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Skilled Women Ethnic Immigrants: Is there any point at which being a multiple minority becomes an advantage, as predicted by Dual Process Theory?

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## ABSTRACT

Previous research on bias has focused on selection bias in recruitment. This research explores the issue of Treatment Bias (lack of advancement or promotion opportunities). The context for the research is potential treatment bias against skilled immigrant women from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, some of whom may experience bias yet others not. The purpose of this research is to test the theories of treatment bias in particular to find out whether Dual Process Theory can help close the gap in understanding of why some skilled immigrant women may not always be accepted in sustainable (respectful, recognition of skills) forms of livelihood in New Zealand workplaces. The research examines the interplay of psychological theories of similarity attraction, social identity, social dominance and realistic conflict with minority influence theory, which suggests that minority status might actually become an advantage for consistent minorities, e.g., minorities that are a minority across multiple criteria (such as “woman” AND “immigrant” AND “ethnic”). Sixty-five immigrant women with approximately 6.35 years’ experience working in a diverse range of New Zealand organisations completed a scenario-type questionnaire based on their direct experiences of working in New Zealand. Participants ranked employers’ perceived preference for promotion, perceived similarity/cultural fit to the majority culture/workplace, perceived status in the workplace and perceived threat or competitiveness for promotion opportunities. Employees were presented in the scenarios as equally skilled, qualified and all performed at the same level. In a 2x2x2 factorial design, majority and minority status for each employee to be ranked was systematically varied by gender (male/female), ethnicity (ethnic/non-ethnic) and immigration status (immigrant/non-immigrant). Despite equality of qualifications, experience and

performance, there was no point at which being a minority presented an advantage as predicated by the minority influence theory. Instead, the mean ranking for perceived preference for promotion revealed that the majority was consistently preferred over single (e.g., female, or immigrant, or ethnic) then double (any combination of two of the above minority criteria) then treble minorities. There was also co-variation between minority status on the one hand and social dominance, social identity, realistic conflict and similarity attraction on the other, suggesting a combined explanatory role for each construct (similarity, identity, etc.) in treatment bias. With each step from single, double to treble minority status there was a consistent decrement in perceived preference; the results showed clear preference for the majority with no particular preference or advantage for the minority at any stage. Discussion focuses on opportunities for future research and improvements regarding the methodology for future research.

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