Organizational Lay Theories of Intelligence and Trust Among Minority Women

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Organizational lay theories are beliefs held by organizations regarding the fixed versus malleable nature of abilities and intelligence. Past research found that predominantly White women trust in an organization that described an entity mindset (i.e., fixed) and perform better visuospatially (Emerson and Murphy, 2015). Yet, less is understood about the role of trust and organizational commitment in racial and ethnic minority women. We submitted women's performance to a 2 (Race group: Black, Latina) x 2 (Organizational Mindset: entity, incremental) x 2 (Belief Type: entity, incremental) ANOVA to test our predictions.

**Method**

We submitted the participants to the visuospatial matrices task. Findings revealed that both groups trusted the incremental organization more, but for the African American women, as we had predicted, the interaction effect was driven by the fact that Black women did significantly worse on the matrices task if they completed moderate scales first than if they completed the manipulation first. The interaction effect was driven by the fact that Black women did significantly worse on the matrices task if they completed moderate scales first than if they completed the manipulation first, F(1, 156) = 3.51, p < .05. In contrast, Latina women, order of completing the moderate scales had no impact on their performance, F < 1.

**Organizational Trust**

We submitted women's ratings of trust in an organization as a mediator. The results revealed that women who trusted the incremental organization more also rated the empirical organization more, F(1, 153) = 3.86, p < .05; Black and Latina women did not differ in their ratings of trust for the incremental organization, F < 1.

**Visuospatial Performance**

The current study provides support for our manipulation as a predictor of levels of trust among minority women. Both groups trusted the entity organization as higher in incremental beliefs than the entity organization, F(1, 156) = 7.93, p < .01; and a significant mindset condition-by-order interaction, F(1, 153) = 3.02, p = .09. The interaction effect was driven by the fact that Black women did significantly worse on the matrices task if they completed moderate scales first than if they completed the manipulation first, F(1, 156) = 5.55, p < .05; in contrast, women who read the incremental version performed equally well in both order conditions, F < 1.

**Limitations/Future Research**

What Organizations Can Do

Organizations that promote an incremental mindset—such as those depicted in Image 2—might foster identity safety among their workforce (Emerson & Murphy, 2014), which would help communities not only avoid stigmatization among their minority members, but also work to buffer against a stereotypical context of intellectual performance for African American women. A growth mindset is not only influenced by the personal views of leadership in a company, but also present in an organization’s materials (i.e., mission and diversity statements). To show inclusivity and belief that intelligence is malleable fosters a context that values minorities.

**Discussion**

Both groups trusted the incremental organization more, but for the African American women, the effect was much larger, meaning they trusted the entity organization less than the incremental organization. Organizational lay theories, shared beliefs among an organization concerning the nature of intelligence, have been shown to affect the way that women view intelligence, have been shown to serve as a cue for trust among minority women. Individuals’ perceptions of organizational members reflect the inferences of various values they project to the organization (Murphy & Dweck, 2010). The current study’s lay theory of intelligence has been shown to affect an individual’s self-presentation, their positive view of the environment, and, in part, their downstream judgments of intelligence regarding others. As opposed to individual perceptions of intelligence. Murphy and Dweck (2010) analyzed the values that the setting evoked, either as an approach of accomplishing people who are “naturally” brilliant (i.e., entity mindset) or a focus on effort and learning (i.e., incremental mindset).

Reflection on past empirical findings followed by completing a progressive matrices task might have led to a non-linear perception because stereotypes concerning intellectually inferior skill for African American women (Emerson & Murphy, 2014). After observing no effect for Latina women, we might presume that the progressive matrices task was not a non-stereotyped context.

**References**

