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Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders:
An Empirical Investigation
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goals and whose unconditional love and generosity of spirit continue to inspire me.

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Introduction

Nearly four decades have passed since enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sex. In the intervening years, women have secured employment in literally thousands of occupations in the professions, trades, and businesses. As labor statistics during this era reveal, the labor force participation rate for women increased from 43% in 1970 to 60% in 1998 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). In addition, the proportion of women executives, administrators, and managers in non-farm occupations nearly tripled in that same period, increasing from 16% to 44% (Powell, 1999). Current labor statistics show that women now constitute 46% of all workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001b) and 45% of those in executive, administrative and managerial positions (U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics, 2001a). Also helping to elevate women's social and economic status has been their increased presence in politics in recent years; between 1996 and 2002, women made significant gains in representation in elected office. Notably, the number of women in the U.S. Senate increased from 9 in 1996 to 13 in 2002 (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2003). In addition, in 1996 only one woman served as governor, in contrast to 2002, when five women occupied this top position (Institute for Women's Policy Research). As current statistics indicate, women have made significant strides in both private and public sector employment over the past several decades, especially in traditionally male-dominated occupations.

Despite the profound changes that have occurred in American society over the past
quarter century, women seem to be on a slow and uneven road to equality in the workplace. Women remain concentrated in a smaller and lower paying set of occupations than men, often referred to as the “pink ghetto” (Jacobs, 1999). Moreover, although the proportion of women in management overall has increased in recent years, the proportion of women in high-level management positions has remained relatively small (Powell, 1999). The majority of women who have attained top leadership positions in American corporations did so during the 1990’s (Eagly & Carli, 2001). Still, the proportion of women holding the highest-ranking executive positions in U.S. Corporations as of 2000 (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, Chairman, Vice Chairman, President, Chief Operating Officer, Senior Executive Vice President, and Executive Vice President) was under 4% (Catalyst, 2003). Furthermore, women represented less than 1% of officers holding the five highest titles of CEO, Chairman, Vice Chairman, President, and COO (Catalyst). Thus, despite increasing numbers of women in supervisory and middle management positions in recent years, women remain a rarity in elite leadership and top executive roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Barriers to women’s advancement have long been attributed to gender-based stereotypes, specifically, the expectations such stereotypes produce about characteristics presumed typical of men and women and also about how men and women should behave (Heilman, 2001). A distinction has been made in recent years between old-fashioned and modern sexism (often referred to as subtle sexism) (see Swim & Cohen, 1995; Twenges, 1997). Old-fashioned sexism has been conceptualized as the endorsement of traditional gender roles for women and men, differential treatment of the sexes, and stereotyped beliefs regarding greater male versus female competence (Buhl, Conn, Hanges, Sipe & Salvaggio, 1999; Swim & Cohen, 1995). In contrast, modern sexism is conceptualized as “the denial of
continued discrimination [against women], antagonism toward women’s demands, and lack of support for policies designed to help women (Swim & Cohen, 1995, p. 199). People with modern sexist attitudes believe that sex discrimination is no longer a problem and thus preferential treatment of women (e.g., public policy) is unwarranted. Although individuals harboring modern sexist beliefs may wish to appear egalitarian-minded, they clearly have negative attitudes about women (Swim & Cohen, 1995). An observation by Lao, Upchurch, Corwin and Grossnickle (1975) nearly three decades ago appears equally as relevant today. As Lao et al. pointed out, the greatest obstacle to women’s sexual equality resides “not in the overt, de facto practices, but in the covert attitudes of people” (p. 1315), yet people who hold such beliefs are often unaware of them.

Of the traits considered necessary to effective leadership, perhaps most critical is the ability to communicate in a forceful, decisive, and confident manner - to project a “no nonsense, take charge” persona. Previous research has demonstrated that people tend to ascribe task or achievement-oriented traits to men (e.g., assertive, independent, and competitive), whereas women are ascribed interpersonal or relationship-oriented traits, (e.g., kind, nurturing, supportive, and tactful) (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Ruble, 1983; Williams & Best, 1990; as cited in Carli & Eagly, 1999). The traits commonly associated with men have been labeled agentic; the traits commonly associated with women have been labeled communal (Bakan, 1966; as cited in Heilman, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002). In addition, as empirical research has also shown, men are concentrated in occupations thought to require agentic qualities for successful performance; women are concentrated in occupations thought to require communal personality characteristics (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Glick, 1991). Thus a
particularly forceful and assertive style of communication has been more commonly
associated with the behavior of men than with women. Women who exhibit such
stereotypically masculine or agentic characteristics may meet with rejection in male-
oriented settings (Page & Meretsky, 1998). Professional women who conduct themselves in
a particularly competent, confident manner may suffer negative social repercussions in the
form of being perceived as interpersonally deficient (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick,
2001). In other words, although women who behave agentically may be perceived as
competent, they run the risk of being disliked for violating gender-stereotypic expectations
for feminine "niceness" (Rudman, 1998). Such negative reactions to agentic women may
reflect a backlash effect (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Such a backlash effect may be explained by the role congruity theory of prejudice
toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory posits that prejudice
toward female leaders manifests in two forms. The first type of prejudice is evidenced in
women being evaluated less favorably than men as potential leaders. This type of prejudice
results from a perceived incongruity between the female stereotype and the attributes
deemed necessary for effective leadership. The second type of prejudice is evidenced in less
favorable evaluations of agentic behaviors of women who occupy leadership roles than the
equivalent behavior of men. This form of prejudice occurs because agentic behavior enacted
by a woman deviates from stereotype-based prescriptions about desirable female behaviors.
Past research has suggested that negative consequences (e.g., being perceived as less
likeable) may accrue to women who depart from traditional sex-role stereotypes by
behaving assertively or aggressively (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale,
1975; Lao, et al., 1975). Likewise, more recent investigations examining social reactions to
men's and women's agentic behaviors have demonstrated that agentic behavior enacted by a woman may be evaluated more negatively than the identical behavior in a male counterpart (Carli, 1990; Crawford, 1988; Kelly, Kern, Kirkley, Patterson & Keane, 1980; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). The purpose of the present exploratory study is to test the second form of prejudice predicted by role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders, as evidenced in the backlash effect (Eagly & Karau, 2002). To this end, the present study will: 1) examine evaluations (e.g., likeability ratings) of equivalent agentic behaviors as exhibited by an executive level man and woman and; 2) examine the influence of modern sexist beliefs on these evaluations.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Gender in the Workplace

Over the past 15 years, the concept of the glass ceiling has been a topic of much discussion in popular culture and academia. A term first introduced in the American lexicon in the late 1980's, the glass ceiling has become a "metaphor" for prejudice and discrimination existing in the workplace (Eagly & Carli, 2001). Over the past decade in particular, the glass ceiling phenomenon has drawn the attention of numerous researchers from the fields of social and industrial psychology, sociology, communications, women's studies, and organizational behavior. According to a report issued by the United States Department of Labor's Glass Ceiling Commission (1995), the glass ceiling represents "an unseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder (p. 4). This phenomenon has been widely acknowledged by the public as posing an invisible but powerful barrier to women's progression beyond a certain point (Carli & Eagly, 2001). Moreover, prejudices stemming from the glass ceiling have serious implications for the organizational experiences of women who have gained access to senior management positions. A recent study by Lyness and Thompson (1997) compared matched samples of female and male executives in a large multinational financial services corporation on several organizational outcome variables (e.g., compensation, executive development opportunities, international mobility, work attitudes). Although overall
findings indicated more similarities than differences between male and female executives with respect to base pay and attitudes toward work, significant differences were found on a number of important outcome variables. Specifically, women had less authority, received fewer stock options, and had less international mobility than men. Women executives also reported lower satisfaction with future career opportunities. These findings, as Lyness and Thompson (1997) suggest, raise questions about "whether women are truly above the glass ceiling or have come up against a 2nd, higher ceiling" (p. 359).

A central issue surrounding the glass ceiling problem is abundant evidence that women are perceived differently from men in task-oriented interactions (e.g., Carli, 1990; as cited in Carli & Eagly, 1999; Foschi, 1994, 1996; Propp, 1995; Pugh & Wahrman, 1983; Wood & Karten, 1986). Task-oriented interactions are defined as goal-directed social interactions that occur in various contexts (e.g., paid and unpaid work settings, community groups, boards and committees) (Carli & Eagly, 1999). As past research has shown, people ascribe higher competence to men in mixed-sex task oriented groups than women unless they are presented with irrefutable evidence that women possess more task-specific competence than men (see Carli, 1990; as cited in Carli & Eagly, 1999; Wood & Karten, 1986). Moreover, not only are women held to a higher standard of what constitutes competent performance than men in task-oriented groups, but their performance must exceed that of their male counterpart to be considered equally competent (see Foschi, 1994; 1996). Such a scenario reflects a double standard of evaluation (Carli & Eagly, 1999), which has important implications for women's advancement. Specifically, the double standard makes it more difficult for women to exert influence. This difficulty arises because people, as a general rule, are more influential when they are perceived to be competent (Carli &
Eagly, 1999). Research has also repeatedly demonstrated that men, by virtue of their male status, wield more influence than women across a number of "contexts, topics, and time" (Burgoon & Klingle, 1999, p. 259). For example, a meta-analysis of 64 data sets from 29 studies of power and influence in mixed-sex groups reported by Lockheed (1985) revealed that men exert more influence in mixed-sex groups than do women. More recently, Propp (1995) examined the decision-making processes of simulated juries. In this study, an equal number of male and female undergraduates were divided into four-person groups. The same general information on a custody case was given to all four members; some information was shared between a male and a female jury member, and some information was provided to only one member. Participants then discussed the case to reach consensus on a recommendation. Results revealed that even though information was equally likely to be introduced by men and women and this information did not differ between the sexes, information presented by men was twice as likely to be used by the group in reaching its decisions. Moreover, this trend was most pronounced when the information was known only by a male versus a female participant (group numbers used the information 72% versus 12.5% of the time, respectively).

**Gender-Role Stereotypes**

The persistence of widely held gender-role stereotypes has been identified as a major factor perpetuating the glass ceiling problem (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995). As documented in past research, broad consensus exists regarding characteristics or personality traits believed to be innately male or female (Broverman et al., 1972). Broverman et al.'s primary research objective was to identify consensual beliefs regarding traits believed to describe the average man and the average woman in modern society and their work has
“served as a benchmark for gender stereotype research” (Deaux & Kite, 1987, p. 99). Two distinct clusters of traits emerged from the Broverman et al study. The traits associated with women reflected “warmth-expressiveness” and have been labeled communal or expressive. The traits associated with men reflected competence and have been labeled agentic or instrumental (Bakan, 1966; Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly, 1987). Not only do people ascribe different characteristics to the sexes, but stereotyped conceptions of men and women tend to be oppositional (Heilman, 2001). That is, members of one sex are perceived as possessing characteristics that are generally seen as lacking in members of the opposite sex (Heilman, 2001). Stereotyped notions of men and women extend also to cognitive traits. Men are seen as more analytical and thus more skilled in abstractions, reasoning, and problem-solving whereas women are seen as more verbally skilled, intuitive, perceptive, and creative (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Williams & Best, 1990).

Early research examining the content of gender stereotypes also suggested that members of both sexes generally held men in higher esteem than women (McKee & Sherriffs, 1957; as cited in Sherriffs & McKee, 1957). This line of research also indicated that the male stereotype cast men in a more favorable light than did the female stereotype of women. Stereotyped conceptions of what men and women are like have remained relatively unchanged over the past two decades (Bergen & Williams, 1991; Werner & LaRussa, 1985; as cited in Aries, 1998) and subsequent studies have replicated these associations many times and in different cultures (e.g., Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Williams & Best, 1990). The concept of a "gender belief system", coined by Deaux and Kite (1987), has been proposed to account for people’s attitudes and opinions about men and women. The gender belief system model posits that societal expectations influence people's perceptions of
Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice

women and men. Accordingly, these expectations are reflected in "a set of beliefs and opinions about males and females and the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity. This system includes stereotypes of women and men, attitudes toward the appropriate roles and behaviors of women and men, and attitudes toward individuals who are believed to differ in some significant way from the modal pattern" (p. 97). As broadly conceptualized, a person's gender belief system includes both descriptive and prescriptive elements. Whereas the descriptive element is reflected in stereotypic beliefs about the characteristics possessed by men and women, the prescriptive element is reflected in opinions about how members of each sex should behave. Thus these beliefs influence not only our perceptions of women (and men) in nontraditional roles but also our reactions to them (Kite, 1999).

Research interest in assessing sexist beliefs as reflected in opinions about women's role in modern society dates to the 1970's, when Spence and Helmreich published the first version of the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972). Designed as a measure of attitudes towards women's rights and responsibilities, the AWS is generally recognized as the most widely used instrument to document people's beliefs about women's proper place in society. As documented in a recent meta-analytic study (Twenge, 1997), there has been a steady trend toward more liberal/feminist attitudes in American society. Twenge (1997) analyzed findings from 71 samples of American undergraduates responding to the AWS from 1970 to 1995. Results revealed that both men's and women's scores on the AWS have become increasingly more liberal or feminist over the time period studied; however, men's attitudes have consistently lagged behind women's. The greatest amount of change in men's scores occurred during the late 1970's and the 1990's; the least amount occurred in the early 1980's. It was not until the period from 1986-1990 that men's
attitudes equaled those held by women in 1970-1975. Women’s scores, in comparison, changed the most during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, with a slower rate of change seen in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. As Twenge (1997) has observed, because the AWS is a self-report measure of attitudes, socially desirable responding may account for some of the change toward more liberal attitudes. Moreover, as Swim and Cohen (1997) have noted, implicit in the content of the AWS is that “it can identify individuals who hold overtly sexist beliefs and who are willing to endorse them on surveys. The [AWS] is less likely to identify individuals who hold covert or subtle sexist beliefs because [they] are not likely to indicate openly that they support traditional gender roles” (p. 104).

Whereas the AWS is considered a measure of overt or blatant sexism (Swim & Cohen, 1997), some instruments were developed in the 1990’s to assess more covert forms of sexism. The Modern Sexism scale (MS; Swim et al., 1995), modeled after the Modern Racism Scale (McConahey, 1986; as cited in Swim, et al., 1995), was designed to tap contemporary forms of sexist beliefs, as parallels are thought to exist between racism and sexism (Sears, 1988; as cited in Swim, et al., 1995). The content of the MS centers around three themes: denial of continued discrimination against women, resentment toward women’s fight for equality, and resentment toward policies designed to help women. Another subtle sexism measure, The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) was developed to distinguish between benevolent sexism (e.g., women need to be protected and cherished) and hostile sexism (e.g., women are not at competent as men). The theory behind the ASI is that ambivalent sexism occurs whenever men and women hold competing attitudes, both benevolent and hostile in nature, toward members of the opposite sex.
Corresponding with evidence of more egalitarian attitudes toward women over the past quarter century (Twenge, 1997), there is evidence that women's self-conceptions have also changed. Spence and Buckner (2000) compared contemporary college student's self perceptions and stereotyped beliefs about their male and female peers to students surveyed at the same institution in the 1970’s. In this study, male and female participants were asked for their perceptions of “masculine” and “feminine” traits. Using a combination of instrumental and expressive items taken from the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Spence et al, 1974) and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974; as cited in Spence & Buckner, 2000), respondents rated the items both in terms of how they see themselves and the “typical” college student. The adjectives “masculine” and “feminine” were added to the instrumental and expressive items from the BSRI. The total number of instrumental items was 22 and the total number of expressive items was 16. Participants also completed questionnaires tapping gender-role attitudes and sexist beliefs. Results revealed significant gender differences in self-report on all the expressive items but on only 41% of the instrumental items. The findings confirmed the investigators' hypothesis that changes in American society over the last several decades has lead to women developing more agentic self-perceptions.

Lending support to Spence and Buckner’s (2000) conclusions were findings from a series of surveys by Diekman and Eagly (2000) examining perceptions of women and men of the past, present, and hypothetical future. Approximately 800 adults participated in the surveys and the samples were drawn from male and female students at a private and public university and commuters at a large metropolitan airport. Participants were instructed to imagine the typical woman and man living in America at various time periods from the
year 1950 to the year 2050 (e.g., 1950, 1975, 1997, 2025, and 2025).

Two measures were used to assess participants' perceptions of the average woman and man from a specific era. One measure tapped perceptions of gender roles (e.g., perceived sex distributions for traditionally male or female-dominated occupational and domestic activities) and the other measure tapped perceptions of gender-stereotypic characteristics (e.g., personality, cognitive, and physical attributes). Of primary interest to the investigators were participants' perceptions of agentic and communal personality attributes of the average woman and man during these eras; the inclusion of cognitive and physical dimensions of gender stereotypes was mostly for exploratory purposes. To measure perceptions of gender role in terms of traditional versus nontraditional, participants were asked to estimate the percentage of workers who were male versus female in six occupations. They were also asked to estimate the percentage of activities performed by the husband/father versus wife/mother for six domestic tasks. The six occupations were lawyer, physician, auto mechanic, flight attendant, elementary school teacher, and homemaker; the six domestic tasks were automobile maintenance, lawn maintenance, household repair, cleaning, laundry, and cooking. For two of the samples, the activity "caring for children" was added. To measure perceptions of gender-stereotypic characteristics, participants' rated the likelihood that the target person possessed characteristics representing the personality, cognitive, and physical components of the female and male stereotypes. Overall, results revealed that people believe women of the present possess more masculine personality characteristics than women of the past (e.g., assertive, independent and competitive), and that women of the future will be more masculine than women of the present. These findings, according to Diekman and Eagly (1999), illustrate the dynamic nature of the female stereotype. That is,
because women's role in society changed significantly over the 20th century, there has been a corresponding change in stereotypic characteristics ascribed to them.

Gender-based stereotypes have long been cited as the greatest obstacle to women being hired into positions leading to organizational power and prestige (Heilman, 2001). Indeed, the persistence of widely held gender stereotypes has been identified as a major factor perpetuating the Glass Ceiling effect (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995). Gender stereotypes, as do all types of stereotypes, contain both descriptive and prescriptive components (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux & Heilman, 1991; Fiske & Stevens, 1993; Glick & Fiske, 1999). The descriptive dimension pertains to characteristics believed to be typical of members of a particular group. Thus, stereotypic descriptions of women and men consist of beliefs about attributes, roles, and behaviors that characterize each sex (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). For example, the descriptive component of the female stereotype may include personality attributes such as emotional, weak-minded, and passive, among others (Fiske et al., 1991). The prescriptive component pertains to behaviors deemed appropriate for group members. Thus, stereotypic prescriptions for women and men consist of expectations for behavior based on the attributes, roles, and behaviors ascribed to each sex (Borgess & Borgida, 1999). Because people presumably have more experience with members of the opposite sex than they do with members of other stereotyped groups, gender stereotypes tend to be more prescriptive than other stereotypes (Fiske & Stevens, 1993). As past research suggests, behaviors that violate gender prescriptions are generally negatively evaluated by others (e.g., Costrich et al., 1975; Nieva & Gutek, 1980).

Descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotyping can lead to discrimination in the
workplace in different ways. For example, discrimination may result when a woman is perceived through the lens of the traditional female stereotype and judged unsuitable for traditionally male-dominated occupations or roles (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). In other words, there is a perceived discrepancy or “lack of fit” between the stereotypic characteristics of women and the attributes deemed necessary for success in male-typed occupations (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 1984). This type of discrimination is known as disparate impact, which refers to institutional practices that result in employment decisions biased against a certain class of people (Case, 1995; as cited in Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Such discrimination may be unintentional and equally as likely to occur in men and women (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Results from a recent meta-analysis by Davison and Burke (2000) illustrate how negative performance expectations (e.g., perceptions of “lack of fit”) resulting from descriptive stereotyping can penalize women seeking entry into organizations. These investigators analyzed findings from empirical studies examining sex discrimination in employment published between 1969 to 1994. These studies involved ratings of job applicants in simulated employment contexts. The results showed that when the job was male-sex typed, men received higher ratings than women for selection; when the job was female sex-typed, women received higher ratings than men. In addition, results also revealed greater discrimination against female applicants when there was less job-relevant information available about applicants.

The prescriptive component of gender stereotypes can lead to discrimination when a woman violates consensual beliefs about how women should behave (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 2001; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). For instance, people may think women should have good interpersonal skills, be agreeable, and acquiescent (Fiske et
al., 1991) and thus expect them to behave accordingly. Women who do not conform to prescriptions of the female gender role may be subjected to disparate treatment (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Specifically, women perceived to have violated prescriptive beliefs about femininity may be punished (e.g., subjected to hostile work environment, harassment, devaluation of their performance and/or personality). Discrimination stemming from gender prescriptions may serve to perpetuate power inequities in society and men are more likely to engage in this form of discrimination than are women (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). The way in which prescriptive stereotyping leads to discrimination was illustrated in the landmark case *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins* in 1989 (see Fiske et al., 1991). In this case, accountant Ann Hopkins brought a sex discrimination suit against her employer, Price Waterhouse, one of the nation’s largest accounting firms, after being denied partnership. Despite Ms. Hopkins being one of the firm’s top performers, she was denied a promotion to partnership on the grounds that she lacked social skills. In defending this decision, Price Waterhouse argued that Ms. Hopkins had interpersonal skills problems, namely, she was “macho” and “overcompensated for being a woman” by being aggressive (Fiske et al., 1991). Ms. Hopkins successfully argued that sexual stereotyping contributed to Price Waterhouse denying her partnership. The American Psychological Association filed an *amicus curiae* brief attesting to the validity of the field of stereotyping research and the methodology employed by the psychologist serving as an expert witness. *Waterhouse v. Hopkins* set a precedent in establishing that sex stereotyping constitutes a form of sex discrimination prohibited under Title VII (Fiske et al., 1991). This case also marked the first time the Supreme Court relied on psychological research on sex stereotyping in reaching a decision.
Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders has been advanced to explain the relative dearth of women in the elite leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory builds on social role theory (Eagly, 1987), which argues that because women and men have historically filled different roles in work and in the family, they are expected to exhibit characteristics that particularly suit them for their respective roles. According to social role theory, gender stereotypes are a natural outcome from observations of men and women in sex-typical roles, specifically, men assuming the role of provider and women assuming the role of homemaker (Eagly, 1987; Eagly and Karau, 2002). Because gender stereotypes function as self-fulfilling prophecies (Aries, 1998), men are expected to be more agentic and achievement-oriented and women more communal and emotionally expressive (Eagly, 1987).

Role congruity theory holds that a perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles results in two distinct types of prejudice. First, women are perceived less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles. Second, agentic behaviors exhibited by women are evaluated less favorably compared with men because such behavior is seen as less desirable in women than men. Whereas the first form of prejudice derives from discrepancies between the communal or female-stereotypical characteristics commonly ascribed to women and the agentic qualities required of leader roles, the second type stems from consensual expectations about how women ought to behave. According to Eagly and Karau, gender roles contain produce two kinds of expectations or norms, descriptive and injunctive, associated with men and women. Descriptive norms refer to consensual expectations about the actual behavior of men and
women; injunctive norms refer to consensual expectations about behaviors that men or women ought to display. A central proposition of social-role theory is that most beliefs about men and women are related to communal and agentic attributes (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987; as cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to Eagly and Karau, it is the differential ascription of communal and agentic attributes that illuminate the issues of prejudice encompassed by the role congruity theory of prejudice. The first type of prejudice predicted by role congruity theory (e.g., women perceived less favorably than men as potential leaders) derives from the descriptive norms of gender roles; specifically, that descriptive beliefs about women's characteristics are incongruent with the qualities expected and desired in leaders. The second type of prejudice derives from injunctive norms inherent in gender roles; that is, expectations about how women ought to behave are activated when people observe a woman engaging in an agentic versus communal manner. Women leaders who violate injunctive norms by carrying out their job responsibilities in a particularly agentic fashion are subjected to social censure in the form of negative evaluations. Such censure may occur even though a woman might also receive some positive evaluation (e.g., perceived as successful, competent, etc.) for fulfilling the agentic requirements of the leader role. Eagly and Karau contend that gender prejudice postulated by role congruity theory create three distinct disadvantages for women aspiring to leadership roles: (a) More negative attitudes toward female versus male leaders, (b) More difficulty in attaining leadership roles, and (c) more difficulty in being recognized as effective in these roles.

*Empirical findings relevant to the first form of prejudice*

The first form of prejudice predicted by role congruity theory stems from the predominantly communal characteristics people associate with women and the
predominantly agentic characteristics believed necessary for success as a leader. An important consideration in understanding how the female stereotype impedes women’s upward mobility is a recognition of the masculine construal or sex-typing of upper level management positions (Heilman, 2001). As documented in a line of research spanning three decades, a “manager” is one job function in particular that has been consistently characterized in predominantly masculine terms (e.g., Dodge, Gilroy, & Fenzel, 1995; Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Schein, 1973, 1975). In Schein’s early research (1973, 1975) male and female managers were asked to describe the qualities of an effective manager. Results revealed that both sexes described good managers as possessing characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men than to women. Specifically, managers of both sexes were found to use adjectives such as aggressive, forceful, ambitious, and self-confident, among others, in describing characteristics of a successful manager. Moreover, these were characteristics that women were not perceived as possessing. A replication of Schein’s original work conducted over a decade and a half later, however, yielded mixed results (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989). Whereas, male managers adhere to the male manager stereotype, female managers saw successful managers as possessing characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments that are associated with both men and women. Heilman, Block and Martell (1989) in a similar investigation, reported that respondents of both sexes characterized the effective manager in strongly masculine terms. Men, in general, were still perceived to be more similar to effective managers than were women, in general. Although the results also indicated a greater correspondence between descriptions of women and successful managers, women continued to be seen as more different from effective managers than were
Findings from more recent research by Heilman, Block and Martell (1995) yielded a mixed picture. Although characterizations of women on male stereotyped attributes were more favorable when they were depicted as managers than when depicted in general terms, women managers were characterized more negatively overall than were male managers. In this study, 224 male managers from a variety of functional areas (e.g., sales, human resources, production, purchasing, accounting, marketing, etc.) in a range of industries (e.g., chemical, steel, government, oil, business machinery) were administered a 92-item attribute inventory developed by Schein (1973, 1975). Ratings on the 92 attributes were made using a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (not characteristic) to 5 (characteristic). The 92 items were sorted into 1 of 7 target categories or scales. Five of the scales were derived from research in the content of the male stereotype and were labeled: work competence, activity/potency, emotional stability, independence, and rationality. One scale, labeled concern for others, was derived from work on the content of the female stereotype. An additional scale was created, labeled hostility toward others, which was included on an exploratory basis. Inclusion of this latter scale, as the investigators explained, was based on the commonly held conception of women who achieved powerful positions as being abrasive and manipulative. Participants were randomly assigned to target conditions and rated 1 of 6 stimulus targets: men in general, women in general, men managers, women managers, successful men managers, or successful women managers. Results revealed that women were viewed as more competent, active, impotent, emotionally stable, independent, and rational when they were presented as women managers than as women in general. However, although characterizations of women were enhanced with the presentation of a
managerial label, they were still more negative than those ascribed to men managers. Women managers were depicted as less competent, active, impotent, emotionally stable, independent, and rational than were male managers. Only when women were designated as successful managers did the discrepancy in characterizations of men and women with regard to stereotypically masculine attributes abate. As Heilman et al. concluded, the findings attest to the tenacity of traditional stereotypes of women. Moreover, these findings also suggest that women who succeed in a traditionally male role may be penalized for their out-of-role success.

Research by Schein, Mueller and Jacobson (1992) and Dodge, Gilroy, and Fenzel (1995) suggests that men continue to see themselves as more likely to possess the traits necessary to successfully move up the ranks of management. Schein et al. (1992) reported that undergraduate male business students, consistent with attitudes held by male managers in Schein’s studies two decades prior, also subscribed to the male managerial stereotype. Female students, however, did not sex-type the managerial job as did their female counterparts in the 1970’s. Dodge et al. (1995) examined the perceptions of adult Master of Business Administration (MBA) candidates regarding male versus female management characteristics. Consistent with previous findings, male participants perceived successful middle and upper-level managers as possessing characteristics more commonly ascribed to men. However, one striking finding did emerge. When the term “successful” was attached to the men or the women manager category, no evidence of gender bias was evident from either male or female participants. Female managers who were described as successful were almost as similar to successful managers in general as successful male managers were. In explaining the overall results, Dodge et al. concluded that although male perceptions have
not changed since the 1970’s, once an individual is identified as successful at either management level (middle and upper-level) male participants perceive both genders as equally similar to the successful prototype. This finding, according to Eagly and Karau (2002), may indicate that gender stereotypical inferences about women are held in check when a woman is perceived as successfully fulfilling the requirements of the leader role.

Contradicting such optimistic conclusions are findings reported by Martell, Parker, Emrich, and Crawford (1998). These investigators surveyed 132 male managers drawn from executive development programs and business organizations. Respondents ranged in age from 25 to 62 years and had from 1 to 35 years of managerial experience. Using an inventory of 32 attributes or characteristics thought to be descriptive of successful executives, participants rated one of four target groups: women middle managers, men middle managers, successful women middle managers, and successful men middle manager. Inventory items were subsequently subjected to a factor analysis yielding four factors labeled as follows: change agent, managerial courage, leadership, and results oriented. As noted by the investigators, these factors correspond to characteristics of successful executives as discussed in the professional academic research literature. In all but one factor, results oriented, women received less favorable ratings than men. When depicted as middle managers, women were perceived as less inspirational, decisive, and energetic (change agent). They were also viewed as less courageous, resilient, and resourceful (managerial courage), and less of a leader, visionary, and strategic (leadership). Although this study yielded small to moderate stereotyping effects, the investigator emphasized the practical importance of sex stereotyping of this magnitude. Specifically, it is important to recognize that even exceedingly small amounts of sex bias are sufficient to seriously impede the
upward mobility of women managers. Such findings, according to the investigators, support Heilman's (1983) "lack of fit" explanation for the scarcity of women in the executive ranks. Moreover, these findings lend credence to the notion that men and women continue to be perceived differently with respect to characteristics that are associated with successful executives. These perceptions, coupled with stereotypic notions about what women are like and what they should be like underlie the evaluative biases to which women are subjected (Heilman, 2001).
Empirical findings relevant to the second form of prejudice

Role congruity theory states that the behavior of women occupying leadership roles is evaluated less favorably than the equivalent behavior in men. This type of prejudice stems from the injunctive aspect of the female gender role, which dictates that women should exhibit communal, supportive behaviors. Thus women who fulfill their leadership responsibilities in a particularly forceful, assertive, or directive manner are penalized in terms of perceived likeability.

Early studies pertaining to assertive communication focused almost exclusively on the nature of sex differences in expressions of assertiveness. This line of research relied mostly on self-report inventories to determine the extent to which men and women differ in assertive behaviors. Although there exists no solid research evidence that women are less assertive than men (Crawford, 2000), the preponderance of findings indicate that men have consistently reported themselves as being more assertive than women across the variety of situations (e.g., Hollandsworth & Hall, 1977). Past research has also indicated that expressions of assertiveness are often specific to the context in which they occur (see Towson & Zanna, 1982; Mathison & Tucker, 1982).

Research interest in examining social reactions to behavior violating the prescriptive aspect of gender stereotypes dates to the 1970’s. As early research has shown (Costrich et al., 1975), both men and women who do not conform to sex role expectations are subjected to less favorable evaluations than those who do. Similarly, another study demonstrated that women who violate gender stereotypic prescriptions are rated less favorably on dimensions of intelligence and likeability (Lao et al., 1975). During the 1970’s, dozens of books, training courses, and other media were marketed aggressively to help people become more
assertive; many of these materials were specifically targeted to women (Crawford, 2000).

Some research during this era, inspired by the assertiveness training movement, focused on social reactions to assertiveness (e.g., perceived likeability) (Crawford, 1988; Kelly et al., 1980).

Kelly et al. (1980) examined perceptions of male and female stimulus models behaving in an identically assertive or unassertive manner. Stimulus materials consisted of videotaped vignettes depicting either a male or a female model handling four different situations in which another person behaved unreasonably toward the model. The incidents depicted in the vignettes occurred in social versus work settings and were adapted from materials used in assertiveness training interventions. Participants were told that they would be watching a person handling four everyday situations and then asked to evaluate what this person was like based on their careful observations. They then completed an interpersonal attraction inventory consisting of 26 personality items previously validated as sensitive to interpersonal attraction and likability by Anderson (1968). The investigators determined that this instrument also appeared relevant to measuring social judgments of assertive behavior. To facilitate interpretation of the interpersonal attraction inventory data, responses to the 26 questionnaire items were factor analyzed. This analysis yielded a four-factor solution. The factors were labeled: likeability, ability/achievement, honesty, tactlessness.

Two general patterns of the findings emerged from the study. First, although assertive models were rated higher than their unassertive counterparts on characteristics related to their presumed competence, ability, and achievement, they also received lower ratings on various measures of likeability, warmth, flexibility, and friendliness. A second finding was that both male and female participants devalued assertive behavior enacted by the female
model on multiple measures of likeability, attractiveness, ability, and competence. As Kelly et al. (1980) concluded, although assertive persons were described as higher than unassertive persons in many characteristics assessing their presumed competence, ability, and achievement, they are also described as lower on many measures of likeability, warmth, flexibility, and friendliness. Moreover, results also revealed that both male and female participants devalued the assertive behavior of a female stimulus model on multiple dimensions of likeability, attractiveness, ability and competence. These investigators, however, noted several limitations of their research. First, findings could have been a function of using a videotaped presentation. That is, the videotaped format may have prompted participants to perceive more extensive visual queues of the model’s behavior than would written or audio-only formats used in prior research. Second, their methodology did not require the participants to actually interact with the assertive or unassertive model. As Kelly et al. noted, future research is needed to clarify whether attitudes toward assertiveness are also manifested behaviorally by participants.

A similar study by Crawford (1988) investigated social reactions to women’s assertive behavior in work-related situations. Crawford, using an undergraduate and an older nonstudent sample, compared male and female participants’ perceptions of male and female assertive models across three types of assertions. The student sample (mean age = 19.2 years) represented a variety of majors, and the nonstudent sample (mean age = 33.5 years), represented a variety of occupations. The three types of assertion consisted of expressing negative feelings, positive self-presentation, and limit setting. Written descriptions consisted of two, single paragraph examples of each type of assertion. Participants rated the behavior of the model on a series of 24 interpersonal evaluation items adapted from the interpersonal
evaluation measure used by Kelly et al. (1980). In addition, participants rated the degree to which they would like to have the model as a boss or supervisor, socialize with him or her at a party, and work with him or her on a committee. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to determine how accurately people could evaluate the personality of another based on a small sample of behavior. Findings revealed that the highest ratings on likeability (e.g., inoffensive, friendly, agreeable, considerate, kind, likable, thoughtful) were given to male models by older male participants and to the female model by older female participants. Conversely, older male participants gave the lowest likeability evaluations to female models. As Crawford concluded, the evaluation of assertive behavior depends on the interaction of the assertive individual’s gender and the gender and age of the observer. According to Crawford, such interactions suggest that evaluations of the assertiveness occur within a complex social context.

Research reported by Mathison (1987) examined sex differences in the perception of assertiveness among female managers. Using a sample of managers drawn from supervisory and middle management positions, Mathison examined perceptions of a conversion between a male and female manager. The conversation was audiotaped and involved a mild disagreement between the managers concerning the proper handling of a policy issue. Raters judged the style of both the male and female stimulus as comparably assertive versus non-assertive or aggressive. To assess perceptions of assertiveness, participants completed a measure designed by the investigator. The construct of assertiveness was operationalized in relation to the Rathus Assertiveness Categories (Rathus & Spencer, 1973; as cited in Mathison, 1988), which conceptualizes assertiveness as a continuum of expressivity including unassertiveness, assertiveness, and aggressiveness.
Assertiveness was defined as maintaining the ability to speak up while taking the social context into consideration. Participants also completed open-ended questions regarding their perception of the woman's and the man's behavior (e.g., self-centered, defensiveness, too aggressive).

The first hypothesis of this study, which predicted that both sexes would tend to view the assertive female model negatively, was not supported by the data. The second hypothesis positing that women would tend to view an assertive women more negatively was supported by the findings. In explaining these findings, Mathison suggested that social desirability may have accounted for men's positive perceptions of the female manager. Conversely, the findings might be interpreted as reflecting an actual shift in men's attitudes resulting from social changes engendered by the feminist movement. In explaining female participant's reactions to the female manager, Mathison suggested that women participants may have been unable to identify with the female manager insofar as her willingness and ability to challenge a competent male. Thus, female participants' inability to identify with the female manager may have been reflected in less favorable evaluations of her conduct.

Some research in the area of assertive communication has examined the interplay of gender, language, and social influence. One such study by Carli (1990) investigated women's use of direct versus tentative language on the ability to influence men. Participants listened to one of two versions of an audiotape in which a persuasive message was delivered by two male and two female confederates. The topic of the message pertained to the college bus system charging a fare. One version constituted the assertive condition, in which the message was delivered without added tag questions, hedges, or disclaimers. Tag questions are defined as declarative statements followed by a question concerning the statement just
made (Lakoff, 1975), for example, *older adults have better driving records than teenagers, don't they?* A hedge refers to adverbs or adverb phrases such as *sort of, maybe* and *perhaps* that weaken the impact of a statement; an example of a disclaimer would be a statement preceding a comment such as *I'm no expert, but...* (Lakoff, 1975). A second version, the tentative condition, was created by the addition of tag questions, hedges and disclaimers. Separate audiotapes were made of four speakers presenting each of the two versions of the message, which resulted in a total of eight different speeches. Participants were randomly assigned to one version of the speech. To measure perception of the speakers, participants rated their opinion on the topic on an 11-point scale (1 = complete disagreement, 11 = complete agreement). They also evaluated the speaker on an 11-point scale indicating their perceptions of him or her on nine dimensions: *knowledgeable, interest, confident, powerful, competent, trustworthy, likable, intelligence,* and *tentative.* Results revealed that female speakers were more influential with men when they spoke tentatively than when they spoke assertively. In contrast, they were more influential with women when they spoke assertively than when they spoke tentatively. Supporting Carli's hypothesis, male speakers were equally influential regardless of the language employed or the gender of the participant. As Carli concluded, the results indicate that the use of tentative language enhances a woman's ability to influence a man but reduces her ability to influence a woman. Furthermore, both male and female speakers judged the woman who spoke tentatively to be less competent and knowledgeable than the woman who spoke assertively, but speaking style of male speakers did not affect ratings of competence and knowledge. These findings illustrate the double bind professional women may find themselves in their business dealings (Carli & Eagly, 1999). That is, either their competence is questioned or it is acknowledged but at the
expense of being perceived as likable. This has important implications because social influence is a function of perceived competence and likeability (Carli et al., 1995).

Results from a partial replication of Carli's study by Hawkes, Edelman, and Dodd (1996) were not consistent with Carli's findings. These investigators examined the effect of style of speech (tentative versus assertive) used by a female speaker upon evaluations made by college students. Participants listened to a 1-1/2 minute audiotaped speech, delivered by a woman who discussed campus safety and argued for a better campus escort service. Participants completed a questionnaire consisting of 11 items. Results indicated that both male and female listeners evaluated the tentative speaker as less competent, less reliable, and less likable than the assertive one. As the investigators noted, two possible explanations may account for the discrepancy in their findings and those of Carli (1990). First, Carli's data were collected at a state university in the mid-to-late 1980's whereas the Hawkes et al. data were collected in the mid-1990's in a private university whose students were known for liberal attitudes. Second, it is possible that the techniques employed in the tentative condition (e.g., high frequency of hedges) were so obvious that they came across as unrealistic to some of the listeners.

Some recent research has examined assertiveness in the context of self-promotion and suggests that women may be penalized for making their competence and accomplishments known (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Self-promotion is considered an assertive impression management (IM) strategy (Stevens & Kristof, 1995), which refers to conscious or unconscious attempts people make to control the images that are projected in their social interactions (Schlenker, 1980, as cited in Stevens & Kristof, 1995). IM is assumed to be a ubiquitous feature of most social exchanges.
(Tetlock & Manstead, 1985; as cited in Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Self-promotion is designed to enhance one’s status and social attractiveness and includes “pointing with pride to one’s accomplishments, speaking directly about ones’ strengths and talents, and making internal rather than external attributions for achievements” (Rudman, 1998, p. 629).

Although self-promotion can be especially advantageous in situations in which the self promoter is not well known to another person, or in situations involving competition (e.g., interviewing for a job), such behaviors can have negative repercussions for women (Eagly & Carli, 1999). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that it may be to a women’s advantage to self-present in a highly modest fashion in work settings (Wosinska, Dabul, Whetstone-Dion & Cialdini, 1996).

Using a college sample, Wosinska et al. (1996) examined the effectiveness of self-presentational strategies in the workplace. Participants read a vignette depicting a company employee responding in one of three ways to being congratulated for receiving a productivity award (e.g., low, moderate, or high modesty). Participants then completed a questionnaire to assess their reactions. Boastful presenters were found to be least effective across the board, however, there was a significant interaction between the level of modesty and type of evaluator (e.g., coworker vs. manager). When the self-presenter was female and evaluators were coworkers, highly modest self-presenters were favored over moderate ones. When the self-presenter was male and an evaluator was a manager, moderate modesty was favored over high modesty. According to Wosinska et al. (1996), these results provide even further evidence of the tenacity of stereotypes in the workplace. Moreover, they also have implications for even high-achieving women, in that their advancement may be affected by the extent to which they conform to sex role expectations.
Three experiments by Rudman (1998) examined reactions to women’s self-promoting behaviors and highlight the tradeoff to which women may be subjected. In these studies, undergraduate students evaluated the job interviewing skills of the target individual who presented him or her self in either a self-deprecating or self-promoting manner. Participants were told that they would play a computerized version of the television game show *Jeopardy* with the target individual after the interview, ostensibly to assess his or her performance on the task. In addition, some of the participants were told that if their team performed well, they could win money, whereas other participants were not given this opportunity. Participants then asked the target male and female a series of questions designed to assess the target’s game playing skill. In responding to these questions, the target male and female answered them in either a self-promoting or self-effacing manner. Self-promoting targets spoke in a direct, self-confident manner, highlighted past accomplishments, and made internal rather than external attributions for success. The self-effacing targets spoke more modestly of his or her skills and accomplishments. For example, their responses included disclaimers such as “I’m no expert but” and hedges such as “don’t you think?” Following the interview, participants completed a series of questions rating the target individual in three areas: *task aptitude* (e.g., competence, intelligence), *social attraction* (e.g., likeability, popularity, friendliness, and *hirability* (e.g., the likelihood participants would hire the target).

Results revealed that self-promoting targets received higher competence ratings than self-effacing targets who spoke indirectly and modestly. Participants who thought that they had an opportunity to win money rated self-effacing targets as more competent if the target was male than if the target was female. When male participants had nothing to gain from
having a competent partner, they liked the self-promoting woman less and considered her less hirable than a self-effacing woman. Female participants considered the self-promoting woman less likable and hirable than the self-effacing woman, regardless of having an opportunity to win money. As Rudman (1998) concluded, self-promotion appears to represent a double edge sword for women in that women are subjected to discrimination both for failing to counteract gender stereotypes and for deviating from them. In discussing limitations of the research, Rudman acknowledged that the study relied on highly trained confederates who were introduced without supporting materials. This was done intentionally to avoid the possibility that such materials might be evaluated differently for the male and female targets. As Rudman noted, future research in this area should expand on contextual information provided to participants and employ naive targets in order to increase confidence in the generalizability of findings.

Subsequent research by Rudman and Glick (2001) also examined reactions toward agentic women in the context of self-promotion. In this study, participants evaluated videotaped presentations of an agentic or communal male and female applicant for a management-level computer job. The computer lab manager position was described in either masculine terms (e.g., emphasizing the need for agentic personality traits) or in feminine terms (e.g., emphasizing the need for communal as well as agentic traits). Applicants in the agentic condition responded to questions in a direct, self-confident manner, and provided examples of accomplishments reflecting favorably on them. Applicants in the communal condition were more modest in reporting their skills and accomplishments. Participants were also provided an essay ostensibly written by the applicants prior to viewing the videotape. The agentic applicants' essays emphasized a stereotypically masculine orientation (e.g.,
promoting self-interest over communal values or interest in others). The communal applicant's essays emphasized an interdependent orientation. For example, one of the statements was "To me, life is about being connected to other people. If I can help someone out, I feel a real sense of accomplishment." Consistent with past research (Rudman, 1998), participants rated the applicants on dimensions of competence, social skills, and hirability. Results revealed that on the competence index agentic applicants obtained higher ratings than did communal applicants. Results also revealed that on the social skills index communal applicants were rated higher than were agentic applicants. In addition, a main effect for applicant sex showed that male applicants were rated higher on social skills than were female applicants. On the hirability index, results showed that agentic applicants obtained higher ratings than did communal applicants. Moreover, a main effect for applicant's sex occurred, which revealed that male applicants were rated higher, overall, than were female applicants. As the results indicated, strongly agentic (e.g., competent and competitive female applicants) were consistently rated as less socially skilled than an identically presented man, irrespective of the manager job description (agentic vs. communal or masculine vs. feminine). As the investigators pointed out, these findings were obtained with undergraduate research participants, and therefore, the extent to which the results generalize to actual hiring decisions is uncertain. They also noted, however, that experimental results obtained with undergraduate samples have had a good track record of revealing moderators and mediators of discrimination among business professionals and in actual employment decisions. Commenting on Rudman and Glick's findings, Eagly and Karau (2002) point out that the results should be interpreted with caution because statements contained in the agentic candidate's life philosophy essay were particularly forceful (e.g.,
"Basically there are two kinds of people, winners and losers. My goal is to be a winner, the type of person who gets to be in charge and make decisions"). Thus, the possibility exists that participants reacted negatively to the forceful material, which may have skewed the results.

Conclusions

Gender prejudice stemming from the descriptive aspect of sex stereotyping has been well documented in the empirical literature over the past several decades (e.g., Schein, 1973, 1975; Heilman et al. 1989; Martell, et al., 1998). As this line of research has demonstrated, the characteristics associated with being a successful leader have been construed in largely masculine or agentic terms. By comparison, there has been relatively little research examining gender prejudice stemming from the prescriptive aspect of sex stereotypes (Fiske et al., 1991). As such, there have been few studies examining social reactions to women who violate injunctive norms of the female gender role by behaving agentically. However, as the small but growing body research in this area suggests, agentic behavior enacted by women in leadership roles may evoke less favorable reactions than the equivalent behavior in their male counterparts (e.g., Carli, 1990; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Much research remains to be done in order to gain a better understanding of this form of prejudice toward female leaders.
Chapter II
Rationale and Hypotheses

Since the feminist movement of the 1960's, women have entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, with more and more achieving success in traditionally male-dominated occupations. Despite evidence that overtly sexist attitudes have abated over the years (see Spence & Buckner, 2000; Swim & Cohen, 1997; Twenge, 1997), society still seems resistant to the notion of women in powerful leadership roles. Less conspicuous forms of sex discrimination that occur in today's workplace have often been attributed to the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of gender stereotypes and the biased evaluations they produce (e.g., Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 2001). According to Heilman, the "effects of gender stereotypes continue to dog women as they climb the organizational ladder" (p. 658).

Early research investigating the social evaluations of behavior has demonstrated that negative social consequences may accrue to both men and women whose behavior violates traditional sex role expectations (Costrich et al., 1975). Specifically, assertive, aggressive women and passive, dependent men received lower ratings of popularity and were viewed as less well adjusted psychologically as compared with their role-conforming counterparts. In line with Costrich et al.'s findings, Lao et al. (1995) compared ratings of assertive males and females on dimensions of intelligence and likeability. These investigators found that assertive women were evaluated as less intelligent and likeable than assertive men. Kelly et
al. (1980) found that assertive behavior by female models was consistently evaluated more negatively than the identical behavior in their male counterparts on dimensions of likeability, attractiveness, ability, and competence.

Studies examining interpersonal evaluations (e.g., likeability) of agentic behaviors enacted by males and females in work settings, in which behaviors have been equated, represent a relatively new research paradigm. To the investigator’s knowledge, the empirical literature contains only five such studies relevant to the present investigation (Carli, 1990; Crawford, 1988; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001). In general, this body of research suggests that women's agentic or status-asserting behaviors in work settings (e.g., assertiveness, direct language, self-promotion), may be censured. The purpose of the present study is to test the second form of prejudice toward female leaders, by assessing differences in interpersonal evaluations of an agentic male executive and an agentic female executive. This study represents the first of its kind, known to the investigator, to directly investigate gender prejudice posited by Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory, as evidenced in the backlash effect (Rudman, 1998). It is also believed to be the first to examine the influence of modern sexist attitudes on these perceptions. Based upon a review of the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis I: Male participants will evaluate an agentic female executive less favorably than an agentic male executive.

Hypothesis II: Female participants will evaluate an agentic female executive more favorably than an agentic male executive.
Hypothesis III: Participants of both sexes who endorse modern sexist beliefs will evaluate an agentic female executive less favorably than an agentic male executive.

The null form of the hypothesis will be tested at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance.
Chapter III
Method

Participants

A power analysis was conducted to determine the appropriate number of participants to be included in the proposed study. Based on the average effect size of .51 obtained by Crawford (1988), this analysis suggests that a sample of approximately 200 participants with 25 participants per group is needed. Junior and senior level undergraduate students of both sexes enrolled in business and other fields of professional study (e.g., pre-law, economics, political science) at a private Midwestern university will be recruited for participation in this study. With the permission of faculty in each participating academic department, data collection will be carried out by during regularly scheduled class times. Participation will be voluntary, therefore students who do not want to take part will be excused from the room before the experiment begins. Because the design of this study poses no apparent harm to participants and the identity of those surveyed will remain completely anonymous to the investigator, an application for exempt status will be submitted to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Stimulus Materials

For purposes of the present research, the concept of agentic behavior will be operationally defined according to Eagly and Karau’s (2002) conceptualization of this construct, which encompasses characteristics or tendencies ascribed more strongly to men than to women (e.g., assertive, aggressive, controlling, forceful, dominant, etc). In addition,
two separate audio vignettes will be created for this project with identical scripts being used in producing the two vignettes (Appendix A). The audio vignettes will depict a corporate executive receiving a phone call from a subordinate in the field. In one vignette, the stimulus person will be male; in the other vignette, the stimulus person will be female. Conceptually, the scripted material was designed to portray the stimulus person (male or female business executive) as having an agentic persona or behavioral style. Undergraduate psychology students’ ratings of the content of the scripted material indicate that the goal of having the stimulus person come across in an agentic manner was met.

To ensure that the role-plays achieve a realistic sound and quality about them, a communications professional with experience in nationally broadcast radio script writing will supervise all aspects of production. To further enhance the believability of the audio vignettes, professional voice-over talent will be recruited to play the parts of the male and female executives. Local actors will be sought who have acting experience in radio drama and corporate training productions. Efforts will be made to match the actors on all aspects of vocal delivery (e.g., voice quality, pitch, inflection, etc.). Each vignette will be approximately two minutes in length. To enhance the believability of the scripted dialogue, both actors will be given the same directorial instructions. For example, the actors will be instructed to begin their exchanges in a warm, friendly, and engaging manner. Then, upon hearing news that a particular business transaction is not proceeding as expected, they will be told to quickly descend into an aggressive “tongue-lashing.” In popular parlance, the executive will “bust the chops” of the individual with whom she or he is conversing on the telephone. The vignette featuring the female actor will be recorded first to allow the male actor to observe her performance. This will be done to enable the male actor to imitate as
much as possible the verbal nuances of the female actor's delivery. In order to insure that
the performance of both actors successfully conveys agentic behavior, comparability of their
performance will be assessed by independent raters who will listen to the two vignettes to
compare all aspects of their demeanor in relating to the employee. These evaluations include
judgments of the actors’ performance on dimensions of verbal behavior such as voice
quality, friendliness, level of aggressiveness, and overall credibility. Feedback from raters
will indicate success in meeting the goal of comparability of the actors’ demeanor. Should
this goal not be met, efforts will be made to edit the existing versions to achieve
comparability or the vignettes will be re-recorded.

The rationale for having the stimulus person depicted as a corporate executive is
threefold: First, executive level positions typically require a high level of aggressiveness in
order for one to be effective in these roles. Second, because the majority of elite leadership
positions continue to be occupied by men, women remain a rarity in these roles. And finally,
the few women who have risen to high-ranking positions in corporate America are often
viewed as aggressive, threatening, and unlikable. To avoid the possibility of confounding
variables, the gender of the person to whom the executive is speaking is kept intentionally
ambiguous. Thus, participants will not be given any cues as to the gender of the person on
the other end of the phone and will only actually hear the executive’s end of the
conversation.

Instruments

Interpersonal evaluation inventory: This instrument was taken from the work of
Kelly et al. (1980) and Crawford (1988) (see Appendix B). The inventory used by these
investigators consisted of a compilation of items from a list of 555 personality-trait words,
previously validated by Anderson (1968) as sensitive to interpersonal attraction and likeability. According to Crawford (1988) and Kelly et al. (1980), these personality trait-words appear applicable to interpersonal evaluations of assertiveness. In Anderson's (1968) study, 100 college students rated a list of 555 personality trait words on likeableness as personality characteristics. Participants were told to think of a person as being described by each word and rate the word according to how much they would like the person. It was emphasized that participants' ratings should reflect their own personal opinion. The words were also rated on meaningfulness in terms of how well participants knew their meanings as descriptions of people. On a 7-point scale, mean likeableness ratings for the words ranged from 1.3 to 5.73. Similar data from unpublished research conducted at three unnamed universities (as cited in Anderson, 1968) yielded comparable normative likeableness values, with correlations ranging from .96 to .99 with Anderson's data set.

Consistent with the methodology employed by Crawford (1988) and Kelly et al. (1980), the interpersonal evaluation inventory in the present study will include the following items: *assertive, appropriate, tactful, inoffensive, truthful, educated, friendly, agreeable, pleasant, considerate, flexible, open-minded, sympathetic, good-natured, fair, kind, honest, likable, intelligent, thoughtful, attractive, socially skilled, warm, and superior*. Participants will rate the stimulus person on a 7-point bipolar scale (e.g., 1 = extremely unfriendly to 7 = extremely friendly). The scoring direction for each inventory item will be randomly determined so that for some of the items the more desirable pole will be "1" and on the others it will be "7." In addition, participants will be asked to indicate the extent to which they (1) would like to have the stimulus person as a boss; and (2) would be interested in being mentored by the stimulus person.
Modern Sexism Scale (MS; Swim et al., 1995) is an 8-item instrument developed to assess covert and subtle forms of sexism as measured by less than sympathetic attitudes surrounding women’s issues (see Appendix C). Item responses will be on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with “1” indicating strongly agree and “5” indicating strongly disagree. In developing the Modern Sexism Scale, Swim et al. distinguished between old-fashioned and modern sexism. These constructs were derived from attitudinal research on racial prejudice (e.g., old-fashioned versus modern racism), as parallels are thought to exist between racism and sexism (McConahay, 1986; Sears, 1988; cited in Swim et al, 1995). Swim et al. administered their items initially to a sample of 683 undergraduate students and a second sample of 788 undergraduates. Factor analytic results from exploratory and confirmatory analyses supported the investigators’ contention that beliefs about women can be separated into two meaningful and distinct components. In the present study, a median split will be calculated on the Modern Sexism Scale to measure the level of sexism (e.g., the extent to which participants endorse sexist beliefs on the MS). Based on the results of a scatter plot/t-test, a procedure will be developed to determine an appropriate split on categorizing sexist versus nonsexist participants.

Procedure

In classroom settings, participants will be asked to listen to a vignette featuring either the male or the female stimulus person. Thus, half of the participating classroom groups will listen to the vignette featuring the male executive and the other half will listen to the vignette featuring the female executive. Prior to the experiment getting underway, the investigator will introduce the study and distribute informed consent forms (Appendix D). Students will be asked to sign the form in duplicate and told that they may retain the second
copy for their records if they so desire. Students who do not wish to participate will be given the opportunity to leave the room. In introducing the study, participants will be told that the purpose of the research is to examine how accurate people are in determining an individual's personality style based on a brief "snapshot" of his or her behavior on the job. After the informed consent forms are collected and immediately prior to listening to the vignette, participants will be read a brief autobiographical statement about the executive whom they will be evaluating (Appendix E). At the conclusion of the vignette, participants will be asked to complete the two instruments. Both instruments will be distributed as part of a single packet. After the packet is distributed, participants will be read aloud the instructions appearing at the top of the interpersonal evaluation inventory and will be asked to complete this questionnaire (see Appendix B). Participants will then be asked to complete the Modern Sexism Scale (MS). After all forms have been distributed, the investigator will read aloud the instructions that appear at the top of the page, asking them to indicate their level of agreement with each of the eight statements (see Appendix C).

Research Design

Each participant will participate in one stimulus condition by listening to the vignette of either the male or the female stimulus person. Thus, this experiment will be a 2 (sex of stimulus person) x 2 (sex of participant) x 2 (sexist versus nonsexist attitudes as measured by participants' scores on the MS) design, with all variables between participants.
Chapter IV

Results

The three hypotheses of this study will be tested by a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ analyses of variance. The three independent variables are sex of the stimulus person, sex of the participant, and level of modern sexism (sexist versus nonsexist). Level of sexism will be determined by scores on the Modern Sexism Scale. The dependent variable will be likeability ratings as measured by the interpersonal evaluation inventory. The first two hypotheses, which posit that male participants will evaluate the agentic female executive less favorably than the agentic male executive, and female participants will evaluate an agentic female executive more favorably than the agentic male executive, respectively, will be supported by an interaction between sex of the stimulus person and sex of the participant. The third hypothesis, which posits that participants of both sexes who endorse modern sexist beliefs will evaluate the agentic female executive less favorably than the male executive, will be supported by an interaction between sex of the participant and level of modern sexism.

Consistent with previous research (Crawford, 1988; Kelly et al., 1980), two additional dependent variables will also be analyzed on an exploratory basis (e.g., participants will rate the degree to which they would like to have the stimulus person as a boss and as a mentor).
Chapter V

Discussion

The primary objective of the present study is to test a form of prejudice posited by role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau; 2002), as reflected in less favorable evaluations of the female executive than the male executive. A second objective is to examine the relationship between modern sexist beliefs and interpersonal evaluations of an agentic female versus an agentic male executive. The first hypothesis of the present study states that male participants will evaluate the agentic female less favorably than her male counterpart. Such a finding would support Rudman's (1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001) notion of a backlash effect toward agentic women. It would also be consistent with overall findings in the area of women's assertive communication (e.g., direct versus indirect speech; impression management; self-promotion, etc.), which suggest that agentic behaviors enacted by a woman tend to be looked upon unfavorably (e.g., Carli, 1990; Kelly, et al., 1980; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Such a finding would also contradict the predictions of Kanter (1977) and others, who have argued that as women's presence in business and the professions increases, problems associated with acceptance and respect should decline. A finding of more favorable evaluations of the agentic female may signal a new era in terms of societal acceptance of women occupying powerful leadership roles, and will be discussed accordingly.
The second hypothesis states that female participants will evaluate the agentic female executive more favorably than the male executive. Such a finding would be consistent with the findings of Carli (1990) regarding perceptions of women's direct versus indirect speech. Specifically, results revealed that female speakers were more influential with women when they spoke assertively than when they spoke tentatively. However, findings supporting the second hypothesis would be inconsistent with other research suggesting that both women and men are uncomfortable with displays of aggressiveness in women (e.g., Kelly et al., 1980; Mathison, 1987; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

The third hypothesis states that participants who endorse modern sexist beliefs will evaluate the agentic female executive less favorably than the agentic male executive. Such a finding would be consistent with some recent research suggesting that people who endorse modern sexist beliefs dislike women who violate gender role prescriptions, and thus they are more likely to rate men more favorably than women (e.g., biased in favor of men and biased against women perceived as career women or feminists (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Warner, & Zhu, 1997; Glick & Fiske, 1997; Swim & Cohen, 1997).

Thirty years ago Spence and Helmreich (1972) raised the question of whether women who defy gender stereotypes by exhibiting competence are disliked. Although attitudes toward women have become more egalitarian over the past several decades, society still seems conflicted over the notion of women fulfilling major leadership roles. Indeed, it appears that prescriptions for how women "ought" to behave still exert a powerful force in shaping societal expectations for behavior. Thus, the question today might be: Who likes powerful women? The answer to this query is especially salient for women aspiring to leadership and has untold implications for the advancement of all career-oriented women.
References


Implications for assertiveness training. *Behavior Therapy, 11*, 670-682.


Appendix A

Script

Dana Stephens, 37, is the President and Chief Executive Officer of a billion dollar, multinational consumer goods corporation. She/he holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration. She/he joined the company within a few weeks of obtaining her/his MBA, and quickly rose through the ranks, assuming the position of COO within a matter of a few years. She/he is generously compensated for her/his time and effort, with a salary and bonus structure in the high six-figures. Dana Stevens is married and has two young children.

Role-Play:

Audio scene opens with Chris on the telephone in her/his office...we pick up in the middle of a conversation more personal than professional in nature.

**DANA (to phone, laughing):**
There's no way...I can't imagine a hole-in-one on that course. Maybe it's time to finally go out and get some new irons.

*(Dana listens).*

**DANA (to phone, still very pleasant):**
Yeah, I've heard all about those...I'm just not sure they're right for me. But, hey, you never know.

*(Sound effect: secretarial buzzer).*

**SECRETARY (On speakerphone):**
Dana...Chris Smith's on line three...and needs to talk with you right away.

**DANA (to secretary):**
I'll be right there.
*(to phone caller):*
Sorry, I've got to cut this short. Sounds like I have something important to attend to...

*(Dana listens).*

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Okay. I'll see you out there...looking forward to it.

(Sound effect: change of phone lines).

DANA (to Chris, upbeat):
Hey Chris...What's going on? How are things in Palm Springs? Breaking some temperature records out there from what I've seen in the paper.

(Dana listens).

DANA (to Chris):
Yeah, I remember last time I was there... about a year ago, Joe/Jo Ann and I got a little time away without the kids. You could have fried an egg on the sidewalk. I got the worst sunburn of my life...
Well, enough about that - what's going on with The Hudson account?

(Dana listens, her/his mood becomes serious).

DANA (unpleasantly surprised):
Really? I thought that had been all taken care of?

(Dana listens, her/his mood continues to deteriorate).

DANA (getting angry):
C'mon, Chris. How the hell did you let that happen? I mean, Hudson was totally primed for this deal...I worked my (expletive beeped) to get a verbal commitment. And, as you know, I think, I missed the championship game of my kid's soccer tournament so I could take their board to dinner when they were here.

(Dana listens again...she/he is really mad at this point).

DANA (over the top):
Ah...you and I both know that's complete bull. There's absolutely no excuse for this Chris!! I can't believe you screwed this up.
Ahhh! What the hell are we going to do now?

(Dana listens).

DANA (really worked up):
That's not enough. You need to go further than that! We have to save this deal! If we don't, you-know-who is going to kick my you-know-what.

(Dana listens).
DANA
Okay. I'd better hear some very good news from you by noon. And, I'm not kidding!

(Sound effect: Dana bangs down the phone).

DANA (very abrupt, almost yelling):
Leigh! Track down Courtney for me right away.

SECRETARY (on speakerphone)
Dana, I think Courtney's at some kind of college graduation ceremony.

DANA
I don't really give a (bleep) where Courtney is... I need some advice! And, I need it right now!
Appendix B
Interpersonal Evaluation Inventory

Please check one:  ____Male   ____Female

Age: ___  Race/ethnicity: ____________

Religious affiliation: ____________

The purpose of this study is to determine how accurately people can tell what a person is like based on a brief “snapshot” of their behavior on the job. This questionnaire contains common personality traits and characteristics. Please describe what you think Dana Stevens is like on each of the specific characteristics listed. Again, please do not talk with one another while filling this out. Thank you for your participation in this project.

1. extremely unassertive  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely assertive 7

2. extremely inappropriate  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely appropriate 7

3. extremely tactless  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely tactful 7

4. extremely offensive  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely inoffensive 7

5. extremely untruthful  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely truthful 7

6. extremely uneducated  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely educated 7

7. extremely unfriendly  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely friendly 7

8. extremely disagreeable  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely agreeable 7

9. extremely unpleasant  
   1 2 3 4 5 6  extremely pleasant 7
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Please indicate how much (1) you would like to work for a person like Chris Stevens and (2) how interested you would be in being mentored by Chris Stevens.

1 = not at all                        7 = very much

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<th>Work for:</th>
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Appendix C

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree

Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.*

1  2  3  4  5

It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.

1  2  3  4  5

Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.

1  2  3  4  5

It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America.*

1  2  3  4  5

Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.

1  2  3  4  5

Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.

1  2  3  4  5

On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.

1  2  3  4  5

It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women's opportunities.*

1  2  3  4  5

Note: Items with asterisk indicate reverse scoring.
Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project designed to examine how accurate people are in determining what a person is like (e.g., personality style), based on a small sample of the individual's behavior on the job. In order to participate in this project, Xavier University requires that you provide your written consent. Your participation in this study will involve listening to a brief audio-tape of a telephone conversation between a high-level corporate executive and his/her employee, after which you will complete two brief questionnaires regarding your impressions and/or opinions. The total time to complete these tasks will be approximately 10-15 minutes.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts related to your participation in this study. Because the questionnaires do not ask for your name, your results from this study will be anonymous. Should you have any questions about the purpose of this research, please contact Elizabeth Scheurer, who is in charge of the project (561-3371). My dissertation chair, Dr. Cynthia Dulaney, can be reached by phone at 745-3535.

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services to which you may be entitled from Xavier University. You are under no obligation to participate in this study, and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the goals, implications, and procedures of this research. At the end of the experiment, you will be provided with a more detailed written explanation of the purpose of this study.

By signing below, I am indicating that I fully understand the nature of the experiment and am willing to participate.

Participant Signature: ________________________ Date: ________

Experimenter Signature: ________________________ Date: ________

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Appendix E

May 5, 2004

Elizabeth Scheurer, M.A.
6953 Murray Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45227

Dear Ms. Scheurer:

The IRB received your protocol #0292-1, Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders: An Empirical Investigation on April 29, 2004, reviewed it, and requested minor revision of the informed consent. The appropriately revised informed consent was received and reviewed today. Your research is approved in the Exempt category. No further reporting is required unless your protocol is modified or adverse events occur.

Enclosed is your Informed Consent document with XU IRB's approval stamp.

We wish you every success in your research.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Baumiller, S.J.
RCB:nm

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Cynthia Dulaney, ML 6511
Appendix F

You are about to listen to a conversation between a corporate executive and an employee. Dana Stevens is President and Chief Executive Officer of a billion dollar, multinational consumer goods company. He/she has been with the corporation since receiving his/her Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, and quickly rose through the ranks. Dana Stevens is married and has two young children. In a few minutes I am going to ask you to give your opinion on what you believe this individual is like based on what you have heard. It is important that you play close attention to the conversation, so I ask that you please not talk with one another during this experiment and before/during completion of the questionnaires. Thank you for your participation in this research.
Appendix G

DEBRIEFING INFORMATION

The study in which you just took part is designed to examine the dynamics of gender prejudice and sexist attitudes. Past research has suggested that professional women who depart from traditional sex role stereotypes by behaving aggressively or assertively may suffer negative social consequences in the form of being perceived unfavorably (e.g., viewed as unlikeable). The present study directly examines whether an aggressive male and female corporate executive, whose behavior has been equated, are perceived differently and also explores the influence of biased attitudes on these perceptions.

If you have any questions about the purpose of this study or the results obtained, I will be happy to talk with you. Please contact me (Betsey Scheurer) at 561-3371. If I am not available when you call, please leave your name and a message, and your call will be returned as soon as possible. My dissertation chair, Dr. Cynthia Dulaney, can be reached at 745-3535 should you wish to speak with her about any aspect of this research.

Thank you again for your participation and your contribution to this research.
Chapter VI

Dissertation

Abstract

The present study directly tested the second form of prejudice posited by role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This form of prejudice manifests in negative evaluations of actual leadership behaviors of women as compared with the equivalent behaviors in men. Two separate audio CD vignettes were created specifically for this study, based on identical scripts, each depicting a corporate executive during a telephone conversation with a subordinate. In one vignette, a male actor was featured as the target character; in the other a female was featured. Participants listened to one of the two vignettes and completed an interpersonal evaluation inventory designed to assess their perceptions of the target characters' likeability. Two additional items were added to this questionnaire, asking participants indicate their level of interest in having the target character as both a mentor and a boss. Participants also completed a questionnaire assessing modern sexist beliefs. Separate two-way ANOVA's were performed on each of the three hypotheses. It was hypothesized that male participants would evaluate the male executive more favorably than his female counterpart whereas female participants would evaluate the agentic female executive more favorably than the male executive. It was also predicted that participants of both sexes who endorse modern sexist beliefs would evaluate the female executive less favorably than the female
executive. Results revealed a significant interaction effect between participant sex and sex of the stimulus person, with participants rating the same-sex executive as more likeable than the opposite-sex executive. A similar double-bias was found with respect to participants' preferences in a mentor. Contrary to prediction, no significant differences were found in likeability ratings of the male and female executive by participants endorsing modern sexist beliefs. The implications of the present findings are discussed in light of methodological considerations and suggestions for future research are given.
Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward Female Leaders: An Empirical Investigation

In the nearly four decades since enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting sex discrimination in employment, women can be found in literally thousands of occupations in the public and private sectors. Despite the increased presence of women in the labor force in recent years and ever-growing numbers in middle and upper level management positions, women remain a rarity in elite leadership and top executive roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Data show that as of 2000, the percentage of women holding the highest-ranking executive positions in U.S. Corporations (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, Chairman, Vice Chairman, President, Chief Operating Officer, Senior Executive Vice President, and Executive Vice President) was under 4% (Catalyst, 2003). Moreover, women represented less than 1% of officers holding the five highest titles of CEO, Chairman, Vice Chairman, President, and COO (Catalyst).

Women's underrepresentation in powerful leadership positions has often been attributed to the glass ceiling phenomenon. This term, first introduced into the American lexicon in the late 1980's, "labeled prejudicial barriers in a way that recognized both their increasing subtlety and continuing strength" (Eagly, 2004; p. 82). The glass ceiling has serious implications for the organizational experiences of women who have successfully ascended it. For example, Lyness and Thompson (1997) found that female executives employed in a large multinational financial corporation had less authority, received fewer stock options, had less international mobility and reported lower satisfaction with future career opportunities as compared with their male counterparts.
The Glass Ceiling: Gender Stereotypes and the Double Standard

Gender-based stereotypes have long been cited as the greatest obstacle to women being hired into positions leading to organizational power and prestige (Heilman, 2001). The persistence of widely held gender stereotypes has been identified as a major factor perpetuating the glass ceiling effect (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995). Research examining the content of gender stereotypes has demonstrated that people tend to ascribe task or achievement-oriented traits to men (e.g., assertive, independent, and competitive), whereas women are ascribed interpersonal or relationship-oriented traits, (e.g., kind, nurturing, supportive, and tactful) (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Carli & Eagly, 1999; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Ruble, 1983; Williams & Best, 1990). The traits commonly associated with men have been labeled agentic; the traits commonly associated with women have been labeled communal (Bakan, 1966; Heilman, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender stereotypes, as do all types of stereotypes, contain both descriptive and prescriptive components (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991; Fiske & Stevens, 1993; Glick & Fiske, 1999). The descriptive dimension pertains to characteristics believed to be typical of members of particular groups. Thus, stereotypic descriptions of women and men consist of beliefs about attributes, roles, and behaviors that typify each sex (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). The descriptive component of the female stereotype, for example, may include personality attributes such as emotional, weak-minded, and passive, among others (Fiske et al., 1991). Stereotypic descriptions may lead to discrimination when a woman is perceived through the lens of the traditional female stereotype and judged unsuitable for traditionally male-dominated occupations or roles (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). In other
words, a perceived discrepancy or “lack of fit” exists between the stereotypic characteristics of women and the attributes deemed necessary for success in male-typed occupations (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 1984). Such discrimination may be unintentional and equally as likely to occur in men and women (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Meta-analytic data reported by Davison and Burke (2000) illustrate how the so-called lack of fit stereotyping can penalize women seeking entry into organizations. These investigators analyzed findings from empirical studies examining sex discrimination in simulated employment settings published between 1969 and 1994. Results showed that when the job was male-sex typed, men received higher ratings than women for selection; when the job was female sex-typed, women received higher ratings than men. In addition, results also revealed greater discrimination against female applicants when there was less job-relevant information available about applicants.

The prescriptive dimension of gender stereotypes consists of expectations for behavior based on the attributes, roles, and behaviors ascribed to each sex (Borgess & Borgida, 1999). Prescriptive stereotyping can lead to discrimination when a woman violates consensual beliefs about how women should behave (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 2001; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). For instance, people may think women should have good interpersonal skills, be agreeable, and acquiescent (Fiske et al., 1991) and thus expect them to behave accordingly. Women perceived to have violated behavioral prescriptions for femininity may be subjected to disparate treatment and punished (e.g., subjected to hostile work environment, harassment, devaluation of their performance and/or personality) (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Discrimination stemming from gender prescriptions may serve to perpetuate power inequities in society, and men...
are more likely to engage in this form of discrimination than are women (Burgess & Borgida, 1999).

A central issue surrounding the glass ceiling problem is abundant evidence that women are perceived differently from men in task-oriented interactions (e.g., Carli, 1990; Carli & Eagly, 1999; Foschi, 1994, 1996; Propp, 1995; Pugh & Wahrman, 1983; Wood & Karten, 1986). Task-oriented interactions are defined as goal-directed social exchanges occurring in various paid and unpaid work settings (Carli & Eagly, 1999). Lockheed's (1985) meta-analysis of 64 data sets from 29 studies of power and influence in mixed-sex groups revealed that men exert more influence in mixed-sex groups than do women. Some research has found that people ascribe higher competence to men in mixed-sex task oriented groups than women unless presented with irrefutable evidence that women possess more task-specific competence than men (see Carli, 1990; Carli & Eagly, 1999; Wood & Karten, 1986). Research findings have consistently demonstrated that men, by virtue of their male status, wield more influence than women across a number of “contexts, topics, and time” (Burgoon & Klinge, 1999, p. 259). Other findings reveal that not only are women held to a higher standard of what constitutes competent performance than men in task-oriented groups, but also their performance must exceed that of their male counterpart to be considered equally competent (Foschi, 1994; 1996). Such a scenario reflects a double standard of evaluation that has important implications for women’s advancement (Carli & Eagly, 1999). Specifically, the double standard makes it more difficult for women to exert influence. This difficulty arises because people, as a general rule, wield more social influence when they are perceived to be competent (Carli & Eagly, 1999).
Differences in how men and women are perceived in work settings may be rooted in the observer’s “gender belief system,” a conceptualization posited by Deaux and Kite (1987). Akin to the dynamics underlying sex-role stereotypes, a gender belief system accounts for one’s attitudes and opinions about men and women. This model posits that societal expectations influence people's perceptions of women and men and includes both descriptive and prescriptive elements. These beliefs influence not only our perceptions of women (and men) in nontraditional roles but also our reactions to them (Kite, 1999). Not only do people ascribe different characteristics to the sexes, but members of one sex are perceived as possessing characteristics that are generally seen as lacking in members of the opposite sex (Heilman, 2001). Stereotyped notions of men and women extend also to cognitive traits. Men are seen as more analytical and thus more skilled in abstractions, reasoning, and problem-solving; whereas women are seen as more verbally skilled, intuitive, perceptive, and creative (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Williams & Best, 1990).

A distinction has been made in recent years between old-fashioned and modern sexism (often referred to as subtle sexism) (Swim & Cohen, 1995; Twenges, 1997). Old-fashioned sexism is conceptualized as the endorsement of traditional gender roles for women and men, differential treatment of the sexes, and stereotyped beliefs regarding greater male versus female competence (Buhl, Conn, Hanges, Sipe & Salvaggio, 1999; Swim & Cohen, 1995). In contrast, modern sexism is conceptualized as “the denial of continued discrimination [against women], antagonism toward women’s demands, and lack of support for policies designed to help women” (Swim & Cohen, 1995, p.199). There is evidence that not only have societal attitudes toward women become more egalitarian in recent years, but also women’s self-conceptions and stereotypic
characteristics ascribed to women have undergone changes as well. Twenge's (1997) meta-analytic study found a steady trend toward more liberal/feminist attitudes in American society over the past three decades. Men's attitudes, however, consistently lagged behind women's. Spence and Buckner (2000) found that women's self-conceptions have also become more agentic, a finding these investigators attribute to changes in American society during the 20th century. Diekman and Eagly (2000) found that people believe women in contemporary society possess more masculine personality characteristics (e.g., assertive, independent, and competitive) than women in the past, and that women of the future will be more masculine than are women of the present.

Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders

Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders has been advanced to explain the relative dearth of women in the elite leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory holds that a perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles results in two distinct types of prejudice. First, women are perceived less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles. Second, agentic behaviors exhibited by women are evaluated less favorably compared with men because such behaviors are seen as less desirable in women than men. The first form of prejudice derives from discrepancies between the communal or female-stereotypical characteristics commonly ascribed to women and the agentic qualities required of leader roles; the second type stems from consensual expectations about how women ought to behave. According to Eagly and Karau, gender roles produce two kinds of expectations or norms, descriptive and injunctive, associated with men and women. Descriptive norms refer to consensual expectations about the actual behavior of men and women; injunctive norms
refer to consensual expectations about behaviors that men or women ought to display. The first type of prejudice predicted by role congruity theory (e.g., women perceived less favorably than men as potential leaders) derives from the descriptive norms of gender roles; specifically, that descriptive beliefs about women’s characteristics are incongruent with the qualities expected and desired in leaders. The second type of prejudice derives from injunctive norms inherent in gender roles; that is, expectations about how women ought to behave are activated when people observe a woman engaging in an agentic versus communal manner. According to Eagly and Karau, the types of prejudice encompassed by the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders are rooted in differential ascriptions of communal and agentic attributes.

Empirical Findings Relevant to the Second Form of Prejudice

According to the second type of prejudice posited by role congruity theory, the behavior of women occupying leadership roles is evaluated less favorably than the equivalent behavior in men, a phenomenon stemming from the injunctive aspect of the female gender role. Professional women who depart from traditional sex-role behaviors by conducting themselves in a particularly agentic manner may suffer negative social repercussions in the form of being perceived as interpersonally deficient (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Thus women who fulfill their leadership responsibilities in a particularly forceful, assertive, or directive manner are penalized in terms of perceived likeability.

Research interest in examining social reactions to behavior violating the prescriptive aspect of gender stereotypes dates to the 1970’s. Costrich et al. (1975) demonstrated that both men and women who do not conform to sex role expectations are
subjected to less favorable evaluations than those who do. Negative consequences (e.g., being perceived as less likeable) may also accrue to women who violate traditional sex-role stereotypes by behaving assertively or aggressively (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975; Lao et al., 1975). Specifically, women may be perceived as less intelligent and likeable (Lao et al.). More recent investigations examining social reactions to men’s and women’s agentic behaviors have demonstrated that agentic behavior enacted by a woman may be evaluated more negatively than the identical behavior in a male counterpart (Carli, 1990; Crawford, 1988; Kelly, Kern, Kirkley, Patterson, & Keane, 1980; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Mathison (1987), examining perceptions of the assertive behavior of a female manager directed toward a male manager, found that female participants viewed the assertive female more negatively than did the male participants. As Mathison suggested, social desirability may have accounted for men’s positive perceptions of the female manager. Conversely, the findings might be interpreted as reflecting an actual shift in men’s attitudes. Explaining the female participant’s reaction to the female manager, Mathison suggested that women participants may have been unable to identify with the female manager insofar as her willingness and ability to challenge a competent male. In contrast to Mathison’s findings, Geller and Hobfoll (1993) found evidence of a double bias operating in the workplace with respect to assertive behavior. In this study, participants watched two videotaped vignettes depicting a common workplace interaction (e.g., making a request). One vignette featured an assertive male character; the other, an assertive female character. Both characters behaved in an identically agentic manner. The results indicated that participants of both sexes preferred agentic employees of their own sex. Both male and
female participants judged themselves to be more similar to the same-sex character and rated them more positively. Moreover, participants expressed a greater willingness to support same-sex targets in work situations. Whereas male participants, as predicted, reacted to the target males more positively than the females, the female participants, unexpectedly, reacted to the target females more positively than the target males. Findings of a double bias, the investigators concluded, have different implications for male and female workers.

Some research examining social reactions to women’s assertive communication has focused on the interplay of gender, language, and social influence (Carli, 1990; Hawkes, Edelman, & Dodd, 1996). Carli (1990) found that female speakers were more influential with men when they spoke tentatively versus assertively but were more influential with women when they spoke assertively versus tentatively. Male speakers were equally influential regardless of their speaking style or gender of the listener. Moreover, both male and female participants judged the woman who spoke tentatively to be less competent and knowledgeable than the woman who spoke assertively; but speaking style of male speakers did not affect ratings of competence and knowledge.

Consistent with findings of a double bias reported by Geller and Gobfoll (1993), similar results were obtained by Carli (1990). In this study, striking differences were found in how men and women perceived a competent male and female who attempted to persuade an audience in either a serious or a friendly manner. Whereas female participants responded positively to persuasive communication from both the friendly and the serious female, male participants responded most favorably to the competent but serious male. They were not persuaded by the competent female who behaved in the same serious
manner as her male counterpart. Moreover, the serious female was regarded as condescending, threatening, and less likeable, although she was seen as equally competent as her male counterpart. Male participants were persuaded by the warm, friendly female, however, and also rated her as competent and likeable as her male counterpart. Findings from the aforementioned studies examining social reactions to women’s assertive communication illustrate the double bind professional women may find themselves in in their business dealings (Carli & Eagly, 1999). Specifically, either their competence is called into question or it is acknowledged at the expense of being perceived as likeable. Such a scenario has serious implications for women’s professional status because social influence is a function of perceived competence and likeability (Carli et al., 1995).

Results from a partial replication of Carli’s study by Hawkes, Edelman, and Dodd (1996), however, were inconsistent with Carli’s findings. These investigators found that both male and female listeners evaluated a female speaker employing a tentative style of speech as less competent, less reliable, and less likable than a female speaker employing an assertive style. As Hawkes et al. observed, two possible explanations may account for the discrepant findings. First, Carli’s data were collected at a state university in the mid-to-late 1980’s; whereas the Hawkes et al. data were collected in the mid-1990’s at a private university whose students were known for liberal attitudes. Second, the results may have been skewed because of techniques employed in the tentative condition (e.g., high frequency of hedges may have come across as obvious and unrealistic to some listeners).

Some recent research examining assertiveness in the context of self-promotion
Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice

suggests that women may be penalized for making their competence and accomplishments known (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Self-promotion is considered an assertive impression management strategy (Stevens & Kristof, 1995) designed to enhance one’s status and social attractiveness (Rudman, 1998). Such behaviors include “pointing with pride to one’s accomplishments, speaking directly about ones’ strengths and talents, and making internal rather than external attributions for achievements” (Rudman, 1998, p. 629). Although self-promotion can be advantageous in certain situations (e.g., instances in which self-promoter is not well known to the other party; in job interviewing or other such competitive circumstances), such behaviors can have negative repercussions for women (Eagly & Carli, 1999). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that it may be to a women’s advantage to self-present in a highly modest fashion in work settings (Wosinska, Dabul, Whetstone-Dion & Cialdini, 1996). Wosinska et al. (1996) examined the effectiveness of self-presentational strategies in the workplace and found that when the self-presenter was female and evaluators were coworkers, highly modest self-presenters were favored over moderate ones. When the self-presenter was male and an evaluator was a manager, moderate modesty was favored over high modesty. According to Wosinska and colleagues, these findings have implications for high-achieving women in that their advancement may be affected by the extent to which they conform to sex role expectations. Three experiments by Rudman (1998) examined reactions to men’s and women’s self-promoting versus self-effacing behaviors in the context of employment interviewing. Some participants were told that they had an opportunity to win money by pairing up with the target male or female in playing a computer game, whereas others
were not given this opportunity. Results revealed that self-promoting targets received higher competence ratings than self-effacing targets who spoke indirectly and modestly. Participants who thought that they had an opportunity to win money rated self-effacing targets as more competent if the target was male than if the target was female. When male participants had nothing to gain from having a competent partner, they liked the self-promoting woman less and considered her less hirable than a self-effacing woman. Female participants considered the self-promoting woman less likable and hirable than the self-effacing woman, regardless of having an opportunity to win money. As Rudman (1998) concluded, self-promotion appears to represent a double-edge sword for women in that women are subjected to discrimination both for failing to counteract gender stereotypes and for deviating from them.

Subsequent research by Rudman and Glick (2001) examined reactions toward agentic women in the context of self-promotion. In this study, participants evaluated an agentic (e.g., direct, self-confident manner of speech) or communal (e.g., modest, humble) male and female applicant for a management-level computer job. The job was described in either masculine terms (e.g., emphasizing the need for agentic traits) or in feminine terms (e.g., emphasizing the need for agentic and communal traits). Applicants were evaluated on dimensions of competence, social skills, and hirability. Results revealed that on the competence index agentic applicants obtained higher ratings than did communal applicants. On the social skills index communal applicants were rated higher than were agentic applicants. In addition, a main effect for applicant sex showed that male applicants were rated higher on social skills than were female applicants. On the hirability index, agentic applicants obtained higher ratings than did communal applicants.
A main effect for applicant’s sex revealed that male applicants were rated higher, overall, than were female applicants. As the results indicated, strongly agentic women (e.g., competent and competitive female applicants) were consistently rated as less socially skilled than an identically presented man, irrespective of the manager job description (agentic vs. communal or masculine vs. feminine).

Gender prejudice stemming from the descriptive aspect of sex stereotyping has been well documented over the past several decades (e.g., Schein, 1973; 1975; Heilman et al. 1989; Martell et al., 1998). This line of research has demonstrated that the characteristics associated with being a successful leader have been construed in largely masculine or agentic terms (Eagly & Karau, 2002). By comparison, relatively little research has examined gender prejudice stemming from the prescriptive aspect of sex stereotyping (Fiske et al., 1991). This relatively small but growing body of research, however, suggests that agentic behavior enacted by women in leadership roles may be received less favorably than the equivalent behavior in their male counterparts (e.g., Carli, 1990; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Although female leaders who behave agentically may be perceived as competent, they run the risk of being disliked for violating gender-stereotypic expectations for feminine “niceness” (Rudman, 1998). Negative reactions to agentic women may reflect a backlash effect (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001), which may in turn be explained by the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The purpose of the present study was to test the second form of prejudice predicted by role congruity theory, as evidenced in such a backlash effect. To this end, the present study examined evaluations (e.g., likeability ratings) of equivalent agentic behaviors as exhibited by an executive level.
woman and man and also examined the influence of modern sexist beliefs on these evaluations.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants in the study included 272 male and female undergraduate students enrolled in business courses at a private Midwestern university. The sample consisted of 160 (59%) male participants and 112 (41%) female participants ranging in age from 18 to 30 with a mean age of 20.2 ($SD = 1.53$). The study included 224 (82.4%) Caucasian participants, 19 (7.0%) African-American participants, 2 (.7%) Hispanic participants, 8 (2.9%) Asian/Pacific Islander participants, and 19 (7.0%) participants who identified themselves as “Other.” There were no incentives offered for participation.

**Stimulus Materials**

Two separate audio CD vignettes, based on the identical script, were created for this project. Each vignette was approximately one min in length and depicted a corporate executive receiving a phone call from a subordinate in the field. In one vignette, the corporate executive was male; in the other vignette, the executive was female. In order to enhance the realism or believability of the vignettes, professional voice-over talent was recruited to play the parts of the male and female executives. In addition, a communications professional supervised all aspects of production. Conceptually, the scripted material was designed to portray the stimulus character (male or female business executive) as a friendly person with an agentic persona or interpersonal style. For purposes of the present research, the concept of *agentic* behavior was operationally defined according to Eagly and Karau’s (2002) conceptualization of this construct, which
encompasses characteristics or tendencies ascribed more strongly to men than to women (e.g., assertive, aggressive, controlling, forceful, dominant, etc). In addition, the present study made no distinction between the adjectives assertive and aggressive as descriptors of agentic behavior, in either definition or connotation, inasmuch as many dictionaries offer assertive as a synonym for aggressive (Hull & Schroeder, 1979). In both audio vignettes, the actor begins the conversation in a warm, friendly, and engaging manner. Then, upon hearing news that a particular business transaction was not proceeding as expected, he or she quickly descends into an aggressive “tongue-lashing.” To avoid confounding variables, participants were not given any cues as to the gender of the person to whom the executive was speaking and only heard the executive’s end of the conversation.

Two separate manipulation checks were conducted on the stimulus materials. First, the script was evaluated by 24 undergraduate psychology students who rated the content of the script to determine the extent to which the stimulus person came across as friendly in the opening lines of the dialogue and the extent to which he/she conveyed an agentic persona as the scene progressed (e.g., assertive, forceful, aggressive, dominant, etc.). A scale utilized a rating format of 1 for “not at all” to a 5 for “extremely.” Students’ ratings on the dimension of friendliness ranged from 3.0 to 5.0 ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.75$). Students’ ratings on the dimensions of agentic behavior ranged from 3.1 to 5.0 ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.78$). Based on these results, it was determined that the objective of having the stimulus person come across in a friendly but agentic manner in the scripted material was met.

Second, to ensure that the verbal behavior of the male and female actor in the
audio vignettes was equated (e.g., reasonably equivalent in conveying an agentic style),
23 undergraduate psychology students listened to both vignettes and rated the actors on
four dimensions: friendliness, aggressiveness, vocal delivery (e.g., voice quality, pitch,
infection, etc.), and overall believability. The order in which raters listened to the
vignettes was counterbalanced (e.g., some of the raters listened to the male vignette first,
the female vignette second; other raters listened to the female vignette first, the male
vignette second). There were no statistically significant differences in ratings for the
male actor versus the female actor on the first three dimensions, friendliness,
aggressiveness, and vocal delivery, $t(22) = .85, p = .41$; $t(22) = .30, p = .77$; and $t(22) =$
-1.93, $p = .07$, respectively. On the fourth dimension, believability, there was a
statistically significant difference in ratings, $t(22) = -2.51, p = .02$, with the male actor
receiving a higher rating ($M = 3.70, SD = 0.559$) than the female actor ($M = 3.13, SD =$
0.968). One possible explanation for this finding is that the male actor had more
corporate acting experience than did the female actor, which may have resulted in the
male actor being more convincing than the female actor in their respective vignettes. In
turn, this may have affected perceptions of his overall believability as a corporate
executive, as compared with his female counterpart. Alternatively, it is conceivable that
descriptive gender stereotyping may account for the female actor being seen as less
believable as a high-level corporate executive than the male actor. That is, participants
may harbor the belief that women lack the requisite traits to occupy high-level corporate
positions (lack of fit), which, in turn, may have affected their overall perceptions of the
female actor's believability. Given that the primary objective of the scripted material was
for the executive to come across as both friendly and agentic in the respective vignettes, it
was determined that the verbal behaviors of the male and female actors were adequately equated for purposes of the present study.

**Instruments**

*Interpersonal evaluation inventory.* Participants' likeability ratings of the male or the female corporate executive were assessed using a 24-item interpersonal attraction inventory taken from the work of Kelly et al. (1980) and Crawford (1988). The 24 personality-trait words, validated by Anderson (1968) as sensitive to interpersonal attraction and likeability, also appear applicable to interpersonal evaluations of assertiveness (Crawford 1988; Kelly et al., 1980). The total score can range from 24 to 168, with a higher score indicating a greater degree of interpersonal attraction or likeability. Consistent with Crawford's (1988) research, two individual, 7-point items asked participants to indicate their level of interest in (a) having the stimulus person as a boss; and (b) being mentored by the stimulus person.

*The Modern Sexism Scale.* Participants' attitudes about women, with respect to modern sexist beliefs, were assessed using the Modern Sexism Scale (MSS; Swim et al., 1995). The MSS is an 8-item instrument developed to assess covert and subtle forms of sexism as measured by less than sympathetic attitudes surrounding women's issues. The scores can range from 8 to 64, with a lower score indicating that the respondent endorses modern sexist beliefs. In developing the Modern Sexism Scale, Swim et al. distinguished between *old-fashioned* and *modern* sexism. These constructs were derived from attitudinal research on racial prejudice (e.g., *old-fashioned* versus *modern* racism), as parallels are thought to exist between racism and sexism (McConahay, 1986; Sears, 1988; Swim et al., 1995). Swim and colleagues administered their items initially to a sample of
683 undergraduate students and a second sample of 788 undergraduates. Factor analytic results from exploratory and confirmatory analyses supported the investigators' contention that beliefs about women can be separated into two meaningful and distinct components.

Procedure

In classroom settings, participants listened to one vignette. Thus, half of the participating classroom groups listened to the vignette featuring the male executive, and the other half listened to the vignette featuring the female executive. In introducing the study, participants were told that the purpose of the research was to examine how accurate people are in determining an individual's personality style based on a brief "snapshot" of his or her behavior on the job. Immediately prior to listening to the vignette, a brief autobiographical statement about the executive was read to the participants. At the conclusion of the vignette, participants completed the Interpersonal Attraction Inventory first and the MSS second.

Research Design

Each participant participated in one stimulus condition by listening to a vignette featuring either the male or the female stimulus person. This experiment was a 2 (sex of stimulus person) x 2 (sex of participant) x 2 (sexist versus nonsexist) design, with all variables between subjects.

Results

 Separate 2 x 2 analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the three hypotheses in the present study. All tests of significance were conducted at the .05 alpha level. In order to classify participants as sexist or nonsexist, categories were created by
calculating the mean on the MSS (M = 25.65, SD = 5.56). Participants who scored one-half standard deviation or more below the mean were categorized as sexist; participants who scored one-half standard deviation above and higher were categorized as nonsexist.

Hypotheses I predicted that male participants would evaluate the agentic female executive less favorably than the agentic male executive. Hypothesis II predicted that female participants would evaluate the agentic female executive more favorably than the agentic male executive. A 2 (participant sex) x 2 (sex of stimulus person) ANOVA on likeability ratings revealed a significant interaction effect between sex of the participant and sex of the stimulus person, $F(1,268) = 4.74, MSE = 293.19, p < .05$ with participants rating the same-sex executive as more likeable than the opposite-sex executive. Male participants gave higher likeability ratings to the male executive ($M = 90.45, SD = 15.91$) than the female executive ($M = 85.45, SD = 19.59$). Female participants gave higher likeability ratings to the female executive ($M = 87.47, SD = 15.42$) than the male executive ($M = 83.29, SD = 16.92$). Thus, hypotheses I and II were supported.

Hypothesis III predicted that participants of both sexes who endorse modern sexist beliefs would evaluate the female executive less favorably than the male executive. Because of the method used to categorize participants as sexist or nonsexist, as described earlier, data of 113 participants were lost from the original sample. Of the remaining 159 participants, 71 were categorized as sexist and 88 were categorized as nonsexist. In the sexist group, 62 were male (87%) and 9 were female (13%); in the nonsexist group, 61 were female (69%) and 27 were male (31%). A 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (sexist vs. nonsexist) ANOVA was conducted on likeability ratings. No significant differences were found in likeability ratings of the male ($M = 89.06, SD = 18.12$) and female executive ($M$
Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice

by male and female participants who endorse modern sexist beliefs. Thus, Hypothesis III was not supported.

Consistent with past research (Crawford, 1988), participants also indicated the extent to which they would like having the male or female executive as a mentor and as a boss. A 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (sex of stimulus person) ANOVA was conducted on mentor ratings. A significant interaction effect was found between sex of the stimulus person and sex of the participant, with respect to the participants' showing a preference for the same-sex executive as a mentor $F(1,267) = 4.77$, $MSE = 3.28$, $p < .05$. Female participants showed a greater interest in being mentored by female executive ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.81$) than the male executive ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.77$). Male participants showed a greater interest in being mentored by the male executive ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.83$) than the female executive ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.83$). A 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (sex of stimulus person) ANOVA was conducted on boss ratings. A marginally significant interaction effect was found with respect to participants' preference for the male or the female executive as a boss, $F(1,267) = 3.77$, $MSE = 2.02$. Again, this finding was in the direction of male and female participants showing a slightly greater preference for the same-sex executive than the opposite-sex executive as a potential boss. Female participants showed a greater interest in having the female executive as a boss ($M = 2.772$, $SD = 1.38$) than the male executive ($M = 2.309$, $SD = 1.15$). Male participants showed a greater interest in having the male executive ($M = 3.204$, $SD = 1.43$) than the female executive ($M = 2.987$, $SD = 1.60$) as a boss. Further research is needed to determine whether and to what extent this latter finding represents an actual trend.
Discussion

Studies comparing interpersonal evaluations (e.g., likeability) of agentic behaviors of men and women, in which their behavior has been equated, represent a relatively new research paradigm. The present study examined whether agentic leadership behaviors of women are evaluated negatively as compared with the equivalent behaviors in men. To this end, it compared interpersonal evaluations (e.g., likeability ratings) of equivalent agentic behaviors enacted by an executive level man and woman. It also examined the influence of modern sexist beliefs on these ratings.

The Double Bias

Consistent with predictions, data from the present study revealed a double bias, in that each sex gave a higher likeability rating to the same-sex executive. As predicted, male participants gave the male executive higher likeability ratings than his female counterpart whereas female participants gave the female higher ratings than the male executive. These findings are consistent with results obtained by Geller and Hobfoll (1993) and Carli (1990) who found a similar double bias in perceptions of women’s assertive communication. This double bias was also revealed in participants’ preferences for the same-sex executive as a mentor. Again, female participants indicated greater interest in being mentored by the female executive than the male executive; male participants indicated greater interest in being mentored by the male executive than his female counterpart. Results also revealed a marginally significant effect for sex of participant and sex of the stimulus person as regards participants’ preference for the male or the female executive as a boss.
Several inferences may be drawn from the findings of double biases. One plausible explanation is that the climate of today's workplace - insofar as gender politics are concerned -- has resulted in women and men being more comfortable with agentic behaviors when exhibited by superiors, peers, and/or subordinates of their own sex. At the same time, the results raise the question of whether the increased number of women in supervisory and middle/upper management positions has had a "trickle down effect" of sorts, with respect to female workers becoming desensitized to and more accepting of agentic behaviors in other women. Moreover, given the numerous obstacles that professional women have encountered and continue to encounter in the workplace, it is possible that women have developed a "circle the wagons" mentality, with respect to recognizing the need for increased support and camaraderie of other women. The double bias found with female participants showing a preference for the female executive as a mentor, in particular, speaks to this possibility. In a different but related vein, the double bias demonstrated by female participants also supports -- albeit indirectly -- the conclusions of Spence and Buckner (2000), who contended that changes in American society over the past several decades have engendered changes in women's self-conceptions.

Perceptions of Agentic Women

Although results of the present study were consistent with predictions of a double bias with respect to perceived likeability of the male and female executive, the findings do not lend support to gender biases predicted by role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). That is, there was not a statistically significant difference in overall likeability ratings of the agentic male and female
executive. One possible interpretation of this finding relates to the dynamic nature of the female stereotype (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). That is, because women's role in society changed significantly over the 20th century, there has been a corresponding change in stereotypic characteristics ascribed to them. As revealed in Diekman and Eagly's (2000) research, people believe women of the present possess more masculine personality characteristics than women of the past (e.g., assertive, independent, and competitive), and that women of the future will be more masculine than women of the present. Drawing a parallel from Diekman and Eagly's findings to the current results, it is possible that the female executive did not evoke negative reactions from participants because her conduct was not considered outside the realm of normative behavior for women in today's society. Indeed, it may be the case that the finding of nonsignificant differences in evaluations of the male and female executives actually reflects the dynamism of the female stereotype.

The present findings, however, contradict evidence from a small but growing body of research that behavior enacted by women in leadership roles may evoke less favorable reactions than the equivalent behavior in their male counterparts (e.g., Carli, 1990; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Such negative reactions to female leaders may reflect the backlash effect, as described earlier (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). These results are also inconsistent with meta-analytic data suggesting that female leaders occupying male-dominated roles in organizational settings where men outnumber women are devalued, especially by men (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Specifically, Eagly and colleagues examined the relationship between gender and leader evaluation across a wide range of professional settings. Their research revealed that
although ratings of male and female leaders were equally favorable when they used a stereotypically feminine approach to leadership (e.g., democratic or participative), there was an overall, albeit slight, tendency for women leaders to be evaluated more negatively than their male counterparts when they adopted a stereotypically masculine approach (e.g., autocratic, directive).

Also contrary to predictions, no relationship was found between modern sexist beliefs and likeability ratings. There were no statistically significant differences in ratings of the male and female executive by participants who endorsed modern sexist beliefs and those who did not. Not only are these results interesting in light of Eagly et al.'s (1992) findings, they are also surprising given the high number of male participants who endorsed sexist beliefs in the present study. As mentioned previously, this finding may have resulted from certain methodological shortcomings. If the current finding is taken at face value, however, it suggests that women whose behavioral repertoire consists of predominantly agentic traits are not subjected to a backlash effect. It also lends credence to the notion that people who may harbor sexist beliefs do not necessarily engage in discriminatory behaviors toward women. Moreover, it reinforces the argument that as women’s access to male-dominated roles increases, women will be perceived to possess more stereotypically masculine characteristics (Diekman, 2004).

In reconciling the present findings, however, several considerations appear warranted. One consideration pertains to the socialization experiences of young adults coming of age during the third wave of feminism. This is important to bear in mind inasmuch as the sample in the current study consisted of male and female undergraduates (mean age = 20.2 years) in professional fields of study. With the increased presence of
women in the labor market in recent years, it is quite likely that many of the participants
grew up in dual income households and were thus accustomed to a mother working
outside the home. It may follow then that even though young people (men in particular)
in contemporary society may indeed hold more egalitarian attitudes towards women and
women’s roles, many continue to harbor sexist attitudes – attitudes of which they may not
be consciously aware. These beliefs, however, do not necessarily translate into
discriminatory behaviors toward women in nontraditional roles, as manifested, for
example, in an individual perceiving a female executive as less likeable than her male
counterpart. Alternatively, as mentioned previously, this finding may have resulted from
socially desirable responding. Caution therefore should be exercised in interpreting the
results as indicating that agentic women and men are viewed similarly with respect to
perceived likeability.

Methodological Considerations/Limitations

Several features of this study may limit the generalizability of its results. It is
possible that certain aspects of the research design may have prompted participants to
evaluate the male and female executive similarly. First, it is recognized that the present
research was an exploratory effort employing a single-stimulus design with human beings
as stimuli. Discussed at length by Maher (1978), several problems are inherent in such
single-stimulus designs. Two major limitations include: 1) an inability to determine if
obtained differences are due to the validity of a tested hypothesis of the effect of
uncontrolled stimulus variables and 2) an inability to determine if a lack of obtained
differences is due to the presence of an uncontrolled stimulus variable which serves to
either cancel out or artificially inflate the effect of the intended independent variable. In
the present study, efforts were made to control for confounding variables by using audio recordings instead of videotaped vignettes, as used in previous research, and by matching the male and female actors on the most salient aspects of verbal behavior to ensure that their performances were equated. Creating a realistic milieu in which male and female stimulus characters perform identically on various facets of nonverbal behavior was a decidedly more complex undertaking than originally anticipated. Although feedback from independent raters indicated that the goal of equating the actors' behaviors, overall, had been met, it is plausible that some aspect of their respective performances had stimulus value that was unknown and hence uncontrolled.

Second, all data were collected by a female investigator and female research assistants. This situation may have, unwittingly, created an atmosphere eliciting demand characteristics from the participants. Specifically, socially desirable responding on the part of the male participants may have prompted them to evaluate the female executive more favorably than might otherwise have been the case had the data been collected from a male. It is possible that had both males and females participated in the data collection process, an entirely different set of results may have been obtained.

Third, both the measure used to assess sexist beliefs and the procedure employed to classify participants as sexist versus nonsexist may have served to compromise conclusions that can be drawn from the present study. To the first point, it may be that the construct of old-fashioned sexism is more predictive of negative perceptions of agentic women than is modern sexism. Given this possibility, a measure that attempts to detect individual differences along a traditional/nontraditional sex-role attitudinal dimension may have better addressed the research questions at hand, and, correspondingly, been
more illuminating. One such instrument is the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972), as discussed earlier. The AWS has a long history in the research literature and measures attitudes about women behaving in a traditionally masculine manner. Another similar instrument measuring gender-role attitudes is the Sex-Role Egalitarianism Scale (SRES; Beere, King, Beere, & King, 1984; King & King, 1997), which is designed to measure attitudes toward the equality of men and women. In contrast to the AWS, the SRES contains questions that require judgments about both sexes assuming nontraditional roles for their gender. Sex-role egalitarianism is defined by Beere and colleagues (1984) as:

an attitude that causes one to respond to another individual independently of the individual’s sex. One who possesses this attitude believes that the sex of an individual should not influence the perception of an individual’s abilities or the determination of an individual’s rights, obligations, and opportunities (p. 564).

An example of a question on the SRES is “Women should have as much right to go to a bar alone.” It is possible that had an instrument like the AWS or the SRES been used, a more complete, nuanced picture of the relationship between sexist beliefs and evaluations of women leaders would have emerged.

As was touched on earlier, the procedure used to classify participants as either sexist or nonsexist resulted in a significant loss of data (original sample of 272 participants reduced to 159). Of the remaining sample, it is noteworthy that the majority of participants categorized as sexist were male whereas (and not surprisingly) the majority of participants categorized as nonsexist were female. Such a finding is generally consistent with research documenting the nature of gender differences in attitudes toward
the equality of women (as Twenge pointed out, this research relied on a self-report measure of attitudes, therefore socially desirable responding may have accounted for some of the change toward more liberal beliefs) (Twenge, 1997). The current finding is also in line with other research, which shows that women tend to demonstrate more egalitarian scores on gender-role equality scales than do men (King & King, 1993; as cited in Belitsky, Toner, Ali, Yu, Osborne & deRooy, 1996) and is consistent with research documenting a slower progression toward egalitarian attitudes in men than in women (Twenge, 1997). Ultimately, however, the finding of marked gender differences in the distribution of participants' scores on the MSS is significant and raises the question of whether and to what extent social desirability in the present study contributed to nonsignificant differences in ratings of the male and female executive.

Conclusions

In total, results from the current study suggest that equivalently agentic male and female behaviors in work settings are not subjected to a double standard of judgment with respect to perceived likeability. However, the findings of a double bias in the present research, in combination with similar findings by Geller and Hobfoll (1993) and Carli (1990) suggest a growing division in the workplace along gender lines, with respect to individual allegiances to colleagues, bosses, and others. Clearly, such a trend has different implications for men and women. On the downside, a pro-male bias held by men in the workplace may serve to perpetuate the status quo and thus function to further exclude women from the upper echelons. As Geller and Hobfoll (1993) observed, because corporate governance at the most senior levels remains predominantly male, it is "the employees these men deem most similar to themselves who will advance with the
greatest ease” (p. 429). Consequently, women may continue to be at a relative
disadvantage in the workplace despite behaving in ways consistent with highly valued
male gender role traits.

On the upside, although the evidence suggests that vestiges of the “good ol’ boy”
network remain in today’s workplace as regards women in leadership roles, it appears
that women have developed a radically different perspective. The pro-female bias by
women revealed in the current study may signal a new era -- not only in terms of women
identifying with strong, powerful women, on an individual level, but also, and perhaps
more important, with respect to their perceiving women as having attained relatively
equal status with men. Such a mindset, conceivably, could help steel women against the
adverse effects of stereotype threat they may encounter in male-dominated work
environments. Stereotype threat is defined as the “psychological threat one feels
associated with the awareness of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype”
(Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004; p. 152). Indeed, the perception that women’s power base
is increasing could operate as a self-fulfilling prophecy and serve to accelerate the
existing momentum toward gender equity in the workplace (Diekman, 2004).

**Future Directions**

The present study is the first known to directly test the second form of prejudice
predicted by role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau,
2002), by way of comparing likeability ratings of a male and female executive whose
behavior has been equated. It attempted to expose subtle or unconscious prejudices
existing in young adults as reflected in more negative evaluations of a female leader than
her male counterpart. As discussed previously, several methodological problems were
inherent in the research design of the present study, the most notable of which may have been its reliance on self-report measures. Social psychologists have long assumed that attitudes and, to a lesser extent, stereotypes operate in an explicit or conscious manner (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). This assumption is most apparent in the widespread practice of operationalizing attitudes and stereotypes through the use of direct (e.g., instructed self-report) measures (Greenwald & Banaji).

Since its introduction in 1998, the Implicit Association Test (IAT) method (see McGhee & Schwartz, 1998; Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2005) has been used in research examining racial biases and stereotyping (e.g., Ziegert & Hanges, 2005; McConnell & Leibold, 2001; Payne, 2001) and has been used to measure implicit gender beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Rudman & Heppen, 2003; Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Desktop virtual reality simulation is another recently introduced method that has been used to investigate the unconscious nature of racial prejudices (see Greenwald, Oakes, & Hoffman, 2001). The IAT, virtual reality simulation, and other emerging technologies may reflect a trend in the study of social prejudices. Moreover, not only do these innovative methodologies represent a new and groundbreaking research paradigm, they may also afford a fascinating window into the automatic processes underlying covert prejudices toward female leaders.
References


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Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice


Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice


