

Study: 100% of women of color in STEM experience bias

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A new study finds that women of color in STEM fields suffer a “double jeopardy.”

At the dawn of 2015, gender bias in science, tech, engineering and math (STEM) fields are pervasive, but a new University of California Hastings study finds the difficulties compound if you are a women of color.

[The study](#), led by Professor Joan Williams, a director of Hastings’ Center for WorkLife Law, was based on interviews with 60 women of color in STEM and a survey of 557 women (both women of color and white women). A full 100% of the women of color reported gender bias, with 93% of white women saying they’ve experienced gender bias. But women of color also encounter racial and ethnic stereotypes, putting them in what Williams called “a double jeopardy.”

For instance, black women were more likely (77%) than other women (66%) to report “having to prove themselves over and over again.” The study also found that Latinas and Asian-American women faced stereotyping in the workplace. The findings of the study included:

- Both Latinas and Black women report regularly being mistaken as janitors.
- The stereotype that Asians are good at science helps Asian-American women with their students but not their colleagues
- Asian-American women said they felt more pressure to act “feminine”—demure and passive—and received more push back when they don’t
- Latinas reported that when they assert themselves, they risk being seen as “angry” or “too emotional”

- Black women felt they have more leeway in terms of expressing emotion so long as they aren't perceived as "angry black women"
- Latina scientists reported having a harder time getting administrative personnel to do work, and were expected to do more admin work by colleagues such as filling out forms and organizing meetings
- All of the women surveyed reported experiencing some form of gender bias; and 93% of white women have experienced gender bias

Williams, who has been studying gender for more two decades, said over the years she's received several requests to add a racial component to her studies. "If you study gender, it's typically about white women," she said. "If you study race, it's typically about men of color. Women of color get lost in the shuffle."

In her study, Williams offers a list of best practices that employers can adopt to counter this bias, such as providing new hires with mentors and creating focusing groups to assess the level of bias in the firm.

The [U.S. Census Bureau](#) reported that men are employed in STEM occupations at about twice the rate of women with the same qualifications. Recently, Intel announced a [major diversity initiative](#) to improve such stats.

However, for people who want to take matters into their own hands, Williams, the author of [a book about how women combat gender stereotypes](#), suggests creating a "posse." The posse is a group of both men and women that regularly celebrates each others' successes. Williams contends that this combats two significant biases women face: having their mistakes highlighted more than their successes and facing push back for asserting themselves.

As for Williams, when asked if she'd experienced gender bias herself, she laughed heartily. "Are you kidding?" she said, rattling off the stats about the pervasiveness of gender bias.