**ARTICLE**

# Multifarious person perception: How social perceivers manage the complexity of intersectional targets

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**Abstract**

Stereotyping plays an important role in how we perceive the members of social groups. Yet stereotyping is complicated by the fact that every individual simultaneously belongs to multiple social groups. For example, the stereotypes that are called to mind about a Black individual can vary depending on that person's age, gender, and sexual orientation. This phenomenon—termed *intersectional stereotyping*—has recently inspired a variety of intriguing research findings. But these research findings pose challenges for prevalent theories of stereotyping. These prevalent theories tend to argue either that (a) perceivers inevitably attend to certain social identities (e.g., gender) when stereotyping intersectional targets, or that (b) perceivers inevitably attend to all detectable social identities at once. In contrast to these perspectives, we argue that perceivers generally attend to just one social identity (or one intersection of identities) at a time when stereotyping intersectional targets, as a function of the social context. For example, gay Black men can be alternately stereotyped as *gay people*, as *Black people*, as *men*, or as *gay Black men* specifically. The approach described here can account for a diverse array of findings emerging from research on intersectional stereotyping. Moreover, by specifying the factors that render particular identities salient in the minds of social perceivers, this approach offers clear and falsifiable predictions regarding the situated stereotyping of multifaceted individuals.

Social psychologists are becoming increasingly interested in the topic of intersectional stereotyping—broadly, how it is that perceivers stereotype targets in light of targets' interlocking social identities (Cole, 2009; Goff & Kahn, 2013; Plaut, 2010). This interest has resulted in a broad range of empirical findings that demonstrate the dynamism of social stereotypes—findings showing, often, that social stereotypes are not applied to targets in a one-size-fits-all way (Bodenhausen & Petsko, in press; Remedios & Sanchez, 2018). For example, the tendency to stereotype Black men as less fit for leadership roles than White men has been shown to *reverse* when the men in question are gay rather than heterosexual (Wilson, Remedios, & Rule, 2017). As another example, when White women exhibit dominant (vs. communal) behaviors in the workplace, perceivers exhibit backlash against them. Yet when Black women exhibit these same behaviors, they appear to face no such penalty (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). In many ways, these findings echo the insights of Black-feminist scholarship (Crenshaw, 1991; King, 1998; Hooks, 1984), which operated from the assumption that "each person has a gender, race, sexual orientation, and so on... [and that] the meaning of each social group is constructed through the lens of the others" (Ghavami, Katsiaficas, & Rogers, 2016, pp. 34–35).

Recent advances have made clear that intersectional forces can shape all elements of stereotyping, from the activation of stereotypes themselves (Johnson, Freeman, & Pauker, 2012), to the ways in which they are applied to targets (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013), to the patterns of discrimination that unfold in their wake (Hall, Galinsky, & Phillips, 2015). Indeed, this burgeoning literature has, empirically speaking, been quite generative (for reviews, see Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015; Nicolas, de la Fuente, & Fiske, 2017). But the empirical growth in this literature has not been matched by similar growth in *theorizing* about intersectional stereotyping. In the present paper, we review the literature on intersectional stereotyping, and we argue that it may be time for researchers to consider an often-overlooked theoretical possibility—the possibility that intersectional stereotyping may be a compartmentalized phenomenon. By "compartmentalized," we mean that perceivers may engage in intersectional stereotyping by attending to just one identity (or one intersection of identities) at a time, as a function of the social context. For example, there may be moments when perceivers stereotype gay Black men as *gay people*, other moments when perceivers stereotype gay Black men as *Black people*, and still other moments when perceivers stereotype gay Black men not as *gay* or as *Black* per se, but as *gay Black men* specifically.

This review is divided into two main sections. In the first section, we describe two kinds of assumptions that psychologists have tended to use when making sense of how perceivers engage in intersectional stereotyping. We call these assumptions *dominance assumptions* and *integration assumptions*, respectively (Bodenhausen, 2010). Dominance assumptions argue that perceivers chronically pay attention to certain social identities more than others when stereotyping social targets (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 2012). Integration assumptions argue that perceivers attend to *all* social identities at once when stereotyping social targets (e.g., Freeman & Ambady, 2011; Freeman, Stolier, & Brooks, in press). Both kinds of assumptions have been highly generative for intersectional stereotyping research. Yet, there are drawbacks to each of them. Dominance assumptions offer clear but relatively static assumptions that fail to explain the diverse ways in which intersectional targets are actually stereotyped. They fail to explain, for example, why older Black men appear to be stereotyped quite differently from younger Black men in some contexts (Kang & Chasteen, 2009), yet as virtually indistinguishable from younger Black men in other contexts (Lundberg, Neel, Lassetter, & Todd, 2018). In contrast, integration assumptions are far more flexible—so flexible, in fact, that they can account for virtually any conceivable outcome. Integration assumptions acknowledge that multiple categories can play a flexible role in shaping social stereotyping, but often without offering a parsimonious basis for predicting when a particular category will become the predominant basis for social stereotyping versus when it may be largely or completely overlooked. A theoretical approach falling in between the overly static predictions of dominance assumptions and the overly flexible predictions of integration assumptions could offer research on intersectional person perception a useful way forward.

In the second section of this review, we describe such a way forward—a "middle way" that can be used for explaining intersectional stereotyping, which we call *compartmentalization assumptions*. Compartmentalization assumptions, as noted above, argue that perceivers have a repertoire of distinct social categories in their minds

(e.g., *old people, women, older women*) that they can use as templates for thinking about others (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). What makes compartmentalization assumptions falsifiable—and thus desirable in the context of intersectional stereotyping—is that perceivers are hypothesized to attend to *just one category* (or one intersection of categories) *at a time*. Moreover, the factors that are hypothesized to produce this focal categorization can be specified in ways that allow strong predictions about which category will be predominant and which ones will be overlooked in any particular situational context. For example, in a social context that highlights race, perceivers should attend to targets' racial categories, but not, in these contexts, to targets' age, gender, or sexual orientation categories. The second section of this paper provides examples of theories that contain compartmentalization assumptions, and it reviews a set of psychological principles that ought to govern when it is that perceivers attend to certain social categories over alternatives. This section concludes by discussing how compartmentalization assumptions accord with existing intersectionality research.

## 1 | PREVAILING THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

As noted above, social psychologists have tended to make one of two very general kinds of assumptions about how perceivers stereotype intersectional targets. These assumptions are termed dominance assumptions and integration assumptions, respectively. Below, we provide examples of theoretical perspectives that contain these assumptions, and we discuss the merits as well as the limitations of relying on these assumptions when explaining intersectional stereotyping.

### 1.1 | Dominance models

Dominance models assume that certain social identities inevitably take precedence over others in the minds of perceivers. That is, certain identity dimensions, according to these models, are inherently and consistently more salient in directing stereotyping processes. In the domain of intersectional stereotyping, a dominance model would imply that certain forms of prejudice manifest more often than others, or that intersectional stereotypes are shaped more by one social identity than by others. For example, from the perspective of evolutionary psychology (Sidanius, Hudson, Davis, & Bergh, 2018; Tooby & Cosmides, 2010), categorizing others by age and sex is regarded as obligatory. But categorizing others by race, in this perspective, is more malleable (e.g., Pietraszewski, Curry, Petersen, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2015). An implication of this perspective is that stereotypic responses to social targets should inevitably be shaped by targets' age and gender groups, but only optionally influenced by targets' racial groups.

Generally speaking, dominance models specify particular kinds of categories that will chronically be influential in social perception. A converse question concerns claims about categories that will chronically have *no* influence. Intersectional invisibility theory is an interesting case, because it focuses on how identity intersections inevitably render certain categories irrelevant in the minds of perceivers. This theory stipulates, for example, that racial identities become a focus for stereotyping only when targets fit the default demographic assumptions that define the psychological scope of the category. The theory specifically holds that racial prejudice and discrimination against Black individuals will be expressed only toward heterosexual Black men. For Black women or homosexual men, "Black" becomes an ill-fitting and functionally invisible feature, and racial stereotypes are unlikely to be activated or applied to these individuals. Likewise, prejudice and discrimination against women is thought to be expressed only toward White heterosexual women, and for other kinds of women, their gender is considered to be chronically invisible. A noteworthy implication of this view is that perceivers are not likely to express racial or gender biases against heterosexual Black women. Because of these women's multiple subordinated identities, perceivers are thought to regard Black women as chronically invisible (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010).

A benefit of dominance models is that they often make precise claims about what should not happen (e.g., perceivers should *not* be able to refrain from engaging in gender stereotyping: Pietraszewski et al., 2015; or perceivers should *not* evince gender bias against Black women: Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). This is desirable from the standpoint of falsifiability (Popper, 1959). But an issue with dominance models is that they imply that the stereotypes toward intersectional targets ought to be relatively static regardless of the situational context—an implication that, as reviewed later, is not well-supported.

## 1.2 | Integration models

Integration models assume that all of a target's detectable social identities are perceived simultaneously, and that the perceiver spontaneously integrates them into a coherent mental impression of the target (e.g., Wojnowicz, Ferguson, Dale, & Spivey, 2009). Thus, these models do not presuppose, as dominance models do, that the perceiver will inevitably respond to a Black woman in terms of, for example, her gender. Instead, integration models assume that the meaning the perceiver makes of a woman's gender is constructed in light of whatever else the perceiver notices about her (e.g., her race, age, sexual orientation, religious identity, and so on). Many integration models argue that perceivers' minds are best understood as connectionist networks (Hall, Hall, Galinsky, & Phillips, 2019; Kawakami, Amodio, & Hugenberg, 2017; Kunda & Thagard, 1996). In these perspectives, stereotypes about a target's social class, for example, can only be understood as resulting from the way perceivers conceptualize the interconnections between social class and other group memberships—like targets' gender groups, sexual orientation groups, ethnic groups, and so on (Ghavami & Mistry, 2019). A key feature of these perspectives is that stereotyping is thought to be dynamic and highly context-sensitive. Thus, in many of these approaches, the same target could conceivably be "stereotyped" in infinitely many ways.

A benefit of integration models is that they can account for the broadest range of psychological phenomena, including situations where multiple different social identities simultaneously influence social impressions, as well as cross-situational and individual differences in the influence of particular categories. They can explain, for example, why middle schoolers' perceptions of their peers' intelligence is contingent on their peers' gender groups, age groups, sexual orientation groups, and ethnic groups (Ghavami & Peplau, 2018). They can likewise explain why the same target (e.g., a Black woman) is perceived as trustworthy by some but as untrustworthy by others (Hehman, Sutherland, Flake, & Slepian, 2017; Xie, Flake, & Hehman, 2018). But a drawback of these models is that they are often difficult to falsify. Integration models in general, but connectionist integration models in particular (e.g., Freeman et al., in press), allow for the possibility that innumerable social identities and concepts can inform a perceiver's impression of a target, albeit without offering much hope for a parsimonious set of a priori predictions regarding which ones will matter most and which ones will matter little if at all. As such, infinitely many impressions of a target are possible outputs of the mind. In a sense, integration models are oppositional to the very notion of stereotyping itself. If a target is being perceived in light of *all* their attributes and group memberships simultaneously, then they are arguably closer to being individuated than they are to being stereotyped.

## 2 | COMPARTMENTALIZED CATEGORIES: A FRUITFUL WAY FORWARD

Compartmentalization models can be used to reconcile contradictory findings in the research literature on intersectional stereotyping, and they can also be used to generate innovative (and falsifiable) hypotheses. This portion of the review discusses psychological models that employ compartmentalization assumptions as well as the psychological factors that ought to predict when perceivers use one "compartment" for thinking about targets over alternatives. Finally, this section concludes with a brief overview of intersectional stereotyping findings that are consistent with compartmentalized theorizing.

## 2.1 | Compartmentalization models

Compartmentalization models assume *situational* social identity dominance in the minds of perceivers (e.g., Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1998; Turner et al., 1987). Applied to the domain of intersectional stereotyping, compartmentalization models imply that certain forms of prejudice can be "switched on" by a social context, and that others can be "switched off." They imply for example that there may be some contexts in which Black women are stereotyped as *Black*, other contexts in which they are stereotyped as *women*, and still other contexts in which they are stereotyped not as *Black* or as *women* per se, but as *Black women* specifically. Correspondingly, there may be moments when perceivers exhibit racial bias (but not gender bias) against Black women, moments when perceivers exhibit gender bias (but not racial bias) against Black women, and moments when perceivers exhibit intersectional bias (but not more general forms of racial bias or gender bias) against Black women, instead. Of note, these assumptions are compatible with those of seminal intersectionality scholars. Take, for example, what Crenshaw (1989) wrote about Black women's experiences in the legal system:

> Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways [that are] similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with black men ... And sometimes, they experience discrimination as black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as black women. (p. 149).

A defining feature of compartmentalization models is that different categorizations are hypothesized to *trade off* in the minds of perceivers. This means that using one category to think about targets goes hand in hand with *not* using rival categories. In self-categorization theory, for example, the perceiver is presumed to search for a social category that "fits" social reality in a given social context (Oakes, 1987; Turner et al., 1987). Once a category is chosen, the perceiver then depersonalizes (i.e., stereotypes) targets in the direction of the category prototype, but not in the direction of alternative category prototypes. In the stereotype activation–inhibition model (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1998), perceivers likewise select one of many possible categorizations for construing targets, and these categorizations—but not competing categorizations—form the basis of how targets are stereotyped and discriminated against at a given point in time.

## 2.2 | What causes perceivers to attend to some identities over others?

The above discussion raises a critical question: what, exactly, are the factors that cause perceivers to focus in on one social category at the expense of focusing on others? That is, if the perceiver's mind *does* operate in a compartmentalized way, what facilitates the use of one compartment, so to speak, over others? The existing literature has supported at least four factors, which we discuss in turn below: category accessibility, perceiver goals, category fit, and category distinctiveness.

### 2.2.1 | Category accessibility

The more accessible a social category, the more likely a perceiver is to use that category over alternative categories for construing targets. Category accessibility refers to the ease with which a category is retrieved from memory (Bruner, 1957; Higgins, 1996). In general, the factors that can increase a category's accessibility can be situational or chronic. For example, drawing perceivers' attention to students' college majors (i.e., making students' majors temporarily accessible) has been shown to cause perceivers to regard students as highly stereotypic of their majors, but not very stereotypic of their universities (and vice-versa; van Rijswijk & Ellemers, 2002). As another example, perceivers

who are chronically higher in racism—for whom race is likely to be highly accessible—have indeed been shown to be more likely to use race, but not gender, as a social category for organizing their memories of who says what during an impression formation task (Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glas, 1992). Finally, one recent set of experiments found that when perceivers are repeatedly asked to recall targets' gender groups, they become less accurate at recalling targets' age groups (Palma, Garcia-Marques, Marques, Hagá, & Payne, 2019). In the context of intersectional stereotyping, findings such as these suggest that if one social category is made highly accessible, perceivers will use that category *over alternatives* as a basis for stereotyping and behaving toward social targets.

### 2.2.2 | Perceiver goals

The more a particular social category serves a perceiver's goals, the more likely a perceiver is to use that category over alternatives for construing social targets (Bodenhausen, Todd, & Becker, 2007). For example, in one study, White perceivers learned that they were evaluated either negatively or positively by a Black doctor. When perceivers learned that the Black doctor had evaluated them negatively (vs. positively), negative stereotypes related to the category *Black* became highly accessible in their minds, and positive stereotypes related to the category *doctor* became inaccessible. Thus, perceivers cognitively accentuated social category stereotypes in ways that aligned with their goals—in this example, with the goal of maintaining a positive self-image (Sinclar & Kunda, 1999; see also Mussweiler, Gabrial, & Bodenhausen, 2000). In addition, accumulating evidence suggests that patterns of intersectional invisibility may likewise be contingent on perceivers' goals. That is, when perceivers view targets' social groups (e.g., race) as goal-irrelevant, they may fail to attend to and notice these group memberships—but when perceivers *do* regard targets' social groups as goal-relevant, these social groups may come sharply into focus (Neel & Lassetter, 2019). The upshot of this is that which categories perceivers attend to at a given moment time, and critically, which categories perceivers do not attend to, are likely to be dependent on what goals are guiding their thoughts and behaviors in the moment.

### 2.2.3 | Category fit

The more a category appears to "fit" a social context, the more likely a perceiver is to use it for construing social targets (Bruner, 1957; Turner et al., 1987). In the social realm, Oakes and colleagues argued that fit comes in one of two forms (e.g., Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991): *normative fit* and *comparative fit*. Normative fit describes the extent to which a category is stereotypically associated with a context. For example, in the United States, the criminal justice system is a stereotypically racialized social context (e.g., Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004). As such, perceivers in criminal justice contexts should stereotype targets on the basis of their racial groups more than on the basis of their other identities (e.g., their sexual orientation groups: Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019a, Experiment 1). Comparative fit describes the extent to which a category correlates with patterns of intergroup behavior in a social context. If a perceiver were to walk into a room where a bunch of older adults were arguing with a bunch of young adults, for example, *age* would provide good comparative fit to the context. This is because in this moment, age would correlate with who is doing what. If in contrast a perceiver were to walk into a room where women (regardless of age) were arguing with men (regardless of age), then *gender* would provide good comparative fit to the context. The premise that comparative fit influences which social categories perceivers use has received much empirical support. For example, when comparative fit emphasizes targets' political parties (Pietraszewski et al., 2015) or basketball teams (Kurzban, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2001), perceivers have been shown to view targets as relatively interchangeable with other members of their political parties and basketball teams, respectively. Relevant to the topic of intersectional stereotyping is that perceivers *do not*, in these moments, tend to view targets as interchangeable with other members of their racial groups (see also Klauer, Hölzenbein, Calanchini, & Sherman, 2014).

## 2.2.4 | Category distinctiveness

The more distinctive a social categorization is in a social context, the more likely a perceiver is to use that category over alternatives for construing social targets. A well-known property of the mind is that distinctive information tends to be attention-grabbing (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976; McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978). Thus, if a target person has a social identity that is distinctive in a given social environment, it should be more likely than competing identities to grab the perceiver's attention. Suppose for example that the focal target in a given social environment is a South-Asian woman. According to the principle of distinctiveness, this South-Asian woman would be more noticeably "womanish" when surrounded by South-Asian men than when surrounded by White women. In the former context, *gender* would be the social category that optimizes perceptions of this woman's distinctiveness. In the latter context, *ethnicity* would be the social category that optimizes perceptions of this woman's distinctiveness. Although social identity theorists have tended to reject this hypothesis (e.g., Oakes, 1994), there is some support for the idea that distinctive identities indeed activate identity-relevant stereotypes in the minds of perceivers (e.g., Biernat & Vescio, 1993; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). There is not compelling evidence yet, however, that distinctive identities can also draw the perceiver's attention away from competing identities—but this prediction is highly sensible and is worth empirically testing.

## 2.3 | Using these assumptions to explain intersectional stereotyping

This final section illustrates how compartmentalization assumptions can be used to make sense of divergent findings in the literature on intersectional stereotyping. As well, this section considers when it should be the case when perceivers stereotype targets in light of complex, intersectional categories (e.g., *older Black men*) versus more simplistic, non-intersectional categories (e.g., *old people*).

## 2.3.1 | Race-by-age stereotyping

In some experiments, researchers have found that racial stereotyping is contingent on targets' age groups. For example, a well-established racial bias is that perceivers are relatively quick to identify anger on the faces of Black men (vs. White men; e.g., Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003). Interestingly, however, this perceptual bias has been shown to depend on whether the targets are *old-aged* or not. When Black men are old-aged (vs. younger), perceivers take longer to identify expressions of anger on their faces, and perceivers likewise become faster to identify expressions of happiness (Kang & Chasteen, 2009; Kang, Chasteen, Cadieux, Cary, & Syeda, 2014). In still other experiments, however, perceivers have been shown to respond in virtually indistinguishable ways to old-aged versus younger Black men. This pattern can be observed on the weapons identification task. A well-established racial bias on this task is that perceivers are faster to distinguish criminal objects (e.g., guns) from innocuous objects (e.g., tools) when they are primed with the faces of Black men relative to White men (Eberhardt et al., 2004; Payne, 2001). According to Lundberg and colleagues, perceivers' racial biases on this task—which index stereotype activation—occur in equal measure when the targets are *older* Black men as when they are young-adult Black men (Lundberg et al., 2018). What is more is that the same is true even when the stimulus faces are of children (Todd, Simpson, Thiem, & Neel, 2016; Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016). Thus, while there are clearly situations in which perceivers' racial stereotypes are differentially applied to old-aged versus younger Black targets, clearly too there are other situations in which perceivers' stereotypes are activated in equal measure in response to old-aged versus younger Black targets. Compartmentalization assumptions can help reconcile these divergent findings. It may be the case that by default, perceivers are inclined to attend to targets' age groups *and* racial groups simultaneously (e.g., Kang et al., 2014). However, in the context of the weapons identification task perceivers may be so inclined to attend to race that they do not—at least

in these moments—pay any attention to targets' age groups (Todd, Simpson, et al., 2016; Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016).

### 2.3.2 | Race-by-sexual orientation stereotyping

There is strong evidence that at least some of the time, perceivers respond differently to gay versus heterosexual Black men. For example, when Black men are implicated as being gay (vs. not), perceivers have been shown to characterize these men as more hirable than they would otherwise (Pedulla, 2014). In addition, perceivers have been shown to exhibit an automatic preference for the faces of gay Black men over the faces of heterosexual Black men (Remedios, Chasteen, Rule, & Plaks, 2011). On top of all this, there is some evidence that perceivers regard gay Black men as *de-racialized* relative to their presumptively heterosexual counterparts—as seeming altogether "less Black," and even as more stereotypically White (Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019b).

The above studies suggest that at least some of the time, perceivers respond to gay versus heterosexual Black men in very different ways. But according to compartmentalization assumptions, there should also be contexts in which perceivers respond to these men in identical ways. That is, if gay and heterosexual Black men are being categorized by what they have in common—for example, their racial groups—one would expect these men to be stereotyped similarly. In line with this possibility, a study by Petsko and Bodenhausen (2019a, Experiment 1) showed that the tendency to exhibit an anti-Black bias in judging Black defendants accused of "street crimes" was *not* reduced when the defendant was also known to be gay. The high normative fit between the defendant's race and the alleged crime (given prevalent social stereotypes about race and crime; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997) offers a compelling reason why race would dominate over sexual orientation information in this specific context.

### 2.3.3 | Race-by-gender stereotyping

Although compartmentalization assumptions are not often used in the domain of intersectional stereotyping, when they have been used, they have been used to examine race-by-gender stereotyping. In particular, these assumptions have guided research on how it is that perceivers stereotype East-Asian women. An advantage of focusing on stereotypes about East-Asian women is that in the United States, stereotypes relating to East-Asian identities are occasionally at odds with stereotypes relating to women's gender identities (but see: Galinsky, Hall, & Cuddy, 2013; Johnson et al., 2012). Whereas East-Asian individuals tend to be stereotyped as quantitatively skilled (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000), women tend to be stereotyped as *not* quantitatively skilled (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999). If perceivers stereotype targets in a compartmentalized way, then East-Asian women ought to seem more quantitively skilled when categorized by their race than when categorized by their gender. Indeed, the empirical literature lends support to this view (Pittinsky, Shih, & Trahan, 2006; Rattan, Steele, & Ambady, 2019). In addition, categorizing Asian women as *Asian* has been shown to cause perceivers to cognitively inhibit stereotypes relating to the category *women* (and vice-versa: Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne, 1995), and it has also been shown to cause perceivers to extrapolate that these women have other stereotypically Asian (but not other stereotypically feminine) attributes (Craig & Bodenhausen, 2018).

More recent research documents that when (White) participants are completing an evaluative implicit association test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), their racial bias in favor of Whites over Blacks plummets when they are instructed to categorize faces by gender (male vs. female). But conversely, when participants are instructed to categorize faces by *race*, the reverse is true (that is, in these contexts, their gender bias plummets: Yamaguchi & Beattie, in press). Similar results are emerging in research on participants' neural responses to faces. Specifically, participants' P200 amplitudes—which are components of an event-related potential that vary in response to seeing Black versus White faces as well as to seeing male versus female faces (Ito & Senholzi, 2013; Ito & Urland, 2005)—

seem to have two distinct principal components: one whose amplitude varies in response to targets' race (but not to targets' gender), and one whose amplitude varies in response to targets' gender (but not to targets' race). Interestingly, when participants are instructed to categorize targets by race, the P200 component that responds to gender becomes attenuated, and when participants are instructed to categorize targets by gender, the reverse is true (Volpert-Esmond & Bartholow, 2019). This evidence is all highly consistent with the perspective of compartmentalization assumptions.

## 3 | CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Intersectional stereotyping has been examined, at least in recent years, from the perspective of models that either assume too much stability in the stereotypes perceivers apply to targets (i.e., models with dominance assumptions), or that assume too little stability in the stereotypes perceivers apply to targets (i.e., models with integration assumptions). The present paper argues that researchers should give greater consideration to a third theoretical possibility—the possibility that perceivers focus their attention on just one category (or one intersection of categories) at a time when stereotyping intersectional targets. This possibility, termed compartmentalization, assumes that social categorization is indeed flexible, but that this flexibility is subject to predictable and falsifiable constraints.

Compartmentalization assumptions imply that categorizing someone in light of an intersection (e.g., as a *gay Black man*) does not happen by default. Instead, perceivers are expected to use intersectional categories only when those categories are accessible, when they "fit" the broader social context, and/or when those intersections are rare (and thus, attention-grabbing) in an environment. Although this claim is sensible from the perspective of compartmentalization models (e.g., Turner et al., 1987), it has not, to our knowledge, been systematically examined in the context of intersectional stereotyping. It would be useful for intersectional stereotyping researchers to examine this topic further. As an example, we previously mentioned that perceivers tend to exhibit backlash against White women when these women behave in agentic ways, but that perceivers do not exhibit backlash against Black women for exhibiting these same behaviors (at least according to one study: Livingston et al., 2012). It is entirely possible that this pattern *only* emerges when perceivers are categorizing Black women in light of their intersectional identities—that is, as *Black women*. If in contrast perceivers were categorizing these women as *women*, they may exhibit as much backlash against Black women as they exhibit against White women. A broader implication of this reasoning is that very different targets, like 14-year-old Asian boys and 65-year-old Asian women, might be stereotyped as *indistinguishable* from each other when a category they have in common—here, race—is made sufficiently salient to perceivers. However, these same two targets may also be stereotyped in oppositional ways in other moments (if, for example, their age groups are made salient to perceivers, instead). Dedicating time and resources to investigating this possibility would be hugely informative for the domain of intersectional stereotyping research.

Another area in need of exploration concerns *when* perceivers are likely to use intersectional categories in lieu of more simplistic, non-intersectional categories for thinking about social targets. One hypothesis is that perceivers will only use intersectional categories when they have existing stereotypes for what members of particular intersections are like. This is to say that if perceivers do not have any pre-existing beliefs about what gay Hispanic men are like, they may tend to categorize these men in light of non-intersectional categories (e.g., *Hispanic people* and/or *gay men*) as opposed to intersectional categories (i.e., *gay Hispanic men*). The possibility that a perceiver's intersectional stereotypes may be constrained only to intersections with which the perceiver has familiarity is one that contradicts the reasoning of integration models. As such, an examination of whether these constraints exist on intersectional stereotyping could provide a novel contribution to this research area.

In summary, prevalent theories of person perception argue either that a) perceivers inevitably attend to some social identities more than others when stereotyping intersectional targets (Sidanius et al., 2018), or that b) perceivers cannot help but to attend to all social identities at once when stereotyping intersectional targets (Freeman et al., in press). In contrast to these perspectives, we argue that perceivers may attend to just one social identity

(or one intersection of identities) at a time when stereotyping intersectional targets. This perspective has the power to explain contradictory research findings in the literature on intersectional stereotyping. In addition, this perspective can be used to generate new hypotheses about how perceivers engage in intersectional stereotyping. Because compartmentalization assumptions argue that social categories trade off in the minds of perceivers, they make predictions about when targets should *not* be likely to face particular kinds of stereotyping. The applicability of compartmentalization assumptions to the specific case of intersectional identities is a relatively new proposition that requires much more empirical exploration. Such work may reveal that the multifarious nature of social identity can indeed be well managed by a compartmentalization algorithm—one that uses the current context to flexibly select the categorical lens through which social targets can be most meaningfully perceived.

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### FURTHER READING

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