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## **The Effects of Race and Gender on Perceptions of Trustworthiness in a High Status Occupation**

**Brenda Cunha**

*Dept. of Psychology, Monmouth University, 400 Cedar Avenue, West Long Branch, NJ*

**Michele Van Volkom, Ph.D.**

*Lecturer, Dept. of Psychology, Monmouth University, 400 Cedar Avenue, West Long Branch, NJ*

### **Abstract**

*This study evaluated the potential influence of race and gender on perceptions of trustworthiness of someone in a high status occupation (a lawyer). Eighty participants from a private university completed a questionnaire and a demographics survey. The study measured participants' perceptions of trustworthiness of a pictured individual, and how many business cards participants were willing to take to assess trustworthiness. Participants were assigned randomly to one of four conditions: white male, black male, white female, or black female. It was predicted that the white individual would be perceived as more trustworthy than the black individual and take more business cards. It was also hypothesized that males would be assessed as being more trustworthy than females and have more business cards taken. Lastly, it was predicted that the interaction between race and gender would show the white male condition would have the most trustworthiness assigned to it versus all other conditions and participants would be more likely to take the white male's business cards versus all the other conditions. Results revealed participants were more likely to trust and take a greater amount of business cards from the black individual over the white individual. There were no significant findings for gender or the interaction of race and gender on perceptions of trustworthiness and the number of business cards taken. These findings imply that there may be a change in society regarding the perceptions of race for someone in a high status occupation. Limitations and future research directions are discussed.*

***Keywords: Race, racial biases, gender discrimination, trustworthiness, lawyers .***

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How trustworthy are lawyers, doctors, and politicians? These individuals are responsible for some of the most important decisions, and yet there is always room to distrust them. Over time stereotypes have been formed for low and high prestige occupations based on

factors such as gender (Oswald, 2003). It is therefore possible that race, as well as gender, stereotypes continue to influence a factor such as trust for high status occupations (e.g., lawyers). Race and gender biases have a long and complicated history (Toosi, Babbitt, Ambady, & Sommers, 2012) and can distract people from looking beyond prejudice. The purpose of the present study is to reveal if gender and racial biases influence trusting behavior, as well as discuss the importance of recognizing that individuals should be trusted for their credentials, not their appearance. This study is important to expand the knowledge of perceptions of women for gender biases. It is important to know if women are viewed as less trustworthy than men in high status occupations. The authors also sought to determine if white individuals are being viewed as more trustworthy than black persons.

**Racial Biases:** There are many individuals who harbor racial bias and use this perception to blind them from accepting individuals for their personal qualities. Racial biases link black individuals with the concept of danger, and it is important to understand why these preexisting concepts occur (Correll, Hudson, Guillermo, & Ma, 2014; Payne, 2005). Not only do people associate black individuals with danger, but indirect prejudice is sometimes shown towards black individuals (Frey & Gaertner, 1986). Payne (2005) showed participants images of either black or white male faces followed by an object (e.g., a gun, a tool). Results showed that participants identified guns more quickly when paired with a black individual rather than a white individual (Payne, 2005). Correll et al. (2014) used Payne's (2005) findings to help determine if racial biases influence the decision to shoot. The study included 124 Denver community members and 127 Denver police officers using computer-based simulations. All participants saw either a white unarmed target, a black unarmed target, a white armed target, or a black armed target. The results revealed that the regular community members showed a greater bias to shoot black targets (armed and unarmed) more quickly and more often than white armed and unarmed targets. The police officers' responses showed no bias in the decision to shoot, but showed bias in the quick response time to shoot when threatened (shot the armed black target over the white armed target) (Payne, 2005). Thus, racial biases have an influence on deciding when to shoot.

Frey and Gaertner (1986) examined race biases in which white individuals unintentionally disadvantaged black persons. Participants were assigned to be a role director of a vocabulary task. There were two confederates in the study acting as a "worker" or "supervisor" of the task. The "worker" in the study was either black or white and asked the participant to help in the task. If the participant did not help, the "supervisor" requested the participant to help the worker. Willingness to help was evaluated in this study. White participants were less willing to help black individuals than the white ones, and the white participants were only willing to help if it seemed inappropriate if they did not help. Therefore, while racial discrimination was subtle, it still showed in the participant's unwillingness to help. Therefore, racial biases can exist when helping individuals and also when associating individuals with negative concepts.

Prior research has also investigated if higher-order cognitive control can influence racial bias. Researchers examined executive functions (cognitive process for cognitive control). It

was found that external (but not internal) motivation to control one's prejudice depended on executive functions as one sought to reduce bias expression (Ito et al., 2015). This suggests that racial bias is known to be inappropriate, yet there is still an unintentional implicit behavior to be racially biased. Racial biases are not only found in public settings, but also in professional workplace environments where such biases are considered illegal. Black men continue to encounter discrimination, underrepresentation, and inequalities in the workplace (Youngblood-Bey, 2015). That study included middle-aged men in positions of leadership. The results revealed that these black men felt discriminated against, stressed, frustrated, undervalued, inferior, and fearful at work. They also experienced a loss of self-esteem, and a loss of pride in achievements (Youngblood-Bey, 2015). These findings provide insight as to how black individuals in a place of leadership view themselves and how they might be viewed by outsiders.

Additionally, prior research has found that other workplace conditions can signal fairness and decrease perceptions of racial bias when there are nonwhite supervisors (Hirsh & Lyons, 2010). Results also showed that having predominantly nonwhite coworkers can increase the likelihood of perceiving discrimination (Hirsh & Lyons, 2010). These findings suggest that personal attributions of discrimination may vary across minority social groups as well. Overall, researchers have discovered that black individuals are unintentionally undervalued and viewed negatively even by individuals of the same race.

**Gender Discrimination:** Unfortunately, just as racial biases exist today, gender discrimination still occurs and previous research has discovered patterns of discrimination against women in the workplace (Alkadry & Tower, 2011; Murrell, Olson, & Frieze, 1995; Ortiz & Roscigno, 2009). In fact, research has shown that women are typically viewed as less capable than men in high status occupations due to stereotypes of femininity. Nadler and Stockdale (2012) reviewed the inequalities between genders in the workplace and the evidence of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. The review revealed that women faced struggles of prejudicial stereotypes in society while also being expected to succeed in employment. The pressure of fitting the role of a working woman and a traditional "house wife/mom" led to women becoming more likely to self-select into lower paying positions and looking for jobs with greater flexibility and benefits (Jacobs & Padavic, 2015; Nadler & Stockdale, 2012; Stone & Hernandez, 2013; Sweet, Sarkisian, Matz-Costa, & Pitt-Catsouphes, 2016). By women conforming to the discrimination, society maintained these biases and favored men in "traditional" roles for hiring and promoting, and women who were parents, or who were considering becoming parents, became less likely to secure gainful employment (Nadler & Stockdale, 2012).

Malos (2015) looked to evaluate cases related to the improper stereotypes of women in the workplace and reviewed the *Chadwick v. Wellpoint Inc.* (2009) court case, where a woman in a high performing work environment was denied a position to be a team leader despite being significantly more qualified than her male co-worker who received the position. Chadwick was a mother of four and was presumed to be too occupied with childcare responsibilities, and would therefore not be successful if she were to be promoted

*The Effects of Race and Gender on Perceptions of Trustworthiness...* Brenda Cunha & Michele Van Volkom (Malos, 2015). The wrongful assumption that Chadwick would be unsuccessful because she was a mother is highly related to gender discrimination found in the workplace.

A study that evaluated career-related power, gender discrimination, and gender sexism in the workplace found that gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes were highly associated with men in high power and women with low power (Yang, 2017). These findings are related to Feather and Boeckmann's (2007) research. They had participants complete a 16-item questionnaire on "Promotional Opportunities in the Workplace" and to think of the opportunities of those promotions for men and women. Men were more biased against women's success and even women perceived men to have a higher advantage in getting promotions over women.

Similarly, Kaiser and Wallace (2016) evaluated gender biases in the workplace. They analyzed ratings of leadership among men and women in the workplace and found no evidence of bias. Although the results showed no biases in leadership roles, it did not evaluate trustworthiness or race. Thus, the possibility exists that trustworthiness is somehow related to gender and/or racial biases.

**Racial and Gender Discrimination:** Previous research has examined both gender and racial biases together in the workplace. Wilborn (2016) analyzed working class black women in the workplace and showed that they felt disposable. They also had a change in their workplace status imposed upon them (e.g., change from a full-time employee to a contractor) without any justification provided by the employer (Wilborn, 2016). The study consisted of only 12 participants that completed a self-report survey during an interview procedure, so these findings need to be replicated, but it is important to note that this small sample of working class black women did feel under appreciated.

In addition, Cundiff and Vescio (2016) discovered that gender stereotypes have influenced group disparities and explained how these stereotypes have influenced groups to be underrepresented in the workplace. A two-part study was conducted asking participants to match random traits, both positive and negative, (e.g., lazy, dependent, assertive, reliable) to a male or female individual. Results showed groups of women were labeled with more negative traits (Cundiff & Vescio, 2016). Although racial disparities were not evaluated in this study, the results from Wilborn's (2016) study show stereotypes placed on women and therefore, it can be inferred that these stereotypes may be more noticeable toward black women in a workplace setting.

Xie, Flake, and Hehman (2018) studied social impressions with "a target face" and how this process differs across race and gender. For this study, participants' perceptions of a black individual's versus a white individual's facial expressions were evaluated. Results showed appearance mattered more for women than men, and there were differences for targets of a different race, all of which supports the role of racial and gender stereotypes in affecting perceptions (Xie et al., 2018). Racial and gender biases and stereotypes may be driving people to force women and black individuals into a minority group, whether it is in society or in the workplace.

**Trustworthiness:** While it is clear that previous research has evaluated the connection between race and gender (e.g., Xie et al., 2018), it has often failed to relate them specifically to trustworthiness. Trustworthiness as a concept has been well-studied, as it is seen as a vital component to many aspects of one's social life and interactions (Levine, Bitterly, Cohen, & Schweitzer, 2018). Just as Xie et al. (2018) conducted a study on facial expressions related to racial and gender stereotypes, Wu et al. (2018) had a similar procedure where the effects of facial trustworthiness and gender on fairness in decision-making were examined. In this study, participants were asked to complete an online survey after reviewing neutral images of males and females. Results indicated that females were considered more trustworthy over the males featured in the image (Wu et al., 2018). This study provides good insight into how participants might react towards males and females regarding trustworthiness. However, the study lacked the consideration of stereotypes and how women are often perceived as dependent and emotional which can possibly contribute to reasons why the women were viewed as more trustworthy. Additionally, the study failed to evaluate women's status in society compared to men and how that might influence trusting behaviors. Similarly, another study used facial impressions to determine racial biases in social trust (Stanley, Sokol-Hessner, Banaji, & Phelps, 2011). For this study, results showed white men were rated to be slightly more trustworthy than black men after participants viewed several images, despite the fact there were other races mingled with the images (Stanley et al., 2011).

Another study that evaluated trust discovered that many people are generally trusting of others; however there is a distinct difference in gender related attitudes when considering trustworthiness (Ben-Ner & Halldorsson, 2010). In fact, of 204 participants, results indicated 62% of people can be trusted, 75% tend to trust a person until there is evidence to not trust that person, and that the majority of women were more likely to trust in others but less likely to be trusted (Ben-Ner & Halldorsson, 2010). In sum, these studies reveal that gender and race are large determinants of trustworthiness and provide insight for the current and future research.

**The Present Study:** Overall, previous research has focused on the specific problems of racial biases and gender discrimination that has influenced behavior in the workplace and in society. Some of these behaviors include negative opinions of women in a high status position, associating black individuals with the concept of danger, and belittling black women in their work status (e.g., Correll et al., 2014; Feather & Boeckmann, 2007; Wilborn, 2016). However, while previous research has uncovered hostile attitudes toward others based on their gender and race, it has failed to examine how these biases influence the trustworthiness of an individual in a high status occupation. The present study builds on and adds to previous work because it manipulated gender and race via stimulus materials to see how they might influence perceptions of trustworthiness. While previous research has primarily focused on racial and gender biases as an epidemic in society in general and in the workplace, it has not focused as much on trust. This study utilized a laboratory experiment and both behavioral choice and behavioral observations to measure trustworthiness.

Because trustworthiness has not been evaluated with racial and gender biases, experimental results might provide an added benefit to previous work.

It was hypothesized that for the main effect of race, the white individual would be considered more trustworthy over the black individual and more of the white individual's business cards would be taken over the black individual's business cards. For the main effect of gender, it was hypothesized that the male individual would be considered more trustworthy over the female individual and more of the male individual's business cards would be taken over the female individual's business cards. Additionally it was hypothesized that people would find the white male as more trusting over the black male as well as more trusting over the black and white females. Also, the white female would be viewed as more trusting over the black female but not as much as the white and black males. It was also hypothesized that participants would take more of the business cards from the white male over the black male. Further it was hypothesized that participants would take more of the black male's business cards over the white and black female's business cards, and participants would take more of the white female's business card over the black female's business card.

## **Method:**

**Participants:** Participants in this study were 80 undergraduate students from a private university located in the northeast of the United States. The study included 26 (32.5%) males and 54 (67.5%) females. The mean age of participants was 19.77 ( $SD = 1.44$ ), with ages ranging from 18 to 24 years old. Participants were from different graduating classes. Thirty (37.5%) participants were first year students, 17 (21.3%) participants were sophomores, 19 (23.8%) participants were juniors, and 14 (17.5%) were seniors. There were several ethnicities; the majority of participants were European American/White (63, or 78.8%). Three participants (3.8%) were Asian/Pacific Islander, 6 (7.5%) were African American, 5 (6.3%) were Hispanic or Latino, and 3 (3.8%) classified themselves as multi-ethnic. All participants were from a convenience sample and recruited from an undergraduate online research pool. Participants received research pool credit for their participation in this experiment.

**Materials:** Materials used for this experiment included an informed consent form. A flyer containing one of four different photos of a person with the same high status occupation (lawyer) was also included: a white man in a suit, a black man in a suit, a white woman in a suit, or black woman in a suit. A trustworthy questionnaire, a behavioral measure (business cards) and a demographics form was also included.

**Informed consent:** The informed consent form allowed participants to briefly know what the study was about and the potential risks of the study. Participants were made aware that they could leave at any point during the study.

**Four scenario flyers:** Each flyer contained a photo of one of the following conditions: a black male, a white male, a white female, or a black female all professionally dressed in a

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suit. The flyer also contained a job title (Criminal Law attorney) and a specific number of years working in the field (all consistent across conditions). One flyer containing one of the four possible gender and race combinations was given to each participant.

**Business cards:** Participants had the opportunity to take any number of business cards (created for the purposes of the current study) with the name and law firm of the person in the image after the survey. The business card served as a behavioral measure. All aspects of the business card remained constant.

**Trustworthy questionnaire:** A modified General Trust questionnaire helped signify a very high or very low level of trust (Yamagishi, 1986; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). The General Trust scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .80. Additionally, participants were asked one targeted question: "How trustworthy is the person in the image?" to which they responded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all trustworthy*; 7 = *Extremely trustworthy*).

**Demographics questionnaire:** The demographic sheet asked the participants to give their age, gender, ethnic background, and year in college.

**Manipulation check:** After the demographics, participants were asked to rate on a 2-item scale "Can you identify the gender of the individual?" (1 = *male*; 2 = *female*). Also, "Can you identify the race of the individual?" (1 = *black*; 2 = *white*). A frequency test was completed to test the manipulation.

**Debriefing:** Debriefing forms notified participants about the purpose of the study and how to contact psychological services if needed. The forms also included the researchers' contact information.

**Design:** The current study was a 2 X 2 between subjects factorial design. There were two independent variables. One of the variables was the race of the individual pictured on the flyer (i.e., black or white). The other variable was the gender of the individual pictured on the flyer (i.e., female or male). The dependent variables were the likelihood of the participants to trust the depicted individual to do well at his/her job and the number of business cards willing to take belonging to the person in the image. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

**Procedure:** The current study was self-report. Each potential participant was given an informed consent form to read over and sign while being told that they could leave at any time during the study. Once informed consent was obtained and filed separately, the participants were given one of the four flyers at random to keep, along with the trustworthiness questionnaire and demographics. After the participants completed the questionnaire, a behavior measure was conducted asking participants "How many business cards will you be willing to take to share with friends and family" that included the name and law firm of the person in the image (black male, white male, white female, or black female). Once participants were informed they did not really need to take the business cards, they were able to return them upon debriefing. The participants were debriefed and told that the point of the study was to investigate the extent to which individuals trust other

people depending upon their specific gender or race. Once the debriefing was completed, participants were given a written copy of the debriefing as well as a blank informed consent and were asked if they had any questions regarding the study. As compensation for participating, participants received research pool credit toward their Psychology class research participation requirement.

## **Results:**

**Manipulation Checks:** To determine whether the gender manipulation was effective, a frequency was completed to see if participants in the male or female condition correctly recognized the gender of the individual in the flyer (1 = *Correct*, 2 = *Incorrect*). A multiple-choice question was used to determine the effectiveness (1 = *Male*, 2 = *Female*). The frequency revealed 79 (98.8%) of the participants were correct in identifying the gender and 1(1.3%) was incorrect in identifying the gender.

To confirm if the race manipulation was effective, a frequency was completed to see if participants in the black or white condition correctly recognized the race of the individual in the flyer (1 = *Correct*, 2 = *Incorrect*). A multiple-choice question was used to determine the effectiveness (1 = *Black*, 2 = *White*). The frequency revealed 80 (100%) of the participants were correct in identifying the race of the pictured individual.

**Effect of Race and Gender on Number of Business Cards Willing to Take:** The potential effects of race and gender on the number of business cards of the pictured individual participants were willing to take were examined. It was hypothesized that more of the white individual's business cards would be taken over the black individual's business cards. Also, that more of the male individual's business cards would be taken over the female individual's business cards. Finally, it was hypothesized that participants would take the most business cards from the white male versus all the other conditions. The means and standard deviations for the four conditions (white male, black male, white female, black female) are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Effect of Race and Gender on Number of Business Cards Willing to Take*

	<b>Gender</b>		
Race	Male	Female	Overall Mean
White	2.25 (1.77)	3.10 (4.28)	2.68 (3.26)
Black	3.45 (1.64)	4.45 (2.65)	3.95 (2.23)
Overall Mean	2.85 (1.79)	3.78 (3.58)	3.31 (2.85)

*Note.* *N* for each cell = 20. A two-way factorial analysis of variance was conducted comparing the four conditions on the number of business cards. The main effect for race (black individuals over white individuals) was significant  $F(1, 76) = 4.18, p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$ . The main effect for gender (male and female) and the interaction were not significant.



A two-way factorial analysis of variance was computed with race and gender as the independent variables. The dependent variable was the number of business cards participants were willing to take (after questionnaires were completed). The results for the two main effects were: race,  $F(1, 76) = 4.18, p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$  and gender,  $F(1, 76) = 2.20, p = .14$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Contrary to the hypothesis, participants took significantly more of the black individual's business cards ( $M = 3.95, SD = 2.23$ ; see Table 1) versus the white individual ( $M = 2.68, SD = 3.26$ ; see Table 1). The results showed that the interaction between race and gender was not significant,  $F(1, 76) = 0.14, p = .91$ , partial  $\eta^2 < .001$ . This did not support the original hypothesis; instead, it revealed that race and gender together, as well as gender alone, had no effect on the number of business cards participants were willing to take. It also showed there was a significant difference in means for the number of business cards participants were willing to take from the black individual versus the white individual.

**Effect of Race and Gender on Trustworthiness:** The relationship between race, gender, and trustworthiness was examined. It was hypothesized that the white individual would be considered more trustworthy over the black individual. Also, it was hypothesized that the male individual would be considered more trustworthy over the female individual. Lastly, it was hypothesized that people would find the white male as the most trustworthy versus all the other conditions.

**Table 2**

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Effect of Race and Gender on Perceptions of Trustworthiness*

Race	Gender		Overall Mean
	Male	Female	
White	4.45 (1.05)	4.58 (1.02)	4.51 (1.02)
Black	4.83 (0.79)	5.30 (0.86)	5.07 (0.85)
Overall Mean	4.63 (0.94)	4.95 (1.00)	4.79 (0.98)

*Note.*  $N$  for each cell = 18-20. A two-way factorial analysis of variance was conducted comparing the four conditions on trustworthiness. The main effect for race (black individuals over white individuals) was significant,  $F(1, 73) = 6.65, p = .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .08$ . The main effect for gender (male and female) and the interaction were not significant.

A two-way factorial analysis of variance was computed with race and gender as the independent variables and trustworthiness as the dependent variable. The results for the two main effects were: race,  $F(1, 73) = 6.65, p = .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .08$  and gender,  $F(1, 73) = 1.94, p = .17$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Contrary to the hypothesis, participants rated the black individual ( $M = 5.07, SD = 0.85$ ; see Table 2) as more trustworthy than the white individual ( $M = 4.51, SD = 1.02$ ; see Table 2). The results showed that the interaction between race and gender was not significant,  $F(1, 73) = 0.62, p = .43$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .01$ . This shows that race and gender together, as well as gender alone, had no effect on trustworthiness, but race alone affected trustworthiness.

**Effect of Race and Gender on General Trust:** To determine the relationship between race, gender, and scores on the general trust scale (Yamagishi, 1986; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994), analyses were run to identify any potential effects of race and gender on general trust. It was hypothesized that the white individual would receive higher general trust scores over the black individual. Also, it was hypothesized the male individual would receive higher general trust scores over the female individual. Lastly, it was hypothesized that people would find the white male as the highest in general trust as opposed to all the other conditions.

**Table 3**

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Effect of Race and Gender on General Trust for the Pictured Lawyer*

	Gender		
Race	Male	Female	Overall Mean
White	3.24 (.422)	3.36 (0.38)	3.30 (0.40)
Black	3.19 (3.77)	3.34 (0.43)	3.27 (0.41)
Overall Mean	3.22 (0.39)	3.36 (0.40)	3.29 (0.40)

*Note.*  $N$  for each cell = 20. A two-way factorial analysis of variance was conducted comparing the four conditions on the General Trust scale. The main effects for race and gender, and the interaction, were not significant.

A two-way factorial analysis of variance was used to determine if race and gender affected general trust for the individual pictured in the flyers. Race and gender were the independent variables and general trust was the dependent variable. The results for the two main effects were: race,  $F(1, 76) = 0.14, p = .71$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$  and gender,  $F(1, 76) = 2.35, p = .13$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . The hypothesis was not supported; there was no significant difference in general trust between the black ( $M = 3.27, SD = 0.41$ ; see Table 3) and the white ( $M = 3.30, SD = .40$ ; see Table 3) pictured individuals. There was also no significant difference in general trust between male ( $M = 3.22, SD = .39$ ; see Table 3) and female ( $M = 3.36, SD = .40$ ; see Table 3) pictured individuals. The results showed that the interaction between race and gender was also not significant,  $F(1, 76) = 0.34, p = .85$ , partial  $\eta^2 < .001$ . The means for general trust did not differ significantly across any of the conditions. It was concluded that race and gender, individually or combined, had no overall effect on general trust of someone in a high status occupation.

## **Discussion:**

**Hypotheses:** The present study examined the potential influence of race and gender on perceived trustworthiness of someone in a high status occupation. The results ran contrary to the hypotheses. Participants did view the black individual as significantly more trustworthy over the white individual, and participants took significantly more business cards from the black individual than the white individual. There was no significant effect of gender on trustworthiness, general trust, or the amount of business cards taken. For the

interaction of race and gender, there was no significant difference between the two independent variables on trustworthiness, general trust, or the number of business cards willing to take.

**Implications and Interpretations of Results:** Previous research has studied racial and gender discrimination in the workplace, but there has been very little research on the effects of race and gender on perceptions of trustworthiness. This current study derived most of its predictions from previous work on the influence of gender and racial prejudice in the workplace. For example, a few studies evaluated how black individuals are often unintentionally disadvantaged, feel disposable in the workplace, and are usually linked with the concept of danger (Correll et al., 2014; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Payne, 2005; Wilborn, 2016). The current study's findings contradicted previous research; results instead showed black individuals were trusted more than white individuals. It is possible, and encouraging, that society may have evolved, and people may have educated themselves and learned to value the importance of an individual's credentials, not their appearance, in order to trust. On a more negative note, it is possible that people may have realized their own prejudices and were responding in a way to compensate for their beliefs.

Additionally, previous research has suggested that in the workplace, stereotypes and sexist attitudes are highly associated with men in high power and women with low power (Feather & Boeckmann, 2007; Yang, 2017). This present study, however, discovered no significant effects of gender on perceptions of trustworthiness. Nonetheless, based off the findings from Ben-Ner and Halldorsson (2010) that suggested that a majority of women are more likely to trust in others but less likely to be trusted, perhaps because the majority of participants in the current study were women, their responses influenced the results on trustworthiness. Also, the results from Kaiser and Wallace (2016) that showed that there was no bias toward women in leadership, and that most participants scored in favor of women in leadership roles, may have contributed to why gender had no significant effect on perceptions of trustworthiness. It could be that society no longer sees women as less worthy than men in high status occupations because women have recently dominated positions in areas such as politics.

It is also possible that the current results were not significant for the lawyer's gender on perceptions of trustworthiness because individuals might be willing to trust women more than men and take more of the women's business cards because people might suppose women are "sincere" enough to be trusted. In fact, research has shown women faced struggles of prejudicial stereotypes in society while also being expected to succeed highly in employment. Women are expected to face the pressure of fitting the role of a "working woman" and a traditional "house wife/mom" that this stereotype may have influenced how participants responded to trusting the female individuals (Nadler & Stockdale, 2012). Consequently, a majority of individuals may have progressed away from racial prejudice that allow for more trusting behavior, but it is still unclear as to how gender may affect trustworthiness.

**Strengths and Limitations:** Various factors contributed to the weakening of this study (e.g., random errors). Due to scheduling limitations, participants were exposed to 5 different lab rooms, either with other participants or alone. This change in location and amount of fellow participants contributed to a lack of consistency. Because some participants were grouped with others, conformity could have occurred when asking the number of business cards willing to take; during data collection, after one person answered, participants were likely to repeat the previous person's response. There are also a number of other reasons a participant might have been willing to take business cards that had little to do with their feelings of trust for the pictured lawyer (e.g., they wanted to be polite, or they felt intimidated by the researcher's presence). Also, due to social desirability concerns, participants might have felt obligated to take a business card, in order to not disappoint the researcher.

Additionally, the flyer of the pictured lawyer did not provide participants with a scenario of them needing legal assistance, which might have made the experiment lack some realism. Participants being recruited as a convenience sample from an online participant pool, all of which were in a psychology class (a school requirement), could influence the generalizability of the findings and could also have caused hypothesis guessing. Further generalizability limitations were that most of the participants were White, and the majority of the participants were female, which could have influenced results.

Despite these limitations, the strengths of this study included internal validity. The present study provides an experimental examination with high levels of control. Using experimental methods with race and gender on perceptions of trustworthiness is what previous research had failed to use and thus, the current experiment provided results that were realistic and not correlational. Although participants were exposed to many different lab rooms, there was a strict protocol that was followed to ensure all participants had the same constant treatment in each condition. Another strength was that all participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions that allowed for some variety in ethnicity, gender, and class year to help with generalizability.

**Future Research Directions:** In order to possibly increase power in the future, researchers could have an increased sample size to help with a larger variety of ethnicities, gender, and ages. Because participants were from a research pool from a small private university, variability among the demographics was limited. Also, future research could look to evaluate culture differences regarding race, gender, and trustworthiness since that was not interpreted in this specific study. Additionally, researchers can also look into comparing previous research of racial and gender discrimination to more recent studies like Kaiser and Wallace (2016) and identify the change in societal stereotypes of race and gender for someone in a high status occupation.

Another direction future researchers could consider is changing the behavioral measure. Because participants were asked the amount of business cards they were willing to take instead of allowing them to take them on their own, social desirability may have taken

place. Future studies may also wish to change the high status career to an occupation such as a doctor or politician, and assess if the type of career will influence an individual's opinion on race, gender, and trustworthiness. This can essentially help in determining what types of careers hold the most amount of trust. Finally, future studies can change the dependent and independent variables. For example, conducting a study with more ethnicities for the pictured individual, and evaluating trust with an activity instead of a scale, could further highlight potential gender and racial stereotypes.

**Conclusion:** This study was conducted to determine how gender and racial biases could influence perceptions of trustworthiness of an individual in a high status occupation. It was hypothesized that the white individual would be considered more trustworthy over the black individual, and more of the white individual's business cards would be taken over the black individual's business cards; however, this was not supported. The hypothesis that stated the male individual would be considered more trustworthy over the female individual and more of the male individual's business cards would be taken over the female individual's business cards was also not supported. Finally, the interaction hypothesis that stated people will find the white male as more trustworthy versus all the other conditions was not supported. Results illustrated that race and gender together, as well as gender alone, had no effect on perceptions of trustworthiness for someone in a high status occupation. However race, contrary to this study's predictions, may in fact influence trustworthiness, in that people trusted black individuals over white individuals. By evaluating race and gender with trust, this study helped highlight how society may have evolved, and how people may have learned to value the importance of an individual's credentials more than their appearance when trusting an individual in a high status occupation.

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