Gender, Status, and Leadership

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More than a trait of individuals, gender is an institutionalized system *of social practices. The gender system is deeply entwined with social hierarchy and leadership because gender stereotypes contain* status beliefs *that associate greater status worthiness and competence with men than women. This review uses expectation states theory to describe how gender status beliefs create a network of constraining expectations and interpersonal reactions that is a major cause of the "glass ceiling." In mixed-sex or gender-relevant contexts, gender status beliefs shape men's and women's assertiveness, the attention and evaluation their performances receive, ability attributed to them on the basis of performance, the influence they achieve, and the likelihood that they emerge as leaders. Gender status beliefs also create legitimacy reactions that penalize assertive women leaders for violating the expected status order and reduce their ability to gain complaince with directives.*

More than a trait of individuals, gender is an institutionalized *system* of social practices for constituting males and females as different in socially significant ways and organizing inequality in terms of those differences (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Widely shared gender stereotypes are in effect the "genetic code" of the gender system, since they constitute the cultural rules or schemas by which people perceive and enact gender difference and inequality. Expectation states theory argues that gender is deeply entwined with social hierarchy and leadership because the rules for the gender system that are encoded in gender stereotypes contain *status beliefs* at their core (Wagner & Berger, 1997).

Status beliefs are shared cultural schemas about the status position in society of groups such as those based on gender, race, ethnicity, education, or occupation.

In status beliefs, assumptions about the evaluative ranking of one group compared to another are reflected in and legitimated by presumptions about differences in competence among people from those groups. Expectation states research has demonstrated that when people interact in regard to collective goals, status beliefs shape the enactment of social hierarchies among individuals, affecting influence and leadership (see Ridgeway & Walker, 1995, for a review). Through their impact on goal-oriented interaction in the workplace and elsewhere, status beliefs affect many processes by which individuals are given access to rewards, evaluated, and directed toward or away from positions of power, wealth, and authority. In this article, I use expectation states theory to show how status beliefs about gender account for a series of obstacles that women face in their efforts to exercise leadership at the same level as men.

Expectation states theory makes predictions about the behavior and evaluation of women leaders and managers in the workplace that are similar in many ways to those recently proposed by social-role theory (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, this issue; Eagly & Karau, in press). The theory's account of the impact of status and cooperative interdependence on the content of stereotypes also agrees in several, although not all, points with Glick and Fiske's (1999) theory of stereotype content. Yet because status beliefs are central to the formation of social hierarchies, expectation states theory argues that it is the status element of gender stereotypes that cause such stereotypes to act as distinctively powerful barriers to women's achievement of positions of authority, leadership, and power. The status approach allows a careful analysis of the extent to which the barriers facing women are status based, and in that sense similar to those faced by other status-devalued groups, or are unique to gender.

Status Beliefs and Gender Stereotypes

The Nature of Status Beliefs

Expectation states theory defines status beliefs as widely held cultural beliefs that link greater social significance and general competence, as well as specific positive and negative skills, with one category of a social distinction (e.g., men) compared to another (e.g., women; Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977). Evidence indicates that gender stereotypes do contain beliefs associating greater overall competence with men than women, particularly in more valued social arenas, while also granting each sex particular skills, such as mechanical ability for men and domestic skills for women (e.g., Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Williams & Best, 1990). When status beliefs develop about social groups, they ground inequality between them in group membership itself, rather than in other differences in power or material resources. Consequently, even

wealthy, powerful women are disadvantaged by gender status beliefs compared to their wealthy, powerful male peers.

As status beliefs develop, they form an element in the stereotypes of the groups involved, although group stereotypes also have non-status-related elements. Stereotypes based on gender, race, and occupation differ in many ways, for instance, but they share signature status elements that attach greater competence and social significance to the advantaged group (men, Whites, professionals) than to the disadvantaged (women, African Americans, laborers) and associate the advantaged group with more valued skills (Webster & Foschi, 1988).

Status beliefs imply both difference and inequality. According to the theory, the specific skills associated with one group versus another reflect the particular history and social-structural circumstances of the groups' relationships with one another and may change over time and differ for differing status characteristics (e.g., race or gender). The signature of status beliefs, however, is that they continue to link the higher status group with greater overall competence and with whatever specific skills are most valued by the society at that time. The evaluative content of gender stereotypes has changed in recent years, with perceptions of women becoming more positive, but the essential hierarchical element has remained: Men are still evaluated more favorably in the socially important area of instrumental competence (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994)

As a form of intergroup representation, status beliefs are distinctive in that they are shared, at least as descriptions of what "most people" believe, by both dominant and subordinate groups (Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, & Robinson, 1998). This distinguishes them from the beliefs fostered by ingroup favoritism (Brewer & Brown, 1998). Gender stereotypes and the status beliefs at their core are consensual in this way (Broverman et al., 1972; Jackman, 1994). Shared status beliefs, rather than competing beliefs about ingroup superiority, are most likely to develop among groups whose members must regularly cooperate with one another to achieve what they want or need (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Jackman, 1994; Ridgeway et al., 1998).

Members of the dominant group are more likely than those from the subordinate group to personally endorse descriptive status beliefs (Ridgeway et al., 1998). Also, subcultural segments of either dominant or subordinate groups may personally endorse alternative forms of status beliefs, despite their knowledge of the culturally dominant form of these beliefs. African American women, for instance, generally endorse more moderate gender status beliefs than White women (Dugger, 1988). Whether individuals personally endorse culturally dominant status beliefs or not, however, their assumptions that these status beliefs are widely shared leads them to presume that, especially in public places like the workplace, others will treat them according to those beliefs. As a result, they must implicitly take culturally dominant status beliefs into account in their own behavior (Seachrist & Stangor, 2001). Thus, it is the presumption of consensuality that

gives status beliefs the power to organize social relations on unequal terms across many contexts.

Status, Hierarchies, and Stereotype Content

When status beliefs exist about a social distinction such as gender or race, there is growing evidence that stereotypes of the dominant and subordinate groups take on a characteristic content that is closely related to the behaviors that characterize the enactment of status hierarchies created among individuals by these status beliefs (Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996; Geis, Brown, Jennings, & Corrado-Taylor, 1984; Gerber, 1996; Wagner & Berger, 1997). This status-related content tightens the relationship between the stereotypes and the enactment of leadership.

When people interact in regard to collective goals, a long tradition of research has shown that inequalities quickly develop in how much each participates, the attention and evaluative reactions their efforts receive, and how influential they become (see Ridgeway & Walker, 1995, for a review). Those who become influential and respected in the group display a profile of proactive behavior, speaking up often, offering suggestions and opinions, and defending their views when others disagree (Wagner & Berger, 1997). Less influential members are cast into a reactive rather than proactive role in which their attention is focused on the active, powerful high-status members. The less influential members respond to and support the suggestions of others, pay attention to the others' concerns, and defer when others disagree with them (Wagner & Berger, 1997).

These behavioral profiles created by the status process affect the impressions participants form of one another. As Gerber's (1996) study of same- and mixed-sex pairs of police partners shows, independent of gender, the high-ranking members of such hierarchies are perceived by themselves and others as more instrumental and agentic, whereas the low-ranking members are perceived as more supportive and expressive. Conway et al. (1996) speculate that people may have a general schema for status relations. This may account, they argue, for their evidence that the advantaged and disadvantaged in status relations as different as gender, occupation (e.g., file clerk vs. stockbroker), and hypothetical tribal status are each perceived in similar terms as agentic and instrumentally competent versus reactive and communal.

Compared to race or occupation, the stereotypes of men and women correspond especially closely to the impressions of agentic competence versus reactive communality (see Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000) fostered by the enactment of status hierarchies. Status-based content may form an especially strong component of gender stereotypes because, compared to the advantaged and disadvantaged in race or occupational distinctions, men and women interact frequently, especially in the contexts of cooperative interdependence that foster status hierarchies (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Gender divides people into two

roughly equal-sized groups, which increases the chances of interaction, gender cross-cuts kin relations, and heterosexuality and reproduction also increase cross-sex interaction and interdependence. If everyday life requires men and women to interact constantly in conditions of cooperative interdependence, then the status hierarchies that organize those interactions will significantly shape their experiences of one other and, consequently, the content of their shared gender stereotypes. If the content of gender stereotypes is closely tied to the profiles of behavior people display in interpersonal hierarchies, then gender will be inherently connected to leadership and authority.

Experiences in everyday hierarchies are not the only source of stereotypic conceptions of men as agentic and women as communal. Eagly and colleagues (2000) have shown that the distribution of men and women into social roles also feeds such conceptions. The fact that caretaking roles are occupied almost exclusively by women in our society is surely responsible for the strong association of women, compared to other low-status groups, with a communality that is not only responsive and attentive to others, but nurturant and good (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994).

Status and the Prescriptive Edge of Stereotypes

Several writers have observed that gender stereotypes have a prescriptive as well as descriptive aspect (Eagly & Karau, in press; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Heilman, this issue; Rudman & Glick, this issue). People have roughly consensual conceptions not only about how men and women are but how they ought to be (see Eagly & Karau, in press).

Most writers agree that people's need to make sense of their experience by viewing what is as what ought to be is at least partly responsible for the prescriptive aspect of group stereotypes (Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Glick and Fiske (1999) argue as well that group stereotypes develop a prescriptive edge to the extent the dominant group involved is dependent on the subordinate group and thus has an interest in maintaining the status quo. The exceptional degree of interdependence created between men and women by heterosexuality and reproduction, they argue, is responsible for the distinctively prescriptive quality of gender stereotypes. In contrast, they suggest that the dependence of Whites on African Americans in the United States has declined since midcentury, so that American racial stereotypes are no longer prescriptive.

A status expectations account would agree that both sense making and the interests of those in the dominant group contribute to the prescriptive quality of group stereotypes. The status perspective points out, however, that the central interest of dominant-group members is in maintaining their status advantage over the subordinate group. Consequently, the elements of stereotypes that are likely to be most strongly enforced are those that represent the status difference between the

group and its enactment in social hierarchies (i.e., differences in social significance, competence, and agency versus reactive communality). The enforcement of the status element of stereotypes is especially likely, according to expectation states theory, in cooperative, goal-oriented contexts in which group status beliefs become salient (Ridgeway & Berger, 1986; Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek, & Norman, 1998). As I describe below, expectation states theory argues that the enforcement of behavioral expectations created by the status elements of stereotypes creates a legitimacy process that affects the ability of women leaders to exercise directive power and achieve compliance.

In contrast with Glick and Fiske (1999), however, expectation states theory argues that the enforcement of the status elements of stereotypes is not confined to gender. It may occur for any status-valued group distinction when members of the high- and low-status groups interact in regard to a collective goal. Glick and Fiske (1999) may be right that legal and economic change coupled with the efforts of African Americans to contest their status inferiority have changed the descriptive content of racial stereotypes, particularly in the communal dimension. To achieve positions of leadership and authority in a society in which they are a minority, however, individual African Americans must still enter into cooperative, goal-oriented interactions with Whites. In these situations, expectation states theory predicts that they, like White women, will encounter resistance when they violate status-based expectations that require them to be cooperative and presume them to be less competent and agentic than similar Whites.

Gender Status and Women's Leadership

The core of expectations states theory is its account of the formation of behavioral hierarchies of influence and esteem among individuals and how this process is shaped by status beliefs (Berger et al., 1977; Webster & Foschi, 1988). The development of such hierarchies is central to the process by which people gain access to positions of leadership and exercise that leadership in the workplace. Leadership is based on both the assertive, task-related behavior of the would-be leader and the shared, socially constructed evaluation of that behavior in the situation. Behaviors and evaluations together create the implicit rankings of "who's got it and who hasn't" that shape decisions about leadership. In expectation states theory, these twin components of leadership emerge together because they are jointly controlled by what the theory terms *self–other performance expectations*.

Expectation states theory argues that when people come together to work on a shared goal or task, as is typical in the workplace, they look for cues as to how they should behave. Institutional roles, such as boss and employee, provide general guidelines, but within these there is still much room for variation. The theory argues that, to decide whether to speak up or hold back within the constraints of their formal roles, people form implicit assumptions or guesses about the likely

value of what they themselves have to offer toward the task compared to what they guess others can offer. These often unconscious assumptions are termed *self–other performance expectations.*

Performance expectations, the theory argues, have self-fulfilling effects on people's behavior (Harris & Rosenthal, 1985; Miller & Turnbull, 1986). The lower their expectations for self compared to another, (1) the less likely people are to initiate their own task suggestions, (2) the more likely they are to ask for the other's ideas, (3) the more likely they are to positively evaluate the other's suggestions, and (4) the more likely they are to accept influence from the other by changing to agree with him or her. In this way, the implicit performance expectations people form for themselves compared to others give rise to and sustain a behavioral power and prestige hierarchy based on inequalities in attention, participation, evaluation, and influence. This hierarchy organizes the relationships among the participants within the context of their formal roles (see Ridgeway & Walker, 1995, for a review).

If performance expectations and power and prestige hierarchies emerge from people's initial search for diagnostic cues as to how to behave in relation to others in goal-oriented settings, it seems clear that gender quickly will be pulled into the process. People automatically and almost instantly sex-categorize any concrete other to whom they must relate. Sex categorization, in turn, automatically activates gender stereotypes, including gender status beliefs, and primes them to affect judgments (see Fiske, 1998).

A distinctive claim of the theory, however, is that the biasing effect of gender status on self–other performance expectations is not invariant across all situations. Although they are primed by sex categorization in all situations, the diagnostic value of gender status beliefs to participants can vary from very little to substantial, depending on how salient and task relevant gender is in the situation compared to other social roles and status-valued social distinctions that are also salient for the participants (Wagner & Berger, 1997; Ridgeway, 1997).

Specifically, the theory argues that gender status beliefs become effectively salient (i.e., sufficiently salient to measurably affect task behavior and evaluation) when gender either distinguishes between the actors in a situation (a mixed-sex context; Cota & Dion, 1986) or is linked by cultural beliefs to the task or goal they face. When effectively salient, gender status beliefs about general competence and specific skills unconsciously shape both men's and women's expectations about the likely competence of task suggestions or performances from a woman compared to those from a similar man unless something in the situation explicitly disassociates gender from the task. Sex-biased expectations in turn affect men and women's assertive, task-related behavior, their shared evaluations of those behaviors, and consequently, the likelihood that they emerge as influential leaders (Wagner & Berger, 1997).

No one, however, is just a man or a woman and not also a variety of other iden-
tities that are also status characteristics in North America, such as race, ethnicity,
and age. Also, the theory argues that valued skills and things like positional titles
also function as status characteristics in task-oriented situations. Finally, formal
roles, like manager, and the power and resources associated with them also affect
expectations for competence (see Ridgeway & Walker, 1995).

A particular strength of expectation states theory is that it explicitly takes peo-
ple's multiple consistent and inconsistent roles, resources, and statuses into account
in predicting how gender will affect their behavior and evaluations in a given situa-
tion. The theory argues, as tests show, that actors combine the positive and negative
implications of all salient roles, resources, and status characteristics, each weighted
by its relevance to the task, to form aggregated performance expectations for each
actor compared to the others (Berger, Norman, Balkwell, & Smith, 1992; Berger et
al., 1998). The degree of differentiation in actors' status- or task-related behavior
(e.g., participation, evaluation, and influence) in a situation, the theory claims, is a
direct function of the size of their aggregate expectation advantage or disadvantage
relative to one another (Berger et al., 1992).

Putting this account in the context of the workplace, it is clear that automatic
sex categorization makes gender ever available to become entwined in the pro-
cesses of self-assertion, performance, evaluation, and influence by which people
attain leadership and authority. Yet the impact of gender status on behavior varies
greatly. Task-relevant organizational roles, skills, and credentials are likely to be in
the foreground for actors and most powerfully shape their performance expecta-
tions for one another in the workplace. As a diffuse, very general social role, gen-
der is more likely to be present in the workplace as an implicit *background identity*
that modifies in varying degrees the performance and evaluation of other roles, like
worker and manager, that are more salient in the situation than it is. In this way,
gender status colors actors' behaviors and judgments of one another in subtle to
substantial degrees, often without their being consciously aware of it. The implicit-
ness of gender in many workplace situations often makes it difficult for those
involved to pinpoint its effects even when they sense that something prejudicial is
occurring, because gender isn't part of the shared definition of "what is happening
here."

Behavior, Evaluation, and the Emergence of Leadership

Using its basic arguments about gender status, expectation states theory makes
a number of predictions about men and women's task-related behaviors in goal-
oriented settings such as the workplace. Task-related behaviors include task sugges-
tions, participation, influence, and nonverbal cues of confidence and assertiveness
such as voice tone, speech rate, visual dominance, assertive gestures, and tentative

speech (Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, & Rosenholz, 1986; Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995; Ridgeway, 1987).

In mixed-sex work settings with a gender-neutral task, expectation states theory predicts that, because of the effects of gender status beliefs on performance expectations, men will participate more, be asked to participate more, display more confident and assertive nonverbal cues, and be more influential than women who are otherwise similar to them. When the task or context is stereotypically masculine (say, engineering), gender's direct relevance to the task will exaggerate these differences in behavior. When the task is stereotypically feminine, (e.g., child care), the theory predicts that women will act slightly more assertively and be slightly more influential than similar men (Wagner & Berger, 1997), because the specific skills included in gender status beliefs advantage women and are directly relevant to the task in that particular situation. Yet at the same time, those gender status beliefs continue to advantage men in less relevant general competence. The general competence and specific skill implications of gender status beliefs combine, with the more relevant skills weighted more heavily, to give women a small performance expectation advantage over men in contexts culturally linked with women.

In same-sex groups, in contrast, gender status will not be effectively salient unless the task or context is gender-typed. Since gender is primed by sex categorization even in same-sex settings, ongoing events in the workplace may trigger gender associations among participants, leading them over time to collectively construe their task (e.g., selling securities) in gender-typed terms even when it was not initially gender-linked by the larger culture (Ridgeway, 1997). Yet when the task is not gender-linked, men and women in same-sex groups should show similar rates of task-related behaviors.

These predictions provide a good account of the evidence for gender differences in task-related behaviors. Several studies show that, other things being equal, men in mixed-sex groups talk more (Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson, & Keating, 1988; James & Drakich, 1993), make more task suggestions (Wood & Karten, 1986), display more visual dominance (Ellyson, Dovidio, & Brown, 1992) and assertive gestures (Dovidio et al., 1988), use less tentative speech (Carli, 1990), and are more influential than women (Carli, this issue; Pugh & Wahrman, 1983; Wagner, Ford, & Ford, 1986). In same-sex groups with a gender-neutral task, on the other hand, men and women do not differ in participation and task suggestions (Carli, 1991; Johnson, Clay-Warner, & Funk, 1996; Shelly & Munroe, 1999) or willingness to accept influence from others (Pugh & Wahrman, 1983).[1] Wood & Karten (1986) demonstrated that men's tendency to speak more and

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[1] Studies that code behavior according to Bales's Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) find marginally larger differences between men and women in the percentage of their behavior that is task-related in same-sex groups rather than mixed-sex groups. This apparently contradictory pattern of results has been shown to be an artifact of the IPA coding scheme, however (see Carli, 1991; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

engage in more active task-related behaviors was mediated by status-based assumptions that men were more competent. When performance expectations for men and women in the situation were equalized, gender differences in task-related behavior disappeared.

Evidence also supports expectation states theory's predictions about how the relevance of gender to the task in mixed-sex settings affects the size and direction of gender differences in task-related behaviors. A study by Dovidio et al. (1988) provides a particularly clear demonstration. Dovidio and his colleagues had mixed-sex dyads discuss gender-neutral, masculine, and feminine tasks and recorded a wide variety of task-related behaviors, including speech initiations, time talking, visual dominance, and assertive gestures. With the exception of a few gestures (e.g., chin thrusts), they found a consistent pattern of variation across all these behaviors. As the theory predicts, Dovidio et al. (1988) found that men had a moderate advantage over women in task behaviors when the dyads discussed a neutral task. When they shifted to a masculine task, the difference in men's rate of task behaviors compared to that of their female partners became even more pronounced. But when these same dyads turned their attention to a feminine task, women spoke up and displayed a slightly higher rate of task behaviors than their male partners.

Since expectation states theory argues that task behaviors and evaluations are both shaped by the performance expectations men and women form for one another, the theory predicts the same pattern of gender inequality in evaluations as it predicts for task behaviors. In support of these predictions, a meta-analysis of evaluation studies found a modest tendency for the same task performance to be evaluated less positively when it is produced by a woman rather than a man (Swim, Borgida, Maruyama, & Meyers, 1989). This tendency was significantly stronger when the task domain was associated with men and tended to disappear when the task was linked with women. Meta-analyses of resume evaluation experiments similarly show a modest tendency to evaluate a resume more positively if it is thought to be a man's but, as expectations states theory predicts, the effect of gender on resume evaluations is weaker than the effect of job-relevant qualifications (Olian, Schwab, & Haberfeld, 1988). Furthermore, Carli (1989, reported in Carli, 1991) found that when men and women rated the quality of the ideas they had contributed after either a mixed-sex or same-sex discussion, women evaluated their ideas lower than men in the mixed-sex context but equally positively in the same-sex setting, as the theory predicts.

Performance expectations shaped by gender status beliefs bias not only the evaluation of a performance's quality, but also the inference of ability from a performance of a given, acknowledged quality. As Foschi (1989, 2000) argues, when status characteristics such as gender are effectively salient in a situation, they create double standards for the attribution of ability on the basis of performance. Studies of gender and race effects confirm that lower status groups (e.g., women

and African Americans) are held to higher standards to prove high ability than are higher status groups (men and Whites; see Biernat & Fuegen, this issue; Foschi, 2000). Thus, to be considered highly able in the workplace, a woman must display a higher level of recognized competence than a similar man. The implications of this for the hiring and promotion of women to leadership positions are substantial.

The fact that double standards emerge for race as well as gender supports expectation states theory's claim that such standards are a status effect rather than a gender effect, per se. Furthermore, biases in the attribution of ability from performance are affected by gender's relevance to the task in a pattern fairly similar to that predicted by the theory. Meta-analysis shows that biases in the attribution of success to ability rather than effort clearly favor men for masculine tasks and disappear for feminine tasks (Swim & Sanna, 1996).

Given the pattern of gender status effects on task behaviors and evaluations, we should see similar patterns in the tendency of men and women to emerge as leaders. In a meta-analysis of emergent leadership in mixed-sex contexts, Eagly and Karau (1991) did indeed find that men overall were moderately more likely than women to be selected as leaders. When leadership was defined in more masculine terms as strictly task-oriented, the tendency for men to emerge as leaders strengthened. When the task was feminine or leadership was defined in social terms, men's advantage disappeared and there was a slight tendency for women to emerge as leaders.

Overall, then, expectation states theory's predictions correspond fairly closely to the evidence about gender differences in task-related behaviors, evaluations of performance, inferences of ability, and emergent leadership in task-oriented contexts. The theory is especially successful in predicting how the direction and size of these effects varies with the sex composition of the context and the relevance of gender to the task. Unlike some simple stereotype approaches, expectation states theory, by focusing on the status content of stereotypes, suggests how patterns of behavior and evaluation are related and may occur for other status distinctions such as race as well.

Gender Status and the Assertion of Authority

Despite the subtle but continuous drag of gender-biased performance expectations, more and more women are developing high skill levels that they can be confident of and pushing ahead to attain management positions. When they do, gender status beliefs shape others' reactions to their assertive efforts in two additional ways that create further obstacles for them to overcome.

The first is straightforward. The attainment of a manager role is itself a status attribute that evokes cultural connotations of instrumental competence that should enhance performance expectations for the person who attains it. Expectation states theory, however, points out that the implications of this new status attribute

combine with, rather than eliminate, the existing salient status information about the person, including gender. As a result, the theory predicts that when a woman becomes a manager, the task-relevant implications of that role will significantly strengthen performance expectations for her, compared to other women. Because of the lingering, background effects of gender status, however, she will still be seen as less competent than a similar male manager, as Heilman, Block, and Martell (1995) have shown. The persisting effects of gender status mean that a woman manager's efforts to assert authority over others is subtly undercut by continuing, implicit assumptions that she is not quite as competent in the role as a man would be (Heilman, this issue).

A second way status beliefs shape reactions to women's assertive efforts reflects the prescriptive edge of beliefs that men are not only generally more competent, but also more status worthy, than similar women. Unless gender is not salient or the situation is culturally linked to women, when women assert authority over others they violate the essential hierarchical element of gender status beliefs. This violation may provoke negative reactions and resistance to their efforts.

Expectation states theory conceives of this problem as a question of the perceived *legitimacy* of people from low-status groups who act authoritatively toward others (Berger et al., 1998; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Legitimacy affects a leader's power because it brings with it the normative support of others, which allows an authority to achieve compliance with his or her directives (Zelditch & Walker, 1984). Many factors affect the legitimacy of managers, including the resources and support they receive from their own superiors (Kanter, 1977). Advantaging status characteristics, however, are another such factor. Status beliefs create a sense of the kinds of people others expect to be authorities in a particular situation and, therefore, who seems normative and legitimate for such a role. Acting on this implicit sense of legitimacy, actors may resist or penalize people from lower status groups who attempt to assert authority over others in the situation.

On the basis of this argument, expectation states theory predicts that in mixed-sex or male-linked contexts, women's efforts to assert authority will evoke resistance and dislike, which reduce their ability to get others to comply with them and, consequently, their power and effectiveness as leaders. These effects will be strongest in contexts culturally associated with men. On the other hand, situations that are culturally linked with women will be an exception to the pattern because gender status slightly advantages, rather than disadvantages, women in those situations. Thus, the theory predicts that women will not encounter such resistance to their efforts to assert authority over children or over less expert others in a feminine context (e.g., domestic tasks).

In support of these predictions, several studies have shown that when women in mixed-sex groups present their ideas in an assertive or self-directed style, they are disliked or perceived as untrustworthy and achieve less influence over men

compared to similarly acting men or less assertive women (Carli, 1990, this issue). Similarly, studies have shown that self-promoting behavior that highlights competence produces positive outcomes for men but makes women appear less likeable and less hireable (Rudman & Glick, this issue).

Finally, in a meta-analysis of studies of leader effectiveness, Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) report a pattern of effects similar to the theory's predictions. In their analysis, there was only a slight overall tendency for men to be rated as more effective leaders. Men were substantially more likely than women, however, to be seen as effective in male-dominated and military contexts (see also Boldry, Wood, & Kashy, this issue). Women, on the other hand, were moderately more likely than men to be assessed as effective leaders in contexts more linked with women: educational, government, and social service domains.

Leadership effectiveness, of course, confounds the compliance or resistance of others with the behavior of the leader (see Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, this issue). Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) conducted a meta-analysis of evaluations of leaders that held constant the behavior ascribed to male and female leaders. They found only a slight overall tendency to evaluate women leaders less positively, although this tendency was stronger for male-dominated leadership roles. As the legitimacy arguments predict, however, they also found that women leaders were devalued more strongly than their male counterparts when they directly asserted their authority by acting in a directive, autocratic style.

There is good evidence, then, that women who attempt to assert authority outside of traditionally female contexts, particularly over men, encounter a resistive, "backlash" reaction that reduces their ability to achieve influence over others. Yet what is the evidence that this is a status effect, as expectation states arguments claim, rather than a prescriptive reaction that is unique to gender? To address this question, Ridgeway, Johnson, and Diekema (1994) examined reactions to directive assertions by actors who were advantaged or disadvantaged by status characteristics other than gender. They found that confederates in same-sex dyads who were disadvantaged relative to their partner in age and education, despite being more skilled at the task, were resisted when they engaged in highly directive behavior and gained less influence from such behavior than age- and education-advantaged confederates. The greater resistance encountered by the status-disadvantaged confederates was not due to their being perceived as less competent and therefore, less influential, since these results controlled for the confederates' influence levels before initiating directive behavior. These results demonstrate that the legitimizing (or delegitimizing) effects of status beliefs on leaders' assertive behaviors are not unique to gender.

Studies show that women seeking to assert authority can mitigate the legitimacy problems they face by combining their assertive, highly competent behaviors with positive social "softeners" (see Carli, this issue). Using such techniques, highly competent women can overcome others' resistance and win influence and

compliance even when gender status is salient and disadvantaging to them. The positive consequences of such techniques are not trivial. They allow very competent women to break through the maze of constraints created by gender status to wield authority. This begins to undermine the structural arrangements in society that support gender status beliefs. Yet there is a price associated with such techniques as well: They inadvertently reaffirm gender stereotypes that require women to be "nicer" than men in order to exercise equivalent power and authority.

How Do Status Beliefs Develop?

It appears that the status beliefs embedded in gender stereotypes create a formidable maze of obstacles that hold women back from positions of high authority and leadership. Given their importance for constraining women, it is reasonable to ask how status beliefs develop.

Although status beliefs probably develop in many ways, status construction theory describes one set of processes that is sufficient to create them (Ridgeway, 1991). The theory discusses the development of consensual status beliefs about a group distinction in a situation in which members from different groups must routinely interact under conditions of cooperative interdependence. This, of course, is the situation with men and women.

If status beliefs are at play in cooperative, goal-oriented encounters between people in the workplace and elsewhere, the theory reasons, such encounters are likely to be potent forums for the creation of new status beliefs and the reinforcement or transformation of existing beliefs. Influence hierarchies develop quickly in such encounters. If the participants in an encounter differ on a salient group distinction, there is a chance that they will associate the influence and esteem each acquires in the encounter with their group difference. If something about the social circumstances in which these encounters occur gives members of one group a systematic advantage in gaining influence over those of the other group, people of both groups will have repeated experiences in which it appears that those from one group are more esteemed and competent than those from the other group. From such experiences, those from both groups may form status beliefs that people from the influence-advantaged group are more status worthy and competent than people from the influence-disadvantaged groups. Since people carry such beliefs to their subsequent encounters with those of the other group and act on them there, status beliefs formed in sets of individual encounters can spread widely. Eventually they are taught to children as well as adults and become consensual in the society. Thus, the theory argues that if an inequality develops between groups in some factor (e.g., material resources, technology, coercive power) that systematically biases the development of influence hierarchies in intergroup encounters, those encounters will transform the distributional inequality into widely shared status beliefs favoring the advantaged group.

Experiments show that people can form and spread status beliefs in this way. Ridgeway et al. (1998, Study 1) found that after repeated encounters with people who consistently differed from them in pay, influence, and a group distinction, study participants formed beliefs that most people see those in the influence-advantaged group as more respected and competent but not as considerate as those in the disadvantaged group. A second experiment confirmed that the formation of status beliefs was not simply the result of pay differences, but depended on the influence hierarchies that developed in correspondence with pay differences (Ridgeway et al., 1998, Study 2). Two subsequent experiments showed that people could spread status beliefs by treating others according to the beliefs (Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000). Computer simulations confirm that if encounters create and spread status beliefs as these studies suggest, the development of consensual status beliefs in society will be a logical result (Ridgeway & Balkwell, 1997).

There are many theories about the origins of male dominance (see Wood & Eagly, 2000, for a few). Most of these, however, involve some factor, such as superior strength or the mobility constraints faced by lactating mothers, that would give men a systematic advantage over women in gaining influence in their everyday interdependent dealings. Any one of these factors, argues status construction theory, would give rise to shared status beliefs favoring men. Once gender status beliefs develop, they ground hierarchy and inequality in the sex distinction itself, rather than in strength or lactation. As a result, gender status beliefs disadvantage women who are just as large and strong as their male partners and who are not lactating mothers.

Once established as consensual, gender status beliefs may help preserve the hierarchical structure of the gender system in the face of changing economic and technological conditions that could potentially undermine it (Ridgeway, 1997). People interacting at the edge of economic and technological change develop new ways of doing things and new forms of social organization. Widely shared cultural beliefs tend to change more slowly than material conditions, however. Consequently, as people interact to create new social practices, gender status beliefs are likely to implicitly shape what they do, causing them to rewrite gender inequality into the new social forms they develop.

Conclusion

Although gender status beliefs lie at the core of gender stereotypes, they are only one component in the gender system of social practices that differentiate men and women and organize relations of inequality between them. Yet beliefs about men's greater status worthiness and competence are an especially insidious component of the gender system, because they embed an essential hierarchical element into our fundamental cultural conceptions about who men and women are. In turn, gender status beliefs organize everyday cooperative encounters between men and

women into influence hierarchies that shape the nature of men's and women's experiences of one another in a manner that supports and maintains the status beliefs.

When gender status beliefs are effectively salient in a situation, as they are in mixed-sex and gender-relevant contexts, they create implicit performance expectations for women compared to similar men that shape men's and women's willingness to speak up and assert themselves, the attention and evaluation their performances receive, the ability attributed to them on the basis of their performance, the influence they achieve, and consequently, the likelihood that they emerge as leaders. When women do assert themselves to exercise authority outside traditionally female domains, as they must do to be high-status leaders in our society, gender status beliefs create legitimacy reactions that impose negative sanctions on them for violating the expected status order and reduce their ability to gain compliance with directives. As this suggests, the performance expectations and legitimacy reactions created by gender status beliefs create multiple, nearly invisible nets of comparative devaluation that catch women as they push forward to achieve positions of leadership and authority and slow them down compared to similar men. In my view, this unacknowledged network of constraining expectations and interpersonal reactions is the principal cause of the "glass ceiling." The cumulative effect of its multiple, often small effects, repeated over many contexts throughout a career, is to substantially reduce the number of women who successfully attain positions of high authority in the work world, especially in occupations and contexts not culturally linked with women.

Since gender status beliefs tie being male or female to the enactment of hierarchy, women's efforts to achieve leadership and high levels of authority constitute a basic battleground for the maintenance or change of our gender system. In this article I have argued that expectation states theory, as a theory of status beliefs and social hierarchies, is especially useful for understanding the nature of this battleground. Expectation states theory complements other approaches, such as social role theory and stereotype approaches. It adds, however, a distinctive ability to distinguish the biases that women leaders face that are status based and, therefore, similar to those faced by other status-devalued groups, such as racial or ethnic groups, from those that are unique to gender.

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