actual math performance among female participants. * $p < .05$.

2008). In contrast to men of color, women of color experience their two stigmatized (i.e., racial/ethnic minority and female) identities—as well as the ensuing racial and gender discrimination—as linked (Settles, 2006; Shelton & Chavous, 1999). Thus, it may be the case that women of color are even more sensitive to identity-threatening (i.e., colorblind) contexts because they imagine them to be more hostile or less inclusive overall. These feelings of identity threat may be heightened when, as was the case in the present research, both race and gender are made salient. For women of color, perceptions of gender and racial diversity may be indicators of an overall climate and attitude about diversity. Indeed, our finding that women of color were the demographic group who imagined the least amount overall diversity supports this notion.

The performance-related outcomes measured in this study may reveal important information about individuals' expectations or abilities to perform and accomplish important life goals. Women of color are particularly disadvantaged in the workplace compared with White women and men of all racial/ethnic groups. Of the total workforce employed in management, professional, and related occupations in 2010, 5.2% were African American women, 3.9% were Latina/Hispanic women, and 2.7% were Asian women (Catalyst, 2012), and of the total full-time professoriate, 1.3% were African American women, 0.7% were Latina/Hispanic women, 1.3% were Asian women and 0.1% were Native American women (Jean-Marie, 2011). Moreover, women of color held only 3.0% of board seats in Fortune 500 companies in both 2010 and 2011, representing a 3.1% decrease from 2009 (Catalyst, 2012). As a result of these low levels of representation, especially within the upper echelons of the workplace and higher education, women of color have a particular lack of role models and mentoring and thus report greater feelings of "outsider status," fewer development opportunities, and lower levels of career advancement than White women or minority men (Catalyst, 2009; Hune, Moses, & Turner, 2011). Women of color are also subject to unique types of harassment (and assault) in which their race and gender are inextricably linked (i.e., racialized sexual harassment; Shelton & Chavous, 1999), which may increase the intensity of such experiences and lead to more challenging recovery processes, further damaging their prospects for success in education or the workplace. Our research suggests that the particularly tenuous positioning of women of color in the workplace may be due in part to identity-threatening cues that specifically impair the performance and performance expectations of women of color. Furthermore, it suggests that, if universities and organizations want to increase the representation and achievements of women of color, they should take care to provide environments that signal their worth and welcome.

Limitations and Future Research

The present research reveals important differences between the ways in which institutional diversity statements affect the performance-related outcomes of individuals at the junction of race and gender, and highlights the importance of exploring performance-related outcomes for women of color. Yet, additional questions remain for further research. For example, future research could examine the extent to which students or employees are aware of the diversity message promoted by their universities or corporations, how individual professors' or managers' messages

about diversity may influence student or employee success in the classroom or workplace, or what happens when educators or organizations espouse elements of both multicultural and colorblind messages. Research could also explore what psychological processes may mediate these processes, as well as examine the extent to which women of color's expectations about bias and performance lead them to "opt out" of particular majors or academic opportunities at the university level or fields or positions in the workplace. We also note that future research should include a control (no-statement) condition in the experimental design. Doing so would establish a performance baseline on the math test, which would enable researchers to examine whether, in the multicultural condition, women of color experienced a performance boost or White women experienced a performance decline. A control condition would also enable researchers to explore whether colorblind messages harm expectations and performance relative to receiving no diversity information, or vice versa. In other words, does saying "the wrong thing" about diversity have a worse effect than saying nothing at all?

Moreover, a strength of this research is that we examine the performance-related detriments of all women of color from multiple backgrounds, but we also acknowledge that Asian women composed the majority of our female racial minority sample (41.3% Study 1; 52.0% Study 2), which limits the extent to which the effects observed in this research can be expected to apply to all women of color. Thus, we encourage additional intersectionality work with populations other than Black women to compare the experience of Asian women, for example, with that of Black women or White women. Moreover, women of color continue to experience particular disadvantages across a range of domains. Given that race and gender are confounded (Johnson et al., 2012) and women of color may experience their race and gender identities as fused (Settles, 2006), research should explore the unique experiences of women of color in other areas. For example, women of color consistently experience higher levels of harassment and assault, which is also more trivialized, compared with both White women and men of all demographic groups (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Buchanan, Settles, & Woods, 2008; Shelton & Chavous, 1999). In addition, this research emphasizes the importance of examining outcomes at the intersection of race and gender in particular, and more research is needed to explore the confluence of two or more identities more generally. For example, socioeconomic status (Mendelson, Kubzansky, Datta, & Buka, 2008) and age (Kang & Chasteen, 2009) have been identified as factors that may interact with gender or race to affect perceptions of targets, and immigration status or accent may also impact their experiences.

Conclusion

Women of color risk stigma, prejudice, and stereotypes because of both their race and gender (Beale, 1970), which may impact their ability to achieve in a given domain. By extending prior work to demonstrate the pernicious effects of colorblind contexts on all women of color (and not solely African American women), the present research addresses a crucial gap in the psychological literature regarding women of color. In doing so, this research highlights the importance of examining outcomes at the intersection of race and gender categories. Universities and corporations

that value the success of their students, faculty, and employees should carefully consider the way in which diversity is framed at their institution, as women of color may experience particular disadvantage when exposed to assimilationist diversity messages.

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Appendix

Brochure Text Manipulation

ColorBlind Message Wording

At University X, we encourage our diverse student body to embrace their similarities. We feel that focusing on similarities creates a more unified, exciting, and collaborative environment for students to grow and make friends. Indeed, such an inclusive and accepting environment helps our students learn, and enables all students to succeed in the classroom and beyond. Your race, ethnicity, gender, and religion are immaterial as soon as you walk on our campus.

Multicultural Message Wording

At University X, we believe that embracing our diversity enriches our campus. We feel that focusing on diversity creates a more unified, exciting, and collaborative environment for students to grow and make friends. Indeed, such a diverse environment helps our students learn and enables all students to succeed in the classroom and beyond. As soon as you walk on our campus, you'll appreciate the strength that we derive from our diversity.