

Stereotype Threat

Minorities in a group are conscious of (and anxious about): (i) their status; (ii) stereotypes of that minority; (iii) the need to overcome that stereotype; (iv) the need to combat it as a representative of their minority

See Steele, Spencer, Aaronson, Quinn...

- In sports

- black/white athletes hit more/less hoops when reminded of race

- In math tests

- women do worse when reminded of their gender prior to the test (merely recording their gender, or having male instead of female proctors)

➡ an explanation for the 15% gap between women and men's performance on the Physics GRE?

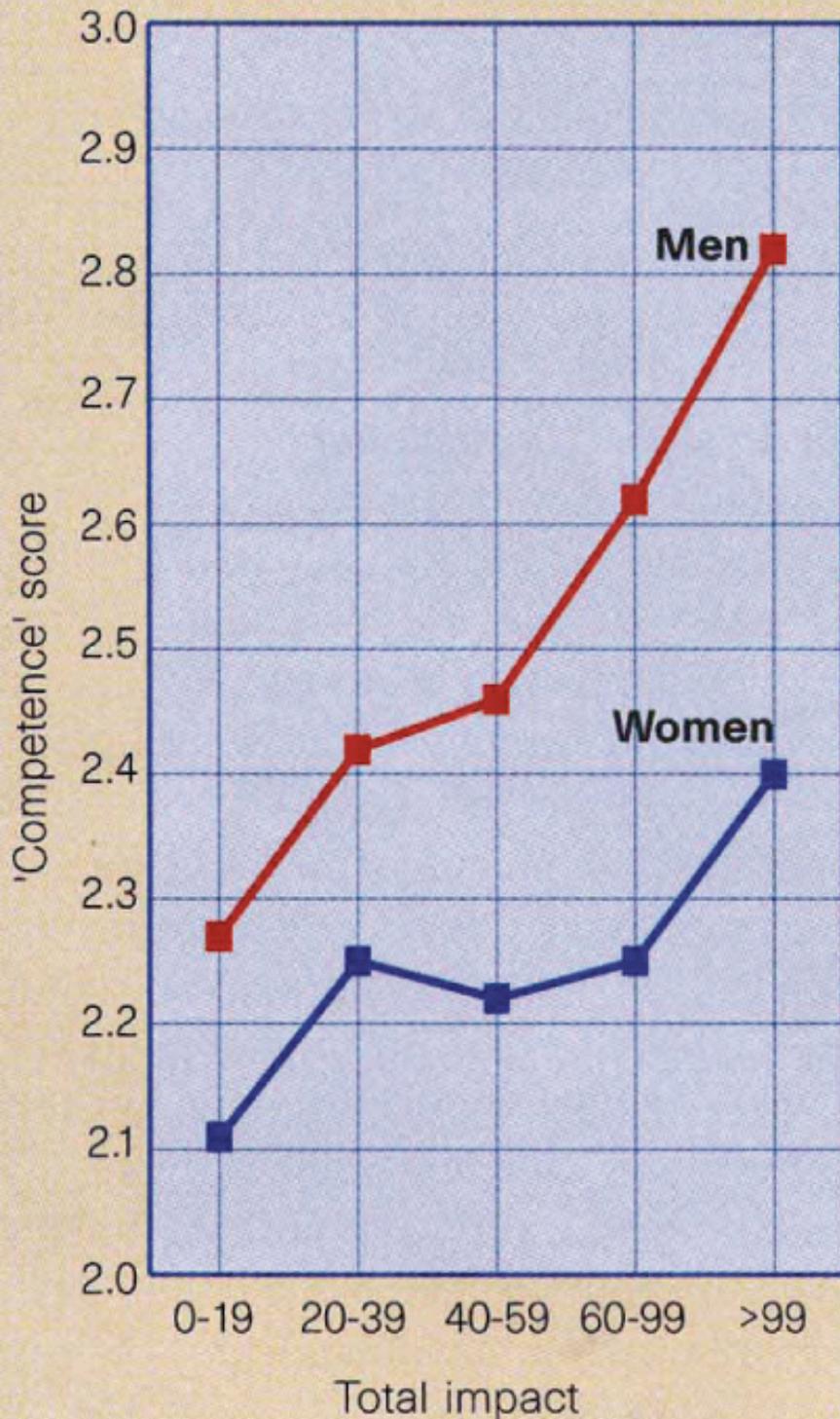
- asians do better when reminded of their race

Unconscious Bias

Weneras & Wold (1997) commentary in Nature:

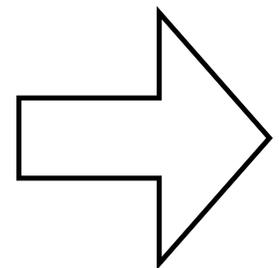
- looked at prestigious postdocs awarded in 1995 by the Swedish Medical Research council
 - 52/62 female/male applicants, 4/16 female/male awards. Why?
 - applications peer-reviewed, each application assigned score (0-4) for “scientific competence”, “
 - women scored systematically lower than men in all three, particularly for “scientific competence”
- to objectively evaluate a scientists “impact” on the field
 - authors assigned their own score from number of publication, number of 1st author publications, citations for each, and taking account prestige of journal

Unconscious Bias



- Only the group of women with impact scores greater than 100 were peer-reviewed to be as competent as any of the groups of men
- Note: no error bars on plot BUT differences must be significant otherwise you would have 50/50 success rate

➔ question your own evaluation of any scientist's "competence"



Unconscious Bias

- Biases in evaluation

- Moving to “blind” auditions for orchestras increased percentage of women’s chances of getting beyond first round by 50%
- Evaluators gave systematically lower job performance scores to women if under time pressure (Martell, 1991)
 - ➡ reviewers of applicants to grad school/postdocs/faculty should spend at least 5 minutes on every application
- Asked to assign success at a task due to “luck” or “skill” more women than men were systematically judged by both women and men to be “lucky” (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974)
 - ➡ reviewers should question their own evaluation of a candidate
 - ➡ reviewers should question any letter-writer’s evaluation

Unconscious Bias

- Biases in selection

- A study of front covers of Time Magazine found that when one person was chosen to represent a topic, it was invariably the stereotype, but if many were chosen there was usually diversity (Valerie Purdie - Yale)
- ➡ Move as much as possible to “cluster-hiring”, rather than the traditional mode of filling one-job-at-a-time. Even hiring 2 people at once makes a difference.

Unconscious Bias

- A study comparing recommendations by both women and men (Trix & Psenka, 2003) for 300 successful applicants to a medical school found letters written for women candidates
 - were shorter
 - raised more doubts
 - talked about them as teachers/students rather than researchers/professionals
- ➡ writers should carefully review their own letters for these characteristics
- ➡ reviewers should question their own evaluation of a candidate
- ➡ reviewers should question any letter-writer's evaluation

Unconscious Bias

- A study comparing evaluations by both women and men of a resume randomly assigned a male/female name found
 - both men and women rated the resume lower if it was from a woman (Steinpreis, Anders & Ritzke, 1999).
 - ➡ reviewers should question their own evaluation of a candidate
 - the effect is increased if there are fewer women in the pool (Heilman, 1980)
 - ➡ search committees should ensure their applicant pool and their short list is diverse as possible - interview at least 2 women!