



The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership:
Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't



ABOUT CATALYST

Catalyst is the leading research and advisory organization working with businesses and the professions to build inclusive environments and expand opportunities for women at work. As an independent, nonprofit membership organization, Catalyst conducts research on all aspects of women's career advancement and provides strategic and web-based consulting services globally. With the support and confidence of member corporations and firms, Catalyst remains connected to business and its changing needs. In addition, Catalyst honors exemplary business initiatives that promote women's leadership with the annual Catalyst Award. With offices in New York, San Jose, Toronto, and Zug, Catalyst is consistently ranked No. 1 among U.S. nonprofits focused on women's issues by The American Institute of Philanthropy.

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ALSO BY CATALYST

Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed (2005)

The first in a series on stereotyping, this report examined perceptions of women’s and men’s leadership among very senior U.S. managers—more than 30 percent of study participants were CEOs. The study showed that managers perceived that there were in fact distinct differences between women and men leaders. For example, respondents—both women and men—perceived that more women leaders than men leaders were effective at “caretaker” behaviors such as supporting others and rewarding subordinates. However, they perceived that more men leaders than women leaders were effective at “take charge” behaviors such as delegating and problem-solving. Notably, the study finds these perceptions are not supported by research on actual leadership behavior, which finds that gender is not a reliable predictor of how a person will lead. This study was conducted in collaboration with Theresa Welbourne, Ph.D., at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan.

Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders (2006)

The second report in the series on stereotyping examined perceptions of women’s and men’s leadership among Western European managers. The study compared managers’ perceptions from four groups of culturally similar countries—Anglo (United Kingdom, United States), Germanic (the Netherlands, Germany), Latin (France, Italy, Spain), and Nordic (Denmark, Norway, Sweden)—and found that in every group managers held stereotypic perceptions of women’s and men’s leadership. Further, the findings of this research suggest that these perceptions bear some striking similarities across cultures. Importantly, in some cultures, stereotypic perceptions discredited the effectiveness of women leaders at highly valued leadership attributes.

COMING SOON FROM CATALYST

The fourth addition to the series on stereotyping will focus on practices for combating stereotypic bias. As indicated in the previous studies in the series, stereotypic perceptions of women’s and men’s leadership are pervasive both in the United States and Western Europe and have significant potential to undermine women leaders. However, because stereotypic bias is often difficult to detect, removing this critical barrier to women’s advancement is a considerable challenge for organizations. This study will offer direction for organizations on how to meet this challenge focusing specifically on human resources practices. In particular, the study will explore how performance evaluation processes can be structured to minimize gender bias and enable organizations to tap the best leadership talent—both women and men.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Foreword: A Punishing Dilemma	1
Chapter 1: Introduction and Key Learnings	3
Chapter 2: Men as Default Leaders	9
Chapter 3: Polarized Perceptions (Predicament 1)	13
Chapter 4: Higher Standards but Lower Rewards (Predicament 2)	16
Chapter 5: Competent but Not Liked (Predicament 3)	19
Chapter 6: Stereotypes and Women’s Double Bind: Individual and Organizational Strategies	22
Chapter 7: Introduction to Catalyst’s Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument	31
Acknowledgments	35
Appendix 1: Study Methodology	36
Appendix 2: Construction of Catalyst’s Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument	39
Catalyst Board of Directors	



Double bind n (1) A psychological impasse created when contradictory demands are made of an individual...so that no matter which directive is followed, the response will be construed as incorrect. (2) A situation in which a person must choose between equally unsatisfactory alternatives; a punishing and inescapable dilemma.¹

We all know the feeling of being trapped in a double bind—that nagging sense that whatever you do, you can do no right. Few know what that feels like more than women in corporate management.

As Catalyst research confirms, despite the numerous business contributions of women leaders, men are still largely seen as the leaders by default. It's what researchers call the "think-leader-think-male" mindset.² As "atypical leaders," women are often perceived as going against the norms of leadership or those of femininity. Caught between impossible choices, those who try to conform to traditional—i.e., masculine—leadership behaviors are damned if they do, doomed if they don't.

Gender stereotypes can become a powerful yet invisible threat to women leaders and the organizations in which they work and lead. The impact of stereotypic bias is often underestimated. Some argue that stereotypes must reflect real differences in the behavior of men and women, or else they would not exist. But research shows that stereotypes do not accurately represent reality; they misrepresent it.³ Others might argue that belaboring the issue of stereotypes dilutes the focus from inroads already forged. But that progress has been remarkably slow.

How can individuals and companies accelerate the closing of the corporate leadership gap? No matter how high women's levels of preparation and aptitude for corporate leadership roles, no matter how many women are promoted, if companies fail to acknowledge and address the impact of stereotypic bias, they will lose out on top female talent. By creating a false dichotomy between men's and women's characteristics, stereotypes narrow the range of effective behaviors within the workplace overall.

¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

² Crystal Hoyt, "Women Leaders: The Role of Stereotype Activation and Leadership Self-Efficacy," *Kravis Leadership Institute Leadership Review* (Fall 2002) http://www.leadershipreview.org/2002fall/article2_fall_2002.asp; Virginia E. Schein, "A Global Look at Psychological Barriers to Women's Progress in Management," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 27, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 4-13; Sabine Sczesny, "A Closer Look beneath the Surface: Various Facets of the Think-Manager-Think-Male Stereotype," *Sex Roles*, vol. 49, no. 7/8 (October 2003): p. 353-363.

³ Through the extensive research on gender differences and similarities, we learn that women and men are actually more similar than different and that there is more variation within each group (women and men) than there is between women and men. See, for example, Janet S. Hyde, "The Gender Similarity Hypothesis," *American Psychologist*, vol. 60, no. 6 (September 2005): p. 581-592; Elisabeth Aries, *Men and Women in Interaction: Reconsidering the Differences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

In today's globally competitive marketplace, organizations cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the talent pool, nor place constraints on what counts as effective behaviors. To ensure that vital leadership talent is effectively assessed and deployed, companies must address stereotypic bias head on. We believe that organizations *can* help change how women leaders in their organizations are perceived. Through qualitative analyses of women and men managers' open-ended comments and in-depth interviews, we document the predicaments women leaders face, expose the stereotypes that create the double bind, look at the strategies successful women leaders use to deal with these stereotypes, and offer a tool for organizations to build awareness of how stereotypes influence work outcomes.

Ultimately, it is not women's leadership styles that need to change but the structures and perceptions that must keep up with today's changing times. Companies versed in negotiating complex social and financial interactions must help employees see that stereotypes, like first impressions, are mutable—and not truths cast in stone.



“Becoming a leader depends on acting like a leader, but even more crucially, it depends on being seen by others as a leader.” – Natalie Porter and Florence L. Geis⁴

NUMBERS-AT-A-GLANCE⁵

50.6

Percent of all management and professional positions held by women in 2005.

1.8

Percent of *Fortune* 500 CEOs who were women in 2006.

0.7

Percent by which women’s representation in *Fortune* 500 companies increased between 2002 and 2005.

AN INVISIBLE BARRIER TO WOMEN’S ADVANCEMENT

Although women constitute almost half of the U.S. workforce and hold more than 50 percent of management and professional positions, they make up only 2 percent of *Fortune* 500 CEOs. The underrepresentation of women at the top occurs across occupations and industries, and regardless of how many women occupy management positions within the organization.⁶ The situation is even more difficult for women of color. In 2005, only 5 percent of all managers, professionals, and related occupations were African-American women; Latinas constituted 3.3 percent, and Asian women 2.6 percent.⁷ In Europe the numbers are slightly different, but show a similar pattern. In 2005, women (regardless of race/ethnicity) represented 44 percent of the workforce, 30 percent of managerial positions, and only 3 percent of company CEOs.⁸

⁴ Natalie Porter and Florence L. Geis, “Women and Nonverbal Leadership Cues: When Seeing is Not Believing” in Clara Mayo and Nancy Henley, eds., *Gender and Nonverbal Behavior* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1981): p. 39-61.

⁵ Catalyst, *2005 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners of the Fortune 500* (2006).

⁶ Prudence LaBeach Pollard, “A Critical Analysis of the Glass Ceiling Phenomenon: A Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia Entry” (April 2005) http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=871; Jodi S. Goodman, Dail L. Fields, and Terry C Blum, “Cracks in the Glass Ceiling: In What Kind of Organizations Do Women Make It to the Top?” *Group and Organization Management*, vol. 28, no. 4 (December 2003): p. 475-501.

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, “Employed and Experienced Unemployed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, Annual Average 2005,” unpublished data.

⁸ European Commission, Database – Social and Economic Domain Decision-Making in the Top 50 Publicly Quoted Companies, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/women_men_stats/out/measures_out438_en.htm (graph name “Decision-making in the Top 50 Publicly Quoted Companies”).

A growing body of research points to stereotyping as one of the key contributors to this gender gap in corporate leadership.⁹ Catalyst research finds that women themselves consistently view gender stereotypes as a significant barrier to advancement. Two recent reports expose the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes in U.S. and European businesses by showing that top managers often hold misleading beliefs about women’s and men’s leadership capabilities. In *Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed*, Catalyst surveyed 296 corporate leaders, 34 percent of whom were CEOs, and asked them to rate how effective men and women are at different essential leadership behaviors. In *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders*, we analyzed the responses of 935 European leaders from ten different countries, 42 percent of whom were top management (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the sample). Both studies found a pattern of stereotypic judgments in participants’ evaluations of women leaders.

The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership is the third report in this series. Here, we examine respondents’ stereotypic perceptions in depth by further analyzing the open-ended questions from the two previous Catalyst studies. The investigation focuses in particular on gender stereotyping. Our qualitative analyses allow us to explore the contours of the misleading beliefs documented in the previous studies using data from more than 1,200 leaders. We further supplement these data with in-depth interviews with 13 women working at a large U.S. headquartered global company, all of whom held leadership positions at the time of the interviews. We show how these perceptions, which stem from broad-based cultural stereotypes about gender, can create difficult predicaments for women leaders. Catalyst findings strongly suggest that, on account of stereotypes, women’s leadership talent is routinely underestimated and underutilized in organizations—and organizations need women’s talent in order to succeed.

Stereotype n (1) A conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image. (2) One that is regarded as embodying or conforming to a set image or type. (3) *Printing* A metal printing plate cast from a matrix molded from a raised printing surface, such as type.¹⁰

STEREOTYPES 101

Stereotypes can be defined as “cognitive shortcuts” or generalizations that we use to make sense of our complex social world. These shortcuts help us differentiate among different groups of people and, in the case of gender stereotypes, between women and men. Gender stereotypes are widely shared within our culture. This can be problematic as they tend to over-simplify reality, especially when it comes to complex social behaviors. Gender stereotypes emphasize “natural differences” between women and men but the empirical literature tells us that gender differences are far from natural. Through the extensive research on gender differences and similarities, we learn that women and men are actually more similar than different and that there is more variation among women and among men than there is between women and men. By creating false *perceptions* that women and men are “planets apart,” however, stereotyping results in women being overlooked for the top jobs—no matter how strong their actual credentials.

⁹ Gender stereotypes often intersect with other social stereotypes, such as race, ethnicity, and class. For the purpose of this study, however, Catalyst focuses specifically on gender stereotypes.

¹⁰ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.

HOW DO STEREOTYPES INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN BUSINESS?

When Catalyst asked senior-level executives in the United States and Europe to independently rate the effectiveness of women and men leaders on a number of key leadership behaviors (see Table 1), both men and women respondents cast women as better at stereotypically feminine “caretaking skills” such as supporting and encouraging others. Both women and men asserted that men excel at more conventionally masculine “taking charge” skills such as influencing superiors and problem solving, characteristics that previous research has shown to be essential components of leadership responsibility.¹¹ Research shows that these perceptions are even more salient when women seek to become leaders or advance in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as engineering and law. In these contexts, women are viewed as even more “out of place” and have to put considerable effort into proving otherwise.¹²

Table 1: Key Leadership Behaviors from Previous Research¹³

Consulting Checking with others before making plans or decisions that affect them.	Networking Developing and maintaining relationships with others who may provide information or support resources.
Delegating Authorizing others to have substantial responsibility and discretion.	Planning Designing objectives, strategies, and procedures for accomplishing goals and coordinating with other parts of the organization in the most efficient manner.
Influencing Upward Affecting others in positions of higher rank.	Problem-Solving Identifying, analyzing, and acting decisively to remove impediments to work performance.
Inspiring Others Motivating others toward greater enthusiasm for and commitment to work by appealing to emotion, values, logic, and personal example	Rewarding Providing praise, recognition, and financial remuneration when appropriate.
Intellectually stimulating Exciting the abilities of others to learn, perceive, understand, or reason.	Role modeling Serving as a pattern standard of excellence to be imitated.
Mentoring Facilitating the skill development and career advancement of subordinates.	Supporting Encouraging, assisting, and providing resources for others.
Monitoring Evaluating the performance of subordinates and the organizational unit for progress and quality.	Team-Building Encouraging positive identification with the organization unit, encouraging cooperation and constructive conflict resolution.

¹¹ Mark D. Agars, “Reconsidering the Impact of Gender Stereotypes on the Advancement of Women in Organizations,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 2 (June 2004): p. 103-111; Alice H. Eagly, Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt, and Marloes L. van Engen, “Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-analysis Comparing Women and Men,” *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 129, no. 4 (July 2003): p. 569-591.

¹² Catalyst, *Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005). Eagly et al.; David J. Maume Jr., “Occupational Segregation and Career Mobility of White Men and Women,” *Social Forces*, vol. 77, no. 4 (June 1999): p. 1433-1459; David J. Maume Jr., “Glass Ceilings and Glass Escalators: Occupational Segregation and Race and Sex Differences in Managerial Positions,” *Work and Occupations*, vol. 26, no. 4 (November 1999): p. 483-509; Sczesny.

¹³ Table 1 displays key leadership behaviors from previous research, as described in Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (2006): p. 13. For a more detailed background on the two studies summarized here, see Catalyst, *Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005) and Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (2006).

HOW DO STEREOTYPES HINDER WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT?

These perceptions inhibit women's advancement because "taking-charge" skills and stereotypically masculine behaviors, such as assertiveness and competition, are often seen as prerequisites for top-level positions.¹⁴ To the extent that people still equate stereotypically masculine behaviors and traits with effective leadership, men are cast as "natural" leaders, while women constantly must prove that they can lead. Also, partly because of the perceived incongruity of women in leadership, gender stereotypes create different standards with which to evaluate women compared to men in similar positions.

Because men tend to evaluate women leaders more harshly than women, gender stereotypes are especially problematic in occupations where men outnumber women and men's views predominate.¹⁵ The perception held by male managers that women are relatively poor problem-solvers, for example, can potentially undermine women's interpersonal influence, making it more difficult for women leaders to persuade subordinates to follow their plans and directions.¹⁶

Stereotypes create additional misleading perceptions when it comes to leadership. Inherent in gender stereotypes is the assumption that masculine and feminine characteristics (including "taking-care" and "taking-charge" behaviors) are mutually exclusive. While these perceptions target the "outsiders"—women leaders—to a larger extent than they do men leaders, they in fact affect all leaders. By creating a false dichotomy between women's and men's characteristics, stereotypes place both women and men leaders in relatively narrow categories of style and behaviors while limiting the range of effective behaviors within the workplace overall.

Because stereotypes create an invisible barrier to women's advancement, they are often difficult to combat or even detect. Another challenge consists of stereotypes' prescriptive nature: people believe that men and women should behave in ways that are gender-consistent; the prescriptive nature of gender stereotypes prevents change by making it difficult for women and men to go against norms that enable them to "fit in" for fear of social rejection and of all the negative consequences it might entail.¹⁷

Stereotypical perceptions create several predicaments for women leaders—all of which put women in a double bind. Women who lead are left with limited and unfavorable options no matter which way they go, no matter how they might choose to behave as leaders. Essentially, women leaders are "damned if they do and doomed if they don't" meet gender-stereotypic expectations.

¹⁴ Sczesny.

¹⁵ Sczesny. Catalyst, *Women "Take Care," Men "Take Charge": Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005); Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions, Stereotyping Of Western European Business Leaders* (2006).

¹⁶ Research shows that interpersonal influence is important in work relationships with both subordinates and peers. E.g., Linda L. Carli, "Gender and Social Influence," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 725-741.

¹⁷ Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau, "Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders," *Psychological Review*, vol. 109, no. 3 (July 2002): p. 573-598; Madeline E. Heilman, Aaron S. Wallen, Daniella Fuchs, and Melinda M. Tamkins, "Penalties for Success: Reactions to Women Who Succeed at Male Gender-types Tasks," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 89, no. 3 (June 2004): p. 416-427.

Double-Bind Dilemmas¹⁸

In this investigation, Catalyst examines three specific predicaments—or double-bind dilemmas—in depth.¹⁹ According to our data, women leaders face:

- Extreme Perceptions: Too Soft, Too Tough, and Never Just Right
- The High Competence Threshold: Women Leaders Face Higher Standards and Lower Rewards Than Men Leaders
- Competent but Disliked: Women Leaders Are Perceived As Competent or Likable, but Rarely Both

How do women leaders deal with these predicaments? Are their strategies effective? Are women leaders themselves attentive to the barriers that stereotypes can create for them and for other women? These are among the questions we address.

Regardless of whether women leaders are aware of the binds they are in, solutions ultimately rest with both individuals and organizations. In this report, we identify the structural and organizational characteristics that influence individual perceptions of leadership. We show companies how to minimize the effects of gender stereotypes in their daily practices. And we offer a tool for building awareness of and addressing bias.

To unravel the three predicaments, we start by examining a series of more basic questions:

- What attributes do participants use when asked to describe effective leaders?
- In what ways do gender stereotypes influence perceptions of effective leadership?
- Do stereotypes get in the way of a fair evaluation of women leaders' behavior compared to men leaders?

In sum, our analyses will show that, when it comes to leadership behaviors, stereotypes may cause organizations to narrow the range of effective behaviors for *both* women and men.

¹⁸ Communication professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson also talks, more broadly, about the double binds that make it difficult for women to achieve positions of power in our culture. Specifically, Jamieson identifies the following five “double binds” for women: Womb/Brain, Silence/Shame, Sameness/Difference, Femininity/Competence, and Aging/invisibility. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ See Appendix 1 for a detailed description of the research methodology for this study.

KEY LEARNINGS IN THIS REPORT

PREDICAMENT 1

Extreme Perceptions – Too Soft, Too Tough, and Never Just Right

Respondents' comments revealed the following about what women are like as leaders:

- When women act in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes, they are viewed as less competent leaders (too soft).
- When women act in ways that are inconsistent with such stereotypes, they're considered as unfeminine (too tough).

PREDICAMENT 2

The High Competence Threshold – Women Leaders Face Higher Standards and Lower Rewards Than Men Leaders

Respondents' comments revealed that women leaders are subjected to higher competency standards. On top of doing their job, women:

- Have to prove that they can lead, over and over again
- Have to manage stereotypical expectations constantly (e.g., too tough-too soft)

PREDICAMENT 3

Competent but Disliked – Women Leaders Are Perceived As Competent or Likable, but Rarely Both

Respondents' comments revealed that when women behave in ways that are traditionally valued for leaders (e.g., assertively), they tend to be seen as competent, but also not as effective interpersonally as women who adopt a more stereotypically feminine style.

STRATEGIES FOR INDIVIDUALS

When asked about the strategies that they use to deal with double-bind dilemmas, women leaders recommend using one or more of the following strategies:

1. Talk openly about the issue. Whether it is an inequitable situation, an inappropriate comment, or a statement that unfairly generalizes about women's abilities, bring it out in the open.
2. Show them otherwise. Become visible, do not be afraid to showcase your skills and accomplishments, seek high-level visible assignments, speak up at meetings.
3. Use clear and effective communication. Let people know what you want (e.g., assignments, aspirations, career development) and ask a lot of questions.
4. Minimize the issue. Shift the attention away from gender.

STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZATIONS

To confront stereotypes in the workplace, both individuals and organizations need to take action. Individual strategies will not work without a commitment from the organization. Companies can use the following strategies to address these double-bind dilemmas:

1. Provide women leaders and other employees tools and resources to increase awareness of women leaders' skills and of the effects of stereotypic perceptions.
2. Assess their work environment to identify in what ways they are at risk of stereotypic bias.
3. Create and implement innovative work practices that target stereotypic bias. These practices can be particularly effective when they address specific areas of risk.



“Women are not naturally effective. They often adapt their behavior...[and] have a tendency to adopt some male behaviors” (Dutch Woman, age 41-45, middle management)

The perception that women do not fit the image of the ideal leader is still pervasive in business.²⁰ Because men are seen as prototypical leaders, women’s leadership behaviors are evaluated against a masculine leadership norm. In such a scenario, women can rarely measure up. Even when “feminine” leadership behaviors are perceived positively—such as when women are complimented for being team-oriented and sensitive to others’ concerns—women’s styles are still labeled as “unique” and “different” from the (presumed) leadership norm.²¹

Although research suggests that leadership styles largely vary depending on organizational contexts and on the specific situation, individuals tend to believe that they are based on inherent and unchangeable characteristics.²² Accordingly, women are often perceived as “atypical,” even when they express behaviors that would be considered “normal” if exhibited by a man in a leadership position.

Through an analysis of open-ended responses from Catalyst survey data,²³ this chapter describes how business executives evaluate women’s leadership behaviors based on masculine standards and what it means for women to be perceived as going against the norm.

Man = Leader²⁴

Many respondents believed that leadership skills come “naturally” to men leaders or that men possess “inherent” leadership tendencies. This belief is reflected in statements such as:

Men have a natural tendency for leadership. (Italian man, age 56-60, top management)

[Men] trust in themselves. This creates a more relaxed and natural leadership (Danish man, age 31-35, middle management)

Men are much better at many of these [leadership] skills. (U.S. woman, age 45-54, top management/core position)

Men can be naturally tough and very results oriented. (British man, age 36-40, middle management)

²⁰ Hoyt; Eagly and Karau; Catalyst, *Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005); Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (2006).

²¹ Tracey T. Manning, “Gender, Managerial Level, Transformational Leadership and Work Satisfaction,” *Women in Management Review*, vol. 17, no. 5 (2002): p. 207-216.

²² Manning.

²³ Catalyst, *Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005); Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (2006).

²⁴ The so-called “think-manager think-male” bias is well-established within the socio-psychological literature. See Schein; Sczesny.

Woman ≠ Leader

If men are the “typical” leader, and women are perceived in opposition to men, then women become “atypical.” It follows that women leaders will always be seen as less effective than men leaders. To be effective—or so the perception goes—women would have to change their natural tendencies. Underlying this perception is the assumption that, when it comes to leadership style, men’s behaviors are essential to effective leadership.²⁵

Even when women do “adapt” and act similarly to their men colleagues, their efforts often go unrewarded (as we discuss in more detail in Chapter 3) and their behavior is frowned upon. A German woman respondent (age 41-45, non-managerial position), for example, criticized two women leaders she knew because they were trying to be better than men. These women were perceived as acting like their men colleagues. In these circumstances, women are seen to be violating gender role expectations, as the following statements suggest:

[W]omen were so obsessed with trying to out-perform their male counterparts that they often neglected the needs of their team. (U.S. man, age 35-44, professional non-managerial position)

Sometimes I get the impression they are playing “tough” although this is not their natural preference. This can be perceived as artificial and a bit unnerving, especially when they are quite caring and soft in private. (British man, age 36-40, middle management)

My experience with women leaders is that they are “turf tenders” because they have had to adopt that behavior to get where they are and do not know how to get out of that mode. (U.S. woman, age 45-54, top management)

What are the consequences of viewing men as default leaders? What does it mean for women, men, companies, and businesses to evaluate women leaders based on men’s standard? In the following chapters, we address these questions in greater detail and further explore the predicaments that women leaders have to face as a consequence of these perceptions.

THE PREDICAMENTS OF WOMEN’S DOUBLE BIND

The three predicaments described in this report are closely connected and rely on similar psychological and cognitive processes. Specifically, each predicament:

- Stems from stereotypical expectations about women leaders
- Is based on the assumption that men are the default leaders
- Places women in a double bind
- Subjects women to a double standard

²⁵ Although the leadership literature has recently acknowledged the importance of interpersonal qualities such as cooperation and collaboration commonly associated with women leaders, “masculine” qualities—such as dominance, authority, and ambition—are still largely viewed as essential components to effective leadership. See Barbara Kellerman and Deborah L. Rhode, “Viable Options: Rethinking Women and Leadership,” *Compass*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Fall 2004) <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/leadership/Pdf/ViableOptions.pdf>.

Predicament	How It Leaves Women in a Double Bind
Extreme and equally undesirable perceptions	When women leaders act in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes (i.e., focus on work relationships and express concern for other people's perspectives), women are viewed as less competent leaders, as <i>too soft</i> . When women act in ways that are inconsistent with such stereotypes, however (i.e., act assertively, focus on work task, display ambition), their behavior is judged as <i>too tough</i> , even unfeminine. ²⁶
Higher standards but lower rewards	When it comes to proving leadership capabilities, women are subjected to higher standards than men. They have to work harder to show the same level of competence and have to confront additional trade-offs than their men counterparts in order to lead effectively.
Competent but not liked	Women who adopt a "masculine" leadership style are viewed more negatively. Although they might be viewed as competent because of their leadership style, they also receive more negative evaluations of their interpersonal skills than women who adopt a "feminine" style. ²⁷ Hence, even acting in counter-stereotypical ways has potential harmful consequences for women leaders, and may negatively impact their work relationships and access to social networks.

Tables 2 and 3 display the prevalence of each predicament in our sample.²⁸ Based on our analysis of participants' open-ended responses, we identified 148 statements describing one or more of the three predicaments. Table 2 shows the percentage of relevant responses for each predicament among all participants, and Table 3 shows how the responses split by participants' gender. It is important to note that the comments below all refer to respondents' perceptions of *women* leaders. We were not able to identify any of these double binds among the comments that respondents (men and women) made about *men* leaders.

*N=148 relevant statements

Type of Predicament	Percentage of Statements Describing Each Predicament
Extreme Perceptions (Predicament 1)	52.7%
Higher Standards, Lower Rewards (Predicament 2)	16.9%
Competent But Not Liked (Predicament 3)	30.4%

²⁶ Alice H Eagly and Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt, "The Leadership Styles of Women and Men," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 781-797.

²⁷ Janice D. Yoder and Arnold S. Kahn, "Making Gender Comparisons More Meaningful: A Call for More Attention to Social Context," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4 (December 2003): p. 281-290; Janice D. Yoder, "Making Leadership Work More Effectively for Women," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 815-828; Laurie A. Rudman and Peter Glick, "Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes and Backlash toward Agentic Women," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Winter 2001): p. 743-762.

²⁸ See Appendix 1 for more detailed information about sample and methodology.

Table 3 ²⁹ : The Three Predicaments Of Women's Double Bind: By Respondents' Gender*		
Type of Predicament	Percentage of Statements Describing Each Predicament: Women Respondents Only	Percentage of Statements Describing Each Predicament: Men Respondents Only
Extreme Perceptions (Predicament 1)	57%	50%
Higher Standards, Lower Rewards (Predicament 2)	19%	18%
Competent But Not Liked (Predicament 3)	25%	32%

Women N=69 relevant statements; Men N=78 relevant statements

Each predicament is described in detail in the following chapters of this report.

²⁹ In Table 3, the total number of statements does not add to 148, as one respondent did not specify his/her gender.

CHAPTER 3: POLARIZED PERCEPTIONS (PREDICAMENT 1)



“Women are caught in a Catch-22 situation regarding leadership. If they are strong they are seen to be aggressive, and if they work more in a consultative way they are seen to be weak...” (British woman, age 46-50, top management)

PREDICAMENT 1 SUMMARY

Extreme Perceptions – Too Soft, Too Tough, and Never Just Right

“What are women like as leaders?” Respondents’ comments revealed the following:

- When women act in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes, they are viewed as less competent leaders (too soft).
- When women act in ways that are inconsistent with such stereotypes, they’re considered as unfeminine (too tough).

This is what psychologists call “all-or-nothing” thinking. Because these behaviors and skills are perceived as polar opposites, they are never right.

Stereotypes influence our general perceptions of women leaders. When women do make it to the top, their performance goes through additional scrutiny and is more likely to be criticized than men leaders’ performance. In general, research shows that both women and men tend to express more positive attitudes toward their men supervisors than toward their women supervisors. Women are evaluated more negatively on important work dimensions such as performance, leadership ability, and problem-solving. On average, men tend to express more doubts about female leaders’ effectiveness than women do.³⁰

Women leaders are subjected to extreme perceptions.³¹ When women act in gender-consistent ways—that is, in a cooperative, relationship-focused manner—they are perceived as “too soft” a leader. They are perceived to “fit in” as women, but not as leaders. When women act in gender-inconsistent ways—that is, when they act authoritatively, show ambition, and focus on the task—they are viewed as “too tough.” In this case, they are often accused of “acting like a man” and of being overly aggressive.³² They might be acting leader-like, but not “lady-like.” Based on these extreme perceptions, women face trade-offs that men in the same situation do not experience.³³

³⁰ Research shows that both men and women are more likely to express positive attitudes toward men supervisors than toward women supervisors. Women are evaluated more negatively on important work dimensions such as performance, leadership ability, and problem solving. On average, men tend to express more doubts about female leaders’ effectiveness than women do. In general, women are more likely to receive positive evaluations when they occupy leadership roles defined in feminine terms (e.g., supporting, mentoring), but negative evaluations on masculine measures of leadership (e.g., problem solving, being assertive). Agars; Alice H. Eagly, Mona G. Makhijani and Bruce G. Klonsky, “Gender and the Evaluation of Leaders: A Meta-analysis,” *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 111 (January 1992): p. 3-22. Madeline E. Heilman, Caryn J. Block, Richard F. Martell, and Michael C. Simon, “Has Anything Changed? Current Characterizations of Men, Women, and Managers,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 74, no. 6 (December 1989): p. 935-942.

³¹ In this study, we conceptualized “extreme” perceptions as a form of “all-or-nothing” thinking (as discussed later in this chapter). On the imaginary continuum of masculine and feminine characteristics, women leaders cannot be nice *and* competent, assertive *and* likable, so each perception is associated with an “opposite” evaluation, where “feminine” women are nice but incompetent and “masculine” women are competent but unpleasant interpersonally. This generally does not occur when people evaluate men leaders, as they can be competent and nice, assertive and likable.

³² Eagly et al.

³³ Kellerman and Rhode.

As noted in Tables 2 and 3, “the extreme perceptions” dilemma was the most common predicament described among this study’s participants.³⁴ More than half of all relevant responses (52.7 percent) described women leaders as either “too soft” and “too tough”—or both.

“Women Leaders Are Too Soft”

Despite some positive comments about women’s “natural,” people-focused leadership style (e.g., women are good communicators and effective at team building), the majority of respondents focused on the negative effects of using what was seen to be a “feminine” leadership style.

Respondents say:

A number of respondents thought that “wanting to be nice” and “worrying about what others think” can negatively influence women’s effectiveness as leaders:

Women can be effective leaders as long as they are not impaired by “wanting to be nice.” (Dutch woman, age 36-40, top management)

A lot of women managers still want to be liked, especially by their subordinates. They are not as prone to “managing up.” (U.S. woman, age 65+, top management)

[Women are] very much focused on “being liked, being good” instead of making harsh and tough decisions. (Dutch man, age 36-40, middle management)

Some respondents described women as too indecisive to lead effectively, unable to delegate their work, or even overly dependent on others:

Many women lack personal confidence and this [affects] their ability to effectively inspire.... They are often defensive, more so than male colleagues, when challenged constructively.... (British man, age 46-50, top management)

Women I have worked with tend to be excellent planners, good team builders. Many, however, have a tendency to do more work than they need to as they are not always comfortable delegating. (U.S. woman, age 45-54, middle management)

Too many women managers assume that the leaders above them will take care of them. (U.S. woman, age 45-54, top management)

In sum, when women act in gender-consistent ways, they are viewed as being weak leaders.

³⁴ These extreme and equally negative perceptions of women leadership behaviors are not unique to our study. A large body of research shows that women are rated lower than their men counterparts when they lead in authoritative ways, and that these perceptions become even more extreme when the woman’s role is one typically occupied by men. See Kellerman and Rhode.

“Women Leaders Are Too Tough”

Yet here is where we see the double bind in play: when women leaders act in ways that are not consistent with the feminine stereotype, they are perceived as too aggressive, rigid, uncaring, and self-promoting. These perceptions are partly based on the assumption that women who do not act in gender-appropriate ways are “faking” their leadership style, as exemplified in the following statements:

Often women try to exert extreme power over their subordinates and co-workers. (U.S. woman, age 31-35, non-management position)

[W]omen are more rigorous and sometimes more aggressive, but often less flexible and less able to see problems from “out of the box.” (Italian man, age 36-40, middle management)

ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING

Perceived as too soft or as too tough, women are criticized for their leadership style. These polarized perceptions represent a type of “all-or-nothing” thinking that does not apply to men in leadership roles. In fact, existing research shows that the same leadership behaviors are often perceived differently, depending on if they are performed by a man or a woman.³⁵ Catalyst data provide further support to these findings.

As a general rule, women in leadership are either nurturing and understanding or direct and appear to be non-caring. (U.S. woman, age 45-54, top management)

My experience shows that men either accept [women’s] authority or fight it.... Most women leaders I have seen seem less effective in...conflict or [seem] abrasive [during conflict]. (Swedish man, age 31-35, middle management)

My observations show senior women to be at either end of the spectrum, drivers that do it themselves (even though they might have given it to someone). This type tends to give little recognition and is a perfectionist. The others are very effective delegators, giving lots of recognition and building loyal teams, but can be perceived as “not tough enough.” (U.S. man, age 35-44, level not specified)

In sum, stereotypes lead respondents to judge women leaders according to extremes—they are frequently seen as too nice or too harsh, but rarely just right. Because individuals’ evaluations of leadership competence are based on their assessment of leader behaviors, these extreme perceptions influence the standards of competence for which women leaders are held accountable. We discuss this second predicament in Chapter 4.

³⁵ Agars; Heilman et al.; Yoder.



"[Women] tend to excel in effectiveness, because they have to position [themselves] in a male-dominated field and to do so they work extremely hard to show their winning achievements...."

(German man, age 56-60, top management)

PREDICAMENT 2 SUMMARY

The High Competence Threshold – Women Leaders Face Higher Standards and Lower Rewards Than Men Leaders

"How do I know women leaders are competent leaders?" Respondents' comments revealed that women leaders are subjected to higher competency standards than men leaders. On top of doing their job:

- Women have to prove that they can lead, over and over again.
- Women have to manage stereotypical expectations constantly (e.g., too tough-too soft).

Because of these higher standards, women tend to receive lower rewards for the same level of effort and competency.

Stereotypes create a second predicament for women leaders. As prototypical leaders, men's potential to lead and, in particular, to lead effectively is rarely questioned *a priori*. As atypical leaders, however, women often have to prove that they can lead even *before* they have the opportunity to do so. Because women leaders have to (1) spend additional time and energy proving that they can lead, and (2) consistently monitor stereotypical expectations, they ultimately end up having to work harder than their men counterparts to prove the same level of competence.³⁶

Women are therefore evaluated by a different scale. Accordingly, leadership behaviors that are effective for men may not prove effective for women.³⁷ Ultimately, women leaders have to choose between working doubly hard for the same level of recognition and getting half the rewards for the same level of competence. In our sample, about 17 percent of all relevant responses described the higher-standards-and-lower-rewards dilemma for women leaders.³⁸

³⁶ Eagly et al; Jamieson; Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *On the Frontiers of Management* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 1997).

³⁷ Yoder, for example, summarized research on how a "masculine" leadership style does not work for women. Behaving in an assertive and dominant way is effective for men but not for women leaders. Jamieson notes that higher standards can apply to different circumstances and double binds.

³⁸ This number is lower than expected among survey respondents. It is important to note, however, that respondents were not asked directly about standards and rewards (see Appendix 1 for more details about the survey methodology).

This double standard of evaluation is seen in statements describing how women have to prove themselves in their position by putting in additional effort. A few respondents viewed the additional effort in positive terms, as exemplified in the statements below:

Women leaders have shown themselves to be quick learners. While many did not start out displaying these characteristics, they readily picked up on developmental efforts. (U.S. woman, age 45-54, top management)

The women leaders I have experienced have been quite effective. I suspect the reason for this is that the relative few women that have reached leadership have been used to proving their skills within a "man's world." (Norwegian man, age 61-65, top management)

It still seems more difficult for women to achieve leadership positions; therefore those that do are normally on average better than men. (British man, age 46-50, middle management)

A number of respondents, however, described the extra effort in far less positive terms. Some interpreted the willingness to take on additional work as an unfavorable personal characteristic, or as "trying too hard," partly ignoring the additional barriers women face in the workplace, as follows:

Some are trying too hard to prove their own abilities and forget how important the softer issues, such as mentoring and role modeling, can be in encouraging other women into more senior roles (British woman, age 31-35, middle management)

Women are so focused on being recognized for their contributions that they do not pass on their own learning about how the system works to others. (U.S. woman, age 35-44, top management/core position)

[Women are] as effective as men, but often trying harder to prove it. (Luxemburg woman, age 26-30, non-managerial position)

At times some [women] would seem to have to prove they're in charge too much.... (Dutch respondent, gender not specified, age 41-45, middle management)

Meanwhile, some respondents commented on women's higher standards by directly comparing the amount of effort men and women each have to put in to show they can lead:

In the IT industry where female managers are quite few they always have to work harder than men to be efficient and that has led to problems in the cases I have experienced, burnouts, etc. (Swedish man, age 31-35, middle management)

Women are often very effective, but must work much harder to impact other male leaders....
(Swedish woman, age 41-45, non-managerial position)

Finally, a number of respondents noted how to show their competency women have to act “tougher” than men in the same positions.³⁹ “Many female leaders are ‘tougher’ than men when it comes to [things like] dealing with low performance,” said a Swedish woman (age 46-50, middle management). “[Women are] mostly tougher, target-oriented [compared to men],” added a German man (age 51-55, middle management).

In sum, stereotypes create a predicament where women are held to a higher standard of competency and receive lower rewards in response to the same levels of competency as their men counterparts. But stereotypes do not only influence perceptions of leaders’ competence. They influence perceptions of leaders’ likability. The next chapter describes another double-bind predicament that women leaders face: the dilemma of having to choose between being perceived as competent and being perceived as personable.

³⁹ Previous research in psychology confirms that same behavior is evaluated differently depending on whether it is attributed to women or to men. A review of 58 experiments looking at people’s explanations for men’s and women’s success, for example, found that individuals tend to attribute women managers’ success to luck or effort and men’s success to their skills and abilities. See Janet K. Swim and Lawrence J. Sanna, “He’s Skilled, She’s Lucky: Are Attributions for Others’ Successes and Failures Gender Biased?” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 5 (May 1996): p. 507-519. Additional research confirms that people were more likely to attribute women managers’ success to factors other than their abilities. See Stephanie Riger, *Transforming Psychology: Gender in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).



“In my experience, women leaders are held to a double standard of being competent and having to be liked in order to ‘fit.’ Men are not expected to be likable.” (U.S. woman, age 35-44, level not specified)

PREDICAMENT 3 SUMMARY

Competent but Disliked – Women Leaders Are Perceived as Competent or Liked, but Rarely Both

“How do women leaders interact with others?” Respondents’ comments revealed that when women behave in ways that are traditionally valued for leaders (e.g., assertively), they tend to be seen as competent. They are also seen as:

- Less effective interpersonally (e.g., in terms of social skills)
- Less personable
- Less likely to exert interpersonal influence

Individuals who do not conform to stereotyped roles are penalized through social rejection, while those who do conform are rewarded through social approval.

With this third dilemma, we shift our attention to how leaders are viewed interpersonally. Thus far, we have illustrated how women leaders’ behaviors are perceived in “extremes” and how women leaders are judged less favorably than equally qualified men.⁴⁰ While the first two predicaments addressed leadership skills and behaviors directly, in this predicament stereotypes penalize women leaders in an even more subtle way: through social disapproval.

Women who are seen as competent leaders are often not liked as much as those judged to be less competent but who act in gender-appropriate ways.⁴¹ What does likability have to do with leadership effectiveness? Existing research suggests that being liked has important consequences for both leaders and followers. Individuals are less likely to trust or follow the instructions of a leader whom they do not like.⁴² And a leader’s effectiveness might suffer from having to constantly manage conflicting personal relationships.⁴³ In the end, stereotypic bias makes it particularly difficult for women leaders to be appreciated for their leadership style *and* interpersonal style. For women, one precludes the other.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See also, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt.

⁴¹ Among others, see Eagly and Karau.

⁴² Carli.

⁴³ Aries; Carli.

⁴⁴ Although not addressed in this study, previous research shows that stereotypes can negatively influence *leader* self-perception, self-efficacy, and even their performance. Psychologists have shown that when skilled individuals start doubting their skills due to stereotypic perceptions, their performance also suffers; for instance, psychologist Claude Steele’s model of stereotype threat describes how stereotype-based expectations can create a real burden and impact women’s achievements. These negative consequences are more likely to occur in contexts where gender stereotypes are salient (e.g., as a result of a stereotypic comment or in a situation where individuals are reminded of stereotyped characteristics). For a review of this research see, for example, Claude M. Steele, “A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape the Intellectual Identities and Performance of Women and African-Americans,” *American Psychologist*, vol. 52, no. 6 (June 1997): p. 613-629; Joshua Aronson, Diane M. Quinn, and Steven J. Spencer, “Stereotype Threat and the Academic Underperformance of Minorities and Women,” *Prejudice: The Target’s Perspective*, Janet Swim and Charles Stangor eds., (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998): p. 85-100.

In our study, on average, about 30 percent of all relevant responses contrasted women leaders' competence to their amiability; when looking at these statements by gender, however, the percentage of men (32 percent) who called attention to this predicament was higher than the percentage of women (25 percent).⁴⁵ The finding that men are harsher judges of women in authority positions than women is consistent with existing empirical literature on the topic.

Accordingly, even when women act more "leader-like" or adopt behaviors considered typical of effective leaders, they still have difficulties influencing others on account of being viewed as less personable leaders. Not being liked can also negatively impact women's work relationships, access to social networks, day-to-day interactions and, ultimately, their advancement opportunities.

The "competent-but-not-liked" dilemma is exemplified by comments that criticize women leaders' interpersonal style. A typical example comes from a European respondent (Spanish man, age 31-35, middle management) who noted that, in his experience, women who do not act in gender-appropriate ways are not trusted:

I have experienced in the past that women can be distrusted in leadership roles, especially when they use a dominant style of communication. On the contrary, if they use a collaborative style serving their organization and empowering people, they get more recognition and sincere appreciation from their male equals.

Other respondents seemingly interpreted women's assertiveness as a sign that they were overcompensating for their lack of power. According to a U.S. woman (age 31-35, non-management position), "Women can be effective leaders when they do not try to overcompensate for their perceived lack of power..." Note that this respondent qualifies "perceived" lack of power, suggesting that she herself might believe that power may not actually be lacking.

Other statements described women's style as too aggressive and self-promoting, or targeted women's communication style as inappropriate and too direct. Men who adopted similar communication styles and acted assertively were praised for being direct.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Due to the small sample size, responses could not be compared through significance testing statistics. Accordingly, percentage differences between women and men are simply descriptive. The finding that men are harsher than women when evaluating women in leadership positions, however, is consistent with existing empirical literature on the topic. See, for example, Susan A. Basow, "Student Evaluations of College Professors: When Gender Matters," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 4 (December 1995): p. 656-665; Susan A. Basow, Julie E. Phelan, and Laura Capotosto, "Gender Patterns in College Students' Choices of Their Best and Worst Professors," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 1 (March 2006): p. 25-35.

⁴⁶ There is also some evidence that negative evaluations are likely to jeopardize women leaders' communication effectiveness. Women who act in highly assertive ways tend to have more difficulties influencing others, particularly men. Because of gender stereotypes, then, women leaders may need to communicate differently to be equally effective. Similarly, women leaders may have to behave differently to be evaluated as equally effective as their male counterparts. Linda L. Carli, Suzanne J. LaFleur, and Christopher C. Loeber, "Nonverbal Behavior, Gender, and Influence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 68, no. 6 (June 1995): p. 1030-1041; Jamieson; Laurie A. Rudman, "Self-promotion as a Risk Factor for Women: The Costs and Benefits of Counter-stereotypical Impression Management," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 74, no. 3 (March 1998): p. 629-645.

Respondents say:

Intelligent and problem-solving women leaders are often hindered by their own ego. (German man, age 36-40, middle management)

Most of [the women leaders] were soloist operators who felt threatened by anybody. (Dutch man, age 36-40, top management)

In my experience, women leaders are held to a double standard of being competent and having to be liked in order to “fit.” Men are not expected to be likable. (U.S. woman, age 35-44, level not specified)

These perceptions create another impossible choice for women leaders—the choice between being viewed as competent or being liked by colleagues and followers—when both components are necessary to lead.⁴⁷

In sum, by casting women as a poor fit for leadership roles, gender stereotypes create additional hardships for women leaders—stereotypes men leaders do not have to face. As a result, women constantly have to monitor their behavior and how they interact with others. Due to gender expectations, the same leadership style can be described as assertive in a man but abrasive in a woman. These perceptions not only influence whether people respect women’s styles of leadership, but also the extent to which women leaders are perceived as trustworthy.

⁴⁷ American Psychological Association, *Women in Academe: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back* (2006) <http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/academe.pdf>.

CHAPTER 6: STEREOTYPES AND WOMEN'S DOUBLE BIND: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES



Having examined the dilemmas that stereotypes create for women leaders, we now turn to what women and organizations can do to confront these issues. As noted earlier, stereotypes are often difficult to detect. As an automatic process, bias often goes unnoticed and, even when it is noted, people are likely to trivialize or dismiss its negative effects.⁴⁸

To confront stereotypic bias in the workplace, both individuals and organizations need to take action and promote change.⁴⁹ Individual strategies will not work without a commitment from the organization. Company strategies will not work without individual (employee and leader) support. This chapter starts by describing the strategies used by successful women leaders and ends by examining structural change. What can we learn from successful, high-achieving women who confront these double-bind predicaments on a daily basis, and what can organizations do to address stereotypic bias within their work environments?

WOMEN LEADERS' STRATEGIES

Catalyst examined individual strategies by asking women directly. We interviewed 13 women working at a large U.S.-headquartered global company, all of whom held leadership positions at the time of the interview.⁵⁰ Of the 13 interviewees, eight held a senior leadership position (e.g., Vice President) with 20 or more years of experience in their field, and five were labeled by their organization as a high-potential manager. All high-potential interviewees reported between five and ten years of experiences in their field. Nine women worked in the United States, two in Europe, one in Japan, and one in South America. All interviewees held at least a college degree and more than half had children under 18 years of age living at home.⁵¹

To specifically address the strategies and approaches these women use to deal with double-bind dilemmas, Catalyst asked them to address three sets of issues:

- (1) **The three predicaments:** Did the predicaments described in this study resonate with you? Which one seemed particularly salient, if any?
- (2) **Specific example:** Have you ever found yourself in a double-bind dilemma in the course of your career, or know someone who has? What type of situation was that?
- (3) **Strategies and approaches:** What kind of approach did you use to cope with this situation? Would you recommend this approach to others or use it again in the future?

⁴⁸ Eagly; Sczesny.

⁴⁹ Agars.

⁵⁰ See Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the interview protocol and methodology.

⁵¹ Only 11 out of the 13 interviewees also completed the demographic questionnaire.

THE THREE PREDICAMENTS

Table 4 summarizes the prevalence of each predicament among interview respondents. As noted in the table, similarly to survey respondents, Predicament 1 received the most number of comments (N=9), followed by Predicament 3 (N=6), and Predicament 2 (N=5).

Predicament Type	Number of Statements That Mentioned Each Predicament*	Percentage of Interviewees That Described Each Predicament**
Extreme Perceptions (Predicament 1)	9	69%
Higher Standards, Lower Rewards (Predicament 2)	5	39%
Competent But Not Liked (Predicament 3)	6	46%

* Responses add up to more than the total number of participants because interviewees commented on more than one predicament

**Percentages add up to more than 100% because the interviewees commented on more than one predicament

Extreme Perceptions. The large majority of interviewees (69 percent) recognized this particular double bind as a relevant experience. When asked about women leaders being perceived as too tough or too soft, interviewees provided a range of responses, from noting the negative consequences that this predicament can create for women to encouraging women to find a balance between the two types of behaviors.

Said one interviewee, a U.S.-based Vice President of Sales:

[I can relate to "Extreme Perceptions,"] either too soft/too tough, I hear [it] from a lot of people. Both inside and outside [the organization], [women] are having trouble trying to find a balance of being collaborative versus being tough.

A U.S.-based high-potential manager, while recognizing the difficulties this predicament creates for women, also suggested that these perceptions are partly influenced by women trying too hard. She said:

I wonder sometimes if it is the expectation that women have, that there is something to prove, that there is some sort of stereotype that may have existed stronger in the past and hopefully is fading, and therefore people overdo on the harshness....

Many interview respondents, however, recognized that extreme perceptions constitute an important barrier for women leaders. Observed one U.S. senior executive:

So if you are sometimes very focused, very committed to the goal at hand and you are—I find women are very organized...they are wonderful multitaskers that, as a result of that, it can be intimidating to some people. And, as a result, they are very committed and very focused on what needs to get done, and that comes across as being a hard-ass or some men like to call it a B-I-T-C-H.

Higher Standards, Lower Rewards. Almost 40 percent of interviewees mentioned this predicament as an important barrier to women's advancement. When asked about whether men and women leaders are held to different standards of leadership, many agreed that they were. Another U.S. senior executive, for example, observed, "I've come to believe over the years...that we have to work by a different standard. I truly believe that women and minorities work against a different standard."

The higher standards are often expressed through additional pressure women experience to prove that women can be effective leaders. Women also have to show over and over again that they are committed to work. According to a European high-potential manager, "My feeling and experience is that before believing that you're a consistent value for the company that they can count on, it takes more time...before you convince them that they can rely on you as with the men."

Interviewees also commented on the difficulty of being constantly under scrutiny:

[M]en and women are seen differently, and the difference in my experience and observation is that we (women) need show it more times before they believe it. With a woman, they will want to see the behavior repeated more frequently before they will say that this is really part of the women and her capabilities.... (European, high-potential manager)

I think it is a real challenge because...we are held up to a higher standard. Constantly. Every daily interaction is building the persona of that individual, that female executive. So, unfortunately, you do need to be aware of the things you're doing and how it will be perceived by other people. (U.S., senior executive)

While many interviewees recognized the different standards predicament as part of their experience, some did not. Three out of the 13 women felt that the performance evaluations at their company were based on equal standards, although they did not necessarily deny that the different-standards predicament might apply in other workplaces. For example, said a U.S. senior executive:

I would honestly say I don't see that much....[we have] got some pretty clear criteria, and they've done a lot of work on leadership competencies, what does it take to create a good leader, what are the competencies, what kind of development and experiences help to develop those competencies.... It's included in our executive-development programs, and they do pretty aggressive comparison benchmarks on salary as well.

Competent But Not Liked. Forty-six percent of respondents described the third double-bind dilemma: having to choose between being perceived as competent and being liked. A U.S. high-potential manager, for example, observed: "I think women bring different skills to the table, and sometimes those skills, be they communication or corroboration, etc., are not appreciated or recognized the same way..." Another high-potential manager (also U.S.-based) added: "...it may just be that people are more sensitive to how women behave in that regard. There does seem to be a little more tolerance for harsh behavior from men rather than women. Women are quicker to get labeled, and with men it's easier to brush it off..."

Other interviewees didn't see the contrast between being perceived as competent and being liked. A U.S. senior executive, for example, reported: "...our whole culture is pretty focused on skill, value, so...it's hard to be liked if you're not competent."

STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

After discussing the three predicaments, interviewees were asked, first, to provide a specific example of a situation where they or someone they know were confronted with a double-bind dilemma. Second, they were asked to describe the approach that was used to deal with the situation and, lastly, whether they would recommend this approach to others or use it again in the future.

Participants generally described specific work circumstances as examples of situations where stereotypic biases seemed to prevail. Interviewees talked about a number of topics, including their experience with implementing promotional decisions (either their own or others'), managing meetings, presenting ideas during meetings, and handling family commitments—especially after children are born. Some also discussed the difficulty of negotiating relationships and effective communication in the workplace, and getting along with colleagues and subordinates.

Our analyses of interviewees' responses revealed a number of common themes, each tied to the strategies and approaches around which their stories revolved. Based on the frequency and effectiveness with which participants described each particular approach, we identified the following four strategies for confronting the double-bind dilemma.

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' STRATEGIES

1. Talk Openly about the Issue: Acknowledge the Elephant in the Room

- Immediately confront the inequitable situation
 - Clearly communicate your concerns
 - Note when a comment or behavior is inappropriate
- Do not discount your own feelings or perceptions
- Address assumptions about women to create awareness

2. Show them Otherwise: Become Visible

- Show your competence
- Be consistent
- Be visible, seek high-level assignments
- Speak up at meetings
- Find a mentor

3. Use Clear and Effective Communication

- Let people know what you want (e.g., assignments, aspirations)
- Ask questions
- Be diplomatic
- Learn the jargon

4. Minimize the Issue

- Learn to ignore gender and act in gender-neutral ways
- Reframe the issue to your advantage
- Adapt yourself to the context

Examples of each approach are provided below. It is important to note, however, that the strategies documented here are meant to describe women's experiences rather than serve as recommendations for the reader. These strategies represent a wide range of styles. What works in one context, and for one woman, does not necessarily work in another context. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy for dealing with stereotypic bias individually but, rather, like leadership styles themselves, a spectrum of tactics and behaviors that women employ in their day-to-day life. Accordingly, in this chapter we can only describe what women are doing when confronted with double-bind dilemmas, but cannot endorse any of the strategies' effectiveness to cope with these dilemmas, as their helpfulness might change in different contexts.

Talk Openly about the Issue: Acknowledge the Elephant in the Room

Interviewees noted the importance of immediately confronting a difficult situation by openly addressing any comments or bias. Women who used this approach noted that it was helpful because people often make assumptions that they are not aware of. Confronting these issues immediately can also help avoid similar situations in the future. One U.S. senior leader, for example, explained how this approach can help in the course of interpersonal conflict: “[T]here are other times when you just need to call people on the carpet and say, you know, ‘Think about what you just said. That was insulting. Do you understand that was insulting? You might not have meant it that way, but....’”

And should someone try to “re-state” your ideas during a meeting, according to a U.S. senior executive, “[Y]ou need to nip it in the bud. So you need to, with the right finesse, be able to go back to—let’s say it’s Joe Smith—and say, ‘Joe, it’s so great you thought my idea was right on target, I like the way you’ve reworded it, and you are exactly on the point I was on, and so’—to the collective audience—‘what do you think about implementing my suggestion that Joe Smith just articulated so nicely?’”

A European high-potential manager also saw this strategy as an opportunity to develop her communication skills. “I really had to learn, which was hard to learn and I think is hard for a woman,... the ability to speak out on things that you feel are not being spoken about, and to make a decision in the place of somebody else,” she said.

Show Them Otherwise: Become Visible

The second approach interviewees recommended to confront double-bind dilemmas has to do with visibility. This is a way to “show them otherwise.” The specific strategies that comprise this approach include being consistent (both in terms of skills and commitment to the job), seeking high-visibility assignments, speaking up during meetings, and finding a mentor who can help make you more visible. Examples of this approach include showing your competence through consistently performing well while also remaining true to your own values. Said a U.S. senior leader, “I think the most effective female leaders I’ve seen are women who cannot lose their personality, but remain focused on their performance and the task at hand and know how to do it, without any of the crap that goes along with a lot of other people and how they do it, right....”

Similarly, another U.S. senior executive noted, “I think the winning game is longevity. [Women] are just prepared to stick it out longer; they are just prepared to put up with more. The men will leave and the women will stay, in my observation.”

Use Clear and Effective Communication

The third set of strategies women leaders described has to do with transparency, i.e., using clear and effective communication. Specifically, participants noted that women are sometimes afraid to ask for particular assignments and opportunities directly and end up missing out. Others also noted that it is important to learn the field's "lingo" (technical language or jargon) so that they can appropriately communicate within their team.

A Latin American senior executive, for example, noted, that the best strategy "is to be able to communicate, understand the nuts and bolts of the operation, not just team-building." Similarly, a European high-potential manager also emphasized the importance of clarity. The best strategy, she noted, is being clear. "The first choice that I made was to be myself and to be transparent," she explained.

Minimize the Issue

Finally, a few respondents reported—either directly or indirectly—that they distanced themselves from the issue of gender stereotyping. They did so either by minimizing the salience of gender—e.g., ignoring gender altogether or trying to act in "gender-neutral" ways—or by reframing the situation as advantageous.

A U.S. high-potential manager, for example, didn't see gender as an issue in her own career: "I don't feel that anyone has ever hampered my career because I am a woman. I feel I have been given a lot of opportunity, and if I have ever been slightly disadvantaged for being a woman, I feel that I've been advantaged just as many times for it. I think that all of our uniqueness works for us and against us at different times."

As noted by a U.S. senior leader, ignoring the problem can become a way to get things done: "[One strategy] is gender neutrality: just don't pay any attention to it anymore.... I am using a gender-neutral strategy, just really focusing on the relationships, you know, the tasks at hand, and my own ability to not worry about [it]. Maybe somebody looks at me a certain way or treats me a certain way or talks over me, but, you know, I'm not noticing it anymore."

While this approach might work in some situations, such as when confronting discrimination without any social support,⁵² due to the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes it might be difficult to transfer it or generalize it from one context to the next. As we have seen in this report, it is mostly other people's perceptions—not women leaders' own perceptions—that leads to double-bind dilemmas.

⁵² For a review of the extensive literature on the topic see, for example, Faye J. Crosby, *Relative Deprivation and Working Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Mindi D. Foster and Kimberly Matheson, "Perceiving and Feeling Personal Discrimination: Motivation or Inhibition for Collective Action?" *Group Processes Intergroup Relations*, vol. 1, no. 2 (October 1998): p. 165-174.

BEYOND INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

There are numerous organizational costs associated with ignoring the impact gender stereotypes have in the workplace. Stereotypes not only prevent competent women from achieving their full potential, but also hinder organizations from capitalizing on some of their most talented employees.⁵³ Creating and implementing innovative work practices that directly address stereotypic bias can help organizations overcome these challenges.

Thinking about men as the default leaders leads to the assumption that, to fit better in the workplace, women must change in order to succeed.⁵⁴ Women can, to some extent, facilitate change, as suggested by a U.S.-based executive: "...women leaders need to also be the trendsetters and the point-of-light for this whole concept of creating a [new] environment for great teamwork and efficiency...the fact that there is not this hierarchy of the king and everyone below...create the culture and the climate around that."

But women cannot do this alone. While individual strategies can help women address the double-bind dilemmas in their everyday lives, organizations need to develop and promote structural changes to make the work environment less amenable to the negative effects of gender stereotyping. Shifting the focus to organizational strategies is critical to avoid making women the only party responsible for addressing the issue.⁵⁵

Previous research shows that legitimizing women leaders rests on programs, policies, and resources that increase employees' awareness of women leaders' skills and of the effects of stereotypic perceptions.⁵⁶ Accordingly, organizational agents can address the double-bind dilemma by:

- (1) Providing women leaders and other employees with tools and resources to raise their awareness of women leaders' skills and of the effects of stereotypic perceptions.
- (2) Assessing the work environment to identify in what ways women are at risk of stereotypic bias (see Chapter 7: Introduction to Catalyst's Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument).
- (3) Creating and implementing innovative work practices that target stereotypic bias. These practices can be particularly effective when they address the specific areas of risk (see Chapter 7: Introduction to Catalyst's Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument).

⁵³ Rhona Rapoport, Lotte Bailyn, Joyce K. Fletcher, and Bettye H. Pruitt, *Beyond Family-Work Balance* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002).

⁵⁴ Pollard.

⁵⁵ Yoder also notes the corollary that women are to blame for failed leadership in the context of non-win situations.

⁵⁶ Legitimization enhances both men's and women's leadership. However, the need for legitimization is stronger for women than it is for men. Yoder.

The first step in addressing stereotypic bias at the organizational level was outlined in previous Catalyst work.⁵⁷ In *Women "Take Care," Men "Take Charge: Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* and in *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders*, Catalyst describes how simply learning about how stereotypes operate can decrease the likelihood that stereotypes will influence individual behavior. Another way to intercept stereotypes is to hold individuals accountable for bias. Both awareness and accountability function by limiting automatic thinking. Internal and external pressure to be fair and deliberate can motivate individuals to become more attentive to their thinking patterns. Organizations can apply this knowledge in a number of ways.

● **Managerial training and diversity education**

Educating managers and employees about the origin and consequences of gender stereotypes is particularly important to increase awareness of gender stereotypes. A comprehensive training program should include information about:

- Ways to recognize bias
- Inconsistencies between values (e.g., gender egalitarianism) and actual behavior
- Causes and effects of gender inequality in the workplace

● **Performance and evaluation management**

Human resources (HR) practices, such as recruiting and performance evaluations, should employ objective and unambiguous evaluation criteria. When evaluation criteria are not clearly defined or are based on individual (rather than standardized) estimates, there is more room for assessments to be influenced by stereotypes. Well thought out HR practices, on the other hand, also increase managers' accountability and motivation to avoid bias.

To complement earlier recommendations, in this report Catalyst provides additional suggestions on how to confront stereotypic bias at the institutional level and identify the structural factors within the organization that make gender bias more likely to occur. In the next chapter, we describe the risk factors associated with gender stereotypes, focusing specifically on these organizational and structural dimensions. We also provide a tool to assess these risks within organizations.

⁵⁷ See Catalyst, *Women "Take Care," Men "Take Charge: Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005); Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (2006).

CHAPTER 7: INTRODUCTION TO CATALYST'S STEREOTYPES DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT



Because stereotypes are largely subconscious, it can be difficult for companies to assess the impact that stereotypic bias has for women employees. Thanks to the extensive research literature on the topic, however, it is possible to identify specific processes that lead to stereotypic bias and hence provide some general guidelines for addressing the problem.

The existing literature on gender stereotypes also provides us with insights into how to address stereotypes' negative outcomes. Stereotypes work as cognitive and "automatic shortcuts" that individuals use to make sense of their social world. Accordingly, if motivated to do so, just learning about stereotypes and how they operate can help us become more aware of our thinking patterns and shortcuts. And awareness is one strategy to limit automatic thinking.

By building awareness of how stereotypes influence work outcomes, companies can develop ways to address bias. One first step in building awareness is learning the extent to which an organization is at risk of letting stereotypes get in the way of opportunities, both for women and for the organization.

Companies can also implement strategies that help to minimize the effects of these automatic individual-level biases. To do so effectively, however, organizations need to first identify the specific threats which put women at risk for stereotypic bias in the workplace, and next develop a focused strategy to limit threats. With the release of this report, Catalyst offers a tool to help companies achieve both of these tasks. The main goal of the Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument is to help companies identify their own unique level of stereotype risk. The tool, described in this chapter, will become available to companies in 2007 on Catalyst's Member website (www.catalyst.org/membernet).

STEREOTYPE RISK SCORE (SRS)

What is a SRS? The SRS consists of each company's weighted score on a number of factors that socio-psychological research has found to be particularly important in the development and maintenance of gender stereotypes.

What SRS Measures. The instrument is a measure of *risk* of stereotypic bias. It is important to note that the SRS does not evaluate the actual presence of stereotypic attitudes in the organization (such specific evaluation would only be possible through an in-depth survey of company employees).

How SRS Measures Risk. The instrument measures the risk of stereotypic bias by looking at organizational/structural dimensions of diversity. It focuses specifically on those dimensions that increase the likelihood stereotypic thinking will occur (based on empirical research). As noted above, SRS does *not* assess stereotypic attitudes directly; it considers the situational factors that might influence individual/group attitudes.

Risk Factors

Below is a list of the risk factors considered in the risk-assessment instrument and a brief explanation of why these factors are important to be considered in the evaluations; the footnotes provide relevant research articles for further reading.⁵⁸

- **Organizational size and industry.** The size of the organization constitutes an important first step in the evaluation of stereotypic risk. While company size does not directly affect risk, the number of employees in a company can influence the ways in which other risk factors intersect. The effectiveness of particular human resource practices in promoting change, for example, will vary for larger and for smaller companies.⁵⁹ In smaller companies the efforts are sometimes more focused, while larger companies might have to consider different risk factors in different regions. Organizational size is particularly important when coupled with information about the industry in which the company operates. Research consistently finds that male-dominated industries are especially prone to gender stereotyping and that women in male-dominated industries report facing specific barriers to advancement.⁶⁰
- **Ratio of women and men in the organization overall and within particular divisions.** The proportion of women and men also provides important information about the risk of bias within the company. Research suggests that when individuals are in a token position within the workplace—whether within their team or in the organization overall—stereotypic bias is more likely to occur due to the unequal gender compositions.⁶¹
- **Ratio of women and men at different organizational levels (e.g., among senior managers and among non-managers).** It is important to consider the number of men and women at each level. Gender stratification—defined as the extent to which men are found in leadership positions and women in support positions within the organization—can increase the risk of stereotypic perceptions, especially if individuals generalize their observation about people occupying particular work roles to gender.⁶² For example, research in social psychology suggests that, if individuals consistently interact with men in leadership positions and women in support positions, employees in highly stratified organizations might conclude that the characteristics associated with organizational roles are the result of gender differences, rather than of the work role itself.

⁵⁸ Appendix 2 provides additional detail about the construction of the risk-assessment tool and the research behind it.

⁵⁹ Goodman et al.; Heather A. Haveman, "Organizational Size and Change: Diversification in the Savings and Loan Industry after Deregulation," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 38 (March 1993): p. 20-50; George P. Huber and William H. Glick, *Organizational Change and Redesign: Ideas and Insights for Improving Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁶⁰ Maume, "Occupational Segregation and Career Mobility of White Men and Women."

⁶¹ Yoder.

⁶² Eagly and Karau; Eagly et al.

- **Human resources practices (includes performance management, hiring practices, committee work, training).** HR practices are important because they tell us something about the current organizational efforts to become more inclusive. In order to accurately address these practices, however, it is also important to examine how HR programs are implemented. Within this context, our assessment tool considers the type, quality, and effectiveness of each program to address stereotypic bias. The more deliberate, high-quality, carefully implemented, and consistently monitored (e.g., through program evaluation) the programs, the more likely that they will be effective in addressing gender bias. Programs that are especially important to monitor for stereotypic bias include:
 - Hiring and promotional practices
 - Performance evaluation practices
 - Personnel and other committees within the company (e.g., whether committees are formed by individuals with different perspectives and backgrounds)⁶³

- **Organizational climate (includes organizational norms, committee work, and other practices).** Although more elusive than HR practices, organizational norms and processes—whether formal or informal, implicit or explicit—are an important measure of risk. Based on the existing literature, SRS identifies two specific constructs to assess stereotypic risk:
 - **“Ideal worker” norms:**⁶⁴ defined as the extent to which the so-called “ideal employees” within a company are described in traditional, “masculine” terms, both when it comes to personal traits as well as the behaviors necessary to be considered ideal employees (e.g., more hours in the office, less likely to take personal leave, etc.).
 - **Preferred leadership style:**⁶⁵ research suggests that organizational cultures that favor more authoritative and hierarchical leadership styles also tend to be less welcoming of women. As we have documented in this study, a preference for stereotypically masculine behaviors (including those associated to authoritative styles) often puts women in a double bind of stereotypic perceptions. Less traditional, more inclusive leadership styles, on the other hand, might foster gender diversity and decrease the risk of stereotypic bias.

⁶³ Among others, Smith found that a diverse search committee makes it less likely that the committee will overlook individuals with non-traditional work experiences; see Daryl G. Smith, “How to Diversify the Faculty,” *Academe*, vol. 86, no. 5 (October 2000): p. 48-52.

⁶⁴ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Home Becomes Work and Work Becomes Home* (New York, Metropolitan Books, 1997); Joan Williams, *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do About it* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000) argues that the pressure to conform to the “ideal worker norm” makes it difficult for employees to take advantage of workplace supports for fear of being viewed as less serious about their job.

⁶⁵ Eagly, et al.; Sczesny.

SUMMARY: USING CATALYST'S STEREOTYPES DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT

Catalyst's Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument allows companies to build awareness of gender stereotypes in their workplace while simultaneously focusing their efforts on specific risk factors. Because the instrument is a measure of *risk*, organizations will need to do additional work to address each risk factor and evaluate how to respond. Below, we provide some guidelines on how to approach the instrument and make the most out of the information it provides.

STEP 1: Identify key issues. This diagnostic instrument allows organizations to identify the specific issues that put them at risk for stereotypic bias. This information is an important first step in designing solutions and for interpreting their score (SRS).

STEP 2: Weigh each issue in terms of its impact/influence on stereotypic bias. Acknowledging key risk factors within their work environment already helps organizations build awareness about stereotypic bias. The next important step of this process is to understand how each factor might impact the organization's risk, so that decisions can be made about where to focus the efforts.

STEP 3: Link each risk factor to specific strategies. Because there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to stereotypic bias, focusing on specific risk factors can direct organizations to more targeted solutions. Once companies can identify the factors that contribute to their risk, they can pursue the appropriate strategies and resources (e.g., changing hiring or performance evaluation procedures, addressing outdated cultural norms, or providing appropriate training to supervisors).

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Laura Sabattini, Ph.D., led the analyses and authored the report. Nancy M. Carter, Ph.D., oversaw the research and provided considerable input and guidance at each step. Jeanine Prime, Ph.D., and David Megathlin participated in the data analysis and interviews, and provided considerable writing and analytical support throughout the project. Special thanks to Staci Kman, Associate of Research, who helped with the qualitative analyses.

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The study can be divided in two parts: a secondary analysis of open-ended responses collected in two previous Catalyst survey studies and a qualitative analysis of 13 follow-up interviews:

A: SURVEY DATA

In this analysis, Catalyst examined the open-ended survey responses from two previous survey studies, both looking at senior executives' perceptions of men and women leaders in the United States (Study 1) and Europe (Study 2).

Respondents Profiles and Methodology

Study 1: Analyses included the responses of 296 U.S. managers and corporate leaders: 168 (57 percent) women and 128 (43 percent) men. Out of the entire U.S. sample, 101 respondents (34 percent), evenly distributed by gender were CEOs. Respondents estimated the percentage of women leaders that were effective at ten leader behaviors as well as the percentage of men leaders effective at the same ten leader behaviors. This secondary analysis focused on the first group of responses (women leaders' effectiveness). The specific behaviors addressed in this study include: consulting, delegating, influencing upward, inspiring others, mentoring, networking, problem-solving, rewarding, supporting, and team-building.⁶⁶ Descriptions of each behavior are provided in Chapter 1, Table 1.

Study 2: Analyses included responses of 935 European respondents; 282 (30.2 percent) were women and 653 (69.8 percent) were men. More than 90 percent of all survey respondents identified as managers and 388 respondents (42 percent) as senior managers. Respondents were from a variety of European countries, including Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and from the United States, and they were all currently residing in Europe at the time of the study. Similar to Study 1, survey respondents were asked, based on their experiences, to estimate the percentage of women and men leaders effective at a number of leader behaviors. This study asked about 14 behaviors, including the ten behaviors addressed in Study 1 and four additional behaviors: intellectually stimulating, monitoring, planning, and role modeling. Descriptions of each behavior are provided in Chapter 1, Table 1. Participants also completed an attitude questionnaire asking about a number of cultural beliefs. Based on this survey and on previous research, respondents fell into four cultural clusters: the Nordic Cluster (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden); the Latin Cluster (France, Italy, and Spain); the Germanic Cluster (Germany and the Netherlands); and the Anglo Cluster (United Kingdom and United States).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See Catalyst, *Women "Take Care," Men "Take Charge": Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005) for the details of how these behaviors were analyzed in the original study.

⁶⁷ See Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (2006) for the details of how these behaviors were analyzed in the original study.

Survey Procedure. In both studies respondents were asked to estimate, based on their own experiences, the percentage of women and men that effectively performed on each of the aforementioned leader behaviors. For each behavior they were given ten response options: 0-10 percent, 11-20 percent, 21-30 percent, 31-40 percent, 41-50 percent, 51-60 percent, 61-70 percent, 71-80 percent, 81-90 percent, and 91-100 percent.⁶⁸

B: INTERVIEW DATA

The second part of this study focused on a qualitative (thematic) analysis of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 13 women leaders in a large U.S. organization. Interviews were used to gain more in-depth knowledge of the issues addressed in the first part of the study, while also exploring specific strategies that women leaders used to cope with stereotypic bias in their own career.

Respondents Profiles

Out of the 13 interviewees, eight held a senior leadership position (e.g., Vice President) with 20 or more years of experience in their field, and five were considered a high-potential manager within their organization, with five to ten years of experience in their field.

Nine out of 13 women worked in the United States, two in Europe, one in Japan, and one in South America. All 13 interviewees held at least a college degree and more than half had children under 18 years of age living at home.

Interview Procedure

Before starting the meeting, the researchers explained the purpose of the study, explained issues of confidentiality, and briefly described the findings that had emerged from the survey data (Part 1). The interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were conducted on the phone, in English, and by three different interviewers. Participants were also asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire after the interview, on their own time.

In the following section, we summarize the specific questions addressed in the course of the interview.

(1) Participants were first asked about the three double-bind dilemmas described earlier in this report and were given examples of each situation.

PREDICAMENT 1: EXTREME PERCEPTIONS. Women leaders are labeled as being either “too soft” or “too tough.”

PREDICAMENT 2: HIGHER STANDARDS, LOWER REWARDS. Women leaders have to meet higher performance expectations and work harder—often for lower rewards—just to prove the same level of competence as their male counterparts.

PREDICAMENT 3: COMPETENT BUT NOT LIKED. Women leaders have to make a choice between being considered a competent leader or being liked.

⁶⁸ The survey used in these studies was adapted from Richard F. Martell and Aaron L. DeSmet, “A Diagnostic-ratio Approach to Measuring Beliefs about the Leadership Abilities of Male and Female Managers,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 86, no. 6 (December 2001): p. 1223-1231.

- (2) Participants were then asked if they could relate to any of the predicaments/situations described or if they could think of anyone they knew who could relate. If the answer was yes, interviewees were asked to provide a specific example
- (3) Finally, participants were asked about how they had approached that particular situation and if their strategy had worked to address the double-bind dilemma. We also asked them whether they would recommend their approach to others or use it again in a similar situation.

Interview Analyses

The analyses of participants' interview responses were conducted as follows. Three researchers independently reviewed a different sub-sample of the 13 interviews and identified a number of themes and strategies based on interviewees' responses. The researchers then reconvened to discuss the themes and discuss a final guideline to code each interview, including types of predicaments and strategies. Accordingly, one researcher coded participants' responses for each of the major categories identified by the team and identified participants' quotes that seemed to significantly represent each theme and approach. The number of responses for each theme/category and detailed quotes are outlined in Chapter 6.

APPENDIX 2: CONSTRUCTION OF CATALYST'S STEREOTYPES DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT



CATALYST'S STEREOTYPES DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT

To develop the Stereotype Risk Score Calculator we follow three steps:

STEP 1: Identify key issues.

STEP 2: Weigh each issue in terms of its impact/influence on stereotypic bias.

STEP 3: Develop "risk categories" that allow us to link each score to specific strategies to address the risk. These "risk categories" identify a) the level of risk; b) what factors seem to contribute to such risk; and c) relevant research findings and resources associated with these particular factors.

TOOL CONSTRUCTION AND RELEVANT RESEARCH

To develop the Stereotype Risk Score Calculator, Catalyst followed a number of steps to identify the most important factors that influence the risk of gender bias at work and to ensure the accurate measure of each risk factor:

- **STEP 1:** Identified key issues (e.g., company type, field of work, percentage of women in the company, etc.) through an online questionnaire.
- **STEP 2:** Weighed each issue in terms of its impact/influence on stereotypic bias (e.g., male-dominated fields might be more at risk).
- **STEP 3:** Developed "categories" that describe each level of risk. These categories identify a) the level of risk; b) what factors seem to contribute to such risk; and c) relevant research findings and resources associated with these particular factors.

The questionnaire draws from well-established and empirically based theories on gender stereotypes in the workplace. To ensure the accuracy of the instrument, each item addresses specific issues that research has consistently found to affect the likelihood that people will employ stereotypes.⁶⁹ Below we summarize the most important research findings that were used to create the risk factors and the questionnaires items used to measure each risk factor.

(1) Gender is a fundamental dimension that people use to categorize their social world. Existing research shows that once a person is categorized as male or female, gender stereotypes quickly follow. As noted earlier, the gender composition of the workplace (whether organization, division, or work team) will influence people's perceptions.

⁶⁹ See Eugene Borgida, Corrie Hunt, and Anita Kim, "On the Use of Gender Stereotyping Research in Sex Discrimination Litigation," *Journal of Law and Policy*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2005) http://www.brooklaw.edu/students/journals/bjlp/jlp13ii_borgida.pdf.

(2) Stereotypes have a definite effect on social judgments (e.g., evaluations, attributions, and hence employment decisions) of women and men. Research consistently finds that gender stereotypes influence people's perceptions at work and that these perceptions are more likely to target women in this context. Individuals are more likely to apply stereotypic knowledge when the behavior they are observing is gender-inconsistent⁷⁰ (i.e., goes against stereotypical expectations). It follows that:

- Women behaving in "masculine" ways tend to be evaluated more harshly.
- Masculine attributes are considered more desirable in the workplace, and especially in male-dominated fields.
- Organizations that rely on an "ideal-worker" schema (as defined earlier) and where so-called masculine characteristics are preferred—such as "competitive" environments—are more likely to disadvantage women.⁷¹

(3) Stereotypes are more likely to exert influence in particular situations. Stereotypes are more likely to affect individuals' judgment under particular circumstances, including:

- Gender salient situations, hence the questions about the type of work/context and the ratio of men versus women.
- Ambiguous situations, in that individuals rely more on shortcuts to make judgments/decisions, and contexts in which roles and criteria are not well-established. This concept is particularly relevant when it comes to human resource practices, such as hiring and promotional decisions.
- Situations in which the perceiver is not motivated to make accurate judgments (e.g., because of lack of time or interest). This finding suggests, once again, the need for specific criteria and standards when it comes to making promotional and hiring decisions.

⁷⁰ Eagly et al.; Heilman et al.; Judith L. Nye and Donelson R. Forsyth, "The Effects of Prototype-based Biases on Leadership Appraisals: A Test of Leadership Categorization Theory," *Small Group Research*, vol. 22, no. 3 (August 1991): p. 360-379.

⁷¹ Among others, see Rudman; Laurie A. Rudman and Kimberly Fairchild, "Reactions to Counter-stereotypic Behavior: The Role of Backlash in Cultural Stereotype Maintenance," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 2 (August 2004): p. 157-176.

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