

# In Good Company: When Gender Diversity Boosts a Company's Reputation

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Leigh S. Wilton<sup>1</sup>, Diana T. Sanchez<sup>2</sup>, Miguel M. Unzueta<sup>3</sup>,  
Cheryl Kaiser<sup>4</sup>, and Nava Caluori<sup>5</sup>

## Abstract

Many companies highlight their gender diversity, in part to signal positive attributes about the organization. We explored whether or not advertising gender diversity improves White men's beliefs about an organization. In four studies, we found that White men expected a company to have a more broadminded and tolerant climate when the company noted it was gender diverse—and the gender diversity was described as including White women—as compared to when it did not address its gender diversity. In Studies 1 ( $n = 105$ ), 2 ( $n = 101$ ), and 3 ( $n = 151$ ), a White gender-diverse organization was also viewed as more prestigious than an organization that did not address its gender diversity. In Studies 3 and 4 ( $n = 183$ ), a gender-diverse company that highlighted a Black woman employee did not receive the same overall reputation boosts as the White gender-diverse company did. Our research indicates that companies that advertise their gender diversity may receive a boost to their reputation. We suggest that this research can inform organizational efforts to address gender diversity by encouraging companies to consider the intersection of gender and race in shaping both prejudicial attitudes and the experiences of minority groups. *Additional online materials for this article are available on PWQ's website at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0361684318800264>*

## Keywords

gender, diversity, organizations, race

Over the past few decades, women have made strides toward gaining parity in the workplace. Just 70 years ago, women made up only approximately 29% of the labor force; today, they comprise about half of it, signaling a rise in gender diversity across U.S. companies (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). At the same time, U.S. companies have increasingly promoted their gender diversity in promotional materials. Researchers have estimated that about half of midsize companies and a majority of Fortune 500 U.S. companies state some formal commitment to diversity efforts (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). Diversity is commonly extolled in the modern workplace (Avery & McKay, 2006; Brief, 2008; Collins, 2011a; Crisp & Turner, 2011; Mannix & Neale, 2005; McKay & Avery, 2005). And, organizations may believe that promoting their gender diversity will benefit the organization by improving its reputation. Corporate reputation can increase earnings and investor confidence, so companies are often motivated to enhance the way they are publicly viewed in order to boost their overall success (Luchs, Stuebs, & Sun, 2009). However, while companies primarily focus on the organizational benefits that diversity can bring, such as increased profits, creativity, and different perspectives, it is unclear whether or not emphasizing gender diversity will actually improve how a company is perceived.

In the present research, we investigated whether White men viewed companies that emphasize their gender diversity as more broadminded (e.g., tolerant, unbiased, open to ideas) or prestigious (e.g., successful, highly reputable, well-established). We focused on White men's beliefs about gender-diverse companies because they most frequently occupy positions of power and influence within corporations (Catalyst, 2017a). For example, among S&P 500 companies, men occupy 78.8% of board seats and 94.8% of CEO positions (Catalyst, 2017b). White men are particularly effective allies in the fight for gender equality (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Eliezer & Major, 2012); unlike women and men of color, White men who advocate for workplace diversity are not penalized via lower performance

<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychology, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY, USA

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ, USA

<sup>3</sup> Anderson School of Management, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

<sup>4</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

<sup>5</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Leigh S. Wilton, Department of Psychology, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866, USA.

Email: [lwilton@skidmore.edu](mailto:lwilton@skidmore.edu)

ratings (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Yang, 2017). Therefore, their perceptions of diverse companies are particularly influential. White men may be most likely to support organizational gender diversity if they believe it will also benefit the company in other ways, such as by improving the company's reputation. On the one hand, gender-diverse companies are viewed as fair and just (Kaiser et al., 2013), and diversity is associated with creativity (Austin, 1997; Milliken, Bartel, & Kurtzberg, 2003), so White men may view a company that promotes its gender diversity positively due to these benefits. On the other hand, White individuals may be threatened by and react defensively to diversity (Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2016), and gender bias remains a serious workplace issue (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Phelan, 2008), so White men could view a company that promotes its gender diversity negatively. We also tested whether White men's gender diversity beliefs differed depending on the race of the women who are identified as contributing to the diversity.

### **Does Advertising a Company's Gender Diversity Improve Its Corporate Reputation?**

Over the past few decades, companies have become increasingly interested in diversifying their workforce, and gender (and race) diversity is almost universally included in such initiatives (Collins, 2011a; Kravitz et al., 1997; McKay & Avery, 2005). Proponents of the "business case for diversity" argue that diversity enhances a workplace by broadening employee perspectives and capabilities, enriching understanding of or attractiveness to new markets, or improving corporate reputation or public image. Companies may also be motivated to recruit and retain women as employees to avoid legal examination in the form of lawsuits (Brief, 2008; Collins, 2011b; McKay & Avery, 2005; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Consequently, companies frequently advertise their gender diversity as a key component of their corporate strategy and success (Richard, 2000; Unzueta & Binning, 2010).

Many researchers have studied corporate diversity broadly and gender diversity specifically. Scholars have examined how gender diversity influences important organizational outcomes such as turnover or performance (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), how women on small teams are perceived and evaluated (Baugh & Graen, 1997; West, Heilman, Gullett, Moss-Racusin, & Magee, 2012), and how diversity structures such as affirmative action influence perceptions of companies and women (Brady, Kaiser, Major, & Kirby, 2015; Heilman & Blader, 2001; Heilman, Block, & Stathatos, 1997; Kaiser et al., 2013). Most of the research specifically examining perceptions of diverse companies has focused on whether underrepresented group members, and particularly racial and ethnic minorities, like or trust the company (Brady et al., 2015; McKay & Avery, 2005; Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008; see also Kaiser et al.,

2013). In related work, expert financial evaluators valued a company's stock differently based on the management teams' racial diversity and educational background (Sauer, Thomas-Hunt, & Morris, 2010), demonstrating that a company's demographic make-up can signal important information about a company's reputation. Little to no prior work has examined whether people, and particularly White men, expect gender-diverse companies to have important reputational qualities, such as broadmindedness or prestige.

Based on the existing literature, there are several reasons to expect White men to evaluate a gender-diverse company negatively. First, high status group members, including White men, react negatively to messages about increasing diversity (Eibach & Keegan, 2006; Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta, 2014; Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006; Norton & Sommers, 2011; Unzueta, Gutiérrez, & Ghavami, 2010; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014), which could work against a gender-diverse company's reputation. White individuals do not support diversity policies when they believe that these policies will harm ingroup members (Knowles et al., 2014) or when the diversity policy is construed as targeting or excluding individuals on the basis of social identity (Collins, 2011a, 2011b; Kravitz et al., 1997; Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2007; Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). White men may even experience cardiovascular threat after believing that they would interview at a diversity-promoting company (Dover et al., 2016). Beyond perceptions of diversity, all members of gender-diverse teams rated each other as less effective (Baugh & Graen, 1997) and expressed less interest in working together (West et al., 2012) compared to all members of less gender-diverse teams.

Moreover, working women are often negatively stereotyped as indecisive, submissive, and less competent than men (Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2008; see also Prentice & Carranza, 2002), particularly when they are associated with diversity programs such as affirmative action (Heilman, Battle, Keller, & Lee, 1998; Heilman, Block, & Lucas, 1992; Heilman & Welle, 2006). They are also penalized for behaving agentically in the workplace (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001) due to a desire to maintain a male-dominated gender hierarchy (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). If White men expect these negatively stereotyped behaviors to be prevalent at companies with larger percentages of women employees, they may not view gender-diverse companies as more reputable.

However, we also have reason to believe that advertising gender diversity could improve a company's reputation and specifically boost the way White men view its corporate climate and prestige. Companies with official diversity programs, including those addressing gender diversity, are seen as more trustworthy, fair, and committed to diversity, even if they only serve to ironically legitimize discrimination (Brady et al., 2015; Kaiser et al., 2013; McKay & Avery, 2005). Analysis of actual companies has shown that, in some cases, gender diversity on a company's board can improve a firm's

social performance and reputation (Bear, Rahman, & Post, 2010; Boulouta, 2013), as well as lead to greater corporate success and innovation (Campbell & Mínguez-Vera, 2008; Dezsö & Ross, 2012; Krishnan & Park, 2005; Lückerath-Rovers & De Bos, 2011; Post & Byron, 2015; Terjesen, Couto, & Francisco, 2015; see also Badal & Harter, 2014; Fenwick & Neal, 2001; Pletzer, Nikolova, Kedzior, & Voelpel, 2015). Based on these data, people may expect that gender diversity is tied to a more capable workforce and, thus, a more prestigious institution. Moreover, when organizations do not accommodate gender diversity, both men and women suffer declines in well-being, with the lowest psychological well-being reported in male-dominated work units (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004). Thus, it could be that the presence of gender diversity leads to boosted perceptions of company reputation.

### Racially Diverse Gender Diversity

People concurrently categorize and perceive others by multiple social groups (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007), so their expectations of a gender-diverse organization may also be shaped by the race of the women at the organization. Gender and race are two of the most salient and meaningful social categories that perceivers use to form impressions of others (Fiske, 2002), and they are particularly relevant categories in explorations of workplace diversity-related judgments. Both women and racial and ethnic minorities have historical experiences with workplace discrimination and, consequently, organizations almost universally address both gender and race in their diversity efforts (J. M. Bell & Hartman, 2007; Kravitz et al., 1997). Yet, little to none of the existing gender diversity research has systematically explored whether gender diversity expectations vary by other social identities, such as race. More specific to the current research, the expectations that White men have about a gender-diverse company may be different depending on whether the company is described as including White women or women of color.

A large portion of the existing research in which researchers have examined the joint role of gender and race in the workplace has focused on whether or not Black women risk discriminatory or biased treatment due to either—or both—their gender or race (i.e., *double jeopardy*; Beal, 1970). In the organizational gender-diversity literature, researchers have primarily failed to specifically consider the beliefs that individuals have about gender-diverse organizations that include non-White women; therefore, we examined the existing research on perceptions of individuals to offer insights concerning the reputations of gender-diverse companies that include Black women. A gender-diverse company that highlights Black women employees may contend with both negative gender and race stereotypes and stigmas, which could dampen perception of the company's reputation. Black women are among the lowest earning and most constrained

demographic segments in the U.S. workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2014; Catalyst, 2004; Dozier, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns, 2015); and, in 2017, there were no Black women CEOs of any Fortune 500 company (Warner & Corley, 2017). Black women also often experience higher levels of workplace harassment than either White women or Black and White men (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Buchanan, Settles, & Woods, 2008), and they can receive more negative evaluations than both Black men and White women (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Black women remain “invisible”—they lack differentiation or individuation among group members, what Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) call “intersectional invisibility”—because they do not fit prototypical definitions of either their gender or race (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Black women are remembered less often, rated as less physically attractive, and incorrectly categorized as men more than either White women or Black and White men (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Based on these data, we suggest that gender-diverse organizations that include Black women may be viewed as less prestigious and less broadminded compared to those that only include White women.

However, other researchers have failed to find that Black women experience undue disadvantage in the workplace, with Black women managers advancing within their organizations at rates comparable to White women (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Nkomo & Cox, 1989). Moreover, the combination of race and gender can combine in unique ways that advantage Black women, relative to those with single subordinate identities (i.e., Black men or White women), in workplace contexts. Black women escaped gender bias when they were described as working in successful, mixed-sex work teams because they were not viewed as prototypical women; only White women working in mixed-sex teams were rated as less competent (Biernat & Sesko, 2013; Epstein, 1973). Black women managers (like White men) were also not penalized for displaying agentic behavior (e.g., independence and assertiveness), whereas White women and Black men were (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). This suggests that gender-diverse organizations that include Black women may be viewed as similarly—or even as more—prestigious and broadminded as those that only include White women. Consequently, in the current research, we also examined the expectations that White men have about gender-diverse organizations that feature White women versus Black women.

### Current Research and Hypotheses

In a series of four studies, we examined whether White men confer reputational boosts upon companies that advertise their gender diversity (Studies 1 and 2) and whether the inclusion of women of color influences these perceptions (Studies 3 and 4). First, because individuals most frequently affirm that diversity can broaden perspectives (e.g., Crisp & Turner, 2011; Pelled, 1996), we expected White men to view (White)

gender-diverse companies as having a more broadminded work climate than companies that do not advertise their gender diversity. Second, given that White men believe that gender-diverse companies are just and fair (Brady et al., 2015; Kaiser et al., 2013; McKay & Avery, 2005) and successful (Post & Byron, 2015), they may rate companies that advertise their (White) gender diversity as more prestigious. However, we were less certain about this secondary hypothesis, given the large amount of evidence that White men can feel threatened by and react defensively to diversity (Dover et al., 2016) and hold negative views about women in the workplace (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Third, we manipulated the race of the gender-diverse organizations in Studies 3 and 4 to explore whether perceived reputational boosts extended to gender-diverse organizations that included Black women. Black women have low status in the workplace (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2014; Catalyst, 2004; Dozier, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns, 2015; Rosette & Livingston, 2012), so gender-diverse companies may not experience the same reputational boost if they highlight their Black (vs. White) women employees. Yet Black women can also avoid penalty for agentic behavior (e.g., E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Biernat & Sesko, 2013; Livingston et al., 2012; Nkomo & Cox, 1989), suggesting that gender-diverse organizations that include Black women may be viewed as similarly prestigious and broadminded as those that only include White women. Consequently, we did not have firm predictions for how perceivers would view companies that included Black women.

All study measures and manipulations were developed for the present research and are reported in the Online Supplemental Materials at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0361684318800264>. In this current article, we focus only on the measures that we collected across all four studies. We report all additional, non-repeated measures and results collected from Studies 2–4 in the Online Supplemental Materials (see Wilton, 2015, for additional measures and results collected in Study 1). Data are available from the first author via email.

## Studies 1 and 2

In Studies 1 and 2, we sought to determine how White men perceive gender diversity. Specifically, because we explored competing hypotheses in Study 1 in an exploratory fashion, we used the same materials and measures in Study 2 to conduct a direct replication of the results in Study 1. In both studies, we experimentally manipulated whether or not a company addressed its gender diversity in a brochure. Participants then rated the institution's prestige and broadmindedness. We expected White men to evaluate companies as more prestigious and broadminded when they advertised their (White) gender diversity relative to companies that did not advertise their gender diversity.

## Method

### Participants and Design

For both Studies 1 and 2, sample sizes were set at 50 per cell to achieve the minimum of 30–40 participants per condition suggested for between-subjects designs without a priori effect sizes (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011). The studies had a between-subjects design with two conditions, so we aimed to collect data from 100 participants for each study before conducting analyses. We proceeded with data analyses if the number of remaining participants (after data exclusions) was within 5% of the participant target goal of 50. We invited White men who self-identified as being (1) currently employed, attending school, or being closely affiliated with an organization; (2) fluent in English; and (3) currently residing in the United States to participate in the study via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and excluded people who did not meet these inclusionary criteria (see below). Prior to data collection, we also determined that any participants who failed a manipulation check after two tries would be excluded from analyses (see below for more information on the manipulation check).

In Study 1, 105 White men ( $M_{\text{age}} = 37.66$ , standard deviation<sub>age</sub> [ $SD_{\text{age}}$ ] = 11.95) initiated the study and accurately completed the manipulation checks. These individuals self-identified as heterosexual ( $n = 99$ ), gay ( $n = 4$ ), and bisexual ( $n = 2$ ), and politically as Independent ( $n = 39$ ), Republican ( $n = 31$ ), Democrat ( $n = 30$ ), and other ( $n = 5$ ). The educational background of participants was as follows: high school graduate ( $n = 19$ ), associate's degree ( $n = 12$ ), bachelor's degree ( $n = 54$ ), master's degree ( $n = 18$ ), professional degree ( $n = 1$ ), and did not specify ( $n = 1$ ). In Study 2, two participants in the control condition failed the manipulation check after two attempts and were eliminated from analyses, leaving 101 White men in the analytic sample ( $M_{\text{age}} = 33.07$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 10.10$ ). These individuals self-identified as heterosexual ( $n = 93$ ), gay ( $n = 4$ ), and bisexual ( $n = 4$ ); information on political identification and educational background was not collected. All participants received 26 cents in exchange for taking part in the research.

### Procedure and Measures

We recruited participants to take part in a study examining individuals' views of corporations. First, as part of recruitment, people responded to a set of questions that included their gender, race, English fluency, and current organizational status (we restricted access to the survey to people currently located in the United States). People who met the inclusionary criteria (see above) were invited to participate in the study and provided informed consent; those who did not were thanked and not invited to participate in the study. Then, we randomly assigned participants to review one of the two company profiles and asked them to form opinions of the company. The company profile either provided information

demonstrating that the company was diverse in terms of gender (White gender-diverse condition) or no gender information was provided (no-diversity-information condition). In the White gender-diverse condition, the brochure stated that the company was recognized as a top company for women, provided the percentage of women employees (45% overall, 20% in leadership positions), and noted names of two (fictional) White women and two (fictional) White men partners who recently presented at an industry conference. In the no-diversity-information condition, the brochure stated that the company was recognized as a top company for environmental activism (cf. Kaiser et al., 2013), provided statistics on the company's carbon footprint reduction, and noted names of four (fictional) White men partners who recently presented at an industry conference. The full brochures are presented in the Online Supplemental Materials at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0361684318800264>. As a slight modification to the procedures in Study 2, which was not included in Study 1, we asked participants to think about and list five individuals to whom they were close (ostensibly because we were also interested in how close relationships influence people at work). In Study 2, we wanted to explore whether thinking about women with whom they were close would shift our men participants' views about gender diversity. This idea was exploratory and the results were not significant.

In both experimental conditions, participants responded to the following manipulation check question to ensure that they correctly categorized the company's gender diversity: "The company is gender diverse." Response options were "yes," "no," or "there is not enough information to answer the question." To pass the manipulation check, participants in the White gender-diverse condition responded "yes," and participants in the no-diversity-information condition responded either "no" or "there is not enough information to answer the question." Participants who did not correctly recall the company's gender-diversity profile were asked to review the brochure and respond to the questions about the company again, and individuals who did not correctly pass the manipulation check after two attempts were excluded from analyses. In Study 1, all participants passed the manipulation check after two tries or less, and in Study 2, two participants in the gender-homogenous condition failed the manipulation check after two attempts and were eliminated from analyses.

To disguise the experimental interest in gender, we included the manipulation questions among other filler items concerning the information on the company's brochure (e.g., "The company is a software firm") as well as the following two questions to assess the perceived professionalism of the materials: "This brochure looks professional" and "This brochure looks high-quality" (responses ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*;  $r = .84$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The control ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ) and gender-diverse ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ) brochures were rated as equal in professionalism and quality,  $t(103) = -0.88$ ,  $p = .38$ . An independent

sample of 137 White men did not view the gender-diverse or control companies as differing in terms of profitability, number of employees, years in business, or location (all  $ps > .53$ ). To rule out the possibility that participants may have had a bias toward an environmentally active company, we randomly assigned another separate independent sample of 94 White men to review either the gender-diversity company or the environmental-control company used in this research or a new control company that was described as a "top company for employees." They indicated how positive or negative they viewed the company (e.g., "How positively or negatively do you view this company?" 1 = *extremely negatively*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *extremely positively*). The perceived positivity of the White gender-diverse company, the control company noted for environmental activism, and a separate control condition noted for being a "top employer," did not differ,  $F(2, 91) = 0.95$ ,  $p = .39$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$  (all pairwise condition differences  $.58 < p < 1.00$ ). After completing the manipulation checks described above, participants completed the following dependent measures, which were developed for the current research. Unless otherwise specified, participants indicated their agreement with all items using a scale with anchors of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

We originally sought to measure three dependent variables addressing the extent to which participants viewed the company as being broadminded, prestigious, and as having capable employees. Because these variables were highly correlated, we conducted a post-hoc exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction and promax rotation to examine the underlying factor structure among all 15 items measured (5 items that comprised the original prestige measure, 6 items that comprised the original broadmindedness measure, and 4 items that comprised the original employee capabilities measure). Across all four studies, the  $\chi^2$  test of sphericity was significant ( $p < .001$ ), and the Kaiser–Meyer–Oklin measure of sampling adequacy value ranged from .93 to .94. Consistently across all four studies, we found that the same two factors described below were extracted and explained between 64.86% and 74.07% of the cumulative variance. The first factor comprised the prestige and employee capability items and explained between 56.71% and 65.49% of the variance across the four studies. All items loaded at .53 or above on the factor. The second factor comprised all the broadmindedness items, explained between 7.27% and 9.29% of the variance across the four studies, and all items loaded at .64 or above on the factor. In Table 1, we present the scale items, factor loadings and cross-loadings, communalities ( $h^2$ ), means, and  $SD$  for all items in Study 1; this pattern was also observed in Studies 2–4 (see Online Supplemental Materials at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0361684318800264>). The pattern of data does not differ depending on whether we report the two or three dependent variables. Thus, we report the results based on the two variables broadmindedness and prestige (which includes all items in the original employee measure).

**Table 1.** Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Prestige and Broadmindedness Measures in Study 1.

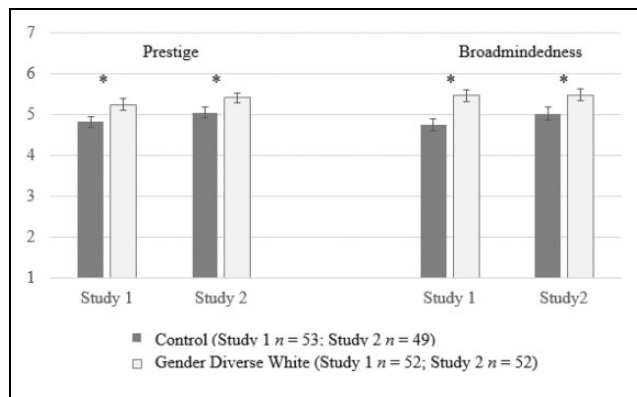
Item No.	Item	Loadings		$h^2$	Mean (SD)
		Factor 1	Factor 2		
1	The company is likely highly reputable	.82	.12	.82	5.06 (1.25)
2	The company is likely prestigious	.94	-.13	.71	4.61 (1.21)
3	The company is likely well-established	.89	-.10	.68	4.86 (1.18)
4	The company is likely a high-quality organization	.80	.14	.83	5.18 (1.26)
5	The company is likely successful	.92	-.11	.70	5.21 (1.03)
6	The individuals who work at the company are likely highly qualified	.64	.27	.74	5.18 (1.05)
7	The individuals who work at the company are likely "best in class"	.81	.05	.71	4.72 (1.28)
8	The individuals who work at the company are likely very capable	.66	.26	.75	5.23 (1.06)
9	The individuals who work at the company are likely extremely competent	.53	.39	.72	5.13 (1.15)
10	The company likely promotes understanding among individuals	-.03	.85	.68	5.12 (1.16)
11	The company likely enables individuals to get to know about others	-.04	.89	.75	5.00 (1.21)
12	The company likely enables individuals to broaden their horizons	.08	.82	.79	5.07 (1.23)
13	The company likely enables individuals to access a variety of ideas and perspectives in decision making	-.01	.91	.81	5.04 (1.22)
14	The company likely encourages acceptance and lack of bias	-.02	.83	.66	5.18 (1.35)
15	The company likely is willing to accept a broader range of ideas	.01	.85	.75	5.13 (1.29)

Note. MTurk participants ( $n = 105$ ) responded on a scale which ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Factor 1 = prestige; Factor 2 = broadmindedness;  $h^2$  = communality; SD = standard deviation.

Prestige was measured with a 9-item scale ( $\alpha_{\text{Study 1}} = .96$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Study 2}} = .92$ ) to assess the perceived prestige and quality of the company and its workers. Broadmindedness was measured with a 6-item scale ( $\alpha_{\text{Study 1}} = .94$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Study 2}} = .95$ ) to assess the extent to which the company is perceived to promote a positive and inclusive organizational culture. All items are listed on Table 1. Finally, participants provided some additional demographic information (e.g., education level) and were thanked and fully debriefed.

## Results and Discussion

To explore how White men evaluated (White) gender-diverse companies relative to non-diverse companies, we conducted independent samples  $t$ -tests on each dependent variable. Means and standard errors ( $SE$ ) are plotted in Figure 1 (and presented in the Online Supplemental Materials at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0361684318800264>); both measures were significantly correlated: Study 1:  $r = .74$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ; Study 2:  $r = .73$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . In both studies, we found that White men evaluated a (White) gender-diverse company as being more prestigious: Study 1:  $t(103) = 2.13$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $d = .42$ ; Study 2:  $t(99) = 2.11$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $d = .42$ ; and broadminded: Study 1:  $t(103) = 3.55$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = .69$ ; Study 2:  $t(99) = 2.20$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = .44$ , compared to the company that did not advertise their gender diversity. From the data, we suggest that companies that advertise their (White) gender diversity may experience a reputation boost compared to companies that do not advertise (White) gender diversity.



**Figure 1.** Mean scores for all dependent measures by company diversity condition for Study 1 and Study 2. Error bars represent standard errors. \* $p < .05$ .

## Study 3

Having found that gender diversity confers reputational boosts for gender-diverse companies in Studies 1 and 2, we sought to test the boundaries of the effect in Study 3. Specifically, we sought to determine whether the reputational boost extends to gender-diverse companies that include women of color. We tested this by adding a third condition to the experimental design used in Studies 1 and 2. In Study 3, participants evaluated a company that advertised its gender diversity by highlighting a Black woman employee.

We expected to again find that White men would evaluate a White gender-diverse company as more broadminded and prestigious compared to a company that did not specifically advertise its gender diversity. However, the research that has

explored how race and gender affect Black women's work-related experiences has been somewhat mixed, with studies suggesting that Black women are associated with both disadvantages (Catalyst, 2004; Dozier, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns, 2015; Rosette & Livingston, 2012) and advantages (E. Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Biernat & Sesko, 2013; Livingston et al., 2012; Nkomo & Cox, 1989) in the workplace. Consequently, we did not have firm predictions for how perceivers would view companies that included Black women.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Based on an a priori power analysis conducted in G\*Power (Version 3.1.9.2; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) assuming 80% statistical power, a medium effect size  $f$  for a one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA; .25), and three groups (White gender diversity, Black gender diversity, no-diversity-information condition), we aimed to collect data from 155 participants. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, White men who self-identified as (1) being currently employed, attending school, or closely affiliated with an organization; (2) fluent in English; and (3) as currently residing in the United States participated in the study. Participants who failed a manipulation check after two tries (see below) were excluded from analyses. Two hundred and five people initiated the survey, 29 people did not progress past a screener asking participants to confirm they met the study criteria and were prepared to complete the survey without interruption in the next several minutes. An additional 25 people did not complete any of the dependent measures. The remaining 151 people ( $M_{\text{age}} = 35.56$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.74$ ) completed all manipulation checks accurately, leaving a total of 151 participants in the analytic sample. These individuals self-identified as heterosexual ( $n = 145$ ), bisexual ( $n = 3$ ), gay ( $n = 2$ ), or did not disclose their sexual identity ( $n = 1$ ). All participants were recruited from MTurk and received 26 cents in exchange for taking part in the research.

### Procedure and Materials

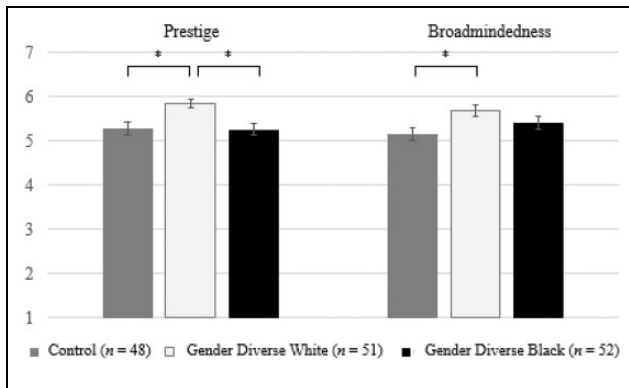
Participants were invited to participate in a study examining how individuals evaluate companies. After providing informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions: (1) a gender-diverse company featuring a White woman employee, (2) a gender-diverse company featuring a Black woman employee, or (3) a control company that did not address its gender diversity and which featured a White man employee. In all three conditions, participants viewed one of the two company brochures used in Studies 1 and 2 (available as Online Supplemental Materials at <http://pwq.sagepub.com/supplemental>). The two gender-diverse companies' brochures were exactly the same (e.g., stated that the companies were named a top company for women), and the control company brochure was different

(e.g., noted that the company was named as a top company for the environment).

Participants also saw one of the three "employee bio" pages: (1) a White woman employee, (2) a Black woman employee, or (3) a White male employee. The employee bio page highlighted and described basic information about a top employee from that company (e.g., types of projects completed with the company). The employee bio page was identical across all three conditions, except for the employee's race and gender, which were manipulated via employee's name (as Greg Nolen, Emily Nolen, or Lakisha Williams) and accompanying photograph (see Online Supplemental File for all study materials at <http://pwq.sagepub.com/supplemental>). In a pretest, we confirmed that the photographs of the company employees used in the brochure were viewed as similar in terms of age, attractiveness, and the professionalism of the photo. Thirty (13 men; age range: 21–22 years) participants were shown photographs of nine White women, nine White men, nine Black women, and nine Black men, one at a time in a randomized order. Participants were asked to rate each individual on their age in years, on his or her attractiveness on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*extremely unattractive*) to 7 (*extremely attractive*), and the professional quality of the picture on a Likert-type scale also ranging from 1 (*extremely unprofessional*) to 7 (*extremely professional*). Participants were also asked to indicate the gender and race of the individual in each picture. Based on these ratings, we selected one photograph each of a Black woman, White woman, and White man, which was viewed equally in terms of age,  $F(2, 56) = 0.15$ ,  $p = .86$ ; attractiveness,  $F(2, 56) = 0.15$ ,  $p = .87$ ; and professionalism,  $F(2, 56) = 2.95$ ,  $p = .06$ , and which was correctly categorized by both race and gender by all participants. After viewing the company background, the picture (of a Black woman, White woman, or White man), and "employee bio" information, participants completed the same dependent measures of prestige ( $\alpha = .95$ ) and broadmindedness ( $\alpha = .94$ ) described in Studies 1 and 2. After completing all measures, participants were thanked and fully debriefed.

## Results and Discussion

The two study measures were significantly correlated ( $r = .75$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). To determine whether the three levels of organizational composition affected perceptions of organizational quality, we conducted a series of one-way ANOVAs, followed by post-hoc tests using Bonferroni's procedure to explore all pairwise differences. Means and  $SE$  are plotted in Figure 2 (and presented in the Online Supplemental Materials at <http://pwq.sagepub.com/supplemental>). As expected, there was a significant effect of condition on prestige,  $F(2, 148) = 6.80$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$ , and broadmindedness,  $F(2, 148) = 3.53$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ . Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, the gender-diverse company with the White woman pictured in the brochure was rated as being significantly more prestigious,  $p = .008$ , Cohen's  $d = .62$ , and as being significantly



**Figure 2.** Mean scores for all Study 3 dependent measures by company diversity condition. Error bars represent standard errors. All variables measured on 1–7 scales. \* $p < .05$ .

more broadminded,  $p = .03$ , Cohen's  $d = .53$ , than the control company. The gender-diverse company with the White woman pictured was also seen as significantly more prestigious,  $p = .004$ , Cohen's  $d = .71$ , than the gender-diverse company with the Black woman pictured in the brochure. However, both gender-diverse companies were rated equally broadminded,  $p = .44$ . The control and the Black gender-diverse companies perceived broadmindedness and prestige did not differ significantly ( $.66 < p < 1.00$ ).

### Study 4

We conducted Study 4 as a direct, pre-registered replication of Study 3 (registration document: <https://osf.io/btdcq/>) in order to provide clear, confirmatory research and reduce reporting bias (Munafò et al., 2017; Nelson, Simmons, & Simonsohn, 2018; Nosek, Ebersole, DeHaven, & Mellor, 2018; van't Veer & Giner-Sorolla, 2016). We again sought to determine whether White men rated a company that advertised its gender diversity as significantly more prestigious and as significantly more broadminded compared to a company that did not advertise its gender diversity. We attempted to replicate the finding that results occur when the gender-diverse company is composed of White women.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Using the same assumptions specified in Study 3 to conduct an a priori power analysis, we again aimed to collect data from 155 participants before analyzing the data. Any participants who failed a manipulation check after two tries were excluded from analyses, and we again invited White men who self-identified as (1) being currently employed, attending school, or closely affiliated with an organization; (2) fluent in English; and (3) as currently residing in the United States to participate in the study. One hundred and ninety-six people initiated the survey and completed the screener, 13 did

not complete any of the dependent measures. The remaining 183 participants completed all manipulation checks accurately and were included in the analytic sample. The participants in Study 4 were White men ( $M_{age} = 34.34$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.62$ ) who self-identified as being currently employed, attending school, or closely affiliated with an organization. They also self-identified as being fluent in English, currently residing in the United States, and as being heterosexual ( $n = 170$ ), gay ( $n = 10$ ), bisexual ( $n = 2$ ), and did not specify ( $n = 1$ ). All participants were recruited from MTurk and received 26 cents in exchange for taking part in the research. At the end of the survey, participants were thanked and fully debriefed.

## Results and Discussion

To determine whether the three levels of organizational composition affected perceptions of organizational reputation, we conducted a series of one-way ANOVAs, followed by post-hoc tests using Bonferroni's procedure to explore all pairwise differences. Means and  $SE$  are plotted in Figure 3 (and presented in the Online Supplemental Materials at <http://pwq.sagepub.com/supplemental>). The two study measures were significantly correlated ( $r = .69$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Unexpectedly, there were no significant effects of condition on prestige,  $F(2, 180) = 1.51$ ,  $p = .22$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$  (all pairwise condition differences  $.31 < p < 1.00$ ). The White gender-diverse and the control companies' perceived prestige did not vary significantly (White gender-diverse:  $M = 5.60$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ; control:  $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ).

As expected, the company's perceived broadmindedness did significantly vary by condition,  $F(2, 180) = 6.52$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . Consistent with Studies 1–3, the gender-diverse company with the White woman was rated as significantly more broadminded than the no-diversity-information control company,  $p = .01$ , Cohen's  $d = .53$ . The perceived broadmindedness of the gender-diverse company with the White versus the Black woman did not significantly differ,  $p = 1.00$ . Extending the findings of the three previous studies, we found that the gender-diverse company with the Black woman was also rated as significantly more broadminded than the no-diversity-information control company,  $p = .002$ , Cohen's  $d = .59$ .

### Internal Meta-Analysis

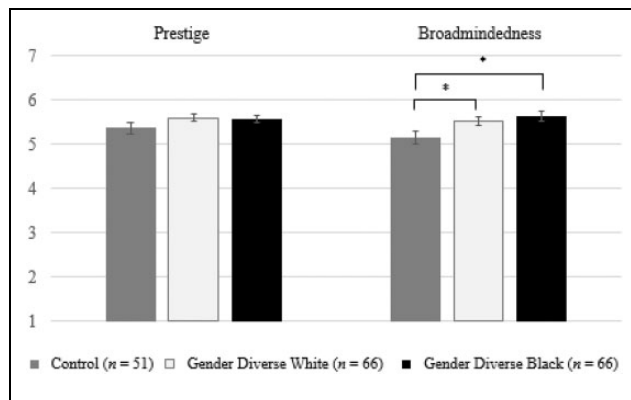
Study 4 data were somewhat inconsistent with those observed in the previous three studies. Given this, we conducted a meta-analysis of the effect sizes (Cohen's  $d$ ) of the mean differences to test the robustness of the gender-diversity effects. Effect sizes provide information concerning the magnitude, as opposed to the likelihood, of the reported results, and some affirm that effect sizes provide the most important information in empirical research (Lakens, 2013). A meta-analysis of the effect sizes across all studies reported in this



**Table 2.** Meta-Analysis of Effect Sizes Across All Main Dependent Measures by Study.

	Mean <i>d</i>	Lower <i>d</i>	Upper <i>d</i>	Standard Error	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
White gender diverse versus control (Studies 1–4)						
Prestige	.44	.24	.63	.10	4.41	.000
Broadmindedness	.54	.34	.73	.10	5.38	.000
White gender diverse versus Black gender diverse (Studies 3 and 4)						
Prestige	.47	.01	.93	.24	1.99	.047
Broadmindedness	.19	–.06	.45	.13	1.48	.139
Control versus Black gender diverse (Studies 3 and 4)						
Prestige	.03	–.23	.30	.14	0.25	.805
Broadmindedness	.42	.07	.77	.18	2.36	.018

Note.  $n_{S1} = 105$ ;  $n_{S2} = 101$ ;  $n_{S3} = 151$ ;  $n_{S4} = 183$ . Effect sizes were computed using Cohen's *d*.



**Figure 3.** Mean scores for all Study 4–dependent measures by company diversity condition. Error bars represent standard errors. All variables measured on 1–7 scales. \* $p < .05$ .

research would therefore allow us to more robustly quantify and characterize the magnitude, and thus practical significance, of the differences between companies by diversity condition. We calculated the mean effect size of the differences between the White gender-diverse company and the control company for both dependent measures across Studies 1–4 (see Table 2). The average effect sizes between these two conditions ranged from .44 to .54, which is consistent with a medium effect size. For studies that compared the differences between companies with White women and control companies ( $n = 4$ ), the combined effect size for company prestige is .44 ( $SE = .10$ , 95% confidence interval [CI] = [.24, .63],  $z = 4.41$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ) and broadmindedness is .54 ( $SE = .10$ , 95% CI [.34, .73],  $z = 5.38$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Combining the experiments, the gender-diverse company was reliably rated as more prestigious than the control company, though the differences were only statistically significant in Studies 1–3. Comparing the effect sizes of the differences between these groups across all studies, we suggest that these differences should be treated as somewhat meaningful.

We also calculated the mean effect size of the differences between the Black gender-diverse company and the control company across Studies 3 and 4, and between the White

gender-diverse company and the Black gender-diverse company across Studies 3 and 4. The average effect size for the differences between the Black gender-diverse and control companies ranged from .03 to .42, which also ranges from a small to medium effect. Across the studies, the average effect size for the perceived broadmindedness of the Black gender-diverse company and the control company is .42 ( $SE = .18$ , 95% CI [.07, .77],  $z = 2.36$ ,  $p = .02$ ). For prestige, the average effect size for the Black gender-diverse company and the control company was .03 ( $SE = .14$ , 95% CI [–.23, .30],  $z = 0.25$ ,  $p = .81$ ). This additional analysis provides further evidence that Black gender diversity does not consistently provide the same organizational reputational boosts as White gender diversity (aside from perhaps an indication of broadmindedness).

The average effect size for the differences between the White and Black gender-diverse companies ranged from .19 to .47, which indicates a small to medium effect (Lakens, 2013). However, these effect sizes were not found to be significant, meaning that our meta-analysis did not provide additional evidence to support the notion that the White and Black gender-diverse companies are perceived differently. Specifically, for studies that compared the differences between White and Black gender-diverse companies ( $n = 2$ ), the combined effect size for company prestige is .47 ( $SE = .24$ , 95% CI [.01, .927],  $z = 1.99$ ,  $p = .047$ ) and broadmindedness is .19 ( $SE = .13$ , 95% CI [–.06, .45],  $z = 1.48$ ,  $p = .14$ ).

## General Discussion

Across four studies, we found that White men expected a company to have a more broadminded and tolerant climate when the company noted it was gender diverse and featured White women in their communication (a brochure), as compared to when it did not address its gender diversity. Beyond expectations concerning the company's climate, a White gender-diverse organization was also rated as more prestigious than a company that did not address its gender diversity. These differences only reached conventional levels of statistical significance in three of the four reported studies but, based on the meta-analysis, we suggest that these

differences are meaningful. These data are consistent with the belief that diversity broadens perspectives (cf. Antonio et al., 2004; Crisp & Turner, 2011; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Pelled, 1996) and that diversity is a positive asset in the modern workplace (McKay & Avery, 2005).

In Studies 3 and 4, we explored whether these positive perceptions of a gender-diverse company that featured White women extended to a gender-diverse organization that featured women of color. White men's impressions of the Black gender-diverse company were less consistent than the impressions of the White gender-diverse company. However, the Black gender-diverse company did not receive the same pattern of reputational boosts as the White gender-diverse company did; the Black gender-diverse company was not viewed as more prestigious than the control company. Although the perceived broadmindedness of the White and Black gender-diverse companies did not differ significantly in either Study 3 or Study 4, only the White gender-diverse company was consistently related to the perception that the organization had an open-minded climate.

Across two measures of organizational reputation, gender diversity was generally found to enhance companies, though primarily when the gender diversity featured White women. Although there is a sizable amount of evidence that high status group members, including White men, can be threatened by diversity (e.g., Dover et al., 2016; Lowery et al., 2006) and hold negative stereotypes of working women (e.g., Rudman & Phelan, 2008); in the current research, we demonstrated that these individuals can also see diversity as a boost to a company's reputation.

### *Future Research and Limitations*

Our studies represent a first step at identifying some of the ways that promoting gender diversity may affect perceptions of companies. In the future, researchers might explore whether the reputation boosts for White gender-diverse companies observed in these studies would hold if the company endorsed (or was believed to endorse) such policies. And given the evidence that women and men managers of color are penalized for promoting diversity (Hekman et al., 2017), researchers could also test whether these effects hold if the message about the company's diversity comes from a CEO who is a woman or a man of color.

The current studies raise several important questions about the expectations that White men have concerning what non-White women may contribute to organizations. They also raise questions about the beliefs that White men hold about racial diversity generally and, specifically, who White men view as contributing to diversity. People may form a negative impression of a Black woman because of both her gender and her race, either individually or jointly (Beal, 1970; see also Remedios, Snyder, & Lizza, 2016); a Black woman adds to a company's diversity in terms of both

gender and race. In contrast, people may form negative impressions of a White woman based on her gender, but it is less likely that they will also do so based on her race (cf. Rosette & Livingston, 2012); a White woman only adds to the gender diversity of a company. It is possible that the Black gender-diverse company did not receive the reputational boosts the White gender-diverse company received due to lowered expectations of the value of racial diversity. In future studies, researchers should directly measure participants' beliefs about organizational racial diversity to test this possibility.

It is also possible that White men may have more interactions and intergroup contact with White women than with women of color (Eberhardt & Fiske, 1994). White men also may have fewer experiences with competent Black women to draw from when considering the merits of a gender and racially diverse organization. Although both women and racial minorities are underrepresented in the workplace, relative to White men, Black women are more underrepresented than their peers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2014; Catalyst, 2004; Dozier, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns, 2015). It is also possible that White men feel more comfortable with the concept of gender diversity when it includes White women, with whom they share a common racial identity, but not Black women, with whom they share neither a common gender nor racial identity. Because they share a (White) racial identity, and because whiteness is not generally considered to be "diverse" (Unzueta & Binning, 2010), White men may not view White gender-diverse organizations as being particularly diverse. Researchers may test whether White men believe White (but not Black) gender-diverse organizations are normative, and whether these beliefs influence their expectations about the organization's reputation.

Researchers should also continue to explore the expectations that people have about gender-diverse companies that include Black women and women of color from other racial backgrounds. They could also explore the expectations that men and women of color have about gender-diverse companies. In particular, they could explore whether White women would have positive views of gender-diverse companies that include women of color or whether, like White men, their support for gender diversity would be primarily limited to organizations that are described as including White employees. Women, like men, view companies that have gender-diversity enhancing policies as more procedurally just and consequently express less support for litigation aiming to address sexism (Brady et al., 2015). They also endorse stronger pro-White attitudes when sexism is made salient (Craig, DeHart, Richeson, & Fiedorowicz, 2012). By examining these questions, researchers could shed further light on when underrepresented group members build coalitions or compete across identities (cf. Craig & Richeson, 2016).

## Practice Implications

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, it is important that organizations commit to increasing diversity as a means to attract and promote feelings of inclusion among women and other historically disadvantaged groups (e.g., people of color), promote and facilitate harmonious intergroup relations, and capitalize on some of the benefits that diverse contexts offer. Much of the previous research has focused on the ways in which gender diversity affects specific organizational metrics, such as employee satisfaction or performance (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Our results demonstrate that beliefs about a company's broader corporate reputation can be influenced before any of these processes take place. They also provide insight into the organizational qualities that White men either attribute or do not attribute to a company based on perceptions of diversity. When companies highlight affirmative action or other policies designed to actively recruit women, they may threaten men and unwittingly undermine diversity goals (Brady et al., 2015; Heilman & Blader, 2001). We examined the impressions that White men have of an organization that highlights its gender diversity by focusing on gender representation and not specific policies that seek to increase diversity. This distinction is important as the concept of diversity has been somewhat unconnected from specific policies that seek to increase opportunities for underrepresented group members (i.e., individuals affirm diversity yet oppose diversity-enhancing policies; Collins, 2011b). We found that when companies feature successful (White) women in promotional materials, the company may experience a boost in perceived reputation. The results provide further incentive for companies to advertise their gender diversity that goes beyond previously established benefits such as attracting and retaining minority employees (Avery & McKay, 2006; McKay et al., 2007). In the future, researchers should seek to replicate and extend the results about reputation boost for White gender-diverse companies using other manipulations and methods (e.g., field research, longitudinal studies), similar to what has been done on racial workplace diversity (e.g., McKay et al., 2007). Researchers might directly test whether a company receives a reputational boost or reduction, depending on whether it highlights its gender diversity in terms of women's representation at the company or through use of diversity-enhancing policies.

However, these findings also indicate the importance of taking intersectional approaches to understanding and addressing issues related to organizational diversity. The fact that we only observed the reputational gender-diversity boost when the organization featured White women points to unequal perceptions of gender groups in the workplace. Organizations should include structures to protect women of color from the deleterious effects on performance caused by such bias (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008) and support efforts to increase the presence of women of color in leadership positions.

## Conclusions

Companies advertise their gender diversity in part because diversity is viewed as an important component of corporate success. We explored whether gender diversity influences White men's beliefs about an organization and provide some of the first evidence to suggest that companies that advertise their (White) gender diversity may experience some reputational boost from doing so. Our research can inform organizational efforts to address gender diversity. We encourage others to consider the intersection of gender and race in organizational diversity research.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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