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Social Psychological Approaches to Women and Leadership Theory

Crystal L. Hoyt
University of Richmond, choyt@richmond.edu

Stefanie Simon

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University of Richmond

Stefanie Simon

Carleton College

Abstract

In this chapter, we take a social psychological approach to understanding gender and leadership. In doing so, we explain how both the social context and people's perceptions influence leadership processes involving gender. The theoretical approaches taken by social psychologists are often focused on one of these two questions: (1) Are there gender differences in leadership style and effectiveness? and, (2) What barriers do women face in the leadership domain? We begin our chapter by reviewing the literature surrounding these two questions. We then discuss in detail one of the greatest barriers to women in leadership: the prejudice and discrimination that stem from gender stereotypic beliefs and implicit theories of leadership. Social psychological theory helps to better our understanding of how stereotypes shape expectations people have of female leaders, as well as how they influence women's own thoughts and behaviors via stereotype threat processes. Social psychological approaches to understanding gender and leadership reveal how gender *does* matter in how people respond to leaders and how leaders approach their roles, regardless of whether it *ought* to matter.

Social Psychological Approaches to Women and Leadership Theory

As evidenced by this very book, there is a vibrant and robust scholarly interest in the study of gender and leadership. Questions surrounding gender and leadership were largely ignored in psychology until the 1970s (Chemers, 1997), when changes in both American society and the gender composition of the academy prompted researchers to ask: "Can women lead?" This naïve question soon gave way to questions focused on understanding the pervasive gender leadership gap between men and women. Although the percentage of women occupying leadership roles globally is at the highest it has ever been (Pew Research Center and Demographic Trends, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2014), women remain grievously underrepresented in the elite levels of corporations and political systems (Catalyst, 2015; Center for American Women & Politics, 2015; Lawless & Fox, 2012). Much of the current scholarship on gender and leadership in social psychology is aimed at elucidating the gender leadership gap. Generally, the theoretical approaches taken by social psychologists are focused on one of these two questions: (1) Are there gender differences in leadership style and effectiveness? and, (2) What barriers do women face in the leadership domain?

Are There Gender Differences in Leadership Style and Effectiveness?

Reflecting social psychologists' early interest in studying leadership style, one of the seminal questions researchers interested in gender and leadership asked was "Do women and men lead differently?" In a comprehensive meta-analysis, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2007) found small, but reliable, gender differences in leadership style. For example, female leaders tend to be more democratic and participative than male leaders (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), whereas male leaders tend to have a more directive, top-down leadership style than women.

Additionally, in contexts that are less male-dominated, women tend to lead in a more stereotypically female (i.e., communal) style than men do.

More recently, scholars turned their focus to understanding whether women and men differ in their use of transformational leadership styles. Transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and develop followers and are often compared to transactional leaders who motivate followers through a system of reward-based incentives (Bass, 1998). Here again, another small but reliable gender difference emerged such that women tend to use a transformational leadership style more than men do (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Whereas female leaders tend to be more transformational than male leaders, male leaders tend to be more transactional than female leaders (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Desvaux & Devillard, 2008, Eagly et al., 2003). Importantly, a separate meta-analysis of 87 studies revealed a positive relationship between effectiveness and transformational leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Together, these findings suggest a female advantage: women tend to use a leadership style associated with effectiveness.

Beyond leadership style, social psychologists have started to look for potential gender differences in leaders' psychology that also impact the way men and women lead. Specifically, Eagly (2013) argues that gender differences in men and women's values and attitudes likely translate to different leadership behaviors. Women tend to emphasize social values that promote others' welfare to greater extent than men do (Beutel & Marini, 1995; Schwartz & Rubel, 2005), a difference that has been shown among chief executive officers (CEOs) and board members (Adams & Funk, 2012). The fact that women emphasize more social values than men does seem to influence leaders' behaviors. For example, the proportion of women on corporate boards is

related to company philanthropy and charitable giving (Williams, 2003), as well as more positive social outcomes and greater corporate responsibility (Boulouta, 2012).

In sum, empirical research supports small differences in leadership style and effectiveness between men and women. Women experience slight effectiveness disadvantages in masculine leader roles, whereas roles that are more feminine offer them some advantages. Additionally, women exceed men in the use of democratic or participatory styles, and they are more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors and contingent rewards, which are particularly well suited for the complexity of contemporary organizations and can translate into enhanced institutional effectiveness (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). Women are no less effective at leading than men, and women are no less committed to their jobs or motivated for leadership roles than men. Furthermore, research shows a small gender difference such that women are more likely to focus on the welfare of others.

What Barriers Do Women Face?

While differences in men and women's leadership style and effectiveness may be small, the barriers that women face in attaining leadership positions, as well as barriers they face while *in* leadership positions are more substantial. Although gender-based leadership challenges and barriers are also discussed in Part III of this book (Chapters 17-22), it is important to address in this chapter as well given that many social psychological theoretical approaches to women and leadership revolve around questions of barriers. The majority of social psychologists who study gender and leadership focus on these barriers that women face. This focus on the disparities between men and women in leadership is not so surprising, given social psychologists' predominant focus on theoretically understanding and reducing inequality. Women navigate a complex maze of challenges along their leadership journeys. The greater difficulties women,

relative to men, encounter in leadership was originally dubbed the *glass ceiling*. Two *Wall Street Journal* reporters in 1986 (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986) coined this term to refer specifically to the invisible barricade blocking women's ascension into top corporate leadership positions. Not long after this metaphor gained wide appeal, researchers sought to better understand the glass ceiling. This barrier is even found within female-dominated occupations, professions where men ride a *glass escalator* up to the top roles (Maume, 1999).

The image of a glass ceiling played an important role in inserting this topic into both popular discourse and researchers' agendas; however, this metaphor has limitations and was replaced with the image of a leadership labyrinth (Eagly & Carli, 2007; a deeper discussion of women and leadership metaphors can be found in Chapter 3). The image of a labyrinth conveys the impression of a journey riddled with challenges all along the way—not just a single indiscernible barrier, which can be successfully navigated by some women. Women encounter many hurdles within this maze, including those stemming from contemporary organizational structures and cultures, and the often-inequitable divisions of domestic labor (Eagly & Carli, 2007). For example, although women's participation in the paid labor force has increased dramatically over the past few decades, women continue to do the majority, but not all, of the unpaid labor (Khazan, 2016). Thus, after returning from their first shift of paid labor, many women are burdened with a second shift of unpaid domestic work (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009). The hurdles social psychologists focus on the most are those stemming from stereotype-based expectations.

Women and Lack of Fit: Stereotype-based Expectations

Some of the largest hurdles women face in leadership arise from leadership beginning with "the process of being perceived by others as a leader" (Lord & Maher, 1991, p. 11). People

have lay beliefs of what it means to be a leader, termed implicit leadership theories, and they evaluate actual and potential leaders against these standards (Forsyth & Nye, 2008; Lord & Maher, 1991; Kenney, Schwartz-Kenney, & Blascovich, 1996). In addition to revolving around both task-oriented and people-oriented traits and behaviors, these implicit leadership theories are culturally masculine and reflect the dominant race (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). A prominent theoretical focus for social psychologists interested in gender and leadership concerns understanding the nature and impact of gender-based biases that stem from implicit leadership theories which create a stereotype-based lack of fit between women's characteristics, skills, and aspirations and those deemed necessary for leadership effectiveness. Whereas explicit biases against women in leadership have decreased over the last half-decade, there are powerful and pernicious subtle biases that work to undermine women's access to power (Hoyt, 2015; see also Chapter 20).

The notion that women do not fit the image of a leader has been articulated by various theorists including Heilman (1983, 2001) in her Lack of Fit model and Eagly and Karau (2002) in their role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. According to these perspectives, the bias against female leaders stems from the mismatch between gender stereotypes and the leadership role. It is the deeply ingrained stereotypic beliefs that women *take care* and men *take charge* that give rise to crafty biases against female leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Koenig et al., 2011). In the original research to investigate the mismatch between women and leadership, Schein (1973) employed the well-replicated "think manager, think male" paradigm where she asked participants to rate women, men, and successful middle managers on a list of gendered traits. Not surprisingly, successful middle managers were seen to require traits that were more commonly ascribed to men than to women.

Research into stereotypes within the field of social psychology began nearly a century ago and remains a prominent area of inquiry (Jussim & Rubinstein, 2012). Stereotypes refer to beliefs, or cognitive shortcuts, people have about groups or members of groups that influence the way people process information about them (Hamilton, Stroessner, & Driscoll, 1994). According to social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000), gender stereotypes are derived from traditional gendered division of labor; by viewing women and men in particular roles which require particular behaviors, people begin to associate traits commonly linked to those behaviors to specific genders. Historically, men have served as the primary economic providers and women have done the majority of the unpaid domestic work. Thus, men's greater participation in the paid labor force has promoted the stereotype of men possessing agentic characteristics that emphasize confidence, self-reliance, and dominance. Likewise, greater involvement in domestic responsibilities and care-related employment has fostered the stereotype that women possess communal characteristics that highlight a concern for others (Deaux & Kite, 1993; Eagly et al., 2000; Williams & Best, 1990). Importantly, these stereotypes both *describe* beliefs about the attributes of women and men and *prescribe* how women and men ought to be (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 1999). In working to better understand the impact of these stereotype-based expectations on female leaders, social psychologists generally take one of two theoretical approaches: they focus on how these expectations impact perceptions of leaders, or they focus on how they impact the women themselves.

Stereotypes Shape Perceivers' Expectations

Prejudice and discrimination. Social psychological research has provided ample evidence that the prejudice and discrimination results from women's perceived "lack of fit." Furthermore, this prejudice and discrimination contributes to women's experiencing greater

difficulty in attaining and being perceived as effective in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

However, the stereotype-based prejudice and discrimination that women confront in the domain

of leadership is subtle and often hard to detect. Social psychologists have devised clever

approaches to illuminate these often-inconspicuous biases. In one innovative experimental

approach, termed the *Goldberg paradigm* (Goldberg, 1968), people are asked to evaluate

identical information for a job application, such as resumes, with one catch: half the people are

told it is a man's resume, the other half, a woman's. Using this paradigm, research has

demonstrated clear and blatant discrimination against women in leadership selection in that men

with identical qualifications to women are more likely to be selected (Davison & Burke, 2000).

Thus, identical qualifications are deemed "better" or "more meritorious" when a male name is

attached.

Gendered expectations can also drive people to reconstruct the very criteria used to

define merit. For example, when hiring for a masculine leadership position, such as police chief,

people advantageously define meritorious qualifications to align with the strength of male,

versus female, candidates (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). Moreover, these gendered expectations

can result in women being given less credit or more blame when working on collective projects

with men (Heilman & Haynes, 2005). These unconscious and unintentional gender biases

flourish in unstructured settings rife with ambiguous information (Caleo & Heilman, 2014;

Powell & Graves, 2003).

Not only do women experience discrimination based on descriptive gender stereotypes

that influence how women are perceived, but the prescriptive nature of gender stereotypes place

women in a double bind in leadership. That is, highly feminine women are criticized for being

deficient leaders and highly masculine women experience backlash for not being female enough

(Eagly et al., 2014; Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). The contradictory expectations associated with being both a proper woman and an effective leader complicate many things, from deciding what to wear in an interview to navigating the proper emotional expression in an important meeting. Women are often disliked and vilified for violating the prescription for feminine niceness—they are penalized for expressing anger, talking more than others, and negotiating for their salary (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Brescoll, 2011; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008).

Beyond identifying barriers, much social psychological work has focused on pinpointing boundary conditions that either bolster or undermine gender bias in leadership. Taking a role congruity perspective, researchers often focus on factors associated with the leadership role or the perceived gender stereotypicality of the woman that might exacerbate or attenuate the "think leader, think male" bias. For example, women experience greater bias in contexts dominated by men, when evaluations are made by men, and when they are in line, rather than staff, positions (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Kanter, 1977; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Pazy & Oron, 2001). Critically, it is the line positions that are the more likely route to higher leadership positions (Catalyst, 2004; Galinsky et al., 2003). Moreover, factors that increase reliance of female gender stereotypes, such as pregnancy, parenthood, or attractiveness, exacerbate gender bias against women (Fuegen & Biernat, 2013; Hebl, King, Glick, Singletary, & Kazama, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985).

Factors associated with perceivers also influence role incongruity-based biases. Not surprisingly, people's gender role attitudes strongly predict their evaluations of women in non-traditional roles (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000; Simon & Hoyt, 2008). However, how and to what extent gender role beliefs reinforce or undermine gender bias in

leadership depends upon other important belief systems. For example, political ideology predicts the extent to which people support more or less traditional gender roles and in turn predicts bias against or in favor of female leaders (Hoyt, 2012). Additionally, whether people use their gender role attitudes to make judgments about leaders depends upon their beliefs about the very nature of people, whether people can change their personal attributes or whether they are fixed (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013). Extending this research, we recently examined how the extent to which people endorse hierarchical group relationships (i.e., desire a hierarchy among groups in society) influences preference for female as well as racial and ethnic minority leaders (Hoyt & Simon, 2016). We found that the less people endorsed hierarchical group relationships, the more they favored female as well as Black and Latino/a leaders. Research taking the perspective of understanding how the attributes of the perceivers impacts their evaluations of leaders reveals that while female and other nontraditional leaders, such as racial minorities, are often perceived negatively, this is not always the case. Indeed, at times they may be viewed more favorably than White males.

The glass cliff. Gender stereotypes also contribute to the type of leadership positions women tend to reach. Specifically, women are more likely than men to be placed on a "glass cliff," or appointed to precarious leadership situations associated with greater risk and criticism (Ryan & Haslam, 2005; Chapter 3 also discusses the glass cliff). Although some people originally argued that companies with women on their boards were performing worse than companies with all men on their boards (Judge, 2003), upon further analysis, researchers uncovered that women were particularly likely *to be placed* in leadership positions in situations of financial downturn and decline in company performance—*not* that women cause poor

performance (Brady, Isaacs, Reeves, Burroway, & Reynolds, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2014; Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

A number of experimental studies help shed light on the theoretical underpinnings of the glass cliff. Specifically, researchers have examined whether women are preferentially appointed to leadership positions in times of crisis. These studies have demonstrated that, when companies are declining (vs. improving), women are seen as being more suitable for the leadership position and having greater leadership ability than men (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Furthermore, the reason women seem to be preferred to men as leaders in times of crisis may be due to activation of a "think-crisis—think-female" association (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011; Ryan et al., 2016). While leadership roles are often thought of in stereotypically agentic traits associated with men, in times of crisis leadership is thought of requiring more communal traits (e.g., being caring and understanding) associated with women (Ryan et al., 2011). Thus, women may be selected for leadership positions in crisis situations because they are perceived to be better suited for these leadership roles than men are. Similarly, Brown, Diekman, and Schneider (2011) demonstrate in a series of studies that in times of threat that signal the need for organizational change, female leaders are preferred to male leaders because men are associated with stability and women with change.

While the glass cliff phenomenon may appear to demonstrate an example of gender parity in leadership, women do not necessarily desire these risky positions over more stable leadership positions. For example, women perceive leadership positions that are risky as less attractive than men do (Rink, Ryan, & Stoker, 2012). Furthermore, as Ryan and colleagues (2016) astutely note, the glass cliff is partially driven by the fact that men are given preferential access to more desirable, stable leadership positions. Thus, equal opportunity in leadership

extends beyond numerical parity. In order to pull woman back from the glass cliff, we must also consider the nature of the leadership positions and men's privileged access to the "glass cushion" (Ryan et al., 2016).

Intersectional theoretical perspectives. Because White men are viewed as prototypical leaders (Rosette et al., 2008), most past research has focused on comparisons between White men and White women when considering gender bias in leadership. However, recent research has taken an *intersectionality approach* (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), which investigates the experiences of people with multiple subordinate identities (e.g., women of color). Researchers are starting to take the importance of intersecting identities seriously and in doing so, are discovering important new findings that may counter and expand established wisdom.

From an intersectionality approach, some argue that Black women, for example, experience more prejudice and discrimination than White women or Black men do. In other words, Black women experience "double jeopardy" in that they suffer the effects of *both* gender and racial prejudice (Beale, 1979; Hancock, 2007). In contrast to the double jeopardy hypothesis, others argue that people with intersectional identities experience distinctive forms of oppression known as "intersectional invisibility" (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). According to this perspective, Black women are often marginalized or ignored because they are not seen as prototypical members of both their racial group, where Black *men* are prototypical, and their gender group, where *White* women are prototypical.

Unlike a double jeopardy perspective where Black women *always* experience more discrimination, from an intersectional invisibility perspective, Black women may experience barriers to leadership positions differently than White women or Black men—sometimes taking the form of an advantage and other times a disadvantage, depending on the unique situational

factors involved. The scant empirical research on women of color in leadership seems to be in line with an intersectional invisibility perspective. For example, in a study that directly compared the backlash experienced for leaders' dominance displays, White female leaders and Black male leaders experienced backlash, whereas Black female leaders and White male leaders did not (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). Consistent with intersectional invisibility, Black female leaders seem to be buffered from more extreme prejudice Black male leaders face. In addition, compared with White women, displaying dominance was less strongly proscribed for Black women, allowing Black female leaders to display traits, like dominance, that are more in line with the prototypical leader role (see also Biernat & Sesko, 2013).

However, intersectional invisibility does not always buffer Black female leaders from bias in leadership situations. Rosette and Livingston (2012) found that, in the context of organizational failure, Black female leaders were perceived negatively because neither their race (Black) nor their gender (female) is prototypical of leaders (White male). Thus, Black female leaders' lack of leader prototypicality led to particularly negative evaluations compared to White females and Black males who have one identity that is seen in line with prototypical leaders. However, in the context of organizational success, Black female leaders were evaluated equally favorably as White female and Black male leaders—although all three groups were seen less favorably than White male leaders. Thus, Black female leaders may be at a disadvantage in the context of organizational failure, even if they can display more dominance than White female leaders without backlash (Livingston et al., 2012).

In addition to examining the ways in which gender and race intersect, researchers have also begun to examine the ways in which race is *gendered* (Galinsky, Hall, & Cuddy, 2013; Hall, Galinsky, & Phillips, 2015). Exploring the gender content of racial stereotypes allows for a better

understanding of the unique barriers that minority men also face in leadership positions. Across a series of studies, Galinsky and colleagues (2013) demonstrated that the Asian stereotype is perceived as more feminine, and the Black stereotype is perceived as more masculine in comparison to the White stereotype. The gender content of these racial stereotypes has important implications for leader roles, which are also gendered (i.e., seen as masculine). Thus, while men are seen as more fitting of leadership positions because of the perceived congruity between the male gender role and the leader role, Whites and Blacks are also perceived to be relatively more fitting of leadership positions than Asians because of the perceived congruity between masculine races and the leader role (Hall et al., 2015). The gendered nature of racial stereotypes may help to explain why Asian Americans see themselves as less fitting of leader roles and have lower leadership aspirations than White Americans (Festekjian, Tram, Murray, Sy, & Huynh, 2014).

However, the gendered content of racial stereotypes does not quite explain the current status of Black male leaders: While the racial stereotype and leader stereotype are both masculine, Blacks are underrepresented in top leadership positions. Quite the contrary, Black men's perceived *hyper*-masculinity may even be a detriment to their leadership attainment. In fact, Black men seem to be successful in attaining leadership positions to the extent that they possess "disarming mechanisms" (i.e., traits that attenuate perceptions of threat; Livingston & Pearce, 2009). In a series of studies, Livingston and Pearce (2009) demonstrated that having a baby face, or "babyfaceness," was beneficial to Black leaders because it increased their perceptions of warmth. Thus, in contrast to being masculine to fit the leader role, it seems that being more feminine (i.e., warm) helps Black men, who are often perceived to be threatening, attain leadership success.

While theoretical work at the intersection of gender and race as it pertains to leadership is still in an early stage, it is clear that a complicated picture is emerging. Whether or not women of color or men of color are perceived more or less favorably in leadership positions compared to more "prototypical leaders" will likely depend on situational factors and attributes of the perceivers.

Stereotypes Shape Women's Own Behavior and Beliefs

The stereotype-based processes that shape who we see as "fitting" the leadership role also shape the way we think about ourselves and the way we behave. Women are acutely aware of the pervasive gender stereotypes and are aware that others may treat them accordingly. Moreover, these stereotype-based expectations of inferiority can be psychologically burdensome (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). That is, in leadership positions women may experience *stereotype threat* defined as "the concrete, real-time threat of being judged and treated poorly in settings where a negative stereotype about one's group applies" (Steele et al., 2002. p. 385). Stereotype threat has been one of the most widely studied topics in the field of social psychology (Steele, 1997; Steele et al., 2002). Indeed, this is a dominant theoretical approach taken by theorists focused on gender and leadership. Hoyt and Murphy (2016) recently reviewed the literature and introduced a model of stereotype threat in leadership contexts. According to this model, understanding the impact of stereotype threat processes on women in leadership contexts begins by examining the situational cues that can signal threat, the consequences of stereotype threat, and the factors that can reduce the potential of making stereotype threat appraisals and buffer women from the deleterious effects of stereotype threat.

Women are often acutely attuned to situational cues that signal their identity may be threatened in a particular context. Female leaders can experience increased threat when attempting leadership in industries and organizations where women are scarce (Hoyt, Johnson, Murphy, & Skinnell, 2010; Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007; von Hippel, Walsh, & Zouroudis, 2011), in contexts where gender stereotypes are made salient through the media or physical environments (Cheryan, Plaut, Davies, & Steele, 2009; Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002; Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005), or in organizational cultures extolling the virtues of competition or innate brilliance for success (Leslie, Cimpian, Meyer, & Freeland, 2015; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2008).

The consequences of stereotype threat are multifaceted. This threat has been shown to result in significant adverse consequences, termed *vulnerability responses*, ranging from decreases in performance to disengagement and disidentification from the domain. Gender stereotype-based expectations of inferiority can lead to underperformance on important tasks (e.g., negotiation, decision making) across many domains relevant to leadership in contemporary society (Bergeron, Block, & Echtenkamp, 2006; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2010; Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001). The adverse consequences of stereotype threat extend beyond decreased performance; it can undermine women's sense of belonging in a field, self-confidence, job attitudes, and their motivation and desire to pursue success within the field (Cheryan et al., 2009; Davies et al., 2002, 2005; Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998; von Hippel, Kalokerinos, & Henry, 2013). However, at times, women react to stereotype threat with more favorable responses such as engaging in constructive, counter-stereotypical behaviors. For example, researchers have shown that when the negative gender-related stereotype is explicitly activated, women responded positively by outperforming men in negotiations, leadership, and entrepreneurship (Gupta,

Turban, & Bhawe, 2008; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007, 2010; Kray et al., 2001; Kray, Reb,

Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004).

      Whether women respond to stereotype-based expectations with vulnerability responses,

reactance responses, or an impervious resiliency depends on a host of factors. First, a number of

individual differences factors related to the extent to which women see themselves as having, or

being able to develop, leadership abilities—including leadership self-efficacy, power, and

mindsets about whether leadership abilities can be developed or not—can help buffer women

from deleterious threat effects (Burnette, Pollack, & Hoyt, 2010; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007,

2010; Kray, et al., 2004; Pollack, Burnette, & Hoyt, 2012; Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman,

2007). Next, responses also depend upon important interpersonal factors such as role models.

Role models can demonstrate that success in the stereotyped domain is attainable, and they can

both increase a sense of social belonging and inoculate people's sense of self against identity

threats (Dasgupta, 2011; Marx, Ko, & Friedman, 2009). Although at times role models can have

self-deflating effects by highlighting how deficient one is in comparison (Parks-Stamm,

Heilman, & Hearns, 2008; Rudman & Phelan, 2010), they can also be protective and inspiring to

women in leadership (Latu, Schmid Mast, Lammers, & Bombari, 2013; Simon & Hoyt, 2012).

Whether role models are effective or not depends on important factors such as how much people

identify with the models, their leadership self-efficacy, and the extent to which they endorse the

idea that leadership abilities are malleable and can be cultivated (Hoyt & Simon, 2011). Finally,

the nature of the stereotype cues themselves can help determine women's responses. For

example, stereotypes that are implicitly activated and multiple sources of activation are likely to

produce more detrimental responses than singular and explicitly activated threats (Hoyt et al.,

2010; Kray et al., 2001; Kray et al., 2004).

Social psychologists are keenly focused on gaining a better understanding of the situational and contextual factors that can help reduce the potential that women will make stereotype threat appraisals in the first place. One potent approach to reducing the potential for threat is by creating identity safety. Identity safe tasks and environments "challenge the validity, relevance, or acceptance of negative stereotypes linked to stigmatized social identities" (Davies et al., 2005, p. 278). In terms of creating identity safe tasks, research has shown that describing a leadership task as one in which there are no gender differences or that the previous leader was a woman renders the task identity safe and thwarts otherwise deleterious threat responses (Bergeron et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2005). In the domain of negotiation, the potential of stereotype threat effects can be attenuated when the task is framed as an opportunity of asking rather than an opportunity for negotiation, when the context is less ambiguous such that both parties had a clear understanding of what is meant by a good outcome and what is expected of them, and by explicitly valuing feminine traits or highlighting the power of education, career aspirations, and work experience in the negotiation context (Bowles & Kray, 2013; Kray et al., 2001; Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002; Small et al., 2007). Additionally, presenting entrepreneurship as a gender-neutral domain reduced the potential for stereotype threat and eliminated the gender gap in entrepreneurial intentions (Gupta et al., 2008). Finally, organizational cultures can also promote identity safety; for example, advocating the belief that everyone can expand their intelligence and abilities can foster identity safety and combat stereotype threat (Emerson & Murphy, 2015).

Conclusion

Social psychologists seek to understand human behavior, thought, and emotion primarily by focusing on the social context. A predominant theoretical perspective in social psychology is

that gender, like other social identities, is socially constructed. Theories taking this perspective, such as Eagly's (1987) social role theory, guide much of the academic work on gender and leadership in the field of social psychology. This work typically revolves around one of two questions: (1) Are there gender differences in leadership style and effectiveness? and, (2) What barriers do women face in the leadership domain? Work that addresses the first question typically merges social role theory perspectives with frameworks from the field of leadership studies such as transformational leadership and implicit leadership theories. In working to answer the second question, social psychologists often ground their scholarship squarely within social psychological gender-based theoretical frameworks and situate it within the context of leadership. The primary perspective taken in social psychology to understand how gender influences the leadership process is a stereotyping perspective.

The social world is incredibly complex and a governing theme within social psychology is that people develop cognitive shortcuts, such as stereotypes, to ease these complicated processes. A stereotyping framework both guides social psychological approaches to gender and leadership and helps explain the findings. Although not always approached through a stereotyping lens, the basic comparisons of women and men in terms of leadership styles and differences in perspectives, values, and priorities can be understood through such a perspective. For example, the findings that women engage in more transformational and democratic styles and are more focused on the greater good can be understood by the descriptive and prescriptive expectations of communality for women. Moreover, gender stereotypes undergird the barriers women face in leadership. The descriptive component of stereotypes limits women's leadership access and influence, whereas the prescriptive component creates conflicting demands for them. These stereotypes both shape expectations people have of female leaders, as well as influencing

women's own thoughts and behaviors. In closing, social psychological approaches to

understanding gender and leadership make abundantly clear that, regardless of whether it *ought*

to matter, gender *does* matter in how people respond to leaders and how leaders approach their

roles.

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