



Women, Men, and Leadership: Exploring the Gender Gap at the Top

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Abstract

Elite-level leaders in business and government make significant and far-reaching decisions influencing many facets of society. However, relatively few of these powerful positions are held by women. This article explores gender in leadership by focusing on the difficulties women experience in attaining and being seen as effective in top leadership positions. It begins by revealing the lack of parity between the sexes in leadership and in the remaining sections it addresses empirical research that serves to illuminate the leadership labyrinth, or obstacles to women's progress, also known as the glass ceiling. In the first section, research on gender and leadership styles, traits, and effectiveness is reviewed followed by a consideration of how both domestic responsibilities and current organizational cultures differentially impact women and men on their journey to top leadership positions. The focus then shifts to examining how stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination contribute to women's under-representation in elite leadership roles by both impacting perceptions of and responses to women as well as impacting the experiences of women themselves. The final section concludes with thoughts on promoting parity in top-level leadership.

Social psychologists have shown an enduring interest in topics both directly and indirectly related to leadership making the field of social psychology indispensable to an empirically based understanding of leadership (Hoyt, Goethals, & Forsyth, 2008a). During its infancy, leadership was a central topic in the discipline (Allport, 1924; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). Although as the field matured research on the topic of leadership *per se* began to wane, there remains a sustained interest in both leadership and topics integral to leadership processes (Hoyt, Goethals, & Forsyth, 2008b). Investigations into gender in leadership, however, were largely ignored in social psychology until the 1970s (Chemers, 1997). Around that same time, the topic of gender in leadership began to interest writers in the popular press who have come full circle from arguing women's inherent ineptitude in leadership to more contemporary views of female superiority (Book, 2000; Hennig & Jardin, 1977). These mass media contentions, however, are ultimately empirical claims that over three decades of social psychological research can help answer. Social psychologists have asked a number of research questions related to this topic however, they all serve to address one larger query: 'Why is there a gender gap in top leadership positions?' In this article, gender in leadership is explored using a gender gap framework. After reviewing this gap, the literature on gender and leadership traits, styles, and effectiveness is examined followed by a consideration of how the private and public spheres of our society work to impact women and men in the realm of leadership. Next, research on how stereotype-based prejudice and discrimination impacts female leaders is reviewed and final thoughts on promoting parity between the sexes in elite-level leadership are offered.

The Leadership Labyrinth

Looking around, we can point to many women in top leadership positions throughout America's organizations and political system such as PepsiCo's CEO Indra Nooyi, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and founder and CEO of Teach for America Wendy Kopp. Moreover, women's educational and work attainments, important precursors to leadership success, are remarkable: women earn almost 60% of bachelor's and master's degrees, they earn nearly half of all professional degrees, they make up nearly half of the U.S. labor force, and they occupy more than half of all management and professional positions (Catalyst, 2009; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009a, U.S. Census, 2007). Women have indeed been making incredible strides in attaining top leadership positions. However, a closer examination of the data reveals the very real gap that still exists in these top positions. Although women occupy a quarter of the Chief Executive Officer positions in the United States (25%, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009b), the elite positions tell a different story: women occupy a mere 3% of Fortune 500 CEO seats, only 15.2% of the F500 board seats, and a mere 15.7% of the F500 corporate officer positions (Catalyst, 2009). The numbers are not much better on the political front. Currently, women hold only 90 of the 535 seats (16.8%) in the U.S. Congress and women of color occupy just 20 seats (Center for American Women and Politics, 2009). On a more global level, the world average of women's representation in national legislatures or parliaments is 18.9%, with the United States ranking 73rd of 183 countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2010).

This limitation to women's advancement was originally dubbed the *glass ceiling* by two Wall Street Journal reporters and this term has been in our vernacular ever since (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). The glass ceiling metaphor represents unseen and unsanctioned barriers, in an ostensibly nondiscriminatory organization, that prevent women from securing top leadership roles. These barriers preventing women from progressing into top leadership roles are even found in female-dominated occupations, professions where men ride a *glass escalator* up to the top positions (Maume, 1999; Williams, 1992, 1995). Another more recent metaphor depicting the obstacles women confront has been offered by Eagly and Carli (2007) who put forth the image of a labyrinth, conveying the impression of a journey riddled with challenges all along the way, not just a single indiscernible barrier, that also has the potential for successful navigation. Although both of these metaphors have been offered to describe the challenges women face on their quest for leadership, undoubtedly members of other nondominant social groups, such as ethnic and racial minorities, face glass ceilings, labyrinths, and biases of their own (Livingston & Pearce, 2009).

Where Are the Differences? An Examination of Leadership Traits, Styles, and Effectiveness

One approach to understanding this gender gap is to examine differences between women and men on attributes relevant to leadership. Although the role of traits in understanding leadership emergence and effectiveness has been a controversial issue in the literature, the extant research reveals that traits do play an important, albeit limited, role in leadership effectiveness (Zaccaro, Gulick, & Khare, 2008). One argument attempting to explain the leadership gap is that women are just different than men when it comes to traits associated with effective leadership. Although people often associate primarily masculine traits such as aggressiveness and dominance with leadership, effective leadership

actually requires an androgynous combination of feminine and masculine traits including (but not limited to) intelligence, emotional intelligence, risk taking, empathy, assertiveness, openness to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, integrity and trustworthiness, and the ability to persuade, motivate, and inspire others (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Research shows some small differences between women and men on traits related to effective leadership, such as men showing slightly more assertiveness than women and women showing somewhat higher levels of integrity; however, overall the differences favor women as much as they do men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Feingold, 1994; Franke, Crown, & Spake, 1997). Furthermore, the argument that perhaps women's values differ from men's such that they have less desire to lead (Kellerman, 2003) is not supported by the research demonstrating that women and men in comparable jobs are similarly committed to their jobs and equally desire leadership roles (Aven, Parker, & McEvoy, 1993; Catalyst, 2004; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Nonetheless, this question regarding career and leadership ambition cannot be fully explored without considering gender differences in domestic responsibilities.

There are some differences between women and men that do appear to advantage men in leadership. For example, men are more likely to promote themselves for leadership positions than women (Bowles & McGinn, 2005). Another factor important for reaching elite leadership positions is negotiating for desired positions, opportunities, and resources, and women have a lesser propensity to negotiate for what they want (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman, 2007). Furthermore, the negotiations involved in attaining top leadership positions are often just the type that disadvantage women: unstructured, ambiguous, and steeped in negative gender stereotypes (Bowles & McGinn, 2005). However, although both self-promotion for leadership roles and negotiation are important on the road to leadership success, women's greater reluctance to do either might reflect an adaptive response to the backlash women experience when they engage in those behaviors (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Women face a number of social costs for initiating negotiation and self-promoting including being seen as less socially attractive, less likeable, and less hireable (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Rudman, 1998). Finally, it is important to note the source of these various sex differences is controversial. Evolutionary psychologists argue that many of these differences related to leadership evolved through adaptations to reproductive pressures throughout the history of the human species (Buss & Kenrick, 1998; Geary, 1998). However, these evolutionary arguments for dispositions relevant to leadership rely on a number of highly debated tenuous assumptions concerning the relationship between the sexes in primitive times and scientific evidence for these claims is lacking (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Wood & Eagly, 2002).

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?' This question has been hotly debated and answers range from 'yes' (Rosener, 1995) to 'not really' (Bass, 1981) to 'they may appear to but that only reflects the different roles they occupy' (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Many of these early studies examined task-oriented leadership that underscores behaviors that accomplish tasks, and relationship-oriented leadership that focuses on behaviors that maintain positive interpersonal relationships. Other studies examined democratic and autocratic styles in which leaders did or did not encourage followers to participate in decision-making. A meta-analysis of the relevant literature showed that, contrary to stereotypic presumptions, women did not lead in more of a relationship-oriented and less of a task-oriented style in organizational studies; these differences were only found in situations where social roles were more regulated, such as in experiments, and when female managers were in more

gender-integrated as opposed to male-dominated roles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). There was one robust gender difference found across settings that emerged in this and a later meta-analysis (van Engen & Willemssen, 2004): women tend to lead in a more democratic manner than men. This tendency, however, decreases in male-dominated roles. Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, democratic leadership is not always the most effective style; the link between these leadership styles and productivity and satisfaction is not straightforward and is dependent on a variety of factors (Foels, Driskell, Mullen, & Salas, 2000; Gastil, 1994).

In the 1980s, researchers shifted their focus to a new leadership style originally articulated as transforming leadership (Burns, 1978) but later modified and expanded into transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). This style of leadership is focused on motivating, mentoring, inspiring, and empowering followers to fully develop their abilities to contribute to their organization. This style is often contrasted with transactional leadership that focuses on exchanges between leaders and followers focusing on the followers' self-interest. Here, meta-analyses found that women tend to be somewhat more transformational than men, this effect is driven primarily by women engaging more in the supportive and mentoring aspects of transformational leadership, and they tend to engage in more of the contingent reward component of transactional leadership. Furthermore, both transformational leadership and contingent reward are associated with enhanced leadership effectiveness (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; van Engen & Willemssen, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

These findings regarding gender differences in leadership style can be further understood when they are interpreted in light of research findings on leader evaluation. A large-scale meta-analysis examining the evaluation of female and male leaders who were equated on all characteristics and leadership behaviors revealed that both male and female leaders are evaluated equally favorably when using a democratic leadership style (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). However, compared to men, women were devalued when they led in the more masculine autocratic or directive styles (e.g., Bartol & Butterfield, 1976), when they held a typically masculine leadership role (e.g., athletic coaches or managers in manufacturing plants; e.g., Knight & Saal, 1984), and when the evaluators were men. Similar to the negotiation research described previously, these findings not only highlight the discrimination experienced by female leaders but they also suggest that women's enhanced use of a democratic style might be an adaptive response to social discentives. However, this is not the case for the transformational leadership style; although recent research shows that female leaders using a transformational style are devalued by male subordinates, women still use those behaviors more than men (Ayman, Korabik, & Morris, 2009).

This empirical work examining leadership styles of men and women combined with the research on the relative effectiveness of various styles does not suggest any disadvantage for women in terms of leadership effectiveness and, if anything, suggests a slight advantage. Other studies have directly tested the effectiveness of female and male leaders. A meta-analysis of these studies revealed that *overall* men and women are equally effective leaders (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). However, there were some gender differences in effectiveness revealing greater effectiveness in gender congruent roles. For example, women were less effective than men in male-dominated positions and in more masculinized leadership roles such as military positions but women were more effective than men in less-masculinized leader roles such as education, government, and social service organizations (Eagly et al., 1995). Although many of the findings regarding sex differences in leadership discussed here have been disputed (Vecchio, 2002, 2003), the ensuing debate

served to bolster the arguments that these findings are robust and based on sound methodology and valid research integration. Finally, it is important to keep these few gender differences in leadership style and effectiveness in perspective: not only are the differences very small, but the differences among women and among men are much greater than the average differences between the groups.

Gender, Leadership, and the Private and Public Spheres

Both domestic responsibilities and contemporary workplace cultures differentially impact women and men in the domain of leadership. As a consequence of the traditional division of labor wherein women are more likely to assume domestic responsibilities, we cannot fully address issues of gender and leadership in the public sphere without examining how responsibilities in the private sphere impact this relationship. Although adherence to this traditional division of labor has decreased dramatically and men's contributions to work in the home have been on the increase, there is still a significant domestic gap such that women assume greater responsibility for child rearing and domestic work even when they work full-time outside of the home (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; Bowles & McGinn, 2005; Eagly & Carli, 2007). For example, among married parents working full time, more women (71%) spend time caring for children than men (54%) and they spend more time taking care of the children (women: 1.2 h/day; men: 0.8 h/day; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Furthermore, these women are more likely to do housework activities, such as cooking and lawn care, and they spend more time doing it (89%; 2.1 h/day) than the men (64%; 1.4 h/day).

The disproportionate responsibility women assume for domestic duties presents them with a greater level of conflict between work and home. This conflict is pronounced when people have children: compared to women without children, those with children are more likely to be unemployed or to work fewer hours, whereas men show the opposite pattern such that those with children work more hours and are more likely to be employed (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000). In attempts to juggle these work-home conflicts women engage in a variety of responses including taking leaves of absences, taking sick days, finding part-time employment, and leaving the labor force altogether (Hewlett, 2002; Nieva & Gutek, 1981). These responses result in women having somewhat less work experience, continuity, and advancement than men thus contributing to the leadership gap.

This conflict between work outside and within the home is exacerbated by the un-family-friendly structure and culture of the workplace where both explicit and implicit norms necessitate long hours, forbid flexibility, and often demand travel and even relocation (Bravo, 2007). These ideal worker norms prescribe to conventional gender role expectations that workers have a full-time spouse at home (Williams, 2000). Indeed, success and advancement in the workplace is much easier when one does: people who spend more time working receive higher salaries and more promotions than those who spend less time on the job (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Advancement at work is also dependent on building good social relationships, or social capital, which provides people access to resources, information, and career sponsorship (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Building social capital, however, takes time away from domestic duties and often involves breaking into the 'old boy network', both of which prove generally more difficult for women than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Women experience a variety of barriers at work including having a higher bar to pass than men do to advance in their career (Kay & Hagan, 1998, 1999; Lyness & Heilman,

2006). Additionally, compared to men, women have less developmental opportunities: they have fewer responsibilities in the same jobs and they are less likely to be in key networks, receive encouragement, and receive formal training (Knoke & Ishio, 1998; Lyness & Thompson, 2000; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Ohlott, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1994; Powell & Graves, 2003). Similarly, women experience greater difficulty establishing informal mentor relationships (Powell & Graves, 2003), which can be vital to career advancement (Ensher & Murphy, 2005). Women also disproportionately occupy jobs in fields that receive less visibility and have fewer promotion opportunities such as accounting, education, and human resource management (Bowles & McGinn, 2005; Lyness & Heilman, 2006). In addition to being less likely to be in positions that lead to promotion, when women are promoted to leadership positions they are more likely than men to be appointed to *glass cliffs*: precarious situations associated with greater risk and criticism (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, Kulich, & Atkins, 2008).

Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination Against Female Leaders

Foremost among the barriers female leaders confront are the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination faced by these 'stigmatized' individuals. Women are considered stigmatized in the leadership context because they have characteristics that indicate low status and power and lead others to devalue them (for an overview of stigma and leadership see Hoyt & Chemers, 2008; Leary, 1995; Major & O'Brien, 2005). Thus, women are more likely than men to encounter negative expectations and reactions, making it more difficult for them to reach positions of respect, influence, and leadership. Importantly, there has been a tremendous shift toward greater acceptance of women as leaders over the last half century (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, we do not need to look far to see that people still do discriminate based on sex when it comes to their leaders. For example, in 2007 Gallup polls, 14% indicated that it would be undesirable for the next president to be a woman and 10% of the U.S. population indicated that they would not vote for a qualified woman nominated by their party for president. Even among the 89% who would vote for a woman, 14% were not completely comfortable. This bias is found among both women and men even though women are more likely to vote for a female presidential candidate than are men (Simon & Hoyt, 2008). This bias extends to the workplace where people indicate a greater preference for a male boss (37%) than a female boss (19%; Gallup, 2006). This prejudice mimics biases portrayed in the media. For example, in the media coverage of the 2008 US presidential primaries, sexism directed toward Hillary Clinton was not only deemed acceptable from pundits, journalists, and political analysts but it was also not considered newsworthy (Carroll, 2009). Indeed, as Katie Couric noted "one of the great lessons of that campaign is the continued and accepted role of sexism in American life, particularly the media...if Senator Obama had to confront the racist equivalent of an 'Iron My Shirt' poster at campaign rallies or a Hillary nutcracker sold at airports...the outrage would not be a footnote, it would be front page news" (Couric & Co., 2008).

These gender biases in leadership stem from gender role and gender stereotype expectations. Indeed, people who have more conservative views of the rights and roles of women in society exhibit greater bias against female leaders (Forsyth, Heiney, & Wright, 1997). Stereotypes, or cognitive shortcuts whereby people assign characteristics to groups and members of groups regardless of actual variation in people's characteristics (Hamilton, Stroessner, & Driscoll, 1994), can also influence perceptions of women. Although stereotypes often contain a 'kernel of truth', indeed there are sex differences between men and

women (Eagly, 1995), and they can be adaptive for processing the large amount of social information we encounter daily, they can be maladaptive and bias the way we process information. A dramatic example of the impact of gender stereotypes on perceptions can be seen in the selection of musicians to symphony orchestras in the 1970s and 80s. The male-dominated orchestras witnessed a remarkable increase in women among their ranks after making one small yet powerful change: applicants were asked to audition behind a screen thus nullifying any effects of gender stereotypes in the selection process (Goldin & Rouse, 2000). The stereotypes that influence women in leadership are the pervasive and resilient gender stereotypes maintaining that women take care and men take charge (Dodge, Gilroy, & Fenzel, 1995; Heilman, 2001; Hoyt, 2010). Women are stereotyped to have communal characteristics that highlight a concern for others, whereas men are thought to have agentic characteristics that emphasize confidence, self-reliance, and dominance (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Williams & Best, 1990). These stereotypes are activated easily and automatically and are often very subtle making them particularly pernicious (Dunning & Sherman, 1997; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

In addition to gender-based expectations, people also have conceptions of what it means to be a leader. These widely held and shared beliefs about leaders are referred to as implicit leadership theories and they can help people filter of a wealth of information but they have the potential to bias perceptions and evaluations of leaders who do not fit the image, such as women (Forsyth & Nye, 2008; Kenney, Schwartz-Kenney, & Blascovich, 1996; Lord & Maher, 1991). Furthermore, because effective leadership is dependent on followers' responses to their leaders, not fitting the ideal image of a leader can result in real decrements in leadership effectiveness as followers are less likely to accept the influence of leaders who are perceived and evaluated in a negative light. The stereotypical image of a leader is someone who has agentic, masculine traits, and according to role congruity theory, prejudice against women ensues from the incongruity between the leader role and the female gender role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This incongruity was originally demonstrated by Schein (1973), who illustrated that descriptions of men were much more similar to the descriptions of managers than were descriptions of women, and has been confirmed in numerous studies since (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008). In accordance with these gendered expectations, men are more likely to emerge and take on the official role and title of *leader*, whereas women are more likely to take on informal leadership roles and related titles such as *social facilitator* or *organizer* (Andrews, 1992; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Fletcher, 2001).

A number of related theoretical approaches similarly contend that gender-based prejudice in leadership originates from biased expectations. For example, according to expectation states theory, people assign greater status and task competence to men than they do women and these beliefs create expectations that then affect the social interactions through which leadership is attained and employed (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Ridgeway, 2001). These expectations impact the way women and men behave in group settings as well as how others perceive and behave toward them, which result in women emerging less as leaders than men. As well, Hogg's (2001) social identity theory of leadership contends that people have an image, or 'prototype', of how their group leader should look, think, and act. The more followers identify with their group, the more their leader evaluations and perceptions are based on how prototypical the leader is of the group. To the extent that women are seen as lower in group prototypicality than men, women are at a leadership disadvantage (Hogg et al., 2006). Thus, women are likely at a

disadvantage in groups comprised of people who ascribe to traditional gender stereotypes but not so in groups with members who hold more progressive gender expectations.

Ample empirical evidence supports the claim that stereotyped-based biases result in discrimination against women in leadership: women are evaluated less favorably and have greater difficulty attaining and being seen as effective in leadership roles than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This discrimination often comes in subtle forms and can be difficult to detect. One approach to illuminating this bias is with controlled studies using the *Goldberg paradigm* (Goldberg, 1968) where identical stimuli, such as resumes or vignettes, are given to participants with either a female or a male name attached and participants are asked to give their evaluation. One meta-analysis of studies using this paradigm revealed a strong bias toward selecting men for masculine positions, including leadership positions, and gender-neutral positions and a preference for selecting women for feminine jobs, such as secretary (Davison & Burke, 2000). Another meta-analysis of studies using a similar approach and asking participants to evaluate leaders based on controlled videotapes or vignettes revealed a similar bias against women particularly in more masculine leader roles (Eagly et al., 1992). Leader evaluations are often influenced by attributions people make, which are strongly impacted by gender stereotypes. For example, successful performance on masculine tasks is more often attributed to luck and effort for women but ability for men (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974; Swim & Sanna, 1996) and people attribute significantly less competence, influence, and leadership to women than they do men in successful mixed-sex groups (Heilman & Haynes, 2005).

In addition to being evaluated more negatively and being less likely to be selected for leadership positions, successful female leaders often engender hostility, are not liked, and are personally derogated for violating gender stereotypic expectations (Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). Thus, female leaders often find themselves in a double bind: as women they should be communal but as leaders they should be agentic. Showing too much agency, including self-promotion and negotiation (Bowles et al., 2007; Rudman, 1998), often results in being disliked, whereas too much communion leads people to perceive women as ineffective leaders. A stunning example of the penalties for violating gender stereotypes can be seen in the Supreme Court case *Price Waterhouse v. Ann Hopkins*. Price Waterhouse denied Hopkins partnership in the firm because she was too 'macho' and they even advised her to go to charm school, wear jewelry and makeup, and be less aggressive. Basing their decision in part on the psychological research on gender stereotyping, the court ruled that Price Waterhouse was discriminating based on stereotypes (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991).

Not only are female leaders targets of negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination but they are also aware of the devaluation of women in leadership, which can impact their thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Eden, 1992; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007, 2010; Hoyt & Chemers, 2008). When people are in a position to validate a negative stereotype that disparages the performance ability of members of their social group they are said to experience stereotype threat (Marx, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). For female leaders, stereotype threat can come in many forms including a blatant threat, such as explicit exposure to stereotypes, or a more subtle threat, such as having solo status as the lone woman leading a group of men. The majority of the literature on stereotype threat focuses on the deleterious vulnerability responses that can result. For example, exposure to gender stereotypic commercials has been shown to undermine women's leadership aspirations (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005), when gender stereotypes are activated *implicitly* women perform less well than men on a

masculine sex role-typed managerial task (Bergeron, Block, & Echtenkamp, 2006) and on a negotiation task (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001), and explicit stereotype activation negatively impacts leadership performance and self-perceptions of women who do not have high levels of leadership self-efficacy (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007).

Stereotype threat, however, does not always result in these negative responses. For example, telling women there are no gender differences in the leadership task nullified the negative impact of the stereotypic commercials in Davies et al.'s study (2005). Similarly, Bergeron et al. (2006) found that women do not underperform men on the managerial task when it is a feminine sex role-typed task. Moreover, at times people show positive responses when threatened with a stereotype. Stereotype reactance occurs when individuals confronted with a negative stereotype regarding the performance ability of members of their social group respond by engaging in counter-stereotypical behaviors (Kray et al., 2001). For example, when *blatantly* presented with the gender and bargaining stereotype women react against it by increasing their negotiation performance and out-negotiating men (Kray et al., 2001). However, they can only successfully increase their performance when they possess sufficient power to do so (Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004). Women have also been shown to react against the gender leader stereotype resulting in better performance on a masculine managerial task (Bergeron et al., 2006) and better performance on and self-perceptions after an employee-hiring task from women with high levels of leadership efficacy (Hoyt, 2005; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007, 2010). In sum, gender leader stereotypes have the potential to threaten women and whether this threat is met with vulnerability or reactance responses depends on factors such as the leader's self-efficacy, the explicitness of the stereotype, the group sex-composition, and the power that the leader holds. Finally, although female leaders may demonstrate reactance to certain solitary stereotype threats, when such threats are combined, women are likely to demonstrate deleterious vulnerability responses (Hoyt, Johnson, Murphy, & Skinnell, in press).

Increasing Parity and Concluding Remarks

'There is nothing so practical as a good theory.' – Kurt Lewin

This chapter was organized around the larger question regarding the gender gap in leadership not only because the empirical work fits well within this framework but also because it demonstrates how the field of social psychology can contribute to important social justice issues. As social psychology pioneer Kurt Lewin advocated years ago, movement toward genuine social change is bolstered through rigorous, empirical discovery. The more we understand the barriers that women confront in the leadership labyrinth, the better equipped we will be to break them down. One thing that is clear from the body of literature on gender and leadership, promoting leadership equity and effectiveness requires intervention across a number of levels including the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal levels (Hoyt, 2010).

The research literature on the biases female leaders confront suggests some practical advice for women. For example, one way women can attempt to navigate the double bind they face and come across both as a competent leader and also as appropriately 'female' is by delicately combining communal qualities such as warmth and friendliness with agentic qualities including exceptional competence and assertiveness (Carli, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Furthermore, the transformational leadership can be a particularly effective style for women as it is not a distinctly masculine style, it encompasses

traditionally feminine behaviors such as being considerate and supportive, and it is associated with leadership effectiveness. Although understanding how to navigate this prejudice is practical, our primary focus should be on eradicating the inequality, a goal that will undoubtedly be facilitated by those women who have made their way through the labyrinth. A confluence of changes will go far in increasing parity and justice in the realm of leadership. At the societal level, the gendered division of labor offers many obstacles for women not the least of which are those associated with women's greater domestic responsibilities. Increasing parity in leadership is inextricably intertwined with closing the gender gap at home. On the organizational front, changes such as family-friendly reforms and ensuring that women are in visible positions and gain adequate social capital, through processes such as mentoring, will alleviate women's journey through the labyrinth. Some of the largest obstacles women confront originate in gender stereotypes. The incongruity between the leader role and the female gender role is slowly changing as people begin acknowledging the essential communal elements of leadership and that agency does not only belong to men. Being aware of the impact of these stereotypes can lessen their impact on perceivers as well as women themselves. As these stereotypes begin to erode, female leaders will worry less about walking the fine line between agency and communion and about the repercussions associated with self-promotion and negotiation that they disproportionately face.

The number of women reaching top leadership positions is on the rise. For example, since 1995, the number of Fortune 500 companies with boards that are at least one-quarter women have increased nearly sixfold and those with not a single female board director decreased by nearly half (Catalyst, 2006). Women have also made significant headway in politics where 4 of the 17 female US Senators are in the top three most populous states (California, Texas, and New York), the presence of women in state legislatures has more than quintupled since 1971 (Center for American Women and Politics, 2009), the current US Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, is the first woman to hold that position, and Hillary Clinton recently put '18 million cracks' in the presidential glass ceiling before becoming the third female US Secretary of State. The rate of this influx of women into top leadership positions, however, has slowed from where it was in the 1970s through the early 1990s (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Nonetheless, reduction in the leadership gap will likely persist and be bolstered by interrelated social changes such as the significant, and reversed, gender gap in educational achievements. Furthermore, with a sustained research interest in leadership and gender, social psychologists can help reinvigorate this dynamic of social change. There are many promising avenues of research into gender bias and leadership. First and foremost, continued research aimed at illuminating these biases, which are often nearly indiscernible but ever pernicious, is essential. Without understanding the subtle barriers that women face, it becomes impossible to ascertain how to navigate them. Future research into how gender and leadership expectations form and change should focus on the important role that media plays in maintaining and morphing these expectations. In addition, researchers focused on understanding female leaders' responses to bias should concentrate on developing and assessing techniques designed to thwart potential stereotype threat. To this end, researchers would be advised to take lessons from women who have successfully negotiated the labyrinth. Moreover, true parity in leadership will not be realized without a revolution in the division of labor at home, which is inextricably linked with shifts in both gender roles and stereotypes. Thus, similarly zealous research concentrations on gender and the domestic sphere as well as moving beyond the public/private dichotomy will go a long way toward facilitating change.

Short Biography

Crystal L. Hoyt completed her bachelor's degree in psychology from Claremont McKenna College and her doctorate in social psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is currently an associate professor at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond. As an experimental social psychologist, her primary research interests include examining the effects of stereotypes and discrimination on female and minority leaders and leader perception. She is also empirically investigating the role of cognitive biases in leaders' ethical reasoning. Her research has appeared in journals such as *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, *Group Dynamics*, *Small Group Research*, *Psychological Inquiry*, and *Leadership Quarterly* and she recently co-edited a book titled *Leadership and Psychology* in the Leadership at the Crossroads series.

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