

10 The persistence of gender inequality in leadership: Still a long way to go?

Clara Kulich and Janine Bosak

10.1 Introduction

In most developed societies, women have gained considerable access to leadership roles over the last century. Since the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam (Article 2 EC), gender equality has become one of the essential tasks of the European Community. Achieving gender balance within leadership ranks has been guided by social and ethical considerations, such as fairness and legality. More recently, research has provided evidence for the “business case” of gender diversity in leadership. Female presence in leadership roles has been found to be correlated with higher corporate performance, greater capitalization of talent, enhanced leadership, team performance and motivation, and other factors (Eagly, 2016). However, these outcomes are contingent upon particular conditions in which diversity can be leveraged to improve organizational outcomes (e.g., for a discussion, see Dawson, Kersley and Natella, 2016; Eagly, 2016; Post and Byron, 2015).

Despite legal interventions and the business case for gender diversity, gender balance in leadership remains a distant goal, with women still being under-represented in positions of power and authority. In Europe, women represent on average only 23.3 percent of managers and merely 5.1 percent of CEOs in the largest publicly listed companies (European Commission, 2016). In the US, women also only represent 5 percent of CEOs in S&P 500 companies but they are slightly better represented at general management level, with 36.6 percent of lower- and mid-level positions held by women (Catalyst, 2016).

To explain the relative absence of women in leadership roles, researchers have considered various, interrelated factors including gendered career preferences, gender bias towards women, and work–family-related barriers (for an overview, see Kossek, Su and Wu, 2007). This chapter adopts a social-psychological perspective and focuses on one critical explanatory factor for the under-representation of women in leadership: the role of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes and prejudice are a consequence of social categorization. In this chapter we will explain how this cognitive process can foster other-directed gender bias (discrimination of female leaders) and self-directed bias (self-limiting behavior by female leaders). Moreover, various contextual conditions can attenuate or reinforce gender bias

in leadership. This chapter aims to (1) explain the complexity of gender stereotypes and female leadership; and (2) highlight research questions that await further examination to efficiently tackle gender imbalance in leadership.

10.2 Barriers to gender equality – gender stereotypes and prejudice in leadership

Stereotypes are beliefs about a set of attributes ascribed to a social group. When a person's social category is salient, the person will be perceived as a group member and as possessing the respective attributes (see Bosak, Asbrock and Meyer, 2018). The cognitive process of social categorization of individuals or roles forms the basis of stereotyping. One important social category in our society is sex. Identifying an individual as a woman or a man activates beliefs about the person's traits and behaviors. These beliefs or gender roles include descriptive expectations about what men and women are like as well as prescriptive and proscriptive beliefs about what they should, or should not, be like (Cialdini and Trost, 1998). The content of these gendered expectations consists of two core dimensions: communion and agency (e.g., Deaux and Lewis, 1984; Heilman, 2012). Communal beliefs pertain to a concern for others and include relational qualities such as sympathetic, kind, affective, and caring, which are typically ascribed to women. In contrast, agentic beliefs pertain to assertion and control and include qualities such as being dominant, assertive, daring, and self-confident, which are typically ascribed to men. We will introduce four theories that explain the origins of gender stereotypes and the motivations underlying these generalizations, and sometimes wrong assumptions, about women and men.

Social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood and Diekmann, 2000) argues that gender stereotypes follow from people's observation of women and men in social roles. In industrialized societies, women are more likely to occupy roles of homemaker and primary caregiver to children, and hold service and caretaking jobs in the paid economy. In contrast, men are more likely to occupy roles of breadwinner and hold full-time jobs in the paid economy, with these roles often pertaining to power, leadership, and physical strength. This differential role occupancy leads perceivers to infer that men are particularly agentic and that women are particularly communal (Cejka and Eagly, 1999), thus creating gender-stereotypical beliefs. Gender stereotypes thus stem from role-bound activities. The attributes required to be successful in these roles "become stereotypic of each sex and facilitate its typical activities" (Diekmann and Eagly, 2000, p. 1172).

Other theories on the development and content of stereotypes focus on status and relational interdependence rather than directly observed behaviors as the origin of stereotypes. According to the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002), beliefs about group members follow from people's perceptions of two dimensions of intergroup relations: competence and warmth. From this perspective, low-status groups are typically described as high in warmth and low in competence, whereas high-

status groups are perceived to be low in warmth and high in competence. Women are typically considered as lower status than men and are therefore seen as warmer and less competent than men. Paradoxically, although people associate more positive and warmth-related qualities with women than men (“women are wonderful” effect; Eagly and Mladinic, 1994), the same qualities can lead to disadvantages in the workplace, where competence-related traits are seen as more critical to professional success.

Stereotyping can also be seen as a result of cognitive processes of categorization. People have a natural tendency to categorize themselves and others into social groups (e.g., gender, age, religion). A person’s sex is mostly the first characteristic that observers notice about others, who are in an instant categorized as male or female (e.g., Fiske, Haslam and Fiske, 1991). According to the cognitive miser perspective, this cognitive process helps to reduce information and thus liberates cognitive capacities to react quickly and process complex situations (Hamilton, Stroessner and Driscoll, 1994). Thus, social categorization is viewed as a necessary cognitive function to deal with a complex world while likely producing bias in cognitive processing.

Another theory explains stereotyping through motivational sources linked to inter-group processes rather than a bias in cognitive functioning. People have a need to be positively distinct and thus tend to compare themselves to others in order to know where they stand in terms of their traits, capacities, and attitudes (Festinger, 1954). However, as posited by social identity theory, individuals not only compare themselves on an inter-individual level but also on a group level, with the aim to achieve a positive and distinct social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). For such social comparisons, it is necessary to categorize oneself and other people. As a result, members of the same social category (e.g., the same sex) will be seen as similar to each other but different from the members of other groups (e.g., opposite sex). This fulfils the need to be distinct on a group level while fulfilling, another basic need – that of belonging.

In conclusion, observations of men and women in social roles, perceptions of status differences between the sexes, social categorization processes, and people’s motivation to see the self positively shape their beliefs about women’s greater communion and warmth and men’s greater agency and competence, respectively. These gender-stereotypical beliefs entail behavioral expectations for the sexes and provide the basis for gender bias in the workplace and self-stereotyping of women and men.

10.2.1 The impact of gender bias on performance and leadership evaluations

Gender stereotypes pose one explanation for women’s challenges in being perceived as a leader and in attaining roles with authority. Although gender stereotypes are less powerful in the presence of social role information (e.g., occupational role; see Bosak, Sczesny and Eagly, 2007, 2012), they remain influential in work settings (e.g.,

Ridgeway, 2001). Gender stereotypes can give rise to prejudice and discrimination against female leaders due to dissimilar beliefs about the female gender role and the leadership role. Communal qualities that are predominantly ascribed to women are perceived to be incongruent with agentic qualities typically ascribed to leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Early research by Schein provided evidence of this masculine construal of leadership and alluded to a think manager–think male phenomenon (see Schein, 2001). Specifically, she found that successful middle managers are perceived as more like men than women in numerous, mainly agentic qualities. In general, this incongruity between beliefs about women and leaders may give rise to decreased expectations of performance and of success for women, which in turn may lead to gender discrimination in selection decisions, performance appraisals, and reward allocations (Heilman, 1983, 2001). According to role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002), the incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles can lead to two forms of prejudice toward female leaders. These two forms include biased perceptions of (1) women's potential for leadership roles due to stereotypical beliefs that men rather than women possess leadership ability; and (2) women's leadership behavior, which is judged less favorably than the same behavior shown by men. The first form of prejudice stems from descriptive gender stereotypes, that is, beliefs about what women and men are like. These beliefs can lower women's chances of accessing leadership roles, as people might believe that women do not have the necessary traits to be good leaders (Heilman, 2012). In contrast, the second form of prejudice stems from prescriptive gender stereotypes, that is, beliefs about what women and men *should* be like. If female leaders violate these prescriptive beliefs by demonstrating agentic behaviors expected in leaders and failing to show communal behaviors expected in women, they can face negative evaluations, interpersonal hostility, and dislike (Heilman and Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004; Rudman and Glick, 2001). Empirical research further demonstrated that both contextual and personal factors affected these prejudice types (see Eagly and Karau, 2002). For example, these types of prejudice might be more or less pronounced as a function of the perceived masculinity of the leader role, the gender of the perceiver, the cultural context, or the salience of the gender role in a given context (e.g., pregnancy, token status).

The perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leader roles also makes it difficult for women to have their achievements and performances acknowledged. An array of research has shown that objectively identical traits and behaviors do not translate into the same evaluations and outcomes for women and men. For example, an extensive meta-analysis of experiments presented applicants with identical job résumés or applications except for the manipulation of applicants' gender. The results showed that, for typically male jobs, men received higher ratings than women, whereas for typically female jobs, women received higher ratings than men (Davison and Burke, 2000). Similarly, participants showed greater devaluation of women compared to men for leadership behaviors in male-dominated leadership roles (see meta-analysis of 61 experiments by Eagly, Makhijani and Klonsky, 1992). Meta-analytic evidence from organizational studies further showed preferential hiring of men (Koch, D'Mello and Sackett, 2015) and fewer promotions for women

than men in various professional roles (Joshi, Son and Roh, 2015), particularly for male-dominated positions. These findings suggest that objectively identical behaviors or resumes will receive different evaluations depending on the stimulus person's gender. As male-dominated and higher status leader roles in particular are construed in masculine, agentic terms, the reviewed evidence demonstrates clear bias against female applicants for such roles and against female leaders.

The performance–reward relationship also tends to be skewed for women. This is reflected in pay–performance relationships, where male directors' compared to female directors' bonus payments tend to be strongly and positively related to company performance (Kulich et al., 2011). Similarly, male but not female doctors' grades from medical school were positively related to their remuneration 15 years later (Evers and Sieverding, 2014). A meta-analysis by Joshi et al. (2015) further revealed gender differences in performance evaluations, sometimes in favor of women and sometimes in favor of men. These differences are unrelated to gender differences found in promotional outcomes, which are systematically showing higher outcomes for men and effect sizes being much larger than for evaluations. Overall, these findings suggest that performance attributions are influenced by the actor's gender, with the same performance unlikely to yield the same outcomes for women and men.

Which factors are responsible for these gender-biased performance evaluations? Performance evaluations depend on the degree to which an actor is deemed responsible for an outcome. One reason for the weak relationship between women's performance and promotional outcomes could stem from an attributional bias. Previous research showed that, for men, successful work performance leads to internal attributions, with men being believed to be especially skilled. In contrast, for women, such performance leads to external attributions, such as luck or effort (Deaux and Emswiler, 1974; Heilman and Guzzo, 1978). The attribution of successful work performance to ability and skills rather than other factors is positively related to promotion decisions (Heilman and Guzzo, 1978). Overall, these findings suggest that women and men face different realities, as objectively identical performance by the sexes is perceived differently and is attributed to different factors, with gender stereotypes underpinning these actions.

Another explanation as to why performance by female leaders does not pay off is the fact that women fulfilling the demands of leadership roles and displaying agentic behaviors might elicit unfavorable evaluations by others and thus not translate into promotions and rewards. According to role incongruity theory, gender stereotypes dictate how women and men ought (not) to behave. Gender atypical behavior, which violates such prescriptions and proscriptions, can lead to severe consequences for the actor. The more women in leader or negotiator roles behave in agentic or dominant ways as required by such roles, the more these women are likely to receive negative evaluations because their behavior deviates from norms of the female gender roles. For example, women negotiating their salaries or acting as confident leaders may be perceived as competent and successful, but at the

same time “unwomanly,” “pushy,” or “demanding,” thereby eliciting hostile reactions (Kray and Thompson, 2005; Rudman et al., 2012). The perceived deviation of female leaders from expectations of their gender role can thus result in social and economic punishments such as being excluded from promotions or salary increases. In summary, women face a double bind. On the one hand, they should avoid appearing too communal in a work context as this undermines competence judgments. On the other hand, when they do behave agentially, they are likely to experience backlash. Perceivers especially engage in such discriminatory behavior when they feel threatened (e.g., being outperformed). This behavior allows them to regain their self-worth and to maintain the status quo.

Gender stereotypes pertaining to agency and competence further give rise to double standards in performance evaluations of women and men. Women are expected to lack agency and competence relative to men. Thus, if women perform well in a male domain they may be held to a stricter standard than men. This implies that they need to display more agency and show better performance than men to be considered competent. For example, in a hiring simulation study (Bosak and Sczesny, 2011), at the screening stage, participants short-listed female and male applicants similarly likely for a leadership position. However, consistent with gender stereotypes, male applicants without previous leadership experience were hired over their female counterparts by male participants at the final stage of the hiring process. Similarly, in the context of status characteristics theory (see Berger et al., 1986), experiments found that, although the behavior of men and women with whom participants interacted was equated, men were judged as more competent than women (see review by Foschi, 2000). These findings suggest that women are disadvantaged by the stricter standard – without being seen as highly able despite performing as well as their male counterparts their potential to be perceived as an effective leader in organizational settings is compromised.

The perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles and associated negative implications for women follow primarily from construing leadership roles in masculine ways, that is, with stronger emphasis on agentic and less emphasis on communal traits. Consequently, men tend to be seen to have what it takes to be a good leader and preferred for leadership roles. However, in particular circumstances, leadership roles foster female appointments. This applies in particular to appointments following scandals, weak or unstable company performance, or other turbulent circumstances (Ryan et al., 2016). Research into the glass cliff phenomenon has analyzed these contexts and shows that female leaders are more likely to attain leadership in situations that are particularly precarious and risky for women’s careers (Ryan and Haslam, 2005). Several archival and experimental studies have illustrated that women are prone to become leaders in troubled organizational contexts – including business and politics, but also other domains such as sport or academia (see Kulich and Ryan, 2017). Gender stereotypes play an important role as they associate women with potentially useful traits for crisis contexts such as, for example, conflict solving or communication skills (Eagly et al., 1992). Moreover, stereotypes associate women with change and men with stabil-

ity (Brown, Diekmann and Schneider, 2011) and women's deviance from the male leader prototype responds to the perceived need for change following the crisis. Women are thus likely selected to signal to investors and clients that change is on the way (Kulich et al., 2015b). Nevertheless, the female appointments to these roles bear significant risks and are not always well intended. Although these female leaders might signal change to observers, expectations about these female appointments are often not accompanied by beliefs that women will improve the situation. Studies show that missions that involve taking the blame, enduring the crisis, and managing people are seen as fitting better with communal than agentic traits (Ryan et al., 2011). However, when a company seeks a leader who is qualified to effectively turn it around, traditional, agentic leaders are more likely to be chosen (Kulich, Iacoviello and Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2018). Regardless of the reasons for their appointment (e.g., strategic choice, scapegoat; Kulich and Ryan, 2017), female leaders occupying glass cliff positions are likely subject to criticism, psychological distress, and a high risk of failure. In conclusion, the female-crisis fit is not explained by perceptions of women's leader potential in such contexts but rather female leader appointments are tools for decision-makers to reach strategic aims, or to unload the blame for the crisis.

In summary, the perceived incongruity between leadership roles and the female gender role often results in gender bias and prejudice toward female leaders. This bias manifests itself such that women's performances and contributions are not perceived and acknowledged in the same way as their male counterparts'. In circumstances where this incongruity is lessened, female leaders break through the glass ceiling but they are selected for different reasons than men (Kulich et al., 2018) and they more likely face risks of failure than men. The conditions under which the perceived incongruity is lessened, as well as the reasons, await future research.

10.2.2 The impact of self-stereotyping on performance and career choices

It is critical to acknowledge that gender biases not only affect those judging women but also women themselves. Self-stereotyping in terms of gender is particularly relevant for women, whereas men are less preoccupied by gender as a self-defining dimension (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1991). The stereotypicality of context plays an important role. Leadership contexts are inherently masculine, thereby making gender notoriously salient, which in turn has an impact on women's behaviors, as well as their career preferences and choices. Several social-psychological mechanisms drive competent women to under-perform.

A well-studied phenomenon is stereotype threat, which shows that under-performance and demotivation in stereotyped group members (e.g., women) is likely when a negative stereotype (e.g., women are bad leaders) is activated in a relevant situation (e.g., leadership context; see Hoyt and Murphy, 2016). For example, Davies, Spencer and Steele (2005) found in an experiment that women, but not men, exposed to female-stereotypic (versus neutral) content in television commercials,

expressed lower aspirations for a leadership role than a non-leadership role. Similarly, Gupta and Bhawe (2007) showed that threatening women with the stereotypical belief of greater entrepreneurship among men than women reduced female business students' entrepreneurial intentions. Research illustrated that particularly women who are competent and for whom the performance domain is important for the self-concept are affected by stereotype threat. Cues that might trigger stereotype threat and the subsequent decrease in performance can range from explicit exposure to gender stereotypes (e.g., informing participants that the experimenter is sexist) to more subtle activation (e.g., asking someone to perform in an area known to be stereotyped or serving as a single representative of one's social group). In the workplace, female leaders might experience threat particularly when moving into leadership roles in industries and organizations where women are under-represented, and when being confronted with organizational cultures that emphasize 'the virtues of competition or innate brilliance for success' (Hoyt and Murphy, 2016, p. 390), thus making gender chronically salient.

Under-performance can further be the consequence of women being afraid of negative reactions. As backlash research has shown, women can expect social and economic punishment for gender role-incongruent behaviors (Rudman et al., 2012). The backlash avoidance model predicts that women anticipate the social costs that "non-feminine" agentic behavior that violates prescriptive or proscriptive stereotypes may cause in evaluations. To save inter-relational harmony and avoid being perceived as "pushy" and "too demanding," women likely play down good performance and competence. Thus, they prefer not to negotiate better pay, or forego a promotion, in order to escape social disapproval (Kray and Thompson, 2005; Rudman et al., 2012). For example, in a dyadic negotiation simulation study, Amanatullah and Morris (2010) found that in situations where women bargained on their own behalf, they anticipated that assertiveness would evoke incongruence with female gender norms and thus backlash from the other party. Hence, when bargaining on their own behalf, these women showed less assertive behavior and fewer competing tactics, which in return led to lower outcomes. In contrast, when women bargained on behalf of others, which is congruent with the female gender role, they achieved better outcomes as they did not expect incongruity evaluations.

Another contributing factor to women's under-representation in leadership is self-limiting career behaviors. For example, in their study of police officers, Gaston and Alexander (1997) found that although both genders had the same career ambitions at the beginning of their careers, three years into their service men were more likely to ask for promotion. Such a decrease in women's ambitions is likely due to experiences of not fitting in with a typically male environment. In her lack-of-fit model, Heilman (1983) suggested that an individual's own expectations for success or failure are determined by the individual's attributes and the job requirements. Moreover, role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002) argues that prejudice can influence the behavior of group members and initiate self-regulatory processes. To the extent that women have internalized their feminine gender role, they will experience a stronger lack-of-fit with the masculine sex-typed leadership role

and are, therefore, less likely to be attracted to and inclined to pursue such roles. These gender-stereotypical beliefs are learned through socialization. Indeed, female management students exposed to a fictitious advertisement for a leadership position judged themselves as less suitable for the position than men, and their lower levels of self-ascribed agency, compared to men's, mediated this effect (Bosak and Sczesny, 2008).

Such stereotypical self-perceptions and judgments can be further reinforced by the context, such as, for example, exposure to benevolent sexist behavior. Sexism in its traditional form is openly discriminatory and builds on negative stereotypes about women. It questions women's competences and subordinates them to men. Discrimination and the salience of negative stereotypes (stereotype threat) can indeed hold women back from pursuing a career and aspiring to leadership positions, leading them to opt out of organizations and to seek other ways to accomplish their career ambitions (Kossek, Su and Wu, 2017). However, open hostile sexism is considered illegitimate nowadays and recent research indeed shows that it likely induces resistance in women. For example, women's reactance to hostile sexism has been shown to lead to better performance in negotiations (Kray et al., 2004) and to higher leadership aspirations because such discriminatory treatment creates anger and an endeavor to demonstrate their competence (Ofosu et al., 2018). More subtle forms of sexism can also be harmful. For example, benevolent sexism builds on positive stereotypes, inducing, for example, paternalistic ideologies, which demand that women should be cared for and protected by men (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Although positive in nature on first sight, such protective behavior restricts women's decisions and subordinates them to men. This behavior is often not recognized as sexist by women and even perceived as nice and helpful. Benevolent sexism may thus indeed undermine women's performance and self-esteem (e.g., Dardenne, Bollier and Dumont, 2007). Moreover, an experimental study revealed that women who face benevolently sexist men in a leadership context, self-ascribe more relational and less agentic traits, thereby undermining their leadership emergence (Barreto et al., 2010).

Despite the perceived incongruity between leadership roles and the female gender role, certain contexts might increase women's aspirations to pursue leadership roles. In general, statistics on the percentages of women in leadership roles in various countries show that women's power deficit is particularly pronounced in the for-profit sector, compared to the non-profit sector (Catalyst, 2017; GuideStar, 2016). These observations contributed to the distinction of public good (PG) leaders who serve the broader social community from private profit (PP) leaders who focus on producing monetary profits for stakeholders. According to the goal congruity framework (Diekmann et al., 2017) different leadership roles can afford different life goals of women and men, with PG more likely to afford communal and PP roles more likely to afford agentic goals. Following this rationale, Eagly, Kinahan and Bosak (2018) showed that these differences in goal affordance foster gendered self-selection into different types of leadership roles, with women preferring PG roles (over PP roles) more than men.

A final factor that may foster or undermine female leadership is organizations' diversity culture. One of the consequences of discriminatory experiences in male-dominated organizational cultures is the distancing of senior women from junior women, a phenomenon called "queen bee." This phenomenon has been argued to be particularly strong for senior women as they enter more masculine environments in which discrimination becomes more likely. Looking at the effect of professional mobility on women's attitudes, a study comparing female senior and junior doctors found that female senior doctors were less concerned with female junior doctors' problems, they perceived lower gender discrimination, and held stronger meritocratic beliefs (Kulich et al., 2015a). Overall, it seems that particular low gender identification and feelings of being discriminated against lead women to report being more agentic and more committed to their careers than women in general (see Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers, 2016). Indeed, junior women report less support from female (compared to male) supervisors in diversity-adverse compared to diversity-friendly contexts (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2017). Such ingroup-distancing behaviors are thus a coping strategy within a discriminatory work environment. On the one hand, professionally mobile women align their attitudes with those of the (male) management. On the other hand, they create a distance from, or even barriers to other women, thus reinforcing the gender divide in leadership.

In summary, the incongruity between leadership roles and the female gender role is also evident in female leaders' self-perceptions and this form of self-stereotyping can limit female leaders' behaviors and choices. Certain contexts (e.g., stereotype threat; sexist environment) can make gender stereotypes more salient and in doing so, can undermine female leadership emergence. In contrast, contexts that are more inclusive and aligned with the female gender role can help women to embrace leadership and develop their potential.

10.3 Achieving gender balance in leadership: Still some way to go

This chapter has shown that gender stereotypes are still alive, pervasive, and influential in fostering gender inequality in leadership. To address and overcome gender inequality, it is critical to understand both – the barriers that hold women back from rising to the top and the challenges that women are confronted with in leadership roles (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Ellemers et al., 2012). Blatant sexism and respective discrimination are easy to detect and can be confronted with legislation. While overt sexism is no longer acceptable in work settings, the presence of gender stereotypes can, however, significantly affect decision-makers' judgment as well as women's own behavior. As long as gender stereotypes persist, legislation will not be sufficient to reduce or even eliminate gender inequality in leadership. Research shows that stereotypes about the different characteristics of women and men have not changed over time (Haines, Deaux and Lofaro, 2016). However, as a meta-analytic review of studies on the masculine construal of leadership suggested, the association of leadership and masculine characteristics has decreased

over time. Despite this decrease, leaders continue to be perceived as more like men than women (Koenig et al., 2011), particularly in male-dominated and higher status leader roles. It is therefore imperative for researchers and practitioners alike to consider the context in which they study gender stereotypes. In workplace and leadership settings, gender-stereotypical expectations tend to be more context bound for women than for men who have more behavioral leeway (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2006) as long as they do not violate status norms (Bosak et al., 2016).

Increasing the number of female leaders is often seen as the key intervention to reach gender equality in the workplace. For example, social role theory suggests that increasing the number of female leaders and women in the workplace might foster a change of gender stereotypes over time (Eagly, 1987, 2017). Indeed, in their study of dynamic stereotypes, Bosak and Sczesny (2011) found that participants' stereotypes about women, men and leaders were malleable. They showed an erosion of the perceived incongruity between leaders and women, because of a projected increase of women in male-dominated roles over time. At the same time, higher female representation in leadership can also lead to the opposite effect when women are predominately solicited for work and leadership roles in communal domains. Moreover, although glass cliffs lead to more female leadership appointments, they do not necessarily create favorable work and career conditions for the women affected. It is therefore critical to further analyze the quality and the context of female leader appointments as these appointments might include new hidden barriers underlying the visible increase in female leaders.

In summary, a larger number of female leaders and women in counter-stereotypical professions can yield positive effects for other women at work, such as more equality in promotion rates (see Kunze and Miller, 2017). Successful women may also act as role models who make women feel more empowered and facilitate their performance (e.g., Latu et al., 2013) but who also buffer the negative effects of stereotype threat. Greater representation of women in professional and management roles can thus foster gender equality, but only in certain conditions. Precarious glass cliff positions, backlash experienced by agentic women in leadership roles, and "queen bee" behaviors continue to pose challenges to female leadership success. A positive climate for gender inclusion appears to be key to (1) successfully leverage women's talents; (2) ensure gender fairness in selection processes; and (3) achieve high levels of workplace support for women (Kossek et al., 2017).

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