



Gender stereotypes and workplace bias

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the workplace consequences of both descriptive gender stereotypes (designating what women and men *are* like) and prescriptive gender stereotypes (designating what women and men *should be* like), and their implications for women's career progress. Its central argument is that gender stereotypes give rise to biased judgments and decisions, impeding women's advancement. The paper discusses how descriptive gender stereotypes promote gender bias because of the negative performance expectations that result from the perception that there is a poor fit between what women are like and the attributes believed necessary for successful performance in male gender-typed positions and roles. It also discusses how prescriptive gender stereotypes promote gender bias by creating normative standards for behavior that induce disapproval and social penalties when they are directly violated or when violation is inferred because a woman is successful. Research is presented that tests these ideas, considers specific career consequences likely to result from stereotype-based bias, and identifies conditions that exaggerate or minimize the likelihood of their occurrence.

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Although women have made tremendous strides in workforce participation, they remain woefully underrepresented in traditionally male occupations and fields. They are rarely found at the very top levels of US business organizations and comprise only 15.2% of the corporate boards of Fortune-500 companies (Catalyst, 2010). A similar situation exists in Europe (European Commission, 2011). There is increasing evidence that this dearth of women at the upper levels of organizations occurs despite women’s acquisition of the necessary experience, education and skills for upward mobility and despite a variety of organizational efforts to support their career advancement. This paper focuses on the blocked upward mobility of women and conditions that impede their advancement. Its central argument is that gender bias in evaluation is a major contributor to the scarcity of women in upper level organizational positions, and that gender bias is rooted in gender stereotypes.

The aim of the paper is to enhance understanding about why and how gender stereotypes produce career-hindering judgments and discriminatory decision making. We discuss ideas about the process by which gender stereotypes give rise to gender bias and the conditions that regulate its occurrence. Research is presented that tests these ideas and also demonstrates the specific ways in which gender stereotypes and the expectations they produce can result in negative consequences for women’s career advancement. Our concern throughout is the question of why being competent and qualified provides a woman no assurance that she will advance to the same organizational level as an equivalently competent and qualified man.

1. Gender stereotypes

Stereotypes are generalizations about groups that are applied to individual group members simply because they belong to that group, and gender stereotypes are generalizations about the attributes of men and women. Gender stereotypes have both descriptive and prescriptive properties (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Descriptive gender stereotypes designate what women and men *are* like. Prescriptive gender stereotypes designate what women and men *should be* like. Both descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes, and the expectations they produce, can compromise a woman’s career progress. Descriptive stereotypes promote negative expectations about a women’s performance by creating a perceived “lack of fit” between the attributes women are

thought to possess and the attributes thought necessary for success in traditionally male positions (Heilman, 1983, 2001). Prescriptive stereotypes establish normative expectations for men's and women's behavior, resulting in the devaluation and derogation of women who directly or indirectly violate gender norms (Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Parks-Stamm, 2007). Whether functioning descriptively or prescriptively, gender stereotypes can impede the career progress of aspiring women. The following sections examine descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes in greater detail, delineating the processes they set in motion and exploring the outcomes they produce.

2. Descriptive gender stereotypes

Beliefs about how men and women typically are comprise descriptive gender stereotypes. The content of stereotypes has been studied extensively, and researchers have identified the attributes that are thought to characterize men and women (Abele, 2003; Bakan, 1966; Broverman, Vogel, Borverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). Agency is often taken to be the defining characteristic of the male stereotype, and communality as the defining characteristic of the female stereotype. Agency has come to denote achievement-orientation (e.g., competent, ambitious, task-focused), inclination to take charge (assertive, dominant, forceful), autonomy (e.g., independent, self-reliant, decisive) and rationality (e.g., analytical, logical, objective). Communality, on the other hand, has come to denote concern for others (e.g., kind, caring, considerate), affiliative tendencies (e.g., warm, friendly, collaborative), deference (e.g., obedient, respectful, self-effacing) and emotional sensitivity (e.g., perceptive, intuitive, understanding). Conceptions of men and women not only are different, but they tend to be oppositional, with women seen as lacking what is thought to be most prevalent in men, and men seen as lacking what is most prevalent in women.

The characterizations of women and men that comprise descriptive gender stereotypes are remarkably consistent. They have been shown to be consistent across culture. In a study examining gender stereotypes in 25 different countries, Williams and Best (1990) asked participants to indicate whether each adjective in a list was more frequently associated with men, women or neither group. They found a lot of agreement, with adjectives related to agency more likely to be associated with men and adjectives related to communality more likely to be associated with women. Descriptive stereotypes also have been shown to be consistent across time. Throughout social turmoil and change, gender-stereotypic assumptions about what men and women are like have been shown to prevail, with men still characterized in agentic terms and women in communal terms (Lueptow, Garovich, & Lueptow, 1995; Schein, 2001). Recently, for example, a sample of 529 male and female respondents from a variety of age groups and backgrounds were found to rate men significantly higher than women on agentic attributes and rated women significantly higher than men on communal attributes (Hentschel, Heilman, & Peus, 2012). Additionally, descriptive gender stereotypes have been shown to be consistent across context. Despite the increased number of women in the workplace and their increasing presence in traditionally male roles, descriptive gender stereotypes have been shown to exist in diverse employment settings as well as in social and domestic settings (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989; Dodge, Gilroy, & Fenzel, 1995; Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Schein, 2001).

These widely shared beliefs about men and women have important consequences. Descriptive stereotypes serve as heuristics or shortcuts for forming impressions about people. They serve as energy-saving devices, allowing perceivers to form impressions quickly, enabling them to easily respond to and make more predictable the highly complex world confronting them (Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994, p. 37). Moreover, descriptive stereotypes can exert influence without the perceiver being aware of it. There is evidence that stereotypes are often activated automatically when encountering a member of a stereotyped group, although they are not necessarily acted upon (Devine, 1989; Dovidio, Evans, & Tyler, 1986). There also is evidence that perceivers often are not cognizant of the impact of these automatically activated gender stereotypes on their impressions and the influence of these impressions on their judgments (Banaji & Hardin, 1996; Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993). Because stereotypes are widely shared, automatically activated, and very impactful, descriptive gender stereotypes are highly likely to dominate in impressions formed of men and women. Thus, people can be disadvantaged (or advantaged) in how they are viewed not because of what they are like or what they have done, but because of the gender group to which they belong.

It often is assumed that women are always negatively affected by descriptive gender stereotypes, but this is not the case. Although conceptions of men and women differ, each conception is positive in its own way (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). In fact, there is evidence that women and the attributes believed to characterize them are highly valued and considered to be "wonderful" (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1991). Thus, stereotypic

conceptions of what women are like are not invariably problematic. They are problematic for women in work settings only to the extent that they negatively affect expectations about their performance. But performance expectations are determined not only by conceptions of what an individual is like but also by their “fit” with the attributes thought necessary to successfully perform the job (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1983, 2001).

2.1. Lack of fit and the formation of performance expectations

Descriptive stereotypes create problems for women when there is a perceived “lack of fit” between a woman’s attributes and the attributes believed to be required to succeed in traditionally male occupations and organizational positions (Heilman, 1983). These male gender-typed positions, which include top management and executive positions, are believed to necessitate characteristics that coincide with stereotypic conceptions of men, but not with stereotypic conceptions of women (Gaucher, Friesen & Kay, 2011; Heilman et al., 1989). And this view seems quite resistant to change. Despite the fact that communal traits and behaviors such as interpersonal skills and the ability to develop new talent are increasingly becoming valued leadership and managerial characteristics (Eagly & Carli, 2003), the perception of what it takes to be a successful in these positions remains largely tied to agentic qualities (Schein, 2001). They are still thought to require an achievement oriented aggressiveness and emotional toughness that is contrary to the stereotyped view of what women are like. As a result, women are thought to be deficient in the qualities required for success at upper-level positions.

Research has provided evidence that there is a perceived lack of fit between the demands of high-level organizational positions and characterizations of women. In early work on this issue, it was found that when respondents, both male and female, were asked to identify the attributes of men in general, of women in general and of successful managers, the characterization of successful managers were more congruent with the characterization of men than of women (Schein, 1973, 1975). Heilman et al. (1989) further demonstrated that this result held even when respondents were asked specifically about the attributes of male and female *managers*; male managers were described as more similar to successful managers than were female managers. There also is research that has explicitly verified that good managers are described in masculine terms (Dennis & Kunkel, 2004; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002; Willemsen, 2002), and that stereotypically male qualities are thought necessary to be a successful executive (Martell, Parker, Emrich, & Crawford, 1998). The general idea that we “think manager, think male” seems to live on.

The perceived lack of correspondence between female stereotypic attributes and male gender-typed job requirements is likely to lead to the conclusion that women are not equipped to handle these jobs and consequently produce negative expectations about their likely success. This is the logic of the Lack of Fit model (Heilman, 1983, 2001). The model further proposes that these stereotype-based negative performance expectations have a profound effect on information processing, prompting cognitive distortions that form the basis of gender bias in performance evaluation.

2.2. Stereotype-based performance expectations and information processing

The negative performance expectations arising from lack of fit perceptions can influence the way in which information about women is processed. Expectations have a self-perpetuating quality; they tend to bias information in a manner that allows them to be maintained. Cognitive distortion enables them to withstand disconfirming evidence – cognitive distortion in what information is attended to, how it is interpreted and which of it is recalled. Each of these has distinct consequences for employment evaluations and decisions.

2.2.1. Attention

Expectations can affect what information is focused upon. Social psychology research has shown that expectations act as a perceptual filter, directing attention away from disconfirming information and toward confirming information (Johnson & Judd, 1983). Thus, information that is inconsistent with expectations often is not even noticed. But even when such information is noticed, it might not be integrated into the impression that is formed. It may be considered irrelevant or attributed to external factors or circumstances, rendering it not useful for forming impressions of an individual (Swim & Sanna, 1996). If expectation-inconsistent information is either ignored or attributed to something outside of the individual, the original expectation is not challenged and can be maintained. Research has provided support for these ideas, indicating that evaluators spend less time attending to work behaviors of individuals about

whom there are stereotype-based expectations (such as women), than individuals for whom such expectations do not exist (Favero & Ilgen, 1989).

2.2.2. Interpretation

Even if expectation-inconsistent information is attended to, its interpretation can perpetuate initial expectations. Behavior performed by individuals about whom there are different expectations have been shown to be interpreted very differently (Kunda, Sinclair, & Griffin, 1997). So changing a course of action may be seen as flexible when performed by a man, but as weak or indecisive when performed by a woman. Or delaying making a decision may be seen as prudent when the decision maker is a man, but as timid or passive when the decision maker is a woman. The meaning attached to a particular behavior can vary greatly depending upon the expectations held. It has in fact been demonstrated that when targets are of different sexes, the implications drawn from their behavior can be very different (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). It also has been demonstrated that the kinds of words used in writing laudatory letters of recommendation for highly talented men and women are different, and in line with gender stereotypes (Madera, Hebl, & Martin, 2009).

2.2.3. Recall

Memory can also be biased by expectations (Cantor & Mischel, 1979; O'Sullivan & Durso, 1984). People have been shown to recall more expectation-consistent than inconsistent information about another, even falsely "remembering" expectation-consistent behaviors that did not actually occur (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Higgins & Bargh, 1987). In fact, expectations have been shown to be more powerful than memories of actual behavioral events in making behavioral ratings (Baltes & Parker, 2000; Cooper, 1981; DeNisi, Cafferty, & Meglino, 1984; Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Martell, Guzzo, & Willis, 1995). These investigations suggest that a woman's behavior that is consistent with expectations held about her is likely to be more readily recalled by evaluators, whereas her behavior that is inconsistent with expectations is more likely to be forgotten.

Biased expectations lead to biased evaluations, and these in turn become the basis of organizational decision making. The consequences can be damaging for upwardly mobile women.

2.3. Lack of fit, performance expectations and career consequences

The tenaciousness of performance expectations, and their powerful influence on the way in which information is processed, suggests that expectations produced by lack of fit perceptions can have important and broad-ranging consequences for how women are treated in the workplace. There are likely to be consequences for hiring, starting salary and job placement decisions as well as for opportunities for skill development, pay raises and promotions. The expectation that women are ill-equipped to handle male gender-typed tasks and positions is likely to affect whether they are selected for such jobs and, if they are, the responsibilities they are given and the career track on which they are placed. Also, because of selective attention, interpretation, and recall, assessments of women's performance competence are likely to be negatively affected and, accordingly, their opportunities for advancement and attainment of organizational rewards thwarted.

It follows that the more negative the performance expectations about a woman, the more gender bias should be evident. That means that the degree of the perceived lack of fit between the woman's attributes and the presumed nature of the job requirements, because of the expectations it produces, should also regulate the amount of bias exhibited. There is ample evidence that there are inequities in the recruitment (e.g., Gaucher et al., 2011), selection (e.g., Schmader, Whitehead, & Wysocki, 2007), evaluation (e.g., Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992), and promotion (e.g., Lyness & Heilman, 2006) of women. There also is strong evidence verifying the lack of fit formulation, demonstrating that the greater the perceived lack of fit between a woman and a job, the more negative the evaluative outcomes they produce. In these investigations either the degree to which stereotypes about women are activated or the degree to which the position in question is seen as male gender-typed is varied.

2.3.1. Gender-type of the field

Lack of fit should only create negative performance expectations and subsequent negative evaluative outcomes for women when the job is deemed to be "male." This occurs when the work responsibilities are ones typically associated with men (Gaucher et al., 2011), and is highly likely when men constitute the overwhelming majority proportionally

(Cejka & Eagly, 1999). Maleness is determined not only by the job itself, but by occupation (e.g., the military vs. education), subfields or professional specialties (e.g., surgery vs. pediatrics), academic fields (sciences vs. humanities), and function and level within an organization.

In fact, negative evaluations in selection decisions have repeatedly been found to occur more for male gender-typed jobs than other types of jobs (see Davison & Burke, 2000 for a meta-analysis), and there are similar findings concerning competence assessments and performance evaluations. Lyness and Heilman (2006), for example, found that in a large financial services company women were evaluated less favorably than men in line jobs (which tend to be male gender-typed), but not in staff jobs. Similarly, Pazy and Oron (2001) examined the performance ratings of a sample of high-ranking military officers and found that women were rated as less competent than men in male-dominated units but not in units where men were less prevalent, and presumably the work less male in gender-type.

2.3.2. Degree to which the target is viewed as stereotypical

The other aspect of the fit model – stereotypic beliefs about women – should also affect the formation of negative expectations that provoke negative evaluative outcomes. According to the model, women are considered to be ill-equipped for male gender-type jobs because they are viewed stereotypically, therefore lacking the required attributes needed to succeed. Thus, conditions that heighten the degree to which a woman is characterized stereotypically should produce more negative performance expectations and detrimental evaluative outcomes.

It has been shown that women with personal attributes that increase the saliency of their gender, such as physical attractiveness (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985a, 1985b) or motherhood status (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008) are evaluated more negatively than men than are women who do not share these personal attributes. Structural factors also can contribute to the salience of a woman's gender. Token or minority status, for example, leads to more stereotyped characterizations (Kanter, 1977), and lesser likelihood of being selected (Heilman & Blader, 2001) or promoted (Sackett, DuBois, & Noe, 1991). Moreover, affirmative action policies (Heilman, Block, & Stathatos, 1997) and diversity initiatives (Heilman & Welle, 2006), both intended to help women and other minorities, have been found to instead sometimes promote stereotyping and negative evaluation. Thus, both personal and organizational factors can accentuate a woman's gender, exacerbating perceptions of lack of fit with a male gender-typed job and the negative evaluative consequences these perceptions generate.

Thus, perceived lack of fit has been shown to give rise to gender bias in evaluations, with the severity of these outcomes dependent on the degree of the perceived lack of fit and the resulting negativity of performance expectations. But whether lack of fit perceptions have detrimental effects on women is not determined solely by the negativity of the expectations they produce; the level of ambiguity also plays an important role.

2.4. The facilitating effects of ambiguity

Ambiguity permits expectations to flourish. The more ambiguity, the more necessity there is for inference, and the less evident is the “accurate” evaluative judgment. Thus, ambiguity provides a facilitative environment for gender bias (Nieva & Gutek, 1980), fueling subjectivity and giving free reign to cognitive distortion in information processing (Heilman & Haynes, 2006). Ambiguity is heightened when the information available about a target is impoverished, inconsistent or irrelevant, when there is poor definition of the criteria for evaluation, when there is a lack of specificity concerning the evaluation process, and when there is confusion about the source of performance outcomes.

2.4.1. The amount and type of information available

The quantity of information that is available to evaluators has consistently been shown to be related to bias in evaluative judgments (Davison & Burke, 2000; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Tosi & Einbender, 1985), with limited information facilitating the use of stereotype-based expectations. Accordingly, a meta-analysis of “Joan versus John” studies, in which respondents evaluated fictitious targets whose sex is manipulated, demonstrated the less favorable evaluation of women as compared to men particularly when there is little information about the target (Swim, Borgida, Maruyama, & Myers, 1989).

But simply having plentiful information is not sufficient to prevent the influence of negative expectations – quality also is critical. Research has demonstrated that information must be job relevant and diagnostic of performance success if it is to curtail biased evaluation of women (Heilman, 1984). Irrelevant information has been shown to result in no less bias than minimal information (Heilman, 1984; Rasinski, Crocker, & Hastie, 1985), and to sometimes

reinforce rather than challenge stereotype-based expectations (Locksley, Borgida, Brekke, & Hepburn, 1980). Moreover, the relevant information has to be highly specific and unequivocal in its implications if it is to preclude biased evaluation (Heilman, Martell, & Simon, 1988). It has been found, for example, that although all targets were rated in the highest category possible for performance in a male gender-typed job, it was only when the category was labeled, “top 2% of employees” (not “top 25%”) that women were rated as favorably as were men (Heilman et al., 1997; Heilman & Haynes, 2005).

The constancy of information provided also plays a role in whether expectations dominate in the evaluation process. Few are the instances in which all aspects of an individual’s performance history are unequivocally positive or negative – there are strengths and weaknesses. Information that provides a mixed profile – one in which some aspects are strong and others are not, necessitates weighing one piece of information against another – a process that leaves much to the discretion of the evaluator. When discretion is to be exercised, expectations are likely to exert influence by helping “tip the scales” as to what information is given most attention, often to the detriment of women (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

2.4.2. *Clarity of the evaluative criteria*

Research has generally indicated that the more vague and poorly defined the judgment criteria, the more easily information can be distorted to fit expectations (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). When performance is being evaluated, there are several ways in which criteria can be vague. The performance outcome can itself be indefinite and not amenable to objective evaluation. Work output that is abstract or lacks a reference point for comparison, for example, is far more elusive and easy to distort than a summary of the amount of dollars earned, the number of deals closed, or the number of items produced. Related to this is evaluative focus. Impressions of personal characteristics, such as whether an individual is a “good soldier,” a “team player” or a “charismatic leader,” are more susceptible to distortion than impressions based on explicit accomplishments and work outcomes. Support for this point can be found in evidence that supervisors rate communication competence and interpersonal competence less reliably than they rate work productivity or work quality (Viswesvaran, Onesw, & Schmidt, 1996).

Unclear evaluative criteria also allow people to shift their standards about the extent to which particular criteria are taken as indicators of high potential or of good performance. By redefining what it means to perform well, individuals can shift their standards to fit expectations and justify their biased decisions. Several investigations have supported this idea, showing evaluators to overstate or understate the importance of the same performance criterion depending on whether it is attributed to a man or a woman (Norton, Vandello, & Darley, 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). Flexibility in the interpretation of these criteria, made possible by the absence of a clear sense of what criteria are central to the decision being made, allow for evaluations that fit expectations.

2.4.3. *Specificity of the evaluative structure*

Lack of specificity about how various evaluative criteria are to be combined also encourages expectation-based distortion. If evaluators are required to devise their own individual systems for integrating information into an overall evaluation, then they are not constrained to consider multiple sources of information about a target or to abide by a predetermined set of criteria. If, in contrast, the evaluation process is structured, particular elements of performance are assessed for everyone, and these are weighted in a specified way regardless of the particular target. An ambiguous evaluative structure can therefore encourage non-uniform evaluative standards, with different emphases on different aspects of performance for different people – a situation rife with opportunity for expectation-based distortion (Baltes & Parker, 2000). Even the specificity with which performance is measured can make a difference. Research has demonstrated that in the absence of explicit and unequivocal information about performance excellence, a structured procedure using specific observed behaviors rather than an overall judgment of an employee is more effective in tempering the biasing effects of gender stereotypes on performance evaluation (Bauer & Baltes, 2002).

Research also indicates that lack of structure in the evaluation process allows existing expectations to affect the ongoing evaluation process, with managers sometimes unwilling to give up their current views when given new information (Heslin, Latham, & VandeWalle, 2005; Manzoni & Barsoux, 1998). Moreover, there is specific evidence that gender stereotypes and the expectations they produce affect how women’s evaluations are updated over time. In a series of studies, Manzi, Caleo, and Heilman (2012) found that evaluators’ changes in assessments of performance as a result of changes in performance history differ as a function of the target’s sex. A decrement in performance was found to have a more damaging effect on the competence perceptions of previously successful women than previously successful men, and an improvement in performance to have a less beneficial effect on the competence perceptions of

previously unsuccessful women than unsuccessful men. In other words, there was eagerness to embrace, and reluctance to relinquish, an unfavorable view of a woman's competence. With the latitude offered by ambiguity due to changes in performance over time, expectations could be maintained.

2.4.4. Clarity about the source of performance

Lack of clarity about who is responsible for a performance outcome necessitates an inferential process in determining who actually deserves credit for the outcome if it is successful and who deserves blame if it is not successful. Stereotype-based expectations are likely to influence this inferential process, leading to inferences that conform to the original expectation. Research has supported this idea, demonstrating that when a woman works together with a man on a joint task that is male in gender-type, she becomes the victim of "attributional rationalization," and is given less credit for a successful joint outcome and viewed as having made a smaller contribution to it; she also is rated as less competent than when she achieves the same outcome on her own (Caleo & Heilman, 2010a; Heilman & Haynes, 2005). These effects were found except when negative performance expectations could be stopped from exerting influence – when the task was structured so the woman's individual contribution was unquestionable or there was explicit evidence that the woman's task competence was very high (Heilman & Haynes, 2005). Additional investigations extended these ideas, indicating that women working with men on male gender-typed tasks not only are credited less for joint successes but also are blamed more for joint failures (Caleo & Heilman, 2010a).

Source ambiguity is particularly problematic because of the prevalence of teams in organizational settings and the rarity of work being accomplished in isolation. But its effects are not limited to situations in which women work alongside men on a specific project. Mentoring or coaching relationships also have the potential to blur the credit/blame line for performance outcomes, making it difficult to directly place responsibility for work outcomes on a particular individual. So, for example, if a woman has been mentored by a man, her subsequent success may be in jeopardy of being attributed to his wisdom and guidance rather than to her skills and expertise. Whatever its form, source ambiguity can impede women from getting the credit they deserve even when credit is due them.

2.5. Effects on women's self-evaluations

Gender stereotypes not only affect how women are evaluated by others, but also affect how women evaluate themselves. Research currently underway demonstrates that women's characterizations of themselves largely parallel their characterizations of women in general (Hentschel et al., 2013). That is, women's self-descriptions differ from men's self-descriptions, and are more communal and less agentic than men's. This suggests that women go through a similar process when assessing their own "fit" with male gender-typed jobs, and that their verdict is also negative. (How many times have we heard women proclaim that they aren't good at being cutthroat, that they do not have the killer instinct necessary, or that they are not good with numbers?) The negative performance expectations these perceptions spawn no doubt feed into women's career choices, their taking advantage of opportunities that are pathways to advancement, their willingness to put themselves forward and their willingness to take risks. Lack of confidence in one's own competence can have very corrosive effects.

Research has verified that women approach male gender-typed tasks with less confidence and more trepidation than do men, and that without being given reason to think otherwise, their sense of competence on such tasks is low. In one study it was shown that women's self-ratings of expected task competence did not at all differ from self-ratings of individuals who had actually received negative feedback about their task ability; the only situation in which women's self-ratings equaled men's was when they had received direct and credible positive feedback about their ability (Heilman, Lucas, & Kaplow, 1990). Research also has established that these negative expectations can give rise to self-directed bias. One specific example of this is evident in investigations demonstrating that attributional rationalization occurs when evaluating oneself as well as when evaluating others. In a series of studies it was shown that women, when working collaboratively with men, are unwilling to take an equal amount of credit for successful joint outcomes and are likely to see themselves as less competent than their male co-workers (Haynes & Heilman, *in press*).

2.6. Deterring gender bias arising from descriptive gender stereotypes

From our discussion thus far, it is clear that efforts to narrow the gap between how women and jobs are perceived can alleviate the deleterious effects of descriptive gender stereotypes. The negative performance expectations that set

in motion biased evaluative judgments are a direct result of the perception of lack of fit and, if that perception is weakened, expectations should be mitigated. Our discussion also makes clear that reductions in ambiguity in evaluation processes will affect the degree to which gender bias occurs.

2.6.1. Precluding negative expectations

Perception of lack of fit can be lessened if gender stereotypes are not activated in a given situation. To the extent activation is a consequence of personal attributes such as appearance or parental status, this is not a feasible intervention point. But organizations can influence activation due to structural features of the workplace. Contextual features that downplay the distinctiveness of an individual's gender can limit its salience and therefore its influence in impression formation. The proportional representation of women in work settings is one such contextual feature. As Kanter (1977) pointed out so long ago, gender is made salient by numerical scarcity, and it recedes as a defining element when women are "clustered." Clustering not only undercuts the uniqueness of gender, but also makes it difficult for others to see all women in the same stereotypic terms. There is evidence that increased proportional representation of women in the applicant pool favorably affects perceptions of women's career opportunities (Heilman, 1980), and that increased proportional representation of women in work groups favorably affects women's performance evaluations (Sackett et al., 1991).

The other element of the lack of fit model is perception of male gender-typed jobs. Efforts to broaden conceptions of what it takes to do these jobs – much of which concerns stereotypically female people skills – have been shown to alleviate some negative consequences (Gaucher et al., 2011). Similarly, research conducted in Europe examining the effects of using "gender fair" language in descriptions and advertisements of traditionally male jobs have been shown to have a variety of bias-curtailing effects (Horvath & Sczesny, 2011). Some of this loosening of the conception of gender-type may occur naturally as women increasingly populate previously male dominated jobs and professions and also as leaders in contemporary organizations face new types of pressures. In fact, there is some indication that communal traits and behaviors are becoming valued leadership characteristics (see Eagly & Carli, 2003). Organizations can no doubt help this process along, not only by placing women in traditionally male roles but also by accurately characterizing these positions and their requirements.

2.6.2. Reducing ambiguity in evaluation processes

The research cited earlier in this paper indicating when and how ambiguity facilitates gender bias in evaluation is suggestive of many ways in which organizations can act to lessen or even eliminate that ambiguity. Collecting and providing to evaluators comprehensive job-relevant information can avert the tendency to use expectations to "fill in the blanks". Making the criteria for evaluation concrete, and making sure they are used in the same way no matter who is being evaluated, can avoid the possibility of using different criteria for different people. Finally, obtaining individual performance information when work is done in a group can thwart the attributional rationalization that causes women to be denied credit for their successes. All of these depend on revamping the evaluation process to rid it of unnecessary ambiguity – something that can often be done without excessive cost or effort.

2.7. Heightening the motivation to be accurate

Stereotype-based performance expectations do not always determine the outcome of evaluative judgments – even when these expectations are very negative and the context is rife with ambiguity. This is particularly so when there is strong motivation to make accurate judgments. Reliance on schemas, stereotypes and expectancies is a default processing strategy (Chaiken, 1980). People generally operate using a least-effort principle, expending as little cognitive resources as possible to perform a task, whether it involves forming an impression or making a decision. But when motivated to be accurate, people expend the energy to systematically process information. People are motivated to be accurate for a number of reasons.

2.7.1. Anticipated interdependence

Accuracy is likely to be a motivator when the evaluator is in an interdependent relationship with the target of evaluation – when his or her outcomes are linked with the evaluated person's performance. In these cases, because the target's success or failure has implications for one's well-being, self-interest is likely to provoke caution and deliberation. To do well for themselves, evaluators need to identify the other's strengths and weaknesses, and assess

the likelihood of him or her performing competently (Fiske, 2000). This encourages searching for relevant information and carefully considering it, rather than taking the easy way out and relying on expectations.

2.7.2. *Doing the “right thing”*

There is increasing societal pressure to not be prejudiced in our interactions with others and, for many, being anything less than fair and evenhanded in the treatment of others is abhorrent. Thus, concern about potentially being sexist promotes a desire to do what is right in evaluating women. This motivation to be accurate, when salient, can weaken the effects of stereotype-based expectations, promoting careful processing of information that results in less gender bias. However, as we have pointed out earlier, stereotypes are activated automatically, often without the awareness of the evaluator. Therefore, despite good intentions, stereotype-based expectations often sneak into the evaluation process in ways that are not actively monitored by the evaluator (Banaji et al., 1993).

Sometimes concern about doing the right thing is not really an expression of personal values but rather a concern about doing what is socially desirable and making a good impression. In this case the concern does not motivate accuracy; it motivates a desire to temper the use of stereotypes when the resulting bias will be obvious to disapproving others. (This tempering will be less likely to occur when the effects of stereotypes are indirect or there is an apparent excuse for their use.) This type of “modern” prejudice against women has been distinguished from “old fashioned” prejudice (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995), and the “right thing” it promotes is not to be confused with that derived from a value-based concern about one’s bigotry and bias.

2.7.3. *Accountability*

When accountable, people are answerable for the evaluative judgments they make. In organizations, managers may be asked to justify decisions based on these judgments to any one of a number of organizational constituencies that may be important for them to impress favorably, such as their supervisors, subordinates or upper management. Accountability, when it motivates people to be accurate in order to appear competent (Simonson & Nye, 1992), can inhibit the use of expectations in evaluative judgments, encouraging more complex judgment strategies (Tetlock, 1983a). When held accountable, individuals are apt to exert more effort to search out information and to process it more deeply. There is indeed evidence that people who are held accountable act in ways that prepare them to justify their judgments, such as being more attentive when observing performance or taking more extensive notes when gathering information, ultimately increasing their accuracy (Mero & Motowidlo, 1995; Mero, Motowidlo, & Anna, 2003). Thus, despite conditions that promote the use of expectations, concerns about accountability can curb the effect of stereotype-based expectations on evaluative judgments.

It should be noted that making evaluators accountable does not always have the effect of decreasing bias in evaluative judgments. This only happens when accountability motivates people to be accurate because being accurate is associated with making a good impression on others. But sometimes making a good impression involves doing what you think others would like you to do, especially when the others are legitimate authority figures (Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000). Research indicates that when decision-makers know the views of their audiences, they tend to make decisions that are consistent with these views (Klimoski & Inks, 1990; Tetlock, 1985), and when they are provided with business justifications to engage in discrimination subordinates treat these justifications like they are orders to be followed (Brief et al., 2000). Here the motivator is not accuracy but the need for approval, and the desire to present oneself in as favorable a light as possible (Tetlock, 1983b; Tetlock, Skitka, & Boettger, 1989). Thus, although in this case making evaluators accountable may lessen their reliance on stereotype-based expectations, bias is precluded only if organizational norms work against gender bias. If organizational norms support gender bias, biased evaluative judgments may still result. To summarize, in situations in which evaluators are motivated to be accurate, they will be willing to expend cognitive resources in making their judgments rather than lazily relying on stereotype-based expectations. This would be likely despite the degree to which negative expectations result from perceptions of lack of fit or the level of ambiguity in the evaluation process. When, however, the evaluator has less of a stake in the outcome of his or her judgments, there is little reason not to rely on stereotype-based expectations. It is easy and efficient to do so, especially when there are limited cognitive resources available (Van Knippenberg & Dijksterhuis, 2000), such as when the evaluator is working on other tasks simultaneously (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991) or there are severe time pressures (Pratto & Bargh, 1991).

We have argued that descriptive gender stereotypes produce negative expectations that form the basis of biased competence judgments and evaluative decisions for women. But what happens when the detrimental effects of

descriptive gender stereotypes are averted and women prove themselves to be successful in male gender-typed roles and positions? Are they now beyond the reach of gender stereotypes? Research suggests not. In fact, it is at this point that the prescriptive aspect of gender stereotypes appears to set in motion a process that produces different but no less deleterious consequences for women's career progress.

3. Prescriptive gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes not only descriptive; they also are prescriptive (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2001). That is, they not only designate how women and men *are* but also how they *should be*. They function as injunctive norms (Cialdini & Trost, 1998), dictating what attributes and behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate for people from different groups – in this case men and women.

There is overlap in the content of prescriptive and descriptive gender stereotypes, with the attributes and behaviors that are highly valued for men and women also the ones that are prescribed for them. So, for women, communality is prescribed – it not only is thought that women are communal, it is thought that they “should” be communal, demonstrating socially sensitive and nurturing attributes reflecting their concern for others. Prescriptive gender stereotypes also designate “should not” (Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004). For women, these include the agentic attributes and behaviors associated with men but not women. Thus, women are prohibited from demonstrating the self-assertion, dominance and achievement orientation so celebrated in men.

Violating gender prescriptions has consequences. Since they function as norms, violating them produces social disapproval and negativity, sometimes called “backlash” in the literature (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Penalties for the violator typically ensue.

Penalties for women who violate gender norms can take many forms. Women who do not exhibit stereotypically prescribed attributes have been shown to be regarded as less psychologically healthy than more feminine women (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975), and women thought to be nontraditional have been shown to suffer in their evaluations, with “feminists” evaluated less favorably than other women (Haddock & Zanna, 1994). Women who do not fulfill gender prescriptions have repeatedly been shown to be derogated – they are considered cold (Porter & Geis, 1981), interpersonally hostile (Heilman, 1995, 2001), and are disliked (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). In work contexts, a breach of gender-related prescriptions has additionally been shown to result in more tangible penalties, including lower pay (Brett & Stroh, 1997), less intention to hire and promote (e.g., Rudman, 1998), and fewer recommendations for organizational rewards (e.g., Heilman & Chen, 2005). Thus, the social disapproval that results from not fulfilling gender stereotypic prescriptions can result in decrements in performance-related outcomes.

3.1. Engaging in “Should Not”

If women are to succeed in upper level work settings they have to violate gender stereotypic prescriptions. They have to be able to compete aggressively for positions, to act independently and decisively, and to take charge when the situation requires it. But such behaviors are counter to the directives inherent in gender stereotype prescriptions. What happens when women exhibit these stereotypically male attributes and behaviors? More often than not, they are seen as acting in ways that are reserved for men but prohibited for women, and disapproval and penalties result. Therefore, even when women seek to distinguish themselves from descriptive gender stereotypes and demonstrate that they have what it takes to fulfill traditionally male positions, they are likely to suffer negative consequences.

Research has verified the perils of women stepping out of their prescribed personas, and behaving more in tune with the requirements of male gender-typed roles. Negative reactions have consistently been documented when women violate gender norms by engaging in stereotype-inconsistent behaviors.

3.1.1. Communication style

Communication is the way in which people have impact on others in work settings, and therefore is crucial for organizational success. But there appear to be constraints on women emanating from gender stereotypic prescriptions. Specifically, engaging in traditionally effective communication styles has been found to be problematic for them. When women communicate directly and assertively their influence on male listeners was found to be less than when communicating in a tentative and hesitant style (Carli, 2001). Consistent with this, men have been found to be less

influenced by a competent woman than by either a competent man or an incompetent woman (Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995). It thus appears that communicating effectively, which requires agentic behaviors, reduces women's influence. The communication behaviors that are successful for men are disadvantageous for women.

3.1.2. Leadership style

Leadership is often regarded as a traditionally male role (e.g., Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011), but research indicates that one set of leadership styles are viewed as appropriate for men and another for women. In their meta-analysis, Eagly et al. (1992) found that women were evaluated more negatively than men when they adopted autocratic or directive leadership styles – styles that deviate from communal and non-aggressive stereotypic prescriptions for women's behavior – but women were not evaluated more negatively than men when they adopted a more stereotype consistent and gender-neutral democratic style of leadership. In addition, differences have been found in reactions to the way discipline is administered; female leaders have been found to be most effective when they discipline their subordinates in a private manner using two-way communication – a gender appropriate leadership style termed as “considerate” (Brett, Atwater, & Waldman, 2005). These findings demonstrate that women are penalized for engaging in leadership behaviors that are effective for men.

3.1.3. Self-promotion

It is generally accepted that to get ahead one needs to promote oneself – explicitly drawing attention to one's skills, talents and accomplishments. Such behavior is, however, antithetical to gender prescriptions for women to be modest and uncompetitive. It therefore is no surprise that although self-promotion has been found to enhance assessments of competence for both men and women, it results in women, but not men, being viewed as less socially appealing (Rudman, 1998). Thus, what is a good impression management strategy for men is not necessarily a good impression management strategy for women.

3.1.4. Negotiations

Research indicates that women are hesitant to initiate negotiations about salaries (Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Kray & Thompson, 2005). Because salary is so central to the work experience, and in many cases considered a measure of one's worth, both to self and to others, this failure to advocate for oneself has captured the attention of many researchers. In investigating this phenomenon, it has become clear that the self-confident demeanor and demanding behavior entailed in salary negotiation is considered inappropriate for women. Bowles, Babcock, and Lai (2007) demonstrated that women who engaged in negotiation for higher pay incurred greater penalties than men who did precisely the same thing, with evaluators less likely to hire and to express an interest in working with these women. Self-advocating behaviors, particularly those dealing with manly issues like money, are not consistent with gender stereotypes and not favorably regarded.

3.1.5. Misbehavior

Part of the gender stereotypic directive for women is to be “wholesome” and “respectful” (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Therefore workplace misbehavior, although no doubt dimly viewed for everyone, is likely to be viewed as less appropriate for women than for men. This has in fact been found to be the case. In a study of workplace deviance Bowles and Gelfand (2010) had people evaluate a series of workplace misbehaviors ranging in seriousness from going against the boss's decision and covering up mistakes to stealing a co-workers possessions and verbally or physically abusing a customer. They found that men (but not women) evaluate male deviance more leniently than female deviance, and their propensity to punish females more harshly was greater regardless of the severity of the misbehavior. The data from this study are consistent with the idea that behaving badly is considered more of a “should not” for women than men.

3.1.6. Expressing emotions

Although women are thought to be more emotional than men, there are some emotions that seem particularly reserved for men. Specifically, men have been shown to exhibit anger and pride – two stereotypically male characteristics – more frequently than women (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). What happens when women express these “manly” emotions? Research on anger expression provides some insight. Angry women have been found to be conferred less status at work than angry men (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008), suggesting that anger in women

is not well received. Also, while it is not clear how explicit expressions of pride might affect women, the reactions to self-promoting women described earlier suggests that it, too, results in less favorable reactions to women than to men. So, even in emotional expression, violation of prescriptive gender stereotypes can have detrimental effects for women.

3.1.7. *Effects on how women behave*

There seems little question that disapproval awaits women who choose to cross the prescriptive gender stereotype boundary by doing what women are not supposed to do. And this message is no doubt not lost on women. If failing to act in line with stereotypic prescriptions begets disapproval, women are apt to figure this out early in their careers. This puts them in the unenviable position of having to decide whether to incur the disapproval or act in ways that will not “rock the boat.” Often their decision is not one that is beneficial for their careers. For example, research suggests that women refrain from initiating negotiations because they know that their efforts to assert their best interests will be met with negativity (Bowles et al., 2007; Amanatullah & Morris, 2010). Similarly, women have been found to not advocate for themselves in a variety of work situations (e.g., contesting unfair distribution of work, protesting disrespectful treatment, etc.) if they believe they will be ill-thought of as a consequence (Battle, 2008). This type of self-censorship, strategically tailored to minimize social rejection, can inhibit women’s maximization of their talents and wreak havoc with their emotional well-being.

3.2. *Failing to do the “Shoulds”*

We have reviewed how women can be penalized for engaging in behaviors that are prohibited for them – the “should nots”, but women also can be penalized for not engaging in behaviors that are prescribed by gender stereotypes. This failure to do what they should, and the negative consequences that ensue, have been documented in several areas.

3.2.1. *Altruistic citizenship behavior*

A central part of the female gender prescription is that women be kind and considerate, and that they provide help to others when needed. Thus, work behaviors that necessitate kindness and consideration are likely to be seen as “shoulds” for women more than men. Accordingly, it is believed that women should engage in altruistic behavior when the opportunity presents itself. If, indeed, altruism is a prescribed behavior for women, their failure to be altruistic is likely to induce disapproval that does not occur for men. Moreover, when they *are* altruistic their altruism is likely to be seen as due to the gender prescription (Ames, Flynn, & Weber, 2004), and therefore considered inconsequential. Research by Heilman and Chen (2005) provides support for these ideas. They found that women who refrained from engaging in altruistic behavior to help a colleague were judged negatively although men who behaved the same way were not penalized. They furthermore found that women who did perform the altruistic behavior were not rewarded, although men were rewarded for the same behavior. Using organizational data, Allen (2006) provided additional support for the idea that performing organizational citizenship behaviors, of which altruism is one, have a greater effect on the salary and promotions of men than women. Thus, doing what she should seems not to boost a woman’s evaluation, but failing to do what she should seems to have a decidedly negative effect.

3.2.2. *Collaboration*

Much as there is a gender prescription for women to be kind and considerate, there is a gender prescription for them to be helpful and cooperative. This suggests that women who choose not to be collaborative, but rather to be individualistic or competitive in their orientation, will not be regarded favorably. We already have reported the findings of Eagly et al. concerning the negativity directed toward women who adopt autocratic or directive styles of leadership. But the penalty for not being collaborative is not limited to leadership situations. There also are data indicating that women who choose not to collaborate with coworkers when the opportunity is presented to them are regarded more negatively and rewarded less than men who make the same decision not to collaborate (Chen, 2008).

3.2.3. *Interpersonal fairness*

Gender stereotypes also dictate that women should be sensitive to the feelings of others. Accordingly, failing to be mindful of others’ feelings by being interpersonally unfair and treating subordinates in a disrespectful way is contrary to the behavior prescribed for women. Thus, for women, a breach in interpersonal fairness constitutes not only a

violation of general fairness norms (Cohen, 1982) but also a violation of prescriptive stereotypes. Recent research has in fact found that women are punished to a greater extent than men for behaving in an interpersonally unfair manner (Caleo & Heilman, 2010b). These results support the idea that the failure to be polite and respectful in dealing with others, although viewed as unacceptable for everyone, is considered less acceptable for women than for men.

3.2.4. *Effects on how women behave*

Although it nowadays would be almost unthinkable for women to be asked to get the coffee for a group meeting or to take notes about the meetings' proceedings, there still are normative expectations about what women are supposed to do in work settings. And failure to fulfill them can have costly consequences. A woman who fails to live up to these expectations is seen as somehow lacking in good character whereas men, for whom these expectations do not exist, are often seen as exemplary when they choose to engage in behaviors that are routinely expected of women. The likely effects of this can be profound, if subtle, influencing performance evaluations, career opportunities and organizational rewards. To avert this, women may feel compelled to engage in behaviors that may not be in their best interests.

Recognition of impending penalties from violating gender stereotype prescriptions can lead to self-defeating behavioral choices. Not only might conforming to the prescribed communal behaviors reinforce stereotypes and activate lack of fit perceptions, but they also might not be the best course of action in a given situation. Knowing what they are supposed to do, and that they will be penalized for not doing it, can constrain women's choices among a range of alternative behaviors, rendering them less effective than they might otherwise be in doing their jobs.

3.3. *Success as a violation*

It is not necessary that a woman explicitly violate prescriptive stereotypes to experience penalties in work settings. Women can also be penalized for merely exhibiting competence and success in male gender-typed positions. Achievement in these roles is seen as "off limits" for women – they are simply not supposed to excel at them. Thus, although with their success they discredit and refute the negative performance expectations that arise from descriptive stereotypes, successful women confront yet another impediment in pursuing their careers – the disapproval and negativity that results from violating prescriptive gender norms. Indeed, research tracking the advancement of 30,000 managers, controlling for age, organizational tenure and education, indicates that promotion becomes increasingly difficult for women as compared to men as they move up the organizational ladder (Lyness & Judiesch, 1999, suggesting that women encounter added obstacles when they have reached positions of success.

Why are women penalized for their success? People make inferences about women who are highly successful in traditionally male arenas. They not only assume that these women possess the agentic attributes required for success, but also assume that they lack the communal attributes that are the "shoulds" for women. The consequence, sometimes referred to as "backlash" is not pretty. Paradoxically, success begets negativity. Successful women in male gender-typed fields have been shown to be disliked and personally derogated – seen as interpersonally hostile, selfish and cold, characterizations that are antithetical to the prescribed female stereotype (Heilman et al., 1995, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999). They are not just seen as low in communality, but as overtly counter-communal. Highly successful men, however, do not suffer the same consequences; on the contrary, they are celebrated for their successes.

There is evidence supporting the idea that negative reactions to successful women are provoked by the perception that these women have violated prescriptive gender stereotypes. Negative reactions to successful women have been shown to be limited to situations in which the success is in a male gender-typed role and perceived to require agentic qualities for success (Heilman & Wallen, 2010; Heilman et al., 2004). When the job is believed to require the communal qualities that are consistent with female prescriptive gender stereotypes, women are neither derogated nor disliked. These findings indicate that it is not success that is problematic for women, but rather success in an area that implies violation of gender stereotypic prescriptions.

What drives these negative reactions – presumptions that a successful woman has inappropriately acted like a man or that she has failed to act like a woman? Either is a possible explanation. That is, the disapproval that greets women who succeed in male gender-typed jobs can derive from either the inference that they are inappropriately agentic or the inference that they lack stereotypically female attributes. Research suggests that people's adverse reactions to women's success are due to the perceived deficiency in female attributes (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). In fact, these studies indicate that providing information about communality in any of a number of ways undercuts the negative effects of a woman's success. Other research also has indicated that feminizing information can reduce penalties for

gender norm violations (Carli, 2001; Matschiner & Murnen, 1999). It thus appears that it is the perceived violation of feminine “shoulds,” not of masculine “should nots” that is so damaging to successful women.

3.3.1. Career-related consequences

The negativity directed at successful women has consequences. Not being liked is disadvantageous for people seeking upward mobility in organizations. Performance ratings have been shown to be biased by affect (Dipboye, 1984; Ilgen & Feldman, 1983), and liking has been found to be a benefit in performance rating accuracy (Cardy & Dobbins, 1986). The effects of not being liked also affect how much influence one has (Carli, 2001), and being “unlikable” has been shown to hinder access to social networks (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005), and lessen special career opportunities and salary recommendations (Heilman et al., 2004). No wonder that women have been found to hide their successes on male tasks (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004)! And no wonder that Lyness and Judiesch (1999) found that promotions become increasingly difficult for women as compared to men as they climb in organizational level.

Being seen as cold and interpersonally hostile also is disadvantageous. These perceptions of successful women, captured in terms like “dragon lady,” “ice queen” and “battle-axe,” no doubt add to the obstacles for aspiring women. The Ann Hopkins case, ultimately argued before the US Supreme Court, makes clear the cost women can suffer for their success in traditionally male arenas. MS Hopkins, who was turned down for partner at a major accounting firm although she had more billable hours than any other person proposed for partnership and brought in business worth \$25 million, was said to be too “macho,” and was told she needed a “course at charm school” (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991). It was not her competence that held her back, but the perceptions of her as a successful “lady partner candidate.”

3.4. Detering gender bias that results from prescriptive gender stereotypes

The bias that arises from prescriptive gender stereotypes is value-based and a consequence of beliefs about how things should be. In fact, a violation of prescriptive gender stereotypes has been shown to trigger feelings of moral outrage (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). As a consequence, prescription-based bias is less responsive to contextual intervention or to organizational efforts to mitigate its effects (Gill, 2004). The problem is not one of inattention to individuating information or tendency to discount disconfirming evidence, and therefore solutions do not lie in creating conditions that encourage more careful and thoughtful information processing, thereby precluding cognitive distortion. Not even buttressing the motivational aspects of the organizational context that encourage people to seek accuracy to meet their own interests would be a viable deterrent against a belief system that so persistently gives rise to social disapproval. For even when women’s competence is recognized, their ascribed personal qualities are repellent. Thus, the effects of prescriptive stereotypes on evaluations are a difficult problem for those trying to minimize gender bias in the work setting.

Nonetheless there are some moderators of the negative reactions that greet successful women who are seen as violating prescriptive gender stereotypes. As with descriptive stereotypes, the sex-type of the domain in which the prescriptive violation takes place can be influential. The perceived level of a violation is determined not only by the woman’s behavior, inferred or actual, but also by the degree to which male attributes are thought to be necessary for performance (Heilman et al., 2004). So, for example, the masculine ethos of certain work domains (e.g., law enforcement) or positions (e.g., banker or engineer) increases the extent to which agentic attributes are thought to be necessary for success and therefore will increase the degree of violation perceived when women are successful in these roles. Attempts to feminize these jobs and occupations by broadening conceptions of the attributes actually needed to do them successfully, as discussed earlier with respect to descriptive gender stereotypes, should also help to lessen the perceived violation and thus the likelihood and the seriousness of the disapproval and consequent penalties.

Mitigating disapproval for engaging in the particular behaviors that are directly associated with success is especially difficult. The gender-typing of agentic behaviors is culturally determined and highly resistant to change. What it takes to close a deal, compete for a client or make hard-nosed decisions appears obvious to observers, and until the content of prescriptive gender stereotypes change, the behaviors believed necessary are going to conflict with the prescriptions for women’s “shoulds.”

But, despite these caveats, there are some circumstances that can lessen these effects – not by altering the perceived violation itself, but by counteracting the negative perceptions of the prescription-violating woman that result. Given that the disapproval heaped on successful women is due to them being seen as not sufficiently feminine in their

demeanor (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007), providing information verifying a woman's femininity can stave off this deficiency-based disapproval. Thus, information that contains references to a successful woman's communality (e.g., volunteering to help the sick or to work with children), is likely to protect her against perceptions of femininity deficiencies. So, too, is information that her successful behavior was not of her own doing, but rather constrained by circumstances (she "had" to step in for a sick co-worker) or was not really her goal to begin with (she really had wanted to do something else career-wise) – both of which make clear that she was not motivated to be the success that she is, but rather it "just happened." In other words, like Rosy the Riveter who was called on to help with the war effort, or Katherine Graham whose husband died and left her responsibility for the Washington Post, she is not seen as the kind of person who seeks to violate gender prescriptions but has simply risen to the occasion when life demanded it.

The fact that the availability of information about a successful woman typically rests in her own hands is suggestive of things she, personally, might do to heighten her perceived femininity and mitigate negative reactions to her success. Thus, she can make salient her role as mother, dress in a feminine manner, or portray her interests in feminine pursuits. Or she might redirect the perceived responsibility for her situation away from herself – to chance, to someone else or to circumstances. There is some evidence attesting to the effectiveness of these efforts, e.g., reduction of negative reactions when a successful woman manager claims not to have actively sought that career path (Pierre & Heilman, 2012) or when an accomplished woman begins a salary negotiation by explaining that someone else (a male supervisor) had suggested she raise the issue (Bowles & Babcock, 2012). But there is real jeopardy in pursuing these types of strategies. Besides the potential damage to self-image that may accrue from essentially denying one's ambition and career focus, if the woman's success is not absolutely irrefutable, these behaviors geared toward mitigating penalties for her success, because they conform to descriptive stereotypes, may feed perceptions of her incompetence. If there is any question about her capability or skill, these "feminizing" behaviors can backfire – causing her to be seen in highly stereotypic terms.

4. Some additional issues

4.1. What about men?

Our ideas should have implications not only for women but also for men. They, too, should experience penalties for violating prescriptive gender stereotypes. Although researchers have primarily examined the effect of prescriptive stereotypes for women, there are several investigations that demonstrate that men are not immune to their consequences (Judge, Livingston, & Hurst, 2012; Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010). The prescription for men involves being agentic, and when men fail to act in accordance with it, disapproval results. A study by Chen (2008) demonstrates this point. When men failed to help with a physically demanding male-typed citizenship behavior, they were regarded more negatively and rewarded less generously than women who did the same. Evidently, men, too, are held to gender stereotypic "shoulds" and are penalized when they do not conform to them.

There also is evidence of the negative consequences of gender stereotypes when men violate the prescriptive "should not's". The "should not's" for men involve behaviors that are highly communal in nature, and typically are reserved for women. When men engage in such behaviors, negativity follows. For example, when they request a family leave, men more than women suffer negativity in perceptions of their work ethic (Wayne & Cordeiro, 2003), in recommended rewards (Allen & Russell, 1999) and in suggested penalties (Rudman & Mescher, in press). Men also are penalized for pursuing careers that are considered female in gender type. As the movie, *Meet the Parents*, so graphically depicts, choosing a female gender-typed career such as nursing can have unfortunate and detrimental consequences for a man.

If our ideas are correct, then men also should be penalized when the job at which they are successful is not gender consistent – when it is thought to require feminine rather than masculine attributes for success. Just as success in traditionally male positions implies a lack of femininity for women, success in traditionally female positions ought to imply a lack of masculinity for men. But what would penalties for men be? Penalties for women – dislike and perceptions of interpersonal hostility – are in the domain most central to the female stereotype, communality. Thus penalties for men should be in the agency domain, which is integral to the male stereotype. In a study examining the way in which men who succeed at female gender-typed jobs were evaluated, the findings supported this idea (Heilman & Wallen, 2010). In contrast to women clearly successful at a job typically held by men, who were seen as

interpersonally hostile and were not liked, men clearly successful at a job typically held by women were seen as wimpy and passive and were not respected. These results demonstrate symmetry in men's and women's penalties for stereotype violation, and thus lend further support to our ideas about the process by which prescriptive gender stereotypes lead to gender bias.

These findings appear to be at odds with research indicating that men ride the “glass elevator” in female occupations, receiving greater organizational rewards and making quicker career progress than similarly qualified women (Williams, 1992). But there also is evidence that men's comparative advantage over women in female gender-typed jobs is less than in gender-neutral jobs (Budig, 2002). Thus there are many questions remaining about the conditions under which men continue to benefit from being men, even in female work settings.

4.2. Lack of differences between male and female evaluators

One would think that women would differ from men in their tendency to engage in gender bias. However, data indicate otherwise. In the vast majority of studies conducted on gender stereotypes, no differences have been found in the reactions of male and female respondents. This finding is puzzling. One would expect that women would empathize with other women, be attentive to the type of thinking that jeopardizes their career prospects and therefore process information about them more carefully resulting in fewer biased judgments. One would also expect that women would be sensitive to the burden of prescriptive gender stereotypes, and relax these standards in responding to women who violate them.

Perhaps the lack of difference between women and men as evaluators should not be surprising since women share the same societal gender stereotypes as men and the same conceptions of male gender-typed jobs, and therefore should deduce the same shortfall in perceived fit. They also subscribe to the same widely shared normative prescriptions for men's and women's behavior. Nonetheless, the lack of difference as a function of the sex of the evaluator is unsettling and counter intuitive. No doubt there are individual differences that moderate this effect, such as strength of gender identity and gender stereotype adherence. It also is possible that individual differences in life experiences are a factor. Indeed, there is research suggesting that women's experiences with discrimination impact their treatment of other women (Ellemers, Van den Heuvel, De Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004).

Recent research has taken the stance that although there is little difference in the way men and women respond to successful women in the workplace, the reason they respond as they do differs. Thus, in contrast to men, who can be said to have a vested interest in “keeping women down” and maintaining their superior status in the work setting, it is suggested that women respond negatively to successful women because of social comparison processes. Indeed, findings have supported the idea that women's penalization of successful women serves to avoid a painful upward comparison in the service of maintaining their own sense of competence (Parks-Stamm, Heilman, & Hearn, 2008). Moreover, the burgeoning literature on queen bees (Derks, Ellemers, Van Laar, & De Groot, 2011; Ellemers et al., 2004; Ely, 1994) also suggests that women's motives for negative evaluation of other women are unique to women, differing from those of men. Additional research is needed to better understand the potentially different motivations underlying men's and women's responses to women's success, and their implications for women in the workplace.

5. Summary and conclusions

This chapter describes how both descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes can produce gender bias in work settings, impeding women's career advancement. It discusses how descriptive gender stereotypes promote gender bias because of negative performance expectations that are a consequence of the perception that there is a poor “fit” between the stereotype of women and the attributes believed necessary to succeed in male gender-typed positions. It also discusses the way in which prescriptive gender stereotypes promote gender bias by creating “shoulds” and “should nots” for women – normative standards that prompt disapproval and social rejection both when directly violated and when violation is inferred because women are successful. In addition to these efforts to explain how descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes can provoke gender bias, there is a consideration of the conditions that aggravate or mitigate their effects.

The claim throughout this paper has been that gender stereotypes are the basis of biased evaluative judgments and discriminatory treatment of women in work settings. The paper's objective was to explain the psychological processes that are set in motion by gender stereotypes and examine their consequences. Although some organizational actions

have been identified that can hinder the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes, it is clear that the tenacity of gender stereotypes is considerable and the magnitude of their influence remains sizable. Thus, the message here is not particularly cheery. It appears that women are not yet free of the burden of gender stereotypes. When they seek male gender-typed positions, they are prone to being seen as incompetent to handle them. When they choose to deviate from the set of behaviors deemed acceptable for women, behaviors that often are inadequate in the work context, they appear to pay dearly for their transgression. And, perhaps most vexing, when they overcome expectations and do succeed, they tend to be disliked and interpersonally derogated. Thus, despite the enormous progress in recent years, the deleterious effects of gender stereotypes on career prospects remain, creating obstacles for striving women.

But there also is reason for some optimism. At the same time that gender stereotypes should not be discounted nor their effects underestimated – there are small indications that change is afoot. There no doubt is greater personal and organizational awareness of some of the issues we have discussed, and efforts continue to be made to counteract the negative effects of gender stereotypes. Also, as we mentioned earlier in the paper, whether due to the increasing numbers of women who have penetrated the glass ceiling, or to a general change in perception of what it takes to be a good manager or leader, ideas about what characteristics define these roles have shown some signs of shifting.

Communal attributes and behaviors are increasingly becoming valued characteristics for leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2003). These include sharing responsibility, developing others' skills, building relationships, and reducing hierarchy. Moreover, research about transformational leadership has repeatedly shown the benefits of taking a communal approach to leading (Bass & Avolio, 1994), and approaches such as individualized consideration and inspirational motivation have more and more become associated with effective leadership (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). If, in time, there is such a change in the conceptualization of effective leadership, then according to our ideas there should be a reduction in the perceived lack of fit between the attributes of women and the attributes thought necessary for success, and a corresponding decrease in the negative performance expectations that have such devastating effects on women's evaluations. Such a re-conceptualization, if it should occur, would also alter the effects of prescriptive gender stereotypes, tempering the perceived normative violation and resulting disapproval that occurs when women choose to take on traditionally male roles and perform them successfully. In fact, some have discussed a "feminine leadership advantage" (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Vecchio, 2002), and there is evidence that, at least at the upper levels of management, women are sometimes evaluated more favorably than their male counterparts (Rosette & Tost, 2010). It is notable, however, that this research indicated the tendency to value women more favorably than men only at the very highest management level; women still were disadvantaged in evaluation in the positions they most often populate, and in the positions which serve as stepping stones to the top. Whether the feminized view of management is going to prevail and, if it does, whether it will broadly affect contemporary organizations or remain reserved for those few positions at the top is yet to be determined.

In addition to the gradual shift that may be occurring in how we think about leadership, there is some evidence that there also is a shift in how we think about women. There is evidence that people believe that over time women's attributes have become more like men's and will continue to do so (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). In fact, recent research suggests that while women are still seen in traditionally stereotypic terms – as more communal and less agentic than men, they now are seen as equal to men in intelligence and competence (Hentschel et al., 2013). This revision of the female gender stereotype content, if it is indicative of a trend, bodes well for women's opportunities in the workforce. It suggests that there is a distinction to be made between perceived agency and perceived competence, and that if leadership success is thought to rely on competence and not just on agenticism, there will be improvement in women's perceived fit with the role. It seems reasonable to be hopeful that this trend toward a more textured characterization of women will continue given their ever increasing participation in the workforce and their current and projected higher representation among the college population.

So while the current status of women in the workforce continues to be hampered by gender stereotypes and their deleterious effects on evaluation and decision making, there is reason for cautious optimism. These sanguine thoughts should not, however, obscure the realities of today. Women still are not given equal consideration based on their skills and abilities because of the expectations that they are ill-equipped to do traditionally man's work. They still are punished when they step out of line with the "shoulds" and "should nots" prescribed for their gender, forcing them to act in ways that do not advance their careers and causing them to be disliked and repudiated when they achieve success in an area deemed to be gender inappropriate. And they still are the recipients of multiple reactions rooted in bias – serious and trivial, subtle and obvious, intentional and unintentional – the total of which are dispiriting for their

ambitions and detrimental to their advancement. The consequence is a failure to utilize human resources in the most effective way possible. When women are the targets of gender bias not only they, but the organizations for which they work and society as a whole, are the losers.

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