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Sociology

Tentative Title of Dissertation:
Complex Stereotyping: Stereotypes at the Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, Race, Age, and Class

Dissertation Abstract:
People are many things at once: one cannot be African American without having a gender, or young without a social class. Yet despite the fact that individuals are members of multiple intersecting social categories (e.g., African American woman), social scientists' understanding of stereotypes remains largely focused on single, isolated categories (e.g., stereotypes of African Americans or women). Social psychology in particular must engage with intersectional complexity if it is to understand-and mitigate-the role of stereotypes in social interactions and inequalities. I take a major step towards this engagement by using large web-based experiments to examine how five major social categories (gender, sexuality, race, class, and age) shape stereotypes across hundreds of intersections. Research participants will indicate stereotypes of the competence (e.g., intelligence and confidence) and interpersonal warmth (e.g., trustworthiness and sociability) of target individuals at these intersections. I will test whether these intersectional stereotypes can be understood through categorical stereotypes alone or if, as I predict, they instead require attention to interactions between categories and unique effects of specific intersections. Additional experiments will address the role of occupational segregation and the personal beliefs of more powerful social groups in explaining intersectional variation in stereotypes. My studies will result in the most comprehensive account of intersectional stereotypes thus far developed in social psychology. Resulting insights will improve the ability of scholars and practitioners to understand and reduce the impact of stereotypes on individuals and groups.