

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



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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, and Toronto, 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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Catalyst Publication Code D62; ISBN#0-89584-252-1



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This study was conducted in cooperation with Theresa Welbourne, Ph.D., of the Executive Education at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, and eePulse, Incorporated.



## FOREWORD—THE OBVIOUS BUT UNSPOKEN

Corporations today face an alarming gender gap in leadership. Although women make up more than 45 percent of the U.S. workforce, they lead only seven Fortune 500 companies, and only ten Fortune 501-1000 companies. To reduce this gender gap in leadership, corporations must take on a daunting challenge. They must change how women leaders in their organizations are perceived.

Countless stories in the popular press reinforce misperceptions of women leaders by speculating about how they are different from men. These stories “sell” because they resonate with popular beliefs about women and men.

Although provocative, the stories are dangerous. They reinforce perceptions that are dead wrong—perceptions that are rooted in gender stereotypes—perceptions that maintain the gender gap in leadership itself.

These stereotypic beliefs spill over into the workplace, posing an invisible and powerful threat to women leaders. Gender stereotypes portray women as lacking the very qualities that people commonly associate with effective leadership. As a result, they often create false perceptions that women leaders just don’t measure up to men in important ways.

Unless organizations take steps to check this powerful bias, women leaders will likely be misjudged—no matter how high their levels of preparation and aptitude for corporate leadership roles.

Since leadership talent is critical and scarce, organizations cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the talent pool. To ensure that vital leadership talent is effectively assessed and deployed, organizations must address stereotypic bias head on.

In this report, Catalyst begins to find answers for how companies should take up this challenge and provides a deeper understanding of the potent and insidious effects of enduring stereotypes on women leaders.

### ARE STEREOTYPES AN INVISIBLE THREAT TO WOMEN LEADERS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

- **Would you recognize the subtle impact of stereotypes in your organization?** Because it is difficult to detect individual instances of stereotyping, it is important to use the right “big picture” metrics to assess the effects of stereotypes.
- **Have you kept a pulse on how stereotypes affect women in your organization?** Catalyst research consistently shows that women leaders cite stereotypes as a top barrier to their advancement.<sup>1</sup>
- **Is your organization doing enough to combat gender stereotypes?** Diversity training may not be an adequate defense. Most training programs do not equip employees to recognize or avoid the subtle effects of stereotypes on their perceptions.

<sup>1</sup> Catalyst, *Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same Workplace, Different Realities?* (2004).

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND KEY LEARNINGS

In the first of a groundbreaking series of studies that looks closely at specific barriers facing women in the workplace, Catalyst explores the obvious but unspoken—how gender-based stereotypes in business limit opportunities for women to advance in the workplace and achieve their potential.

If you ask women leaders in business what keeps them from the top jobs, the odds are high, according to Catalyst research, that they'll cite gender stereotypes.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this isn't news. They've been saying it for years. Given the emphasis women consistently place on this specific barrier, this report initiates a new series of Catalyst studies that investigates how enduring stereotypes continue to maintain gender disparities in corporate leadership.

In this exploratory study, Catalyst takes a detailed view of corporate leadership. We consider ten essential behaviors required of corporate leaders. By looking at leadership as a set of separate but related behaviors, we pinpoint just where women leaders are vulnerable to stereotyping, and show how the negative effects of stereotyping on any particular leader behavior can spill over to other leader behaviors. This specificity gives us a better foundation for recommending solutions.

In collaboration with Theresa Welbourne, Ph.D., at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, and eePulse, Incorporated, we surveyed a total of 296 corporate leaders, 34 percent of whom were CEOs, asking them to rate how effective men and women are at ten essential leadership behaviors.<sup>3</sup> The key learnings from the study are summarized below. We discuss each in detail with supporting data in the body of this report.

<sup>2</sup> Catalyst, *Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same Workplace, Different Realities?* (2004).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of the study respondents and methodology, see Chapter 8.

#### KEY LEARNINGS AT A GLANCE

- Gender-based stereotyping is alive and well in business—men AND women do it.
- Senior managers perceive differences between women and men leaders that may not exist.
- Where do managers' perceptions of women and men leaders likely come from—if not reality? One answer: gender stereotypes.
  - Senior managers seem to be applying the same old stereotypes to corporate leadership
    - Women “take care”
    - Men “take charge”
- Because women leaders are stereotyped as relatively poor problem-solvers, their power to motivate followers may be seriously undermined.
- Stereotypic biases of senior managers can become stronger under specific work circumstances.
- Just hiring more women into management positions won't eliminate stereotypes. Exposure to women leaders isn't enough. Organizations must take proactive steps to eradicate stereotypic bias.

## CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING STEREOTYPES AND THEIR ENDURING IMPACT ON WOMEN LEADERS

In this study, we propose that what you don't see and hear about women's advancement in the workplace may be what really counts in the current business world where perception is reality and gender-based stereotyping is shorthand for fact. To understand just why gender stereotypes persist in business, let's review some basics on how stereotyping works.

### STEREOTYPING 101

Generally speaking, social stereotypes, like those about gender, are generalizations we make to *differentiate* categories or groups of people. In the case of gender stereotypes, these consist of generalizations about how women and men differ.<sup>4</sup> Since there *are* differences between women and men, we use stereotypes to anticipate and respond to these differences from the outset—rather than having to figure them out “from scratch” in each interaction. In other words, we rely on stereotypes because they help us save time and energy.

### ARE STEREOTYPES BAD?

Despite the time-saving benefits that stereotypes may offer, many psychologists agree that they can also spell trouble.<sup>5</sup> There are three important reasons for this view:

- 1. Unlike generalizations we make about things or even animals, our generalizations about people are much more likely to miss the mark.** People are extremely complex and their behavior is often highly variable from situation to situation.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, when stereotypes are used to make judgments about people—especially about their traits and abilities—there is a high probability that those judgments will be wrong.
- 2. We often apply stereotypes automatically.** All of us who drive will undoubtedly be familiar with the experience of arriving at some destination without remembering the exact actions that got us there. We followed the traffic rules and operated the car successfully (or so we assume) even though we were not consciously monitoring or paying attention to our behaviors—we performed the task automatically. Stereotypes enable us to function in a similar way on social tasks or interactions. With the “help” of stereotypes, we can and do arrive at perceptions or judgments about individuals without having to tie up our attention. The trouble comes when we accept that these perceptions have a solid basis in fact because we are unaware of the role that stereotypes have played in creating them.

<sup>4</sup> A discussion of how stereotypes develop is beyond the scope of this report.

<sup>5</sup> David Dunning and David Sherman, “Stereotypes and Tacit Inference,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3 (1997): 459-471; David Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> D. C. Funder and D. J. Ozer, “Behavior As a Function of Situations,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 4 (1983): 107-112.

3. **We unintentionally respond to people in ways that elicit from them the very behaviors that confirm our stereotypes.** For example, imagine a woman is being interviewed for a management position. If the interviewer believes that women are not “management material,” he/she may unintentionally ask tougher questions of the women candidates and be more critical of their responses. As a result, women interviewees may stumble in their answers, providing less satisfactory responses than the men interviewing for the job—not because they are any less competent than male interviewees, but because the interviewer directed more difficult questions to women. In effect, the interviewer has caused the women candidates to act in ways that fit his/her stereotype of their lower competence. Such consequences of stereotypes are serious for organizations. Few can afford to fail at correctly identifying and leveraging the true abilities of all their talent.

### The Bottom Line on Stereotypes



- Stereotypes lead us to make inappropriate generalizations that miss the mark and misrepresent reality.
- Because most people are not aware of how their thinking and behavior are automatically influenced by stereotypes, they conclude their perceptions come from objective observations. This is why stereotyping is so difficult to address—all of us do it, but we often don't realize or believe that we do.

### WHY DON'T WE THINK WOMEN MEASURE UP AS LEADERS?

In businesses, gender-based stereotyping can be especially damaging. Stereotypes can limit women's opportunities for advancement into top leadership positions. This is because stereotypes of women often portray them as lacking the very qualities commonly associated with effective leadership.

Consider for a moment individuals thought of as great business leaders of recent times. Bill Gates or Jack Welch come immediately to mind. But why don't people think as readily of women leaders, such as Meg Whitman or Katherine Graham, who are on the same list of top influential business leaders?<sup>7</sup> Some experts say it is because stereotypes paint men as a much more natural fit for top leadership positions than women.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> CNN, “Top 25: Influential Business Leaders,” <http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/02/28/cnn25.top.business>.

<sup>8</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau, “Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders,” *Psychological Review*, 3 (1992): 573-598; Madeline E. Heilman, “Description and Prescription: How Gender Stereotypes Prevent Women's Ascent Up the Organizational Ladder,” *Journal of Social Issues*, 4 (2001): 657-674.

Table 1 illustrates this point by listing qualities in the U.S. culture that are commonly associated with men and women.<sup>9</sup> Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman humorously illustrate these cultural assignments in their Zits cartoon in Figure 1. Contrast each set of traits in the cartoon and in Table 1 with what typically comes to mind when we think about leaders. We often think of leaders as dominant and ambitious—as embodying qualities that closely match the stereotype of men.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the traits that make up the feminine stereotype (e.g., friendliness and sensitivity) are seen as less vital to leadership. These stereotypes result in women being evaluated less positively than men for leadership positions.<sup>11</sup> From our earlier discussion of stereotyping, we know that even though such stereotype-based evaluations are likely to be off the mark, the people who hold them are likely to think they are correct—a potentially dangerous combination.

Previous research has shown that stereotypes create relatively negative perceptions of women’s overall leadership competence.<sup>12</sup> But because leadership is made of a number of skills and competencies, questions remain as to whether there are *specific* aspects of women’s leadership performance that may be especially susceptible to stereotypic bias. Prior research also leaves open the question of whether stereotypic views of women’s and men’s leadership exist among top corporate leaders. We address these questions in the following chapters.

Women’s Traits	Men’s Traits
Affectionate	Dominant
Appreciative	Achievement-oriented
Emotional	Active
Friendly	Ambitious
Sympathetic	Coarse
Mild	Forceful
Pleasant	Aggressive
Sensitive	Self-confident
Sentimental	Rational
Warm	Tough
Whiny	Unemotional

<sup>9</sup> David Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Virginia E. Schein, “A Global Look at Psychological Barriers to Women’s Progress in Management,” *Journal of Social Issues*, 4 (2001): 675-688; Heilman.

<sup>11</sup> Eagly et al., 3.

<sup>12</sup> Schein; Heilman.

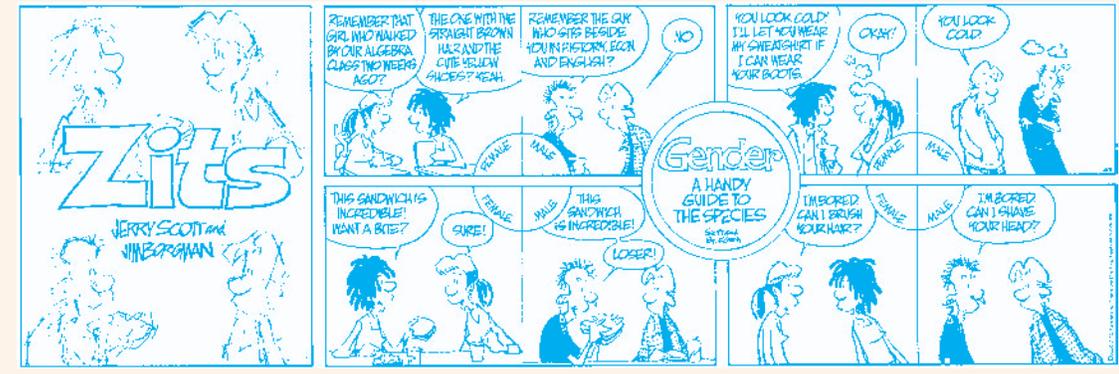
<sup>13</sup> David Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005).

## The Bottom Line on Old Stereotypes and General Impressions of Women and Men Leaders



- ▶ When we think of CEOs, we naturally think of men. Men are seen as dominant and ambitious; women as friendly and sensitive.

Figure 1



© Zits Partnership

# CHAPTER 3: PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN AND MEN LEADERS MAP TO MISLEADING GENDER STEREOTYPES

## KEY LEARNINGS AT A GLANCE

- **Senior managers perceive differences between women and men leaders that may not exist.**
  - In analyses of more than 40 studies, leadership researchers find very little difference between women's and men's leadership.
  - Yet Catalyst finds that misleading perceptions about gender differences in leadership exist—and are even held by corporate executives.
- **Where do these perceptions of women and men leaders likely come from if not reality? One answer: gender stereotypes.**
  - Senior managers seem to be applying the same old stereotypes, women “take care,” men “take charge,” in corporate leadership.
    - Women leaders are judged superior to men at leader behaviors such as supporting and rewarding subordinates, behaviors that relate to the “caretaker” stereotype of women.
    - Men leaders are judged superior to women at leader behaviors such as delegating and influencing superiors, behaviors that relate to the “take charge” stereotype of men.

### Senior managers perceive differences between women and men leaders that may not exist.

According to Catalyst research, women comprise 50 percent of the managers in business.<sup>14</sup> Why is it then, that senior managers in this study still perceive sharp differences in women's and men's leadership capabilities? Leadership research certainly doesn't support their views. In analytical reviews of more than 40 previous studies on gender differences in leadership, top researchers find that there are many more similarities than differences between women and men leaders in organizational settings.<sup>15</sup> And where differences do exist, they are small and mostly concern the extent to which women and men engage in democratic decision-making. Analysis of leadership in organizations provides no indication that women and men leaders differ in the ways that respondents' perceptions suggest.<sup>16</sup> So, why do perceptions of differences still persist?

### Where do managers' perceptions of women and men leaders likely come from, if not reality?

**One answer: gender stereotypes.** In Chapter 2, we described how stereotypes can “dupe” individuals into accepting false beliefs about others. This seems to have been the case with the senior managers we surveyed. Below we provide evidence suggesting that respondents' perceptions were indeed stereotype-based—we reveal a link between the content of gender stereotypes and managers' perceptions of the behaviors at which women and men leaders were effective.

<sup>14</sup> Catalyst, *2002 Catalyst Census of Corporate Officers and Top Earners*, (2002).

<sup>15</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt, “The Leadership Styles of Women and Men,” *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, (2001): 781-797; Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, “The Female Leadership Advantage: An Evaluation of the Evidence,” *Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 6 (December 2003): 807-834; Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, “Finding Gender Advantage and Disadvantage: Systematic Research Integration is the Solution,” *Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 6 (December 2003): 851-859.

<sup>16</sup> Meta-analyses by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt suggest that in organizational settings, women and men do not differ in people- and task-oriented leader behaviors.

**The old rap—women “take care,” men “take charge”—still persists.** We already noted that gender stereotypes attribute traits such as sensitivity and being emotional to women, while attributing traits such as aggressiveness and rationality to men. These stereotypic traits collectively describe women as “taking care” of others while portraying men as “taking charge.” This is an old refrain that apparently still persists. The question is whether it spills over to leadership. Are women leaders more prone to be judged better at “caretaker” leadership behaviors? Are men more apt to be judged better at “take charge” leader behaviors?

To examine whether opinions about leaders arise from gender stereotypes, Catalyst asked top corporate leaders to judge how effective women and men leaders are on ten behaviors essential to leadership.<sup>17</sup> Based on the common gender stereotypes listed in the previous chapter, we classified each of the behaviors according to its connection to the stereotypically masculine or feminine traits. For example, leader behaviors that rely on the task-oriented, “take charge” traits of men were categorized as masculine; and those that rely on the people-oriented “caretaker” traits of women were classified as feminine. These behaviors are displayed according to this classification scheme in Table 2.

Table 2: How Leader Behaviors Connect to Feminine and Masculine Stereotypes	
Feminine Behaviors—Taking Care	Masculine Behaviors—Taking Charge
Supporting Encouraging, assisting, and providing resources for others	Problem-Solving Identifying, analyzing, and acting decisively to remove impediments to work performance
Rewarding Providing praise, recognition, and financial remuneration when appropriate	Influencing Upward Affecting others in positions of higher rank
Mentoring Facilitating the skill development and career advancement of subordinates	Delegating Authorizing others to have substantial responsibility and discretion
Networking Developing and maintaining relationships with others who may provide information or support resources	
Consulting Checking with others before making plans or decisions that affect them	
Team-Building Encouraging positive identification with the organization unit, cooperation and constructive conflict resolution	
Inspiring Motivating others toward greater enthusiasm for, and commitment to, work objects by appealing to emotion, value, or personal example	

<sup>17</sup> The survey was adapted from previous research: Richard F. Martell and Aaron L. DeSmet, “A Diagnostic Ratio Approach to Measuring Beliefs About the Leadership Ability of Women and Men,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 86, no. 6 (December 2001): 1223-1231; Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994); John J. Hater and Bernard M. Bass, “Superiors’ Evaluations and Subordinates’ Perceptions of Transformational and Transactional Leadership,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 73, no. 4 (November 1988): 695-702; Bernard M. Bass, *Transformational Leadership* (Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998).

Then we examined whether respondents' perceptions matched gender stereotypes, such that they judged women leaders as less effective at masculine leader behaviors and more effective at feminine leader behaviors.

Indeed, the judgments of corporate managers did in fact match this pattern.<sup>18</sup> In Table 3, we see that men respondents considered men leaders to be more effective than women on all of the masculine leader behaviors—delegating, problem-solving, and influencing upward. For the most part, women respondents agreed. Except for problem-solving, women respondents also perceived that men leaders were better than women at the stereotypic masculine behaviors delegating and influencing upward.

Table 3 also shows some unexpected attributions. Women respondents ascribed to men leaders greater competency at networking, a stereotypic feminine behavior, and men respondents saw men leaders as better at inspiring, a behavior also classified as "feminine." Despite these exceptions, overall the judgments conformed to stereotypic expectations. Both women and men managers in the sample judged men leaders superior to women leaders on more masculine than feminine behaviors.

Table 3: Leader Behaviors at Which Men Are Considered Better Than Women		Feminine Behavior	Masculine Behavior
Women Respondents	Men Respondents		
... consider MEN leaders better than women leaders at:			
Influencing Upward	Problem-Solving		
Delegating	Delegating		
Networking	Influencing Upward		
	Inspiring		

Perceptions of where women leaders excel also tended to match gender stereotypes. In Table 4, we see that women leaders were consistently considered better at the more feminine leader behaviors than masculine behaviors. In fact, women managers in the sample judged women leaders as better than men at ALL of the behaviors classified as feminine in Table 2 except for networking. Men's responses showed a similar but abbreviated pattern. Men judged women leaders better at only two of the leader behaviors, and BOTH of them were feminine behaviors. As noted earlier, problem-solving was the only masculine behavior at which women perceived women leaders to be superior.

<sup>18</sup> Chi-square statistics revealed that women were more likely to be given higher ratings than men on feminine behaviors and that men were more likely to be given higher ratings than women on masculine behaviors: (Chi-square=201.5, df=2, p=.001). We also compared the average ratings respondents gave women and men at each leader behavior and, using t-tests, identified which ratings were significantly different (bonferonni adjusted p< .004). An average difference between ratings of women and men leaders was considered statistically significant if the probability that it could be a chance occurrence was less than 1 percent. Table 3 shows only those leader behaviors where respondents' ratings of women and men leaders were significantly different.

Table 4: Leader Behaviors at Which Women Are Considered Better Than Men		Feminine Behavior	Masculine Behavior
Women Respondents	Men Respondents		
... consider WOMEN leaders better than men leaders at:			
Supporting	Supporting		
Rewarding	Rewarding		
Team-Building			
Mentoring			
Consulting			
Inspiring			
Problem-Solving			

Although objective evidence tells us that they shouldn't be, respondents' perceptions were generally aligned with gender stereotypes. Together, these facts give us some indication that respondents were not likely basing their perceptions on fact but rather on gender stereotypes. This in no way implies that respondents weren't being honest when they reported their observations. As we pointed out in Chapter 2, because people are often unaware of how their thinking is automatically influenced by stereotypes, they conclude that their perceptions come from objective observations.

### The Bottom Line on Stereotypes vs. Reality



- Even though analyses of more than 40 studies of leadership, spanning more than 15 years, fail to support their perceptions, women leaders are still judged better at "caretaking" leader behaviors and men better at "take charge" behaviors.

### BEHIND EVERY EXTREME PERCEPTION, THERE'S AN OLD STEREOTYPE

We saw above that women are typically judged better than men at feminine leader behaviors and men judged better than women at masculine behaviors. But perceptions of how *much* women and men leaders differ were not uniform across the dimensions of leader behavior. Specifically, the extent to which women leaders were judged superior to men at any feminine leader behavior was variable. The same was true for perceptions of men leaders. At some masculine behaviors, the degree to which men leaders were judged better than women was much greater than at others.

The magnitude of these differences is important. Small differences may indicate where stereotypes are beginning to break down, where women and men no longer rely on trait-based judgments, but instead recognize individuals' capabilities and base their assessments on merit rather than perception. On the other hand, large differences<sup>19</sup> may indicate which stereotypes are particularly immune to extinction—those aspects of leadership where men and women continue to resort to error-prone stereotypical judgments.

<sup>19</sup> Magnitude of differences judged from effect sizes.

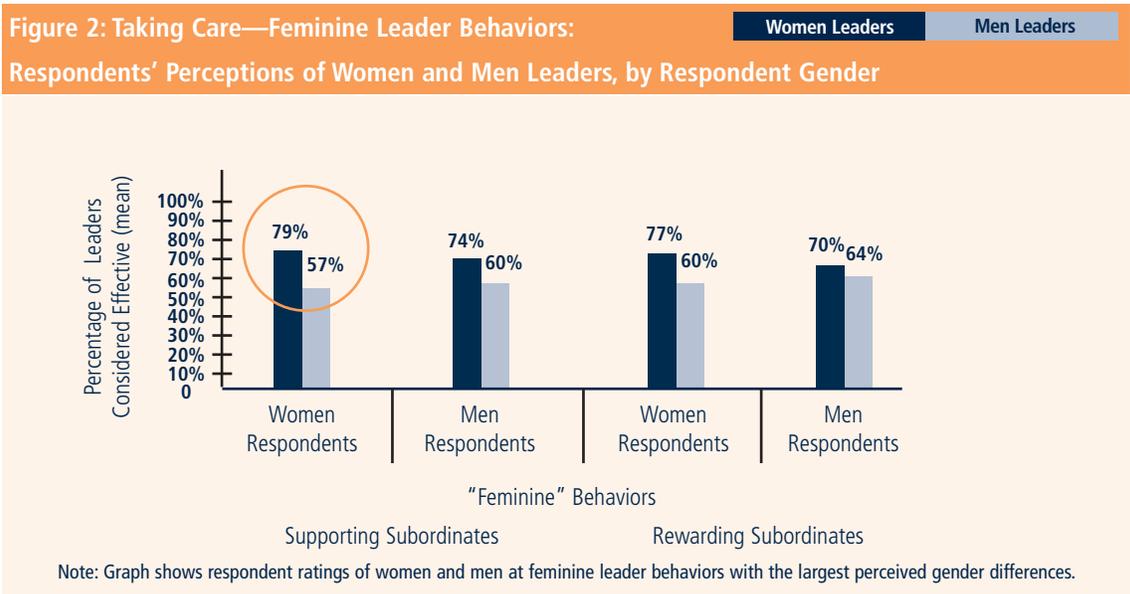
Not surprisingly, perceptions about women and men leaders' effectiveness were generally most polarized or extreme at the behaviors that had the strongest connections to masculine "take charge" traits or feminine "caretaker" traits. This pattern makes sense since the stronger this connection, the easier it would be for respondents to draw on stereotypes to make judgments.

When it's easy, the odds are that people will rely on stereotypes rather than weighing the facts to make their judgments. That being the case, what are the leadership competencies where judgments are most polar—where stereotypes are most apt to be used as shorthand for fact? We highlight these in the following sections.

### Most Polar Feminine Leader Behaviors

It is not difficult to see that feminine leader behaviors, such as supporting and rewarding subordinates, have more of a connection to the "caretaker" stereotype of women than other behaviors classified as feminine, such as consulting and networking. Of all the feminine leader behaviors, supporting and rewarding subordinates were the behaviors associated with the most polarized perceptions of women and men. Women respondents considered women leaders far more superior to men on supporting and rewarding subordinates than on other feminine leadership behaviors, such as consulting. Among men, these two were the only feminine behaviors that women leaders were perceived to be significantly better at than men leaders.

Figure 2 illustrates these polar assessments, showing women leaders judged more effective than men at both supporting and rewarding subordinates. Of these behaviors, supporting subordinates was the behavior where the largest difference in the effectiveness of women and men leaders was observed.



Respondents had the following to say about women leaders' effectiveness at these "caretaker" behaviors:

*"... they [women leaders] care about people and are responsive to other people's needs."*  
 —Man

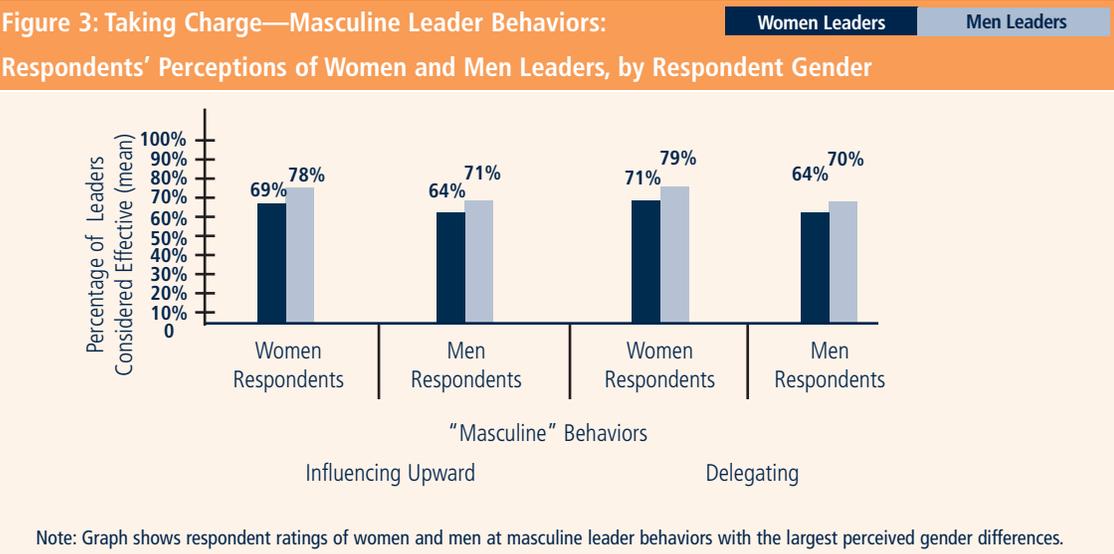
*"Female managers tend to be more sensitive to interpersonal issues and address them, where most male managers either ignore them or treat them as 'personal' problems of the people in their areas."*  
 —Woman

*"Male leaders have weaker soft skills than they think—men tend to focus on execution and neglect the people side of the business. Few senior leaders spend the appropriate amount of time developing their people..."*  
 —Woman

**Most Polar Masculine Behaviors**

Unlike the feminine behaviors, all of the masculine behaviors have relatively clear links to the "take charge" traits stereotypically attributed to men. Consequently, it's not surprising that we found polarized perceptions on all of them. For both delegating and influencing upward, behaviors that are similarly relevant to "take charge" traits, such as dominance and self-confidence, women and men respondents perceived similar sized gender gaps, each showing men on top.

Figure 3 illustrates these differences, showing that both women and men perceived that higher percentages of men leaders than women leaders were effective at delegating and influencing upward.



Women respondents had the following to say about women leaders' relative ineffectiveness at influencing upward:

*"... What they [women leaders] have unilaterally NOT been able to do is to stand firm in the face of upper management disapproval ... This seems to be an across-the-board sticking point. It seems easier to back down and re-evaluate..."*

—Woman

*"A lot of women managers still want to be liked, especially by their subordinates. They are not as prone to 'managing up.'"*

—Woman

### The Bottom Line on Extreme Stereotypic Perceptions



- Polarized perceptions of women's and men's leadership effectiveness link to old gender stereotypes.
- Women's AND men's performance at supporting, rewarding, influencing upward, and delegating can be easily misjudged due to gender stereotypes.

### WOMEN SAY—WAIT A MINUTE—WE'RE AS GOOD AT PROBLEM-SOLVING AS MEN

Of all the masculine behaviors we studied, problem-solving is the one that might best embody the "take charge" stereotype of men. After all, acting decisively to resolve problems is what "taking charge" is all about. More than any of the other behaviors, problem-solving is probably the single best exemplar of leadership that people consider in making judgments about an individual's leadership effectiveness. What other behavior so encompasses how success of top corporate managers in U.S. companies is measured? In light of its importance, it is interesting how much women and men disagreed on who was better at this key masculine behavior. It was the behavior where men judged men leaders as most superior to women. The two left bars in Figure 4 display this difference. Elaborating on this perception, one of the male respondents remarked:

*"Men just have more practice at it and they are conditioned to solve problems. Following the process of critical thinking is where the rewards pay off [for men]."*

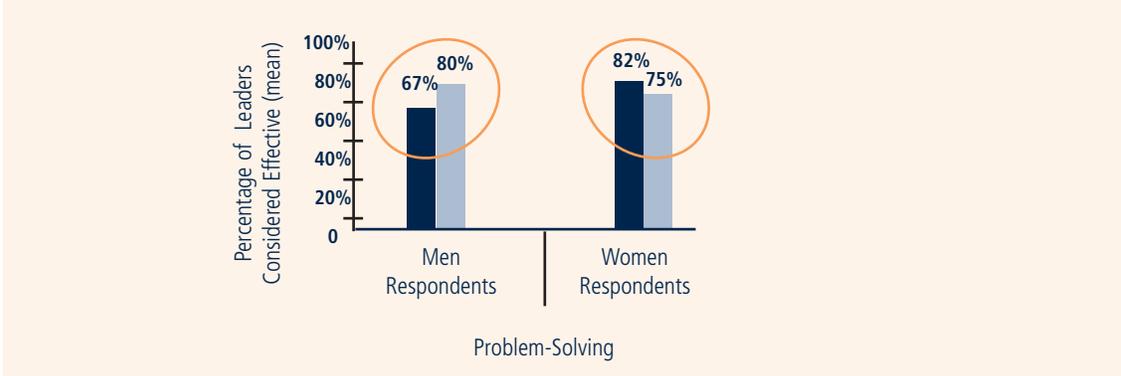
—Man

Figure 4: Taking Charge—Men Respondents'

Women Leaders

Men Leaders

Polarized Perceptions of Women's and Men's Effectiveness at Problem-Solving



Women also perceived a gender gap in problem-solving competencies, but in the opposite direction. Women saw women leaders as outshining men on this stereotypically masculine “take charge” trait. Consequently, as shown in the two rightmost bars in Figure 4, the gap women perceived didn’t match gender stereotypes.

The disagreement between men’s and women’s judgment about problem-solving begs the question of how much this perception gap impacts the work experiences of women leaders. The fact that men far outnumber women in corporate leadership positions indicates that it is their perception that likely predominates in the workplace. In Chapter 4 of this report, we will explore just how devastating men’s false perceptions of women’s problem-solving capability can be.

**Why Do Women Respondents Have Different Perceptions than Men at Problem-Solving?**

It is clear from our findings that women AND men respondents have polarized perceptions of leadership. This polarization was especially evident with respect to these leader behaviors that were closely associated with masculine “take charge” traits or feminine “caretaker” traits. And in most cases, respondents’ perceptions matched gender stereotypes.

Why then did women perceive men leaders to be inferior to women at problem-solving, when this trait is so strongly linked to stereotypically masculine traits and not stereotypically feminine traits? Since we know there is no evidence from research to suggest that women leaders outperform men at problem-solving, and in this instance, women respondents were not drawing on gender stereotypes, what was behind their perceptions?

One likely explanation is that women respondents were especially motivated to avoid stereotyping in this instance precisely because of the importance that problem-solving plays in the overall scheme of successful leadership. Since men's perceptions of women leaders were most strongly negative at problem-solving, women in the sample—being leaders themselves—would have likely experienced the effects of this particular bias first-hand. Since men often make up a majority of women leaders' colleagues, women may find themselves having to consistently defend against this prejudice. Such experiences may have made women respondents so defensive about their problem-solving reputation that they judged women leaders better than men.



#### The Bottom Line on Women's Problem-Solving Perceptions

- Women's perceptions of problem-solving effectiveness do not conform to old gender stereotypes.
- Workplace experiences may make women defensive about their problem-solving reputation—causing them to rate women leaders slightly higher than men at problem-solving.

## CHAPTER 4: LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS LINK TO DIFFERENT SOURCES OF POWER

### KEY LEARNINGS AT A GLANCE

- **Being perceived as an effective problem-solver is linked to higher ratings on other leader behaviors, such as team-building and inspiring followers.**
  - Because women are not seen by men as competent problem-solvers, they may, by extension, be considered less competent at inspiring followers and building teams.
- **Perceived competence at problem-solving, inspiring followers, and team-building relate to interpersonal power—a key type of power that leaders use to motivate followers.**
  - Because women are stereotyped as relatively poor problem-solvers by men, their power to motivate followers may be seriously undermined.
  - Without interpersonal power, women may have little choice but to fall back on sources of power that come from their hierarchical position in an organization and their ability to control rewards.
  - Since most women tend to have positions that fall lower in their organization's hierarchy, they may have even less positional power than men on which to rely.

### WOMEN'S INDICTMENT ON PROBLEM-SOLVING HAS SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS: STEREOTYPES GET WOMEN LEADERS WHERE IT HURTS MOST

In Chapter 3, Catalyst showed that of all the leader behaviors, men had the most negative view of women's effectiveness at problem-solving. Furthermore, we saw that even though women disagreed with men, the impact of men's perceptions of women leaders could be substantial and devastating simply because men so far outnumber women in corporate leadership. How problematic is this reputation of relative problem-solving ineffectiveness? And does its impact warrant the defensiveness we may have seen in women's *own* assessments of their problem-solving skill in Chapter 3?

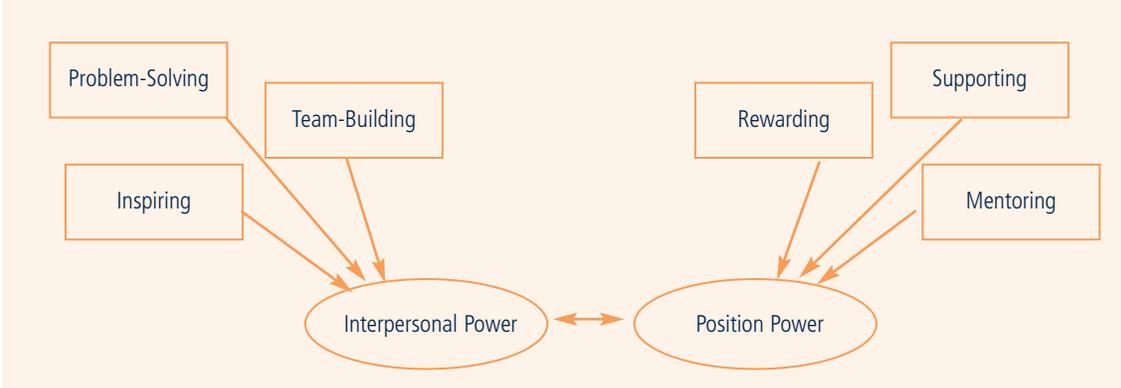
To find answers, Catalyst took a "big picture" look at leadership and examined how the leader behaviors are inter-related.<sup>20</sup> Doing so yielded insight into how problem-solving was linked to the other leader behaviors in respondents' minds and suggested how being cast as poor problem-solvers might have devastating effects on women's leadership.

**A leader's problem-solving reputation is a key source of power.** Figure 5 shows that both women and men had similar views about how the leader behaviors link together.<sup>21</sup> The pattern of the relationships surfaces an important point—that leaders draw from different power bases in organizations to inspire, reward, and rally teams to achieve organizational goals.

<sup>20</sup> A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine whether both women and men saw the same connections between the leader behaviors.

<sup>21</sup> Although women and men had different perceptions about which gender was superior at problem-solving, chi-square statistics indicated that the same model of leader power represented in Figure 5 adequately captured both women's and men's perceptions of how the leader behaviors were related (multiple group test of model structure: chi-square=6.4, df=8, p=603).

Figure 5: Model of How Leader Behaviors Relate to Different Forms of Power



Leadership researchers say there are two primary sources of power that leaders use to get the job done: interpersonal and position power.<sup>22</sup> Our analyses showed that six of the leader behaviors in our survey mapped well to these sources of power. Position power relates to how leaders use their hierarchical positions in organizations to motivate others. Behaviors such as supporting, rewarding, and mentoring are associated with this kind of power because each requires some position of authority or control over key resources. Alternatively, leader behaviors in the second cluster—problem-solving, inspiring, and team-building—mapped to less formal, interpersonal power.<sup>23</sup> This sort of power does not come from the leader’s control of tangible rewards or resources but on the leader’s perceived expertise and charisma. Prior research finds that leaders can use respect for their expertise to inspire individuals and rally teams to achieve organizational goals.<sup>24</sup> Therefore it makes sense that our analyses showed a link between perceived expertise in problem-solving, inspiring followers and team-building.

**Women leaders don’t have an edge on interpersonal power after all.** The results indicate that women are likely seen as having limited interpersonal power—especially in men’s eyes. Because men see women as less effective at problem-solving, the findings show they’re likely to also see them as less capable at inspiring and team-building, too. This is somewhat surprising, given that both inspiring and team-building fit with the emotive, relationship-building traits typically attributed to women.

These findings seem counter to our argument that women tend to be rated better than men at behaviors that fit feminine “caretaker” stereotypes. The model of leader power described here may explain why. Since inspiring, team-building, and problem-solving are related leader behaviors, being perceived negatively on one of these behaviors could have spillover effects to others. Because men perceive that women leaders lack problem-solving expertise, this may have lowered their judgments about how effective women were at team-building and inspiring. When it comes to interpersonal power, women leaders seem to find themselves between a “rock and a hard place.”

<sup>22</sup> Belle Rose Ragins and Eric Sundstrom, “Gender and Power in Organizations: A Longitudinal Perspective,” *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 105, no. 1 (January 1989): 51-88.

<sup>23</sup> These themes did not describe the remaining leader behaviors.

<sup>24</sup> Ragins et al., 1.

**If she can't solve problems, why should I follow her?** The damaging effects of women's perceived problem-solving ineffectiveness likely extend beyond perceptions about women's interpersonal power. Specifically, men's lack of faith in women's problem-solving competence (whether justified or not) may actually cause them to be less open, if not resistant, to the inspirational appeals and team-building attempts of women leaders.

Experts believe that interpersonal sources of power may be more important to effective leadership than position power.<sup>25</sup> The understanding that problem-solving competence may be a critical source of interpersonal leverage gives Catalyst important insight into the dilemma of women leaders. By casting doubt on women's problem-solving competence, stereotypes can limit women's ability to build critical interpersonal power—leaving them to rely on position-based forms of power—positions they don't often have.

### The Bottom Line on Women Leaders' Negative Problem-Solving Reputation



- If leaders cannot command respect for their ability to recognize trouble spots and create solutions, it would be difficult for them to motivate individuals and get teams to follow them.
- This is exactly the predicament of women leaders. By casting doubt on their problem-solving expertise, stereotypes undermine women's power to lead.

<sup>25</sup> Ragins et al., 1.

# CHAPTER 5: FACTORS THAT PUT WOMEN AT HIGH RISK OF BEING STEREOTYPED

## KEY LEARNINGS AT A GLANCE

- Stereotypic biases of senior managers can become stronger under specific work circumstances.
- Stereotypic biases of senior managers are linked to whether they:
  - Work in occupations traditionally populated by women or men and;
  - Report to a woman or man.
    - Senior managers who report to women tend to hold more stereotypical views of women leaders than those who report to men.
    - Just hiring more women into management positions won't eliminate stereotypes. Exposure to women leaders isn't enough. Organizations must take steps to eradicate stereotypic bias.

## IF SHE LEADS A CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, WILL SHE BE SEEN AS A GREAT LEADER?

In Chapter 4, we described how women's negative reputation at problem-solving can have devastating effects on women leaders. Because of its "make or break" impact, we explore whether there are some work circumstances where women are especially likely to be given a "bad rap" on problem-solving.

Several psychological studies have found that women leaders are judged more negatively than equally skilled men in male-dominated domains. However, these studies have found that women do not suffer the same fate in female-dominated fields. In these fields, women are judged equally competent as men.<sup>26</sup>

These findings can be attributed to stereotypes about feminine and masculine occupations. Just as there are stereotypes about gender traits, stereotypes also exist about the type of work women and men are cut out to do—with sometimes negative consequences for women leaders.

Since these occupational stereotypes portray women and men as being suited to or good at different kinds of work,<sup>27</sup> they can also be a source of bias on individuals' perceptions. For example, when people think about an ideal nurse or social worker, odds are they think of women. Similarly, when people envision an accomplished lawyer or medical doctor, they likely think of men.

In the business world, stereotypically feminine and masculine occupations tend to be clustered in staff and line functions, respectively. People expect to find women excelling as human resources and public relations professionals, and they expect to find men excelling as sales and general management professionals.

<sup>26</sup> Eagly et al., 3.

<sup>27</sup> David Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005).

These occupational stereotypes, combined with occupational segregation, result in women leaders being regarded more positively in feminine occupations than in masculine occupations. In other words, regardless of their true competencies, when women leaders work in occupations that are stereotypically suited to men, they will be judged less effective than when they work in occupations stereotypically suited to women.

This explains why women who manage large healthcare systems or cosmetic companies may be seen as more effective than women managing steel mills or construction companies, irrespective of their true competencies. In this chapter, we examine whether occupational stereotypes might exacerbate or attenuate stereotypic perceptions about women’s problem-solving effectiveness. Specifically, we determine whether respondents in masculine occupations (i.e., those that fit masculine stereotypes) give women lower marks at problem-solving than respondents in feminine occupations (i.e., those that fit feminine stereotypes).

**IF THEY REPORT TO A WOMAN, WILL THEY SEE HER AS COMPETENT?**

A second aspect of work circumstances that can exacerbate or attenuate stereotypic bias is the exposure individuals have had to women leaders. Some people have widespread experience working with women leaders, whereas others have little or no experience.

It seems reasonable to expect that the more direct experience individuals have with women leaders, the less likely they will be to rely on stereotyping when making judgments about women’s leadership competencies. Exposure could lead them to arrive at a more fact-based evaluation of women’s leadership talent, preparation, and aptitude.

To test these assumptions about the interplay between work occupation and exposure to women leaders, we went back to the data, but restricted our analysis to the 66 percent of respondents who were not CEOs and, therefore, had a direct supervisor. We compared these respondents’ perceptions based on whether they worked in stereotypically feminine and masculine occupations, and whether their immediate supervisor was a man or a woman. Table 5 shows the major occupations represented among respondents and the classification of these fields according to gender stereotypes.

Table 5: Feminine and Masculine Occupations	
Feminine Occupations	Masculine Occupations
Human Resources	General Management
Public Relations	Finance/Accounting
	Sales/Marketing
	Information Technology
	Research & Development

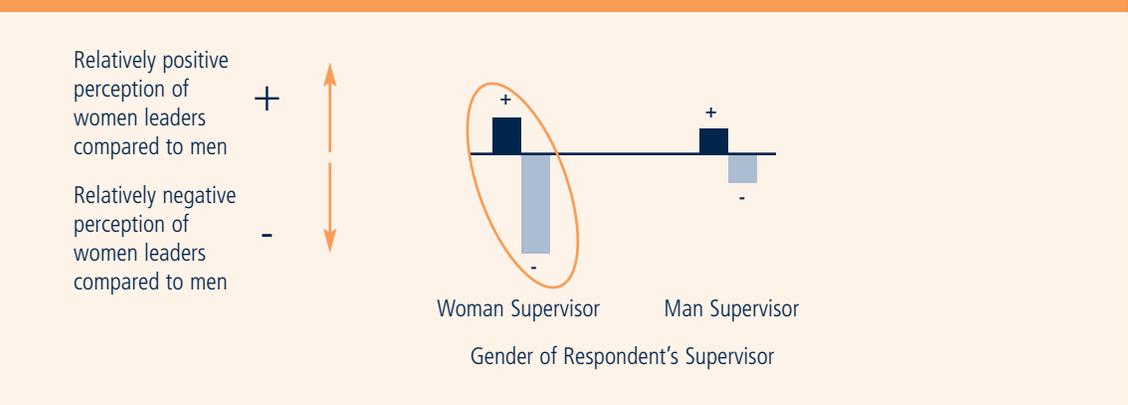
## WHERE WE WORK AND WHO WE REPORT TO MATTERS

In line with gender stereotypes, we found that women and men who worked in stereotypically feminine occupations, such as human resources, rated women leaders' problem-solving effectiveness higher than that of men's, whereas those who worked in masculine occupations, such as general management, rated women leaders lower on their problem-solving abilities.

However, as we expected, these rating patterns were significantly influenced by whether individuals reported to a man or a woman, but not in the direction one might predict. Respondents who reported to women had a more—not less—stereotypic view of women leaders than those who reported to men. If they reported to a male supervisor, the occupational field where they worked made no difference in their perceptions of women and men leaders. As shown on the right side of Figure 6, the difference between how respondents judged women's problem-solving behavior relative to men is minor regardless of whether they worked in a masculine occupation or a feminine occupation—IF they had a male supervisor.

The chart shows a slightly more positive view of women leaders when male-supervised respondents worked in feminine fields, and a slightly negative view of women leaders among those who worked in a masculine field. However, the difference between these perceptions was not statistically significant. In other words, where they worked made no real difference to respondents' judgments as long as they reported to a man.

**Figure 6: Perceptions of Problem-Solving Competency of Women Leaders in Feminine and Masculine Occupations—A Comparison of Respondents with Women and Men Supervisors**



In contrast, for respondents who reported to a woman, the occupation was in fact important. As shown in Figure 6, respondents who had a woman supervisor and who worked in a feminine occupation were more likely to judge women as better problem-solvers than men.

If they worked in a masculine occupation, on the other hand, we found the opposite effect. Respondents who worked in a masculine occupation and reported to a woman supervisor had profoundly negative perceptions of women leaders. They perceived men leader's problem-solving competencies in these work settings as much better than women leaders. Only when respondents worked in a feminine occupation did having a woman supervisor correspond to women being viewed as more competent. Tests revealed that this pattern was statistically significant.<sup>28</sup>

### The Bottom Line on Women Leaders at Risk



- Top managers reporting to women have more stereotypical views of women leaders than those reporting to men.
- Respondents reporting to women in masculine fields are more critical of women leaders than those working in feminine fields.

### DOUBLE JEOPARDY

This chapter shows that when women work in masculine occupations, they may be more likely to be seen as poor problem-solvers, especially by senior managers who have direct exposure to women leaders. Imagine the predicament that these findings suggest for women leaders.

In the previous chapter, we saw that a leader's problem-solving reputation could be a key source of interpersonal power. The findings in this chapter suggest that women leaders may in fact have the least problem-solving credibility with their subordinates. As our findings revealed, respondents with women supervisors had more stereotypic perceptions of women's problem-solving competence than those who reported to men.

Because this sort of credibility (whether deserved or not) is what leaders use to get individuals to follow them, a leader's subordinates are perhaps the most important people she needs to convince of her problem-solving competence. Unfortunately, the predicament of women leaders is that their subordinates—the same people they rely on most to get the job done—are the very ones that may be least receptive to executing their plans.

This reality may make the demands of leading in masculine domains particularly high for women. When women's energy might be better spent on implementing solutions, they may have to spend considerably more effort than men leaders on negotiating with subordinates and getting their buy-in. Due to negative stereotypes about women's problem-solving competence, the role and demands of leadership may be far different and far more difficult for women in masculine fields than it is for their male counterparts.

<sup>28</sup> Statistical significance means that the effect of occupation type was real and not due to chance. An effect was considered significant if the probability of it occurring due to chance was less than 5 percent.

The implications are clear: To help advance women leaders in masculine occupations, organizations need to be especially vigilant against stereotypes. By focusing special attention on occupations typically dominated by men, organizations can promote women being successful in positions where they have been less prevalent, such as line manager positions.

### The Bottom Line on Women Leaders' Predicament in Masculine Domains



- Women find themselves in double jeopardy. In masculine domains, individuals who report to women may have the least confidence in women's problem-solving competence. This means women's subordinates—the same people women leaders rely on most to get work done—are the very people who may have the lowest confidence in their plans. For women, leading in masculine fields may be far more demanding than it is for their male counterparts.

### WHY ARE RESPONDENTS WITH EXPOSURE TO WOMEN SUPERVISORS MORE PRONE TO STEREOTYPING?

Psychologists have found that people automatically remember and believe information that is consistent with their stereotypes, while they dismiss contradictory information.<sup>29</sup> This means that when we are exposed to the target of a particular stereotype, the selective information we gather from that interaction can actually make the original stereotype stronger.

The tendency to process information in a selective way is especially likely when there is a status or power difference among the individuals involved (such as that which exists between supervisors and their reports in this study).<sup>30</sup> Ironically, for these reasons, respondents who had women supervisors may have been even more prone to stereotyping than those who reported to men. The findings reviewed in this chapter support this reasoning.

The idea that exposure to women leaders can actually increase stereotyping has important implications. It makes a compelling case for why organizations must go beyond setting representation goals in their attempts to leverage gender diversity. Simply hiring or promoting more women leaders may not be enough to curb stereotyping and ensure that women's talent is fully leveraged. Unless steps are taken to address stereotypic bias, organizations will not be able to reap the full benefit of women's leadership talent.

### The Bottom Line on Exposure to Women Leaders



- Because greater exposure to women leaders can make individuals more prone to stereotype, organizations cannot assume that hiring or promoting women alone is enough to leverage gender diversity. To ensure that women advance, stereotypic bias must also be addressed.

<sup>29</sup> David Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> A. Dijksterhuis and A. van Knippenberg, "The Knife That Cuts Both Ways: Facilitated and Inhibited Access to Traits as a Result of Stereotype Activation," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 32, no. 3 (May 1996): 271-288.

## CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

### WHAT CAN COMPANIES DO TO ADDRESS STEREOTYPIC BIAS?

We note throughout this report that stereotypes can have automatic effects on people's perceptions. And it is precisely this quality that makes stereotypes so difficult to address. Eliminating stereotypes will take much work and concentrated effort on the part of both men AND women, as well as the organizations. We offer here several initial proactive measures that corporations can adopt to begin that process. Specifically, we present ways to break the "spell" of stereotyping through:

1. **Objective performance evaluation and succession planning processes;**
2. **Educating managers about stereotyping; and**
3. **Showcasing the successes of women leaders—especially in stereotypically masculine fields.**

### Break the "Spell" of Stereotypes by Adding Rigor to Your Performance Management Process: Make performance evaluation and succession planning as objective as possible.

This report shows that gender stereotypes can cast doubt on the problem-solving competence of women leaders—with damaging consequences. As we explained in Chapter 2, people can stereotype without intending to do so. To ensure that women's problem-solving expertise is not unfairly discredited by stereotypes, organizations should ensure that performance management processes are structured to prevent it. Here's how:

- **Clearly define and communicate performance evaluation criteria.** Common to many performance appraisals are evaluation criteria such as "innovation in approaching problems" or "demonstrated ability to execute." We know from this study that these are specific criteria where women may be especially vulnerable to biased judgments. One way to reduce this vulnerability is to increase clarity and specificity about what behaviors or outcomes demonstrate problem-solving competence. The more objective organizations make their appraisal processes, the more likely they are to produce bias-free judgments.
- **Create explicit decision rules about how evaluation criteria are weighted.** Gender stereotypes may cause us to attend to different kinds of information depending on whether we are evaluating a woman or a man. When this occurs, different performance standards may unintentionally be applied to women and men. Using specified criteria weightings can help to ensure that women and men are judged by the same standards.

- **Implement a system of “checks and balances” to safeguard against stereotypic bias.** In Chapter 2, we observed that people may automatically use stereotypes to arrive at judgments. Since organizations may not be able to consistently prevent this automatic individual tendency on the front-end, decision-making processes should be structured to ensure “checks” on the soundness of individual judgments on the back-end. People decisions should not rest with single individuals, or with business or functional units (e.g., within Human Resources only), and should be tested widely. WellPoint, a healthcare company, successfully adopted this sort of bias safeguard, making “checks and balances” a critical part of how succession planning decisions are made.

#### **Company Practice—Rigor in Succession Planning Decisions: WellPoint, Inc. Succession Planning “Talent Calibration Sessions”**

WellPoint’s succession planning system provides an exhaustive and searchable database of resume information and career aspiration profiles of its top 1,400 leaders. The individual leaders first enter this information about themselves. Then, their supervisors, or “raters,” review the data and enter their assessments. From this data, executive leadership can generate summary profiles on individuals, produce succession plan reports in an organization chart format, and perform special queries to generate lists of top candidates for key positions or special assignments.

Succession candidates are presented at “Talent Calibration Sessions” at least once a year. A key objective of these sessions is to minimize bias in succession planning decisions. During these sessions, teams of executives:

- Clarify and calibrate assessments of the potential of their direct reports.
- Explain why they have identified specific individuals as succession candidates and are open to peer feedback.
- Collaborate on the development of identified succession candidates.
- Review and discuss the diversity of the talent pool.

As implied by the phrase “Talent Calibration Sessions,” session attendees are expected to challenge each other about their assessments and recommendations—and to “calibrate” ratings accordingly.

WellPoint’s overall succession planning process ensures the company meets its strategic objectives, while fully engaging diverse talent in support of its common mission.

*Description of company practice provided by Lara Beck, Internal Communications Manager, WellPoint, Inc.*

**Break the “Spell” of Stereotypes with Skill-Based Training: Educate individuals about stereotyping processes, and equip them with skills to self-monitor their perceptions.**

If individual employees are educated about stereotyping processes and equipped with skills to avoid their effects, organizations will be better able to limit bias at its source. For example, there is emerging evidence that people can break the habit of stereotyping if they:

- Learn techniques to override automatic tendencies to use stereotypes.
- Learn to recognize the conditions that place them at risk for stereotyping.
- Have opportunities to “practice” interacting with people who are different from themselves (e.g., in terms of gender or ethnic identity).<sup>31</sup>

Typical diversity training programs do not often achieve these learning objectives. By designing diversity programs that build on principles of bias reduction, organizations can better arm themselves to address this very subtle but significant barrier to inclusion. The example below highlights a program that one technology company uses.

**Company Practice—Stereotype-Avoidance Skills: The Research and Development (R&D) Community at Corning, Inc.**

**Creating an Inclusive Culture through Skill-Building**

A key goal of this program is to improve the innovation effectiveness of the R&D community at Corning. Its leadership believes that taking proactive measures against unintended stereotyping is essential to the organizational goal of leveraging the full potential and creativity of its employees. Important elements of this unique program include:

- Teaching employees at all levels about stereotypes and about their automatic influence on how people perceive each other.
- Experiential, small-group settings where employees learn and practice a number of critical interpersonal skills over a series of months. These include specific techniques to help participants use more deliberate, data-based methods of interpreting what colleagues do and avoid stereotype-based snap judgments.
- Assigning employees to skill practice groups that maximize their exposure to employees who differ from themselves on a number of dimensions—from gender to organizational status.

*Description of company practice provided by Anthony Oshiotse, Associate HR Director, Science and Technology, Corning, Inc.*

<sup>31</sup> Stuart Oskamp, *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000).

**Break the “Spell” of Stereotypes with Counter-Stereotypic Images of Women Leaders: Showcase the innovation successes of women leaders—especially in stereotypically masculine fields.**

People may be less likely to stereotype if they are continually exposed to information that disconfirms their stereotypes. Therefore, to discourage stereotypes of women as poor problem-solvers, organizations can highlight women’s achievements in this specific performance area. As we learned from this report, such tactics may be particularly important in the male-dominated settings where women can be more vulnerable to stereotyping. The following is an example of how one company is creating counter-stereotypic images of women in manufacturing.

**Company Practice—Counter-Stereotypical Portrayals of Women: Georgia-Pacific Corporation Women of Achievement Award**

The manufacturing industry has been a stereotypically masculine domain. This legacy could create unconscious doubt in people’s minds about women’s effectiveness in manufacturing settings. Georgia-Pacific (G-P) recognizes that by highlighting the contributions of women, the organization can counteract any stereotypical beliefs about women that could exist. With this effect in mind, G-P has established a tradition of showing just how much women’s problem-solving expertise has benefited the organization. This recognition is given through an achievement award. Several attributes of the award are key to making it a successful defense against gender stereotyping. These include:

- **Consistency**—The award is given on an annual basis and is now part of a 17-year tradition of recognizing women’s problem-solving achievements. A long list of awardees provides concrete reminders of women’s ability to deliver results, helping to portray them in a counter-stereotypic light.
- **Legitimacy**—The award criteria set high standards for recognition. These standards ensure that the award is a credible and powerful testament to the value of women’s contributions.
- **Wide Exposure**—The award is a company-wide recognition tool. As a result, it can provide a large and highly visible platform to showcase the bottom-line impact of women’s contributions.

*Description of company practice provided by Texanna Reeves, Group Manager, Workforce Strategies and Programs, Georgia-Pacific Corporation.*

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

For organizations, the costs associated with stereotyping are two-fold. First, the organization incurs an opportunity cost for its failure to leverage and develop the true potential of existing female leadership talent. Second, it incurs the cost of sub-optimizing women already in leadership roles. But the cost of stereotyping isn't limited only to the executive suite.

The costs of stereotypes are likely to reach far downstream in organizations. Studies show that the mere fear of being stereotyped can deter women from entering male-dominated fields.<sup>32</sup> As such, women in the pipeline who might have an interest and aptitude for corporate leadership may be discouraged from pursuing leadership roles altogether if they perceive their risk of stereotypic devaluation is high. In this way, stereotypes can diminish the pool of potential women leaders from which organizations have to draw. The self-selection of female pipeline talent into non-leadership roles translates into additional opportunity costs for organizations.

With this study, Catalyst builds on our previous research on women in leadership, which has consistently reported that women perceive gender stereotyping as a barrier to their advancement. Our findings reveal that perceptions of women and men leaders match common stereotypes, although previous research suggests they should not. These stereotypic perceptions are problematic for women on many levels.

Compared to men, women leaders are rated more harshly at stereotypically male, "take charge" behaviors, such as problem-solving, and may be especially at risk for such criticisms in traditionally masculine fields, such as general management. Further, adding insult to injury, it may be difficult for women leaders to prove stereotypes about their leadership wrong. Because people pay more attention to information that confirms stereotypes, even subordinates of women leaders may ignore instances where their supervisors behaved in counter-stereotypic ways. We also show that by casting doubt on the problem-solving expertise of women leaders, stereotypes have the potential to seriously undermine women's ability to lead. These findings leave no doubt that organizations intending to close the gender gap in corporate leadership must take active steps to combat insidious gender stereotypes.

<sup>32</sup>Paul G. Davies, Steven J. Spencer, Diane M. Quinn and Rebecca Gerhardstein, "Consuming images: How television commercials that elicit stereotype threat can restrain women academically and professionally," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* Vol. 28, no. 5 (May 2002): 1615-1628.

Forthcoming Catalyst research will shed light on where and how this battle against stereotypes should be waged. In upcoming reports, we will examine whether women leaders in European countries face the same negative stereotypes that women in the United States do. We will also highlight the predicaments that stereotyping creates for women leaders, such as being penalized for both confirming and disconfirming feminine stereotypes, and how women leaders cope with such dilemmas. Future Catalyst research will also address which people management practices are most effective at minimizing the effects of stereotypic bias. Collectively, these reports will provide well-tested guidance on how organizations can be more effective at breaking down the barrier of gender stereotypes.

## CHAPTER 8: DETAILED RESPONDENT PROFILES AND METHODOLOGY

### RESPONDENTS PROFILES

**Reporting Level.** Analyses included the responses of 296 corporate leaders; 128 (43 percent) men, and 168 (57 percent) women.<sup>33</sup> Thirty-four percent were CEOs, 41 percent were one reporting level from the CEO, and 10 percent were two reporting levels from the top. Taken together, 85 percent of our sample respondents were within two reporting levels of the top job (Table 6). With a sample of this nature, the study provides a firmer foundation for understanding the experiences of women leaders in the top ranks.

Reporting Level From CEO	Men	Women	Total
0 (i.e., respondent is a CEO)	50	51	101 (34%)
1 (direct report to CEO)	48	72	120 (41%)
2	14	16	30 (10%)
3	9	15	24 (8%)
4	4	9	13 (4%)
5	-	3	3 (1%)
6	2	2	4 (1%)
10	1	-	1 (0%)
All reporting levels	128	168	296 (100%)

**Other Work-Related Demographics.** In terms of work-related characteristics, women and men respondents were quite similar. The largest industries represented among both groups of respondents were Manufacturing, followed by Consulting and Information Technology. These similar distribution patterns continued when we looked at the financial performance and revenues of respondents' organizations. Not surprisingly, the greatest point of difference between women and men was the percentage who worked in a feminine-type versus masculine-type occupation. As one might expect, significantly fewer men were in feminine-type occupations compared to masculine ones. Women respondents, however, were almost evenly split between both occupation types.

<sup>33</sup>Total study respondents were 311; 15 were omitted from the analyses due to missing data and/or to remove outliers from the data set (responses that were 3 or more standard deviations from the mean and were omitted from analyses).

Table 7: Respondent Work-Related Demographics		
Work-Related Demographics	Women Respondents	Men Respondents
Industries with Highest Representation (> 12%)		
Consulting	12%	13%
Information Technology	12%	12%
Manufacturing	20%	26%
Occupational Field		
Feminine Occupation	48%	22%
Masculine Occupation	52%	78%
Annual Company Revenues		
Less than \$5 MM	31%	36%
\$5.1-\$25 MM	17%	27%
\$25.1-\$50 MM	6%	6%
\$50.1-250 MM	9%	9%
\$250.1 and above	38%	23%
Company Performance Relative to Competitors (based on respondents' estimates)		
Very Low	2%	3%
Low	7%	6%
Average	38%	30%
High	36%	41%
Very High	17%	20%
Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100 percent due to rounding.		

**Personal Demographics.** A majority of both women and men respondents were over 44 years old. But men tended to be older than women, with 42 percent of men indicating that they were older than 55, compared to only 20 percent of women.

Notably, men also indicated more managerial experience than women. Table 8 shows that as many as 52 percent of men had more than 20 years of managerial experience, compared to 36 percent of women respondents.

<b>Personal Demographics</b>	<b>Women Respondents</b>	<b>Men Respondents</b>
Age		
Less than 35 years	3%	4%
35-44 years	20%	17%
45-54 years	57%	37%
55-64 years	17%	36%
Over 65 years	3%	6%
Education (highest level attained)		
High School or Less	6%	3%
College Graduate	44%	37%
Master's Degree	41%	49%
Doctoral – Ph.D., M.D., J.D., Ed.D.	9%	11%
Years of Managerial Experience		
Less than 5 years	2%	0%
5-10 years	14%	10%
11-15 years	21%	13%
16-20 years	28%	25%
More than 20 years	36%	52%
Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100 percent due to rounding.		

## METHODOLOGY

Participants are part of an existing senior leader panel of approximately 3,000 leaders who participate in a learning project run by Theresa Welbourne, Ph.D., at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan. The group participates in surveys conducted every two months, and the topics focus on leadership and/or other organizational development issues. The entire leader panel was invited to participate in the present study via an email which included a web link to the survey. At 9 percent, the response rate for this particular survey is comparable to other surveys run within the project and similar to other studies of senior executives. Analyses show that the respondent population is representative of the overall leadership sample, when considering industry, firm size, and other demographics.<sup>34</sup>

Once participants accessed the survey, they were presented with information introducing the study goals as well as instructions for completing the survey. The study description indicated that the purpose of the survey was to examine whether people perceive differences between women and men in leadership. They were not given any indication about the position of the research investigators on this issue.

<sup>34</sup><http://www.eepulse.com>.

In the body of the survey, participants were first asked to estimate, based on their own experiences, the percentage of women who performed each of ten different leader behaviors.<sup>35</sup> After respondents indicated their estimates about women leaders, they completed several demographic items. In another separate task, they were asked to estimate the percentages of men that they believed to be effective at the same ten leader behaviors we referenced earlier. After each set of leader items (related to women and related to men), participants were allowed an opportunity to provide open-ended comments about their estimates.

We based our analyses on the average differences between the percentage estimates respondents gave for women and men on each behavior. Specifically, Catalyst subtracted respondents' percentage estimates for men from the percentage estimates for women leaders and tested whether the average difference for each behavior was statistically significant. As such, when we found significant differences that were negative (i.e., higher percentage estimates for men than for women leaders) we inferred that respondents perceived a leadership advantage for men. Conversely, when there was a significant positive difference (i.e., women leaders' percentage estimates were higher than estimates for men leaders) we inferred a women's leadership advantage for the relevant leader behavior.

<sup>35</sup> Using a ten-point scale, respondents indicated whether their estimate fell within one of the following intervals for each of the leader behaviors: 0-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81-90, 91-100. Analyses of respondent estimates were based on the upper limit of each interval such that a response of 0-10 was coded as 10% and a response 11-20 was coded as 20%.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is the result of the teamwork and dedication of many Catalyst staff. Catalyst President Ilene H. Lang provided leadership in the development of the research project and report. Special thanks to Catalyst Vice President of Research and Information Services, Nancy M. Carter, Ph.D., who oversaw the research and whose considerable input and guidance were instrumental in writing this report.

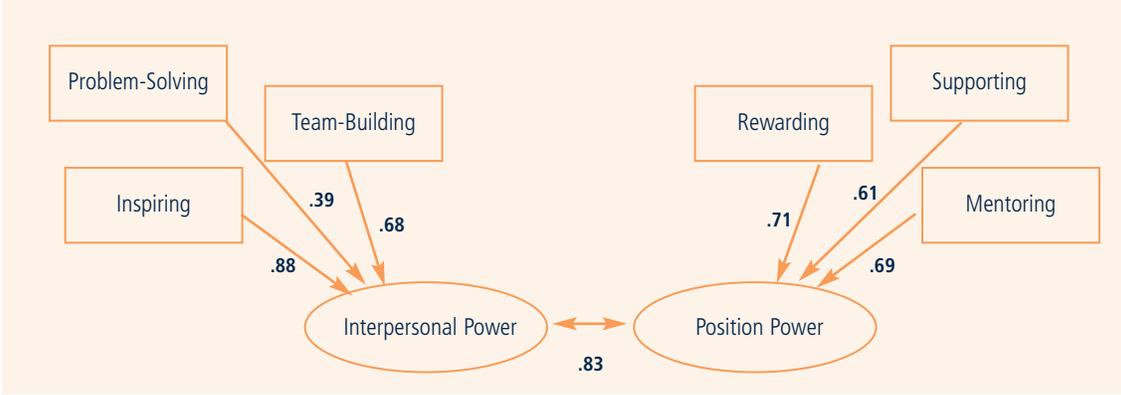
Jeanine Prime, Ph.D., conceptualized and directed the project, and also authored the report. David Megathlin assisted with the survey design. We are grateful to the Catalyst issue experts and team members who reviewed and contributed to the overall report: Jan Combopiano, Paulette Gerkovich, Ph.D., Katherine Giscombe, Ph.D., Marcee Harris, Susan Nierenberg, and Julie Nugent.

This report was produced and edited under the leadership of Deborah M. Soon, Vice President of Marketing and Public Affairs. Kara Patterson and Andrea Juncos edited the report. Kristine Ferrell designed the report and illustrated the cover. Theresa Campbell-Carbon and Emily Troiano fact-checked the report.

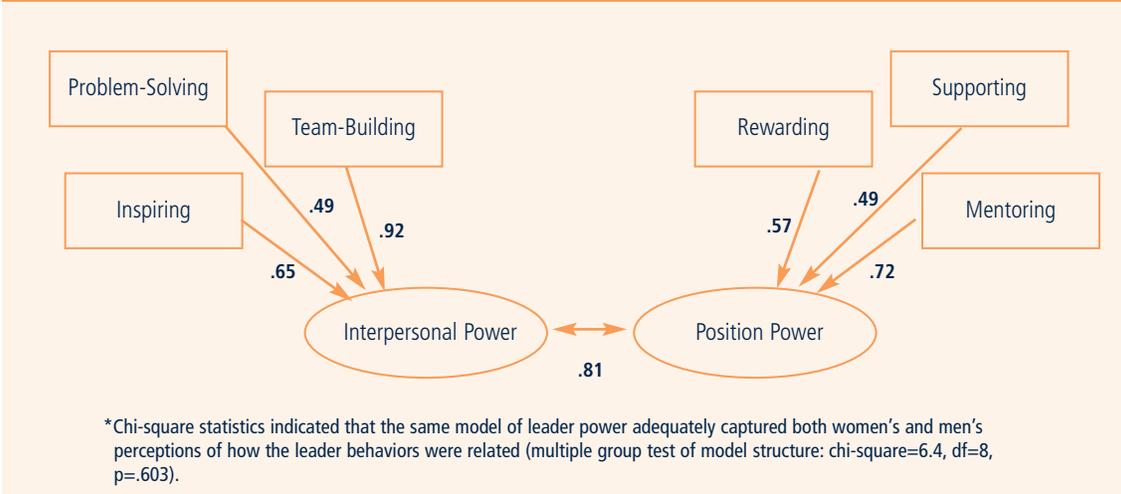
We also thank all those who served as advisors, including Randy White, Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Sara Lee Corporation, and member of Catalyst's Board of Advisors, and Matthew Brush, HR Director, Corning, Inc.

Finally, this project would not be possible without the generous support of Catalyst sponsor General Motors Corporation.

## Model of Inter-Relationships between Leader Behaviors with Standardized Parameter Estimates: Women Respondents



## Model of Inter-Relationships between Leader Behaviors with Standardized Parameter Estimates: Men Respondents



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