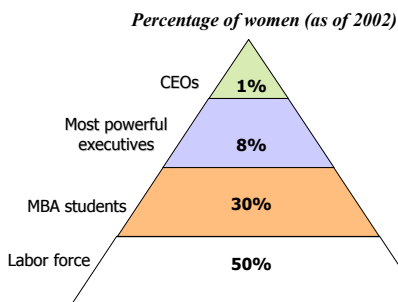


Stereotype Threat and the Disidentification of Women from Leadership Roles

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The gender gap in leadership



Accounting for the gender gap: Differences in leadership ability?

Evidence from recent meta-analyses:

Women are slightly more effective than men as leaders in business settings and significantly more effective at middle management roles (Eagly, Karau, & Mekhijani, 1995).

Women are more likely to use effective leadership styles (e.g., transformational) compared to men (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

Accounting for the gender gap: Social psychology

- ✓ Traditional social psychological explanations are based on discrimination resulting from gender stereotypes.
- ✓ Eagly & Karau (2002) propose Role Congruity Theory to account for the paucity of women in leadership roles.

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109, 537 – 598.

Gender Stereotypes



- ✓ **Women have communal traits** strong interpersonal skills, emotional sensitivity and expressiveness, cooperative
- ✓ **Men have agentic traits** good at independent decision-making, action-oriented, ambitious, competitive

See Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Bem, 1993.

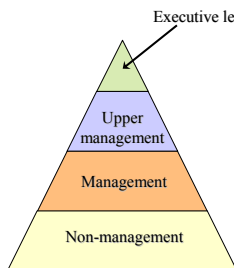
Descriptive expectations

- ✓ Men are assumed to be a better fit for leadership positions, which leads to biased hiring (e.g., Heilman, 1983; Glick, 1991; Pratto, Stallworth, Sidnius, & Siers, 1997).
- ✓ A woman's success as a leader is likely to be attributed to effort rather than skill, whereas the opposite is true for men (Swim & Sanna, 1996); this has implications for promotions.
- ✓ Work attributed to a woman is evaluated less favorably than the same work if attributed to a man (Swim, et al., 1989).
- ✓ The result is a form of discrimination called "disparate impact" in which hiring and promotion decisions are biased (D. ... & ... 1998).

Prescriptive expectations

- ✓ Women are devalued when they use a directive leadership style but not when they used an inclusive, democratic leadership style (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992).
- ✓ Agentic women are evaluated as more hostile and unfriendly compared to agentic men (e.g., Heilman, 1995).
- ✓ The result is a form of discrimination called "disparate treatment" in which women (but not men) who display agentic behavior are punished for failing to have a friendly interpersonal style, (Burgess & Borgida, 1999).

Role congruity theory...

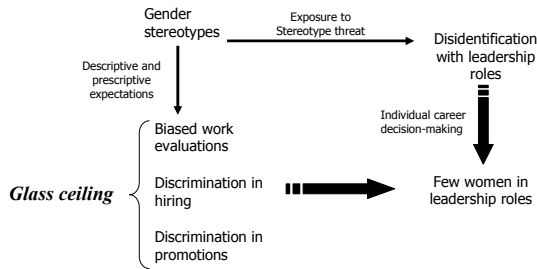


3. Discrimination due to descriptive and prescriptive expectations

2. Agentic behaviors

1. Leadership

Accounting for the gender gap

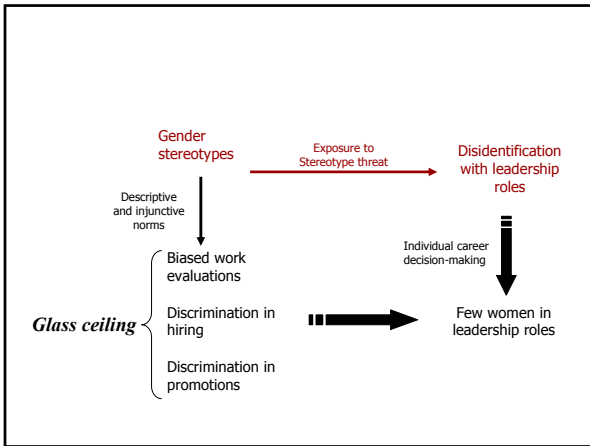


Stereotype Threat

- ✓ Racial and gender stereotypes impair performance by creating the fear that poor performance will confirm the veracity of the stereotype in the minds of observers.
- ✓ Stereotype threat has the greatest effect when performance on a given task is most central to a person's self-concept (e.g., Steele & Aronson, 1995).
- ✓ One method of coping with chronic exposure to stereotype threat is reducing the amount of time, energy, and self-concept invested in a given role or domain – a process called *domain disidentification* (Steele, 1997).
- ✓ The net result is that members of stereotyped groups for whom performance in a given domain is important are likely to feel threatened when performing in that domain and, as a result, reduce their participation in that domain.

Examples of impaired performance due to stereotype threat:

- ✓ Women and math (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999)
- ✓ Women and negotiation (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001)
- ✓ African Americans and verbal tasks (Steele & Aronson, 1995)
- ✓ Caucasians and math (when the stereotype that Asians are better is invoked; Aronson et al., 1999)



The current study

- ✓ Group decision-making exercise provides a leadership experience for participants
- ✓ Collecting self-report and process data
- ✓ Primarily interested in how stereotype threat affects women's leadership behaviors and identification with leadership roles

Gender

		Women	Men
Condition	No threat		
	Stereotype threat		

The manipulation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR GROUP LEADERS:

*As you may know there has been controversy about whether there are gender differences in leadership ability. Previous research on group leadership has sometimes shown gender differences and sometimes shown no gender differences. The activity you are about to lead **HAS NOT shown** / **HAS shown** gender differences in the past.*

Based on a study of stereotype threat and women's math performance by Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999

Order of events

- ✓ Participants show up in a waiting room along with three confederates
- ✓ The participant is assigned to the role of group leader
- ✓ The group is brought into the lab and seated at a table
- ✓ The manipulation is administered
- ✓ Leadership task: groups spend 15 minutes on the winter survival exercise (Johnson & Johnson, 1987)
- ✓ Participants fill out the dependent measures
- ✓ Participants are debriefed



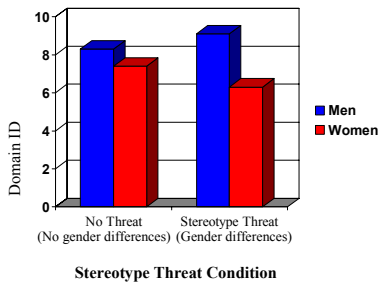
Confederate roles

- ✓ **Loud wrong**: talkative; full of bad ideas
- ✓ **Quiet right**: must be encouraged to share; full of good ideas
- ✓ **Negative attitude**: not invested in the group process; just wants a couple of REP points

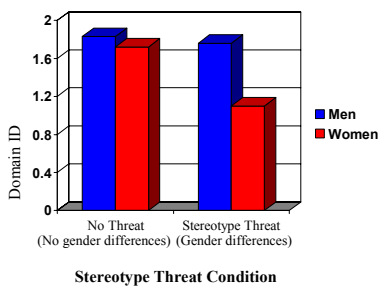
Dependent variables

- ✓ Domain identification measure (used by Spencer, Steele, and Quinn, 1999; based on Markus, 1977)
- ✓ Motivation to lead (Chan and Drasgow, 2001)
- ✓ Leadership self-efficacy
- ✓ Willingness to participate in similar leadership opportunities in the future
- ✓ Leader behavior (on videotape)

Domain identification w/ leadership



Group performance expectations

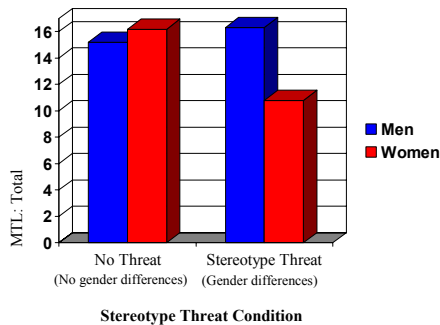


Motivation to lead

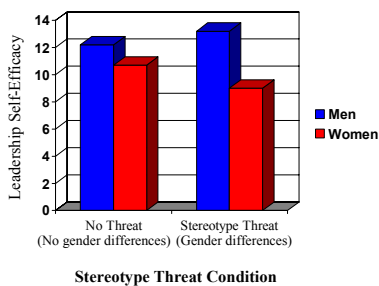
“An individual differences construct that affects a leader’s or leader-to-be’s decisions to assume leadership training, roles, and responsibilities and that affect his or her intensity of effort at leading and persistence as a leader.”

Chan, K., & Drasgow, F. (2001). Toward a theory of individual differences and leadership: Understanding the motivation to lead. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 481 – 498.

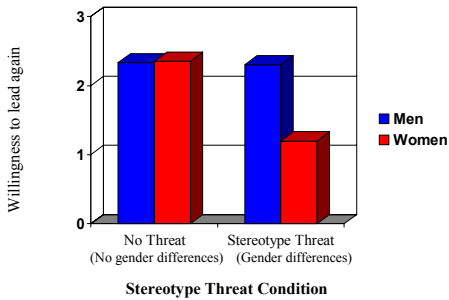
Motivation to lead



Leadership self-efficacy



“I would be willing to lead a similar group in the future.”

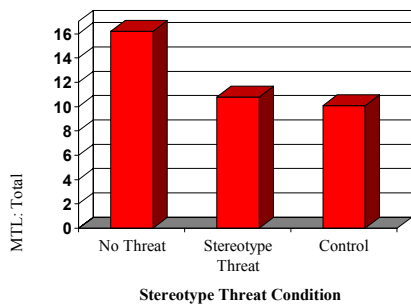


Where is the action?

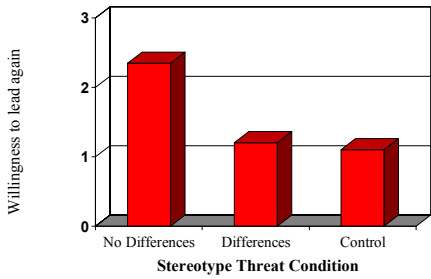
Control condition instructions:

“As you may know there has been controversy about whether group decision-making is superior to individual decision-making. Previous research on group leadership has sometimes shown group decision-making to be more effective and sometimes shown no difference. Please participate fully in the upcoming group discussion.”

Motivation to lead (Women only)



“I would be willing to lead a similar group in the future.” (women only)



Stereotype threat was NOT associated with poor group decisions ($p = .29$)

Implications

- Women pursuing a career in leadership may experience stereotype threat, leading to a drop in motivation, self-efficacy, and willingness to continue in leadership roles.
- This may explain some of the gender gap in leadership.
- It may not be enough for organizations to avoid promoting gender stereotypes. Instead, organizations may need to proactively counter gender stereotypes.
