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3 Stigmatization, Subordination, or Marginalization?

The Complexity of Social Disadvantage across Gender and Race

Robert W. Livingston and Ashleigh Shelby Rosette

Individuals who do not fit the prototype of the White male leader can face many hurdles when seeking to attain or maintain leadership roles. A question often posed when examining existing barriers is whether Black men, White women, or Black women face the greatest leadership challenges. This chapter argues that a comparative focus on the *quantity* or severity of social disadvantage across groups is a short-sighted approach that can fail to appreciate the unique experiences of members from various subordinated groups. Instead, a more accurate and useful framework is one that explicates nuanced differences in the *quality* of the challenges facing leaders from distinct under-represented social groups. Building on existing data and theory, we argue that a typology of social disadvantage is created by two orthogonal dimensions—perceived threat and perceived interdependence—that interact to determine whether these groups experience stigmatization (high threat, low interdependence), benevolent subordination (low threat, high interdependence), hostile subordination (high threat, high interdependence), or marginalization (low threat, low interdependence). We further argue that this typology can shed light on the nature of leadership challenges faced by specific intersectional groups—Black men through stigmatization, White women through subordination, and Black women through marginalization. Implications for the challenges faced by leaders from distinct social groups are discussed.

During the 2008 U.S. Presidential campaign, speculation swirled around which of the two non-prototypical candidates, Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton, would secure the Democratic nomination. With relatively few substantive policy differences between the leading contenders, the political discourse frequently turned to a debate involving whether race or gender would yield the most social disadvantage for these two competitors pursuing the most powerful leadership position in the world. Although it is an oversimplification to suggest that the

outcome of the 2008 Democratic race was reduced to a referendum on racial versus gender disadvantage, this example does mimic an ongoing clash in social science research that tends to pit one socially disadvantaged group against another (e.g., Levin et al., 2002; Navarrete et al., 2010).

The central assumption of this chapter is that a focus on the comparative degree of hardship among socially disadvantaged groups does little to advance our understanding of the persistence of disadvantage in general, or the ways in which organizations can create greater inclusion for a variety of socially disadvantaged groups. A more productive approach to understanding inclusive leadership involves a nuanced investigation of the distinctions that exist among socially disadvantaged groups (e.g., White women, Black men, Black women), *in addition to* considering the mechanisms that regulate the dynamics between the dominant group (i.e., White men) and the various socially disadvantaged groups that must interact with it to access power and leadership.

To account for the variation in socially disadvantaged groups, examinations of the leadership gap must adopt an intersectional lens. Although we acknowledge the various forms of intersectionality, as well as the continuum within social categories, the current chapter focuses on the intersectionality of binary gender and dichotomous Black-White racial categories. We argue that the three socially disadvantaged groups that result from race \times gender intersectionality (i.e., Black men, White women, and Black women) face qualitatively different challenges, not differential degrees of the same challenge. Specifically, we argue that Black men struggle against stigmatization, White women struggle against subordination, and Black women struggle against marginalization. In the sections that follow, we first describe the theoretical basis of our typology, which derives from an integration of intersectional theories with a White hegemonic patriarchal perspective. We then elaborate on the differences between stigmatization, subordination, and marginalization, and how each affects leaders from different intersectional groups. Finally, we offer suggestions to help remedy the numerous barriers that members of socially disadvantaged groups encounter as they aspire to attain top leader positions.

An Intersectional Lens

Historically, the study of systems of privilege have focused on a single subordinate identity at a time—the disadvantage of “women” (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman et al., 1989; Schein, 1973) or the absence of “racial minorities” in leadership roles (e.g., Carton & Rosette, 2011; Zapata et al., 2016)—but not the consideration of multiple subordinate identities simultaneously (e.g., Black women; see Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Livingston et al., 2012, for exceptions).

Although research on subordinate identities in isolation has led to a great deal of understanding about access to leadership roles and leadership dynamics in those roles, the experience of racial disadvantage, for example, is not independent of the (dis)advantage that can come about because of one’s gender or a host of other ascribed or achieved status markers (Beale, 1970; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989). Similarly, the experience of gender discrimination and subordination is not independent of the biases in favor or against one’s racial group (Beale, 1970; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989), especially in a leadership context (Rosette et al., 2016). Each subordinate and/or dominant identity is inextricably linked to the other, and this interconnected consideration is needed in order to fully understand the social disadvantage experienced by White women, Black women, and Black men in a leadership context.

Among those theoretical perspectives that have advocated for an intersectional lens, many have chosen to pit one socially disadvantaged group against another. These existing frameworks formulate arguments for a hierarchy of oppression among the socially disadvantaged. For example, the ethnic-prominence hypothesis suggests that ethnic minority women are more influenced by expectations of ethnic rather than gender discrimination (Levin et al., 2002). However, the subordinate male target hypothesis argues ethnic discrimination is more strongly directed toward ethnic minority men compared with ethnic minority women (Navarrete et al., 2010). Although these perspectives (and others not mentioned here) present valid arguments for their respective points of view, they tend to emphasize quantitative rather than qualitative comparisons. We adopt an alternative approach that strives to better understand how each subordinate group’s experience is *distinct* from each other relative to the socially advantaged group—White men.

A Typology of Social Disadvantage

One of the most enduring findings in the study of leadership is that a concentration of advantage resides with White men as they occupy the vast majority of CEO positions, senior executive positions, and board of director positions in organizations (Catalyst, 2017, 2018). White men occupy well over 90% of all CEO positions, account for upwards of 72% of corporate leadership at many of these companies (Jones, 2017), and, since the country’s founding, have held the U.S. presidency for all but two terms. As a result, one would classify White men as socially advantaged in the vast majority of leadership contexts in the United States. The magnitude of power differences between White men and any socially disadvantaged group overshadows any lateral comparisons of power differences between socially disadvantaged groups (Rosette et al., 2008). Therefore, our analysis is grounded in the relationship between the most socially advantaged group—White men—and three socially disadvantaged groups.

To gain a deeper understanding of social disadvantage, one must assess its meaning within a specific social context and in relation to social advantage (Dean & Platt, 2016; Festinger, 1954). The relational dynamics between the advantaged group and socially disadvantaged groups are critically relevant, from both a theoretical and practical perspective. Thus, our focus shifts from a less relevant (though still important) horizontal comparison of socially disadvantaged groups at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy to a vertical comparison of dynamics between the dominant group and socially disadvantaged groups. Given this vertical focus within the social hierarchy pyramid, which compares the apex (i.e., White men) to the base (e.g., White women, Black women, and Black men), we integrate our intersectional framework with a White hegemonic patriarchal perspective to propose a novel typology of social disadvantage in the leadership domain.

We propose that two intergroup dynamics—threat and interdependence (both perceived from the White male perspective)—interact to determine the nature of the challenges that socially disadvantaged groups face when interacting with White men to acquire power. As a result of this integrative framework, we argue that Black men struggle against stigmatization (high threat, low interdependence), White women struggle against hostile (high threat, high interdependence) or benevolent subordination (low threat, high interdependence), and Black women battle against marginalization (low threat, low interdependence). Our typology of social disadvantage is presented in Figure 3.1.

We define interdependence as the degree to which the dominant group *perceives* the outgroup as being necessary or important from a social, biological, or practical standpoint. This definition is consistent with the White hegemonic patriarchal perspective (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and is often linked to the interest or survival of the dominant group (Buss,

1990; Eisenberger et al., 2003; Glick & Fiske, 1996). At the core of this dimension is whether or not there is common fate or some level of cooperation necessary between two groups in order for either to function or exist.

We also define threat from the White hegemonic patriarchal perspective (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) as the degree to which the dominant group perceives the outgroup as being a threat to its power and privileged position atop the social hierarchy. Is the group perceived as having the motivation and/or ability to challenge or undermine the power of the dominant group? If so, the group could be seen as a threat, regardless of whether the intention, motivation, or ability is real or imagined. We draw this definition, in part, from realistic conflict theory, which emphasizes the conflict and discrimination that can occur between groups who are in competition for the same resources (Sherif, 1961).

The interdependence/threat distinction shares similarities with the classic communality/agency or warmth/competence dichotomy, which plays a prominent role in social psychology research on person perception (e.g., Abele et al., 2008) and leader perceptions in organizational behavior (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman et al. 2012). Like communality (and related dimensions such as “warmth” in the Stereotype Content Model; Fiske et al., 2002), interdependence implicates interpersonal relationships (Bakan, 1966). However, interdependence differs from communality/warmth in important ways. Interdependence requires a functional reliance on another whereas communality/warmth does not. The latter is more related to cooperation and common purpose rather than a functional need or dependency of one group on another group.

Likewise, our threat dimension is similar to, yet distinct from, agency/competence. Both agency and threat can be described as asserting the self or possessing a baseline level of capability (Bakan, 1966). However, threat also entails the perception of a *negative* capability (and intent, perhaps) to challenge or harm the ingroup. This assumption is missing from both agency and competence, which can both be perceived as positive traits that complement or enhance the goals of the ingroup. In Intergroup Image Theory (IIT), this would be the difference between the “ally” image and the “enemy” image (Alexander et al., 2005). Both the ally and the enemy can possess comparable levels of competence and agency. The only difference is whether this capacity is perceived as going in favor of or against the interests of the ingroup.

We represent these two dimensions—threat and interdependence—as orthogonal, such that an outgroup can be high or low on either dimension (see Figure 3.1). When considered in tandem, four quadrants emerge. We label the quadrants: Stigmatization, Subordination I (benevolent), Subordination II (hostile), and Marginalization.

		Perceived Interdependence	
		Low	High
Perceived Threat	Low	Marginalization	Subordination I (Benevolent)
	High	Stigmatization	Subordination II (Hostile)

Figure 3.1 Typology of social disadvantage.

Stigmatization

Stigmatization is produced by the combination of low interdependence and high threat. Consistent with the etymology of the word, stigmatized individuals are “marked” by society (Goffman, 1963). Although stigmatized groups are socially devalued and negatively evaluated (Crocker et al., 1998), they are also “visible” rather than hidden, which leads to high levels of vigilance and monitoring from outgroups (Alexander et al., 2005). For example, IIT distinguishes between two types of low status or socially devalued groups depending on the level of power they are seen as possessing (Alexander et al., 2005). Low status without power produces the “dependent” image, whereas low status with power produces the “barbarian” image. Based on our current conceptualization, only the barbarian image would represent stigma because the combination of low status with high power (and low compatibility) produces the threat that is necessary to satisfy our construal of stigmatization.¹ To use a historical example, Romans could not completely ignore the barbarian tribes who lived in close proximity to them because these tribes represented a real threat to the empire (Heather, 2006). Therefore, they were ever-watchful and vigilant of the barbarians despite the “primitive” and, in general, negative perceptions that they held of these groups (Ferris, 2004).

Subordination

On the opposite diagonal, the combination of high interdependence and low threat produces *subordination*. Subordinate groups often serve an important or essential role in the lives of dominant group members (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Subordinated groups are not viewed in a categorically negative manner; rather, these groups (e.g., children) can and do elicit positive beliefs and emotions, especially when the dominant group believes that its position of power is not threatened. For example, research on ambivalent sexism has shown that men hold generally positive emotions toward women who accept subordinate roles but have negative emotions toward women who resist subordination in search of equality, power, and opportunity (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Glick et al. (2000) state that “men’s dependence on women fosters benevolent sexism—subjectively positive attitudes that put women on a pedestal but reinforce their subordination” (p. 763).

Borrowing from ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), we refer to the high interdependence/low threat condition as *benevolent subordination*. Unlike stigmatization, the hallmark of benevolent subordination is not that the group is marked in a negative way—only that the group be deemed unworthy of power and authority. However, when these subordinated groups resist the dominance and authority of the

hegemonic patriarchy, thereby presenting a high threat rather than a low threat, then affection and protection can quickly morph into anger and resentment. When this takes place, the orientation toward the subordinated group shifts from affection to aggression. Accordingly, we label this high threat quadrant as *hostile subordination*. Research has shown that, across cultures, women choose to conform to traditional gender roles as a means of receiving benevolent sexism *instead of* hostile sexism, particularly in cultures with highly misogynist attitudes toward women (Glick et al., 2000). Thus, although benevolent sexism seems to be a kinder and gentler form of subordination, data clearly show that both hostile and benevolent sexism serve a similar function—the disempowerment and subordination of women (see Glick & Fiske, 2001, for discussion).

Marginalization

Finally, the combination of low threat and low interdependence produces *marginalization*. One definition of the verb *to marginalize* is “to treat someone or something as if they are not important” (Cambridge Dictionary). Unlike subordinated groups, marginalized groups are not seen as being necessary or relevant to the dominant group (Frable, 1993). And unlike stigmatized groups, marginalized groups are not seen as a formidable threat to the power or position of the dominant group (Alexander et al., 2005). Instead, marginalized groups barely register in the dominant group’s consciousness. Because marginalization is characterized by low scrutiny and high invisibility, individuals occupying this quadrant experience both unique advantages and disadvantages (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) compared with stigmatized and subordinated individuals who are both visible (albeit for different reasons).²

It is important to recognize that this proposed typology of social disadvantage is fluid and context-dependent, such that individuals or entire social groups can move from one quadrant to another depending on the interpersonal, social, or historical context. For example, an individual woman can quickly shift from benevolent subordination to hostile subordination as a function of the level of threat that she activates via her decision to conform to prescribed gender stereotypes or not (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Historically, Blacks have shifted from subordination (both benevolent and hostile) to stigmatization as a function of the perceived increase in Black power as well as the reduced interdependence between Blacks and Whites in the colonial South compared with today (see also “paternalistic racism,” Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, or “dependent” versus “barbaric” image, Alexander et al., 2005, for further discussion). Finally, the social disadvantage of Native Americans has shifted from stigmatization (in colonial America when

they were seen as a realistic threat) to marginalization as a function of decimation and the resulting invisibility of the Native population, which contributed to a reduction in perceived threat (Alexander et al., 2005). In the next section we explore the implications of this model for understanding the unique and distinct challenges facing different leaders who are not White men.

Implications for Leadership: An Intersectional Approach

We believe that our proposed typology has implications for socially disadvantaged group members striving to attain or maintain leadership positions. As stated in the last section, the typology is framed from the perspective of White male patriarchy, which holds control over, and perhaps feels subjective entitlement to, leadership roles. Given White men's hyper-representation they also become the de facto gatekeepers of leadership accessibility for socially disadvantaged individuals who aspire to positions of power and authority. Therefore, the relevant questions become: How does the White patriarchal establishment perceive individuals from socially disadvantaged groups who aspire to hold leader roles? How does the nature of these leadership challenges differ from group to group? Finally, what are the strategies that enable otherwise socially disadvantaged group members to succeed in their quest for leadership (i.e., leader emergence) and what are the constraints put on them, if any, once they attain these roles (i.e., with regard to leader behavior)?

We believe that our typology can help to identify and parsimoniously characterize the distinct challenges that face would-be and extant leaders from socially disadvantaged groups by providing a lens for how their diffuse social group is perceived. For example, because *stigmatized groups* are visible, negative, and threatening, we reason that aspiring leaders from stigmatized groups would have to undermine the perception of threat facing their group before they would be allowed into leadership positions by the White hegemonic patriarchy. Similarly, because the default for (role-consistent) *subordinate groups* is warmth combined with the perception that they are unsuitable for leadership because they lack authority, their challenge is to demonstrate that they are capable of leadership positions—while also not appearing too discrepant from the tight norms around warmth and cooperation that are applied to them. Finally, because *marginalized groups* are not surveilled or policed the way that stigmatized and subordinated groups are, we believe that the norms will be looser for them at the same time that leadership hurdles are higher for them—both of these effects due to marginalization.

Returning to our intersectional lens, we argue that Black men, White women, and Black women are stigmatized, subordinated, and marginalized, respectively. Therefore, the challenges facing actual and aspiring leaders from these social groups should conform more or less to the

strategies and challenges outlined above. Specifically, the primary challenge of Black male leaders is to reduce the amount of threat, fear, and negativity that is associated with them (Livingston & Pearce, 2009). The primary challenge of White female leaders is to show that they are able to break out of subordinated roles to effectively function in leadership positions. Paradoxically, once they demonstrate this it places them in the “threat” category because they now stand in violation of traditional gender roles. Therefore, their challenge is to walk a tightrope between being docile and authoritative (Williams et al., 2014). Finally, the challenge for Black women—as a group that does not present the same threat to White men that Black men do (Navarrete et al., 2010), nor holds the same relevance for White men that White women do (Beale, 1970; Glick & Fiske, 2001)—is simply garnering enough visibility to appear on the radar (Crenshaw, 1989; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). However, if they do manage to make it into these roles, we argue that their marginalized status will confer less restrictive norms for how they behave, which ironically gives them a wider range of leader behaviors than either Black male leaders or White female leaders. In the paragraphs to follow, we present data in support of this formulation and then end the chapter with a set of recommendations for both individuals and organizations.

Black Men and Stigmatization

We posit that the primary dimension of social disadvantage facing Black men in contemporary American society is stigmatization. There are multiple sociological indicators that Black men are marked and socially devalued by the dominant culture, including police shootings and mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010). Moreover, social dominance theory argues that men from socially disadvantaged outgroups (e.g., Black males) receive a particularly high level of scrutiny and oppression from the dominant group compared with women from subordinate outgroups. The subordinate-male-target-hypothesis (SMTH) maintains that inter-racial conflict is primarily a male-on-male phenomenon because the men from the outgroup represent the biggest threat to the hierarchical structure (Navarrete et al., 2010; Sidanius et al., 2018). It stands to reason, then, that Black male leaders would be punished for showing too much dominance, confidence, or agency because it only exacerbates the threat that is experienced by the White male patriarchy. On the other hand, Black male leaders should benefit from traits or behaviors that make them appear more docile, harmless, and controllable.

Consistent with our proposition, our data indicate that Black male leaders who behave in a dominant manner were perceived significantly less positively than White male leaders who engaged in identical behavior; however, Black male leaders who behaved in a more docile manner

were not perceived less positively than docile White leaders (Livingston et al., 2012). In addition to advantages conferred to Black leaders with docile behaviors, Black men with a docile *appearance* have an advantage in leader accessibility compared with Black men who do not possess a docile appearance. For example, Livingston and Pearce (2009) found that “babyfacedness” was beneficial to Black male leaders because it functioned as a “disarming mechanism” that rendered them more docile and affable in appearance, and therefore less threatening to White males in power—a phenomenon that has been labeled “The Teddy Bear Effect.” Black Fortune 500 CEOs were significantly more babyfaced than White Fortune 500 CEOs, even though no difference in babyfacedness between Black men and White men exists in the general population. In addition, the more babyfaced a Black male CEO was, the larger his corporation and salary tended to be. The opposite pattern of findings was obtained for White male CEOs. That is, more babyfaced White CEOs tended to earn less money and run smaller companies than mature-faced White CEOs.

Taken together, these findings strongly suggest that disarming mechanisms (e.g., babyfaced appearance, docile behaviors) benefit Black male leaders whereas they do not benefit White male leaders, and, if anything, undermine the authority of White male leaders—who, by virtue of their dominant status, are entitled to power and do not need to be disarmed. Overall, these findings support the notion that Black male leaders are stigmatized, and, as such, benefit from any signals that attenuate the level of threat that is associated with them. This general finding of stigmatization does not appear to be confined to leadership positions. In fact, Hall and Livingston (2012) found evidence that even Black professional athletes face similar challenges. Our archival data indicate that Black NFL players are more likely to be penalized for celebrating after touchdowns compared with White NFL players. Furthermore, experimental data show that Black men who celebrate are penalized because they are seen as arrogant. White NFL players who celebrate are also perceived as arrogant, but they are not penalized for it. Finally, there was no difference in perceptions or salary recommendations for humble Black versus White NFL players (i.e., those who did not celebrate after a touchdown, but instead returned the ball to the referee). In summary, Black men benefit from traits and behaviors that render them more docile or impotent because this undermines the perception of threat that is associated with them.

Returning to the Barack Obama example, there are many aspects of his appearance and his behavior that can be perceived as disarming. He has an ectomorphic (i.e., lanky) build, which is both prototypically boyish and western European (Zebrowitz & Collins, 1997). He is also bi-racial and therefore lower in racial phenotypicality. Many lines of research have shown that Blacks with lighter skin or lower phenotypicality are rated

more favorably by Whites (Blair et al., 2004; Livingston & Brewer, 2002; Maddox, 2004). With regard to his behavior, Barack Obama always upheld standards of “respectability,” almost never showing anger, raising his voice, or behaving boorishly. White men do not have to subscribe to these standards of respectability, whether as President, Senator, Supreme Court Justice, or in any other position of leadership. In fact, research has shown that anger and incivility can benefit White men by making them seem powerful (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Tiedens, 2001), even though the same behaviors are detrimental to women and people of color (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Livingston et al., 2012). Finally, Obama has been criticized by some Black intellectuals for not challenging White hegemonic patriarchy in a way that would produce “real” change (West, 2017), or for not standing up for Blacks who did challenge White hegemonic patriarchy (e.g., Rev. Jeremiah Wright). In short, the goal here is not to criticize Obama’s competence, values, or performance, but rather to point out that Black men in positions of power are constrained in their behaviors. In order to successfully function in positions of power in White-dominated contexts, Black men often have to “disarm” themselves.³

White Women and Subordination

We propose a different mechanism to explain the subordination of White women leaders. Because (benevolent) subordination is characterized by interdependence and low threat, White women are already disarmed by virtue of their gender. That is, women are inextricably linked to subordination because they are conferred low status relative to White men in the gender hierarchy (Rudman et al., 2012). Therefore, what can benefit them in leadership positions is being “armed” rather than “disarmed.” In other words, the default challenge of White women leaders is to demonstrate that they are capable of assuming high power roles. Thus, all else being equal, women leaders should benefit from features that signal capacity (Rosette & Tost, 2010).

Livingston and Pearce (2009) included faces of (White) women CEOs as well as Black men and White men in their research. Although the results indicate that babyfacedness benefitted Black male leaders, babyfacedness was a detriment for White female leaders. That is, White women CEOs were much *lower* in babyfacedness than either White men CEOs or Black men CEOs, despite the fact that women in the general population tend to be more babyfaced than men (Zebrowitz, 2001). The implication here is that White women are not threatening in the way that Black men are, and therefore they don’t need disarming mechanisms like a baby face. On the contrary, women CEOs need to be “armed” with extreme maturefacedness to signal that they are competent enough to do the job.

As previously mentioned, White women who display too much dominance run the risk of creating threat because the default hierarchical relationship between men and women is transformed into a competitive relationship. Competition (rather than cooperation) is a violation of *prescribed* gender stereotypes, or notions of how women “should” behave (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). A well-documented effect implicated in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is *agentic backlash*, which refers to penalties that (White) women, even those who are leaders, face for appearing too assertive, self-promoting, bossy, or angry (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Livingston et al., 2012; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). These penalties do not apply to White men. For instance, a meta-analysis by Eagly and Johnson (1990) showed that women who adopted an autocratic style of leadership (i.e., making executive decisions without permission or approval from others) were evaluated less favorably than men who adopted an autocratic style of leadership. However, no difference in evaluation emerged between White men and White women who adopted a more democratic style of leadership (i.e., eliciting approval and buy-in from others before making decisions).

In fact, some studies have shown that White male leaders are often *rewarded* for displaying agentic emotions (i.e., anger) and behaviors (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Tiedens, 2001) whereas women leaders are punished for demonstrating the same behaviors (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). The mechanism purported to underlie these discrepant effects for men versus women is the confirmation versus violation of *prescriptive* gender stereotypes (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Men are “supposed” to be tough, confident, dominant, power-seeking, and competitive (unless you are a man of color), whereas (White) women are “supposed” to be passive, humble, submissive, self-deprecating, and cooperative. Men and women who conform to or violate these normative standards are rewarded or punished accordingly.

In summary, White women’s social disadvantage relative to White men is due to high levels of interdependence, which creates stringent norms and expectations for behavior that will facilitate a “peaceful” co-existence (if peace requires not challenging the power of the dominant group, which is often the case). It is also due to low levels of threat, which is reflected by traits such as cooperation, nurturance, and docility, which present no challenge to the existing patriarchal power structure. However, becoming a leader is, in itself, an act of sedition for White women. Therefore, they benefit from behaviors that simultaneously confirm their ability to function in the role and demonstrate their adherence to prescribed gender norms. Therefore, their challenge is walking a tightrope that puts them somewhere between benevolent subordination (where they are liked but not

respected) and hostile subordination (where they are possibly respected but certainly not liked).

Returning to the Hillary Clinton example, there are few doubts about Hillary Clinton’s agency or competence. Almost universally, she is perceived as a smart and tough woman who can handle all of the demands of a leadership role. Her overwhelming challenge is the perceived threat that her gender-inconsistent behavior creates—which leads people to dislike her, despite the fact that they respect her ability. What might increase liking and, consequently, support? More gender-consistent behavior, of course, which is exactly what she did when she cried in New Hampshire during the primaries and witnessed a subsequent boost in her polling numbers as a result.

Black Women and Marginalization

It is important to note that nearly all of the research looking at agentic backlash against women leaders has focused exclusively on White women. Will Black women, for example, incur the same agency penalties that White women face—perhaps even more so? Or will Black women be immune to agency penalties due to a different set of norms, stereotypes, expectations, and perceptions than those of White women?

Two dominant theoretical perspectives in the literature make opposite predictions. On the one hand, the double jeopardy perspective argues that Black women might face double the penalty of White women because, in addition to the penalty associated with their gender, there is an added penalty associated with race (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Settles, 2006). On the other hand, the intersectional invisibility perspective maintains that Black women are not the additive combination of Black + woman, but rather a complex combination resulting in a unique experience that can sometimes result in advantageous rather than disadvantageous outcomes (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Therefore, Black women can suffer either more or less penalty than Black men or White women, depending on the context.

We have obtained data that support both perspectives. For example, Livingston et al. (2012) found that Black male leaders and White female leaders were evaluated more negatively when they behaved in a dominant manner rather than a more docile manner. Consistent with previous research, White male leaders were not evaluated more negatively when they behaved in a dominant manner. However, our results revealed that Black female leaders were also not penalized for behaving in a more dominant manner compared with when they behaved in a more docile manner. These data suggest that Black women are not subject to the same agency penalties as Black male leaders and White female leaders, paradoxically giving them more freedom to exhibit a range of leadership behaviors.

We argue that this “free pass” that Black women receive is the result of marginality. Because the dominant group is neither dependent on nor threatened by Black women, this leads to looser norms around acceptable behavior for Black women leaders, compared with Black men or White women. Consistent with this idea, past research has shown that the prescriptive stereotypes of Black women are less stringent. Whereas dominance is proscribed for both Black men and White women (Hall & Phillips, 2012), there are not strong norms against dominance for Black women (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Hall & Phillips, 2012; Rosette et al., 2016). This is consistent with other research showing that Black women are perceived as more masculine than White women (Goff et al., 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Therefore agentic behaviors do not contradict norms or expectations to the same degree that they do for White women.

If Black women have the same latitude and freedom as White men to behave assertively in leadership roles, then why are there not more Black women leaders? Black women are conspicuously absent from many top leadership roles, occupying 0% of Fortune 500 CEO positions compared with roughly 1% and 5% for Black men and White women, respectively. Rosette and Livingston (2012) found that Black women leaders do indeed face double jeopardy when their competence is called into question. Specifically, we found that when Black female leaders made a mistake on the job, their competence was more likely to be called into question compared with Black male leaders or White female leaders who made a mistake (who themselves suffered a penalty relative to White male leaders). This effect was also due to marginality. That is, we found that the excessive penalty against Black women leaders was mediated by leader typicality, or the perception that they were two degrees removed from the White male leadership prototype. Black men and White women were only one degree removed because they possessed either maleness or Whiteness, respectively.

In summary, there is a complicated set of findings for Black women leaders which is consistent with the theoretical notion that invisibility or marginalization provides both advantages and disadvantages (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). On the one hand, being marginalized appears to lead to more freedom for Black women to exhibit leadership behaviors that would not be tolerated from a Black man or a White woman. On the other hand, being marginalized means that Black women leaders are the first to be dismissed if any doubts around competence arise because they are outside of the periphery of the leadership prototype.

The former CEO of Xerox, Ann Mulcahy, a White woman, served as a mentor and sponsor to Ursula Burns, a Black woman, who eventually became her successor. During their exchanges, Ms. Mulcahy encouraged Ms. Burns to have more of a poker face, since according to Ms. Burns “on my face, you could tell everything in 30 seconds. You could tell exasperation. You could tell fed-up-ness” (Bryant, 2010). Undoubtedly,

Ms. Mulcahy was giving Ms. Burns earnest and heartfelt advice, perhaps based on her own experience. But she may have failed to realize that Black women leaders may have more latitude to express agentic emotions than White women leaders—particularly when they are performing at a very high level of competence, which was the case for Ursula Burns.

Recommendations for Overcoming Challenges

The primary purpose of this chapter is to provide a parsimonious framework for understanding qualitative differences in the nature of social disadvantage, and to raise awareness of the unique challenges that different groups face when they occupy leadership roles. A natural reaction that we get to this research, particularly from White women and people of color is: what should I do to advance professionally? Because people differ widely with regard to their values, needs, and goals, it is difficult to offer universal recommendations. Some individuals are concerned primarily about individual advancement, whereas others are deeply concerned about social justice more broadly. Recommendations for what to do might be quite different for two such individuals. Moreover, the burden of “what to do” should not fall on the people who have the least amount of social power. Therefore, we will offer some recommendations for what organizations and White male allies can do to increase the representation and inclusion of White women and people of color in leadership roles.

Flip the Script

The systemic continuation of favoritism toward White male leadership should be explicitly acknowledged and recognized. The usual way in which to frame the racial and gender disparity in leadership positions is to focus on the low proportion of racial minorities and women who occupy these positions. This focus mutes the disproportionate privileges and advantages that accrue to White male leaders. We suggest that when defining the leadership gap as a problem, it is just as important for organizations to examine reasons underlying the overrepresentation of White men in these roles (e.g., cronyism, sponsorship, lower standards for “potential,” etc.) as it is to understand why racial minorities and White women are not represented. People often believe that women and racial minorities have an advantage based on preferential hiring and promotion policies (e.g., affirmative action), but they fail to see the invisible, built-in system of affirmative action for White male leaders, which is often much more potent than organizational structures and policies designed to benefit women and minorities. The holistic focus may help to remedy the disparities and foster more inclusive organizations.

Stand up for socially disadvantaged group members. Becoming a champion or advocate for Black women, White women, and Black men can potentially alter the trajectory of their careers. Having someone to help shepherd them through persistent structural, systemic, and personal biases against them is likely paramount to them in attaining leader roles. Women report receiving less organizational support than men (Ibarra et al., 2013; Kossek et al., 2017; McDonald & Westphal, 2013). Black and Asian women often report lack of role models and lack of access to crucial social networks (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). As a result, feelings of isolation and disconnection from the organization are common (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Turner, 2002). Advocating on behalf of those who may not feel as though they can promote themselves helps to facilitate feelings of inclusiveness.

Build a Diverse Posse

People are often drawn to others who look, think, and behave similarly to themselves. This *homophily* can promote exclusivity rather than inclusiveness. Purposely reaching past one's comfort level to embrace discomfort and opening one's circle to individuals who are different can help remedy the effects of the homophily, or similarity-attraction, paradigm. Undoubtedly racial minorities and White women can initiate their own relationships, but it can often be more difficult for them to do so than for dominant group members in organizations. Perhaps an organizational program or policy can help facilitate such interactions.

Recognize that Intersectionality Matters

It can be somewhat easy to categorize racial minorities and women and the varying combination of these social categories as a monolithic or uniform group relative to White men. However, interlocking systems of power and privilege affect each socially disadvantaged group differently (e.g., Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) and these distinctions should be acknowledged when attempting to develop an inclusive organization. An intersectional framework can shed light on how overlapping identities interact and combine to form distinct experiences. For example, what a Black male associate may need to be successful may be distinct from those tools needed to assist a White female associate at the same level. It is incumbent upon the organization to provide a space to explore these nuanced experiences of the socially disadvantaged in their organization.

Notes

- 1 The group or individual with low status and low power might fall into the category of what we label *marginalization* (to be discussed shortly), especially if the group is not relevant or essential to the functioning of the dominant group.
- 2 We recognize that much of the research on stigma has included visibility or concealability as a dimension of how the stigmatized (and stigmatizer) experience and copes with stigma (e.g., Deaux et al., 1995; Frable, 1993; Kleck & Strenta, 1980; Jones et al., 1984). Consistent with these theoretical perspectives, we concur that visibility of the stigmatized individual or group has a dramatic impact on the way in which social disadvantage is experienced, as well as on coping mechanisms. The only difference is that we refer to relatively invisible groups (as a function of low threat rather than invisible indicators of group membership) as marginalized rather than stigmatized to highlight the important differences in their experiences as socially devalued individuals.
- 3 Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, for example, are not as constrained and do not need to be as docile because their primary leadership contexts and constituents are Black. However, some would argue that this is why they are also less palatable to "mainstream" (i.e., White) audiences. Indeed, both have waged unsuccessful bids for President of the United States.

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