Race is gendered: How shared stereotype content affects basic person construal
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Observers are prone to categorize others along a variety of dimensions (e.g., race, sex, age, and sexual orientation). Because these categories vary orthogonally in reality, prior research assumed these categories to be independent psychologically as well. The supposition of psychological independence, however, seems premature. Many social categories share substantial overlap in their stereotype content. The stereotypes for African American and Men, for example, share overlapping content (e.g., aggressive), as do the stereotypes for Asian and Women (e.g., communal). We hypothesized that categorization of a target along one dimension, such as sex, may be facilitated when the target is also a member of a category that shares stereotype content, such as race. If correct, sex category judgments for African American men and Asian women should be more efficient, relative to judgments for targets with non-overlapping category membership. In 2 studies, participants categorized computer-generated faces that varied in race and sex. Across a variety of measures (i.e., reaction times, mouse trajectories, and Garner interference) we found the predicted pattern of results – facilitated responses for targets with membership in overlapping social categories. The implications for a top-down effect of stereotype content in basic person construal are discussed.