

The impact of diversity-valuing behaviour for non-white and female leaders

Key Finding: The authors find that ethnic minority and female leaders are discouraged from engaging in *diversity-valuing behaviour* because they would otherwise be penalised due to traditional negative race and sex stereotypes.

Executive summary: The study is based on the observation that demographic minorities in top leadership positions have actively opposed the advancement of their fellow minority group members. The authors argue that this is because they are penalised in the form of lower performance ratings when they engage in *diversity-valuing behaviour* and thus try to avoid that.

When low-status group members align themselves with their low-status group through *diversity-valuing behaviour* they could be seen as nepotistic or socially competitive. Thus, non-white and female leaders might activate negative stereotypes associated with their group and convey a social-competitive motive, resulting in being perceived as incompetent and therefore receiving more negative evaluations.

The findings of the study suggest that minority leaders' (i.e. non-white and female leaders) engagement in behaviours valuing organisational diversity hurts these leaders in the sense that they may become victims of negative stereotypes. Leaders belonging to high-status demographic groups (i.e. white, male) experience the opposite to this. Whether the behaviour towards diversity improves or impairs the perceived leader competence depends on the mediator *leader race and sex* (e.g. non-white female may be perceived less competent). This relationship ultimately affects the leader performance.



Note: Adapted from Hekman et al. (2017)

What are the practical implications for my organisation?

- Focusing on “demographic-unselfishness behaviour” rather than “diversity-valuing behaviour” can weaken the glass ceiling because the diversity framing is changing.
- A white male spokesperson for the diversity office can help to achieve maximum legitimacy in the company and make all employees take diversity issues more seriously.
- Promoting and championing white men may be a highly beneficial career strategy for ethnic minority and women leaders. Thus, your organisation needs to address this issue accordingly to be able to reach true diversity.

Summary of: Hekman, D.R., Johnson, S K., Foo, M.D., & Yang, W. (2017). Does diversity-valuing behavior result in diminished performance ratings for non-white and female leaders?. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(2), 771-797.