Who Will Make the Cut? Gender Bias and Contrast Effects in Hiring Behavior

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# Contrast Effects and Gender Bias in Hiring Behavior

Although men and women have legal protection against gender discrimination, and such behavior is considered by society to be wrong, research suggests that gender stereotypes still exist and influence perceptions of men and women in everyday life. It has been repeatedly found in empirical studies that women are thought to possess lower mathematical ability than men (Jacobs, 1991; Steffens, Jelenec, & Noack, 2010; Tiedemann, 2000; Tomasetto, Alparone, & Cadinu, 2011). The stereotype that women are more emotional than men is another belief that permeates society (Hess, Senécal, Kirouac, Herrera, Philippot, & Kleck, 2000; Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 2003; Plant & Hyde, 2000). And one of the most commonly studied of gender stereotypes is that only men, or those with masculine qualities, make successful leaders. Bosak and Sczesny (2011) found that participants would more readily hire a man than a woman for a leader position. Moreover, a meta-analysis summarizing the results of dozens of studies researching this stereotype found that among all subgroups, masculinity was demonstrated as a leader stereotype (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). Most of these gender stereotypes are not accurate, that is, men and women do not actually differ the way the stereotypes suggest. Studies have found evidence opposing the notion that men have superior mathematical abilities (Hall, Davis, Bolen, & Chia, 1999; Voyer & Voyer, 2014) and there is little to no empirical support that women are the more emotional sex (Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco, & Eyssell, 1998; Else-Quest, Higgins, Allison, & Morton, 2012). Nonetheless, the evidence shows that although gender stereotyping is unsupported, people continue to rely on it when forming impressions of others and making judgments about them.

Stereotypes stem from the social construction of gender roles: attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of how individuals should behave based on their gender. These biased perceptions not only influence the way we presume men and women should or should not act, they also guide our expectations of the qualities and abilities we think men and women do or do not possess. A clever study investigated this bias by asking participants to indicate what traits are important for men and women to have in American society, as well as traits that are typical of each gender. The results showed clear patterns of gendered traits in each category (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Whereas the top traits important for women to have were things like sensitivity, being warm and kind, and having an interest in children, the top traits important for men were to be self-reliant, athletic, and to have a business-sense (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). In addition, the qualities most important for women *not* to be were rebellious, stubborn, and controlling, whereas for men these qualities were emotional, approval seeking, and impressionable (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Essentially the stereotypical woman is represented as a sensitive and motherly individual who refrains from confrontation and the stereotypical man is macho, independent, and unemotional. This evidence makes it clear that people have expectations for how men and women should and should not be.

The perceived qualities and abilities of men and women have been shown to be biased in other contexts as well. Male and female professors are perceived to have differing qualities that adhere to gender roles (Basow, 1995). Moreover, when students rated a professor’s qualities after reading his or her syllabus, the syllabus supposedly belonging to a female professor was judged to be warmer than the hypothetical male professor’s, even though the syllabi were identical (Anderson, 2010). Students made judgments that reflected their underlying biases on the different traits men and women possess.

# Role Congruity Theory

Eagly and Karau (2002) developed role congruity theory as a theoretical explanation for stereotypical judgments based on social roles. The theory maintains that when the attributes one is expected to have by virtue of his or her social group are incongruent with the attributes required for success in a particular social role, prejudice can potentially result. This incongruence can lead an outside perceiver to interpret the individual in a negative way because he or she violated expectations.

This theory can be used to explain the mechanisms behind gender stereotyping. Gender roles have been shown to influence our impressions of how men and women should and should not act (Anderson, 2010; Basow, 1995; Prentice & Carranza, 2002) and social roles necessitate specific traits be present for success. If a man occupies a social role that is incompatible with his social group’s (male) stereotypes, he will be perceived less favorably than an individual whose social group’s stereotypes are consistent with the social role. For example, the social role of a policeman generally conjures masculine attributes. If a woman is being judged in this social role, role congruity theory would posit she would be evaluated less favorably than an equivalent man because feminine gender stereotypes do not cohere as well to the policeman role as masculine gender stereotypes. While some gender stereotypes have an accurate basis and may be useful in determining success in a social role, it is more frequent for this process to create an unwarranted bias that causes harm.

Research has thoroughly documented this bias, thereby supporting role congruity theory. One study found participants rated a lecture supposedly given by a man more positively than an identical lecture given by a woman (Abel & Meltzer, 2007). We can conclude that the lecturer’s gender was the factor causing the bias because it was the only difference between the two lectures. Apparently, the social role of professor is more congruent with male stereotypes than female ones. Biernat and Manis (1994) found that male and female authors were given higher ratings when they wrote an article that had reflected the gender appropriate standpoint. That is, an article written by a man about fishing was rated higher than the identical article written by a woman, and an article written by a woman about cooking was rated higher than an identical article written by a man (Biernat & Manis, 1994). Another study found that male attorneys were given higher ratings than their female counterparts, even when the females were judged more favorably in a written evaluation (Biernat, Tocci, & Williams, 2012). Even when there were no differences in the actual abilities of the men and women, men were rated higher because of the perceived congruence of attributes. Okimoto (2010) presented participants with two identical politicians except for their gender and found that the female candidate was more likely to be perceived as having power-seeking behavior than the equally depicted male candidate. Here the incongruence of the social role and group stereotypes resulted in the spontaneous perception of an undesirable trait (power-seeking behavior) in the woman. This demonstrates how gender stereotyping can lead to harmful judgments that seem to lack legitimacy.

This unjustified gender stereotyping can even cause damage in situations designed to combat bias: employee evaluations and hiring scenarios. A hypothetical man’s application was more likely to be hired for a masculine position (personnel technician) than the identical application of a woman, and the same hypothetical woman’s application was more likely to be hired for a feminine position (editorial assistant) than the identical man’s application (Cohen & Bunker, 1975). This gender-occupation bias has been repeatedly found among empirical studies (Frauendorfer & Schmid Mast, 2013; Koch, D’Mello, & Sackett, 2014). According to the research, it is evident that gender stereotypes are not simply harmless beliefs held internally by individuals; men and especially women can be harmed by biased evaluation and perception in situations as important and allegedly impartial as employment.

Several studies have done additional manipulation to further understand the process of gender stereotyping from a role-congruity perspective. Hypothetically, the inconsistency between the social role and gender stereotype is created by manipulating the sex of the subject (male or female) and the type of social role (masculine or feminine). However, by manipulating a piece of individuating information about the subject to provide an additional piece of evidence inferring the subject’s gender, we can explicate the deeper processes by which gender stereotyping operates. Glick, Zion, and Nelson (1988), like others, found that male applicants were preferred for a masculine position and female applicants for a feminine position. But when a piece of individuating information was given via a cover letter that was designed to reflect either masculine, neutral, or feminine characteristics, the applicants with corresponding individuating information to the job position (masculine and masculine or feminine and feminine) were preferred over applicants with mismatched information (Glick et al., 1988). This tells us that it is not only the sex of the applicant that determines their suitability to fill a social role, but also the level of agreement between their perceived characteristics and the social role.

The use of individuating information has been shown to highlight the processes of role-congruity theory using other stereotypical traits as well. When equally portrayed male and female managers in a male-dominated field were reviewed, participants’ ratings depended upon the prominence of success. If the success was made explicit, emphasizing the woman’s deviation from expectations, the female manager was liked less and thought to be more hostile than the equivalent male manager (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). But if the success was ambiguous, the man and woman did not differ on perceived likability and hostility (Heilman et al., 2004). A similar study found that the variable of communality determined a woman’s ratings in a male-dominated field. When a male and female manager were depicted with no individuating information of communality, the male manager was perceived to be more likable, less hostile, and better suited as a boss than the identical female manager (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). However, if the female manager opposed the masculine stereotype and was depicted as being communal, she was rated more likable and less hostile than the male manager (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). These studies support role-congruity theory as a way to understand the mechanisms of gender stereotyping and substantiate the importance of gendered characteristics and how they influence perceptual judgment.

Gender stereotyping not only causes biased judgments of an individual from an outside evaluator; it can also affect the way individuals view themselves. In this way, the stereotype becomes internalized as an attitude or belief in the individual about his or her abilities that reflects the biased nature of the stereotype. Oswald (2008) found that women who identified with the female gender perceived themselves as more fit for feminine positions than masculine positions. In addition, job descriptions utilizing words associated with masculine stereotypes (leader, competitive, dominant) were found to have lower appeal among women than job descriptions using feminine wording (support, understand, interpersonal) (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011). It is evident that stereotypical beliefs permeate beyond an outsider’s judgment and influence the self-concept of individuals as well. For this reason, it is crucial that research continues to tease apart the mechanisms of gender stereotyping so we can reverse the trend of unjust internal and external judgments.

# Shifting Standards Model

The ways in which men and women can be affected by gender stereotyping are varied and do not always follow how initial expectations dictate. Biernat (2003) proposed a model to predict the evaluative outcome of stereotypical judgments based on the concept of shifting standards. The shifting standards model suggests that gender stereotypes can operate in complex ways that depend on the judgment standard used. If a gender stereotype maintains that men and women differ on some variable, men and women will be held to different standards on that variable. For example, the stereotype that men have superior mathematical ability to women will set the average or standard for men higher than the standard set for women. As a result, subjective judgments comparing men and women are biased because they have inherently different reference points. When a woman is described as “good at math,” it doesn’t mean the same thing as saying a man is “good at math” because the two groups are not on an objective, comparable scale (Biernat, 2003).

On the other hand are common-rule scales, objective measures such as IQ scores or ranking systems that put men and women on an equal playing field and therefore eliminate the bias of subjective judgments. These methods seem to bring out the stereotypically-coherent assimilative effects of stereotypes, i.e. a man thought to have a higher ACT score in math than a woman. But if the measure is asking for a subjective judgment, often times the unanticipated contrast effect can occur.

With contrast effects, the subject of a stereotype is perceived in a counterstereotypical way, or a way that opposes the initial stereotype’s claim. Women may be perceived to have exceptional mathematical ability if they have a Ph.D. in Math, because this so clearly violates the expectation they will be mathematically incompetent compared to men. Here, an equal man with a Ph.D. in math may be viewed less positively than the woman because he is held to a higher standard than the woman. The idea is that if two people share the same qualities or display the same behavior, but are judged to have inherently different abilities because of their group membership, then the identical qualities and behaviors will be perceived differently. An individual who violates a stereotype may actually be judged more positively than an individual who does not.

Research has investigated the way contrast effects manifest themselves in gender stereotyping through the examination of men who violate stereotypes. One study by Meltzer and Mcnulty (2011) found that men who were described as nurturing were rated more favorably than women who were described equally as nurturing. If the two were rated on a common-rule scale, the shifting standards model would predict the woman would be considered more nurturing than the man. But a subjective measure was used (7 point Likert scale) and as a result, the findings reflected a contrast effect. The negative stereotype that men are not nurturing combined with the individuating information of an especially nurturing man caused the man to be perceived in a way that opposed the initial stereotype. The woman received lower evaluations even though she was described identically to the man; she was harmed by a stereotype initially intended to favor her. Similarly, the man received disproportional positive evaluations and actually benefitted from a stereotype that would usually harm him (Meltzer & Mcnulty, 2011).

Another study found similar results, this time testing the variable of altruistic behavior. Heilman and Chen (2005) conducted a study that presented participants with information about a male or female employee who was either described to have shown altruistic behavior, not shown altruistic behavior, or neither. The results showed that a man who did the altruistic behavior was evaluated more favorably than a woman who did the same altruistic behavior (Heilman & Chen, 2005). Here the negative stereotype that men are not particularly helpful combined with the presence of a particularly helpful man resulted in a contrast effect that caused the man to receive benefits from his behavior that the woman did not receive. Additionally, the woman who did not do the altruistic behavior was evaluated less favorably than the man who also did not do the altruistic behavior (Heilman & Chen, 2005). A woman who isn’t depicted as particularly helpful experiences a negative outcome that a similar man does not experience because of the shifting standards of subjective evaluation. Contrast effects can work in two directions; not only does the man receive excessive benefits that an equal woman does not receive, but the woman encounters undeserved punishment that an equal man never has to face.

These findings suggest that under the right circumstances, gender stereotyping results in counterstereotypical contrast effects. Although the contrast effect subdues the initial unfavorable outcomes for the group that is negatively stereotyped, it results in unfavorable outcomes for the group being compared. Men who are subjected to negative stereotypes but defy them no longer suffer the unfavorable judgments. However, women who are compared to these men do not get the same benefits from displaying equal behavior or ability because the standards are shifted.

# The Current Research

As demonstrated, both role congruity theory and the shifting standards model are effective and empirically supported demonstrations of how the inner mechanisms of gender stereotypes function. Role congruity theory illustrates the importance of perceived congruence between one’s attributes and one’s social role in judgment making. The shifting standards model clarifies how stereotypes can result in contrast effects that have unexpected outcomes for group members. Past research has neglected to determine how gender stereotypes operate when the assumptions of both of these systems are combined and tested together. More specifically, no study yet has investigated the potential ways in which contrast effects emerge when in the presence of gender congruent or incongruent information in a hiring scenario. Like the research suggests, men and women are evaluated more favorably for positions that stereotypically correspond to their gender (Biernat & Manis, 1994; Cohen & Bunker, 1975; Frauendorfer & Schmid, 2013). But what would happen if the individual being evaluated was manipulated to display behavior in opposition with the notion of the stereotype, which research suggests may elicit contrast effects (Meltzer & Mcnulty, 2011; Heilman & Chen, 2005)?

The present study will investigate the differences in the way men and women are evaluated for a stereotypically masculine or feminine position by manipulating the individuating information given about the men and women to either oppose or support a gender stereotype. Specifically, participants will evaluate a job candidate that is either described as having displayed altruistic behavior (helpful condition), displaying neutral behavior (control condition), or not displaying altruistic behavior (unhelpful condition) by reviewing a man or a woman’s job application for either the position of Executive Chief of Staff (masculine) or Executive Secretary (feminine).

# Hypotheses

According to previous research on contrast effects, it is predicted that a helpful man will be evaluated more favorably than an equally helpful woman. Similarly, due to the contrast effect, an unhelpful woman will be evaluated less favorably than an equally unhelpful man. And according to role-congruity theory, it is hypothesized that men and women will both be evaluated more favorably for positions that cohere to gender stereotypes. Though my hypotheses are based on the general principles of both role congruity theory and the shifting standards model, my specific predictions do not identically replicate these findings as they stand on their own. Instead, I anticipate the contrast effect elicited through the presentation of individuating information (helpfulness) combined with the presentation of gendered positions will complicate this process and produce interactions.

Concerning the hirability ratings, I hypothesize a three-way interaction between position, gender of applicant, and condition. In the Executive Chief of Staff position, female applicants in the unhelpful condition will receive lower hirability ratings than applicants in any other condition, and male applicants in the helpful condition will receive higher hirability ratings than applicants in any other condition. Moreover, male applicants will always receive higher hirability ratings than female applicants in the Executive Chief of Staff position. However, a different pattern is expected in the Executive Secretary position. I predict that male applicants in the helpful condition will receive higher hirability ratings than applicants in any other condition and female applicants in the unhelpful condition will receive lower hirability ratings than applicants in any other condition, but in addition, I anticipate female applicants will receive higher hirability ratings than male applicants in the control condition.

In regard to the helpful ratings, I predict a two-way interaction between condition and gender of applicant such that female applicants in the unhelpful condition will have lower helpfulness ratings than applicants in any other condition. Conversely, male applicants in the helpful condition will have higher helpfulness ratings than applicants in any other condition. Visual representation of all hypotheses can be viewed in *Figure 1.*

# Method

# Participants

Participants will include 144 college students enrolled in a small, Catholic, liberal arts institution in the Midwest. Participants will be recruited through Introductory Psychology courses and will receive partial course credit for participation. All participants will be randomly assigned to one of twelve conditions.

# Design

This study is a 2 (Executive Secretary or Executive Chief of Staff) by 2 (male applicant or female applicant) by 3 (unhelpful condition, control condition, or helpful condition) between-subjects factorial design.

# Materials

**Job description***.* The job descriptions were developed by Biernat and Fuegen (2001) and include a three-paragraph description of the job requirements for a fictitious position. As in Biernat and Fuegen’s (2001) study, all participants will read an identical job description, but the title will vary to indicate either a feminine (Executive Secretary) or masculine (Executive Chief of Staff) position (see Appendices A and B).

**Job Position Questionnaire.** This questionnaire contains four multiple choice questions about the title, gender distribution, average salary, and job outlook for the position the participant has just reviewed, although the only one of interest is on gender distribution (see Appendix C). The purpose of this questions doubles as a manipulation check and a catalyst to get the participant thinking about the gender of an Executive Chief of Staff/Executive Secretary.

**Resumé.**All participants will review an identical resumé, except the name on the resumé will vary to indicate a male applicant (David Michael Johnson) or a female applicant (Amy Marie Johnson). The resumé states the individual has been previously employed as an Executive Assistant, General Office Clerk, and Customer Specialist and is roughly 35 years of age. The resumés were created by the author and, similar to Biernat and Fuegen (2001), will be moderate in caliber (see Appendices D and E).

**Evaluation form***.* The evaluation form will be presented to participants as a tool used by personnel managers to get better insight into an applicant’s work capabilities. Participants will be told the form was filled out by either a coworker, subordinate, or supervisor of the applicant in his or her previous employment position (Global Systems International). However, to make the information in the form more convincing, all participants will read an evaluation done by the applicant’s previous coworker. In both conditions, the form will have ratings of David or Amy on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 on qualities such as dependability, efficiency, and versatility. The ratings given by the supposed coworker will be either good (4) or excellent (5) on all qualities.

Next, the form will give a written description done by the coworker to describe David/Amy’s typical work behavior. In all conditions, the coworker’s statement will begin:

*David/Amy arrives to work on time and makes sure his/her work area is always covered. His/her work is completed on time with minimal errors. He/she strives to improve work performance, takes pride in his/her work, and has shown he/she is a team player. David/Amy is usually able to answer customer questions and uses good judgment in solving problems and working with others. He/she adjusts moderately well to changes in the work place.*

In the helpful and unhelpful conditions, the coworker’s statement will continue:

*Once I was in a panic because I had to make copies of some presentation materials for an important meeting the next morning. The copy machine broke down on me and would not collate or staple the pages. It was 5:15 and all the support staff was gone, and everyone else was preparing to go out for another coworker’s birthday dinner. We’d all been looking forward to it. I ran around looking for help to manually collate and staple the 500 pages.*

In the helpful condition, the statement will conclude with, “*When David/Amy learned what had happened, he/she immediately volunteered to help me even though he/she would miss part of the dinner. That’s just the way David/Amy is”* (see Appendix F) In the unhelpful condition, the statement will conclude with, “*When David/Amy learned what had happened, he/she said he/she could not help me because he/she was on his/her way to the party but suggested I try to find a copy shop that was still open. That’s just the way David/Amy is”* (see Appendix G).

The coworker’s statement in the control condition will conclude with, “*Once I was at an employee meeting where it was David’s responsibility to present a status report to the group on a recent project being developed. David's presentation was informative and clear. He made sure to keep the meeting on schedule and he provided us with handouts. That's just the way David is”* (see Appendix H).This statement is meant to convey the behaviors of an average employee who neither underperforms nor exceeds expectations. Unlike the helpful and unhelpful conditions, we anticipate it will fail to evoke any emotional response from participants, therefore, preventing any stereotypical judgments. This response was written by the author and was derived from a number of descriptors used to describe the average employee (Sample Performance Comments, 2014). This method was adapted from Heilman and Chen (2005); the descriptions in this study will be identical to those used by Heilman and Chen (2005) except for the first five sentences in each condition. This addition was made by the author to enhance the mediocrity of the employee’s ability and to equate the level of information given in the experimental conditions with the control condition.

**Questionnaire***.* The questionnaire will ask the participant to rate the applicant in a number of different ways. First, the participant will complete three measures assessing how hirable they view the applicant on a 1 – 7 point Likert scale. Questions include, “Should this person be hired?” (1 Should definitely not be hired – 7 Should definitely be hired), “Is this person a good fit for the job?” (1 An extremely bad fit – 7 An extremely good fit), and “How successful would this person be in this position?” (1 Extremely unsuccessful – 7 Extremely successful). Next the participant will evaluate the applicant on a number of personality characteristics such as warm, self-reliant, supportive, hard-working, and helpful. From these characteristics, several will be combined to form a measure of helpfulness. An additional purpose of these descriptors is to see if gendered traits (warm, kind, friendly vs. self-reliant, ambitious, and selfish) are perceived after the elicitation of certain stereotypically-congruent/incongruent cues. The questionnaire will also utilize a manipulation check asking participants to indicate the gender and position applied for of the applicant they just evaluated. Lastly, participants will answer several demographic questions (see Appendix I).

# Procedure

The experiment will be run in sessions of 20 participants at a time. Upon arrival, participants will first complete a consent form and then will be seated at a desk and given a manila envelope. The experimenter will then verbally give all participants a cover story stating that the purpose of the experiment is to examine the differences in the way laypeople and experts make decisions. They will be told to imagine that they are a personnel manager with the task of evaluating the competency of a job applicant. It will be explained that actual personnel managers have already evaluated all of the job applicants, but our purpose is to investigate how those evaluations compare to evaluations done by laypeople. In addition, participants will be told that the applicant they are reviewing is a real person and was hired for the position, but in some cases did not prove to be a good hire. With this information in mind, we expect participants to evaluate the applicant with intense scrutiny, which will hopefully elicit some gender-stereotyped perceptions.

The experimenter will then inform the participants their folders contain a job description, a questionnaire, a resume, an evaluation form, and a second questionnaire. After a brief explanation of these materials, participants will be instructed to review the documents, consider the applicant’s fit for the position, and fill out the questionnaire as if they are the one who will make the official hiring decision. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants will be debriefed and thanked for their participation.

# Results

The dependent variables will include the helpful rating and the hirability rating in the questionnaire. Results will be analyzed using a 2 (gender of target) x 2 (type of position) x 3 (altruism information) factorial design.

# Discussion

If the results are as predicted, then there will be a difference in the likelihood of hire for men and women applying for gendered positions. Men will be more likely to be hired for a masculine position, Executive Chief of Staff, than women. However, the same effect will not be found in women due to a contrast effect, which, if realized, will result in a difference in the likelihood of hire for men and women depending on their altruistic behavior. Men who display altruism will be hired more than women who also display altruism. This is predicted to be true in both the Executive Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary positions. If the results are consistent with the hypotheses, then a preference for the hire of men will emerge in five of the six conditions, whereas a preference for women will only be observed in one.

The anticipated results cohere with the findings of previous research on both gender stereotypes and employee selection bias. The preference of men over women for a masculine position would support the findings that men and women are evaluated more favorably for positions that are considered stereotypically masculine or feminine, respectively (Biernat & Manis, 1994; Cohen & Bunker, 1975; Frauendorfer & Schmid, 2013). In contrast, the predicted result in this study that women will *not* be preferred over men for a feminine position opposes these findings. However, my anticipation of this outcome is grounded in research of contrast effects. If a man is held to a negative societal stereotype, and then plainly opposes the stereotype, it is sensible to predict a contrast effect will occur and the man will benefit from the negative stereotype. In these situations, men who do not adhere to the beliefs caused by the stereotype are perceived more favorably than comparable women. Evidence for this type of contrast effect has been found by Meltzer and Mcnulty (2011) and Heilman and Chen (2005). Until now, no study has paired together and investigated the interaction of contrast effects caused by stereotypes and gender bias in hiring.

The predicted findings would suggest that the ways in which we assign capability to another individual are not as objective as we might hope to believe. Although the job candidates will have the same credentials and are applying for fundamentally the same position, differences in the likelihood of their hire based solely on gender are likely to present. Given there is legislation protecting discrimination in the hiring process, the predicted findings would shed light on the flaws that taint our supposed fair and impartial methods of personnel selection. The predicted results would warrant critical examination of the natural tendencies we have for bias when evaluating the skills and abilities of others.

In addition, the study will give insight into the manifestations of stereotypical perceptions, specifically in relation to contrast effects. An individual who violates a stereotype that is intended to produce a negative perception can sometimes be perceived in a way that is hyper-positive, that is, more positive than merit would give. This unwarranted benefit may correspondingly result in harm to an individual of the opposing group in the initial stereotype. Here, the women who are compared to the men who do not adhere to the stereotype do not receive the same benefits as men for their traits or behavior. In a broad sense, this process jeopardizes our ability to form accurate judgments. The stereotypes that influence our perceptions cloud objective observation and pave the way for bias. It stands to reason that as long as these stereotypes function in our society, contrast effects will occur, along with all of their negative implications.

Like all studies, this one is not without limitations. Our sample size of 144 students poses the risk of being underpowered with our complex research design necessitating twelve conditions. There is also the chance our manipulations will not elicit the expected response, though we have taken all of the precautions to improve the likelihood they will.

Future research should continue to examine the ways hiring behavior is influenced by stereotypical judgments, as this study gave a small amount of insight into a process that is very complex. Here we examined a negative stereotype directed at men, that men are typically less altruistic than women. A future study could use the same methodology but consider other gender stereotypes, perhaps a positive stereotype directed at men or a negative stereotype directed at women. A stereotype outside the realm of gender could also be examined, such as racial or ability status stereotypes. It would be interesting to examine how hiring likelihood changes as a result of judgments beyond the scope of altruism.

Another aspect of the research that could be expanded on is the level of training of the evaluator. The current research used student participants to function as personnel technicians and make hiring decisions. While the results still have meaning and important implications, there may be value in observing the evaluation decisions of professionals trained in hiring decisions.

It would also be beneficial for future research to continue examining the manifestations of contrast effects and how they can potentially influence perceptions of ability. This topic should be expanded beyond evaluations of job applicants for hire. Other kinds of evaluation could be studied, such as evaluation of a current employee, evaluation of a subordinate, or evaluation of a performance. The evidence shows the presence of contrast effects in some contexts, but it is reasonable to infer they could emerge in others as well. Stereotypes filter into every aspect of our lives. Research dedicated to the understanding of them should do the same.

Although gender stereotyping is unacceptable societally, intuitively, and legally, research supports the claim that it still subsists at the root of our thoughts and behaviors. It subtly pervades the ways in which we attempt to make objective decisions and judgments. The present study gives evidence for gender stereotyping in evaluative hiring assessment. It also demonstrates the twofold influence of contrast effects based on these stereotypes: an unearned advantage for one and the absence of advantage for another. Further exploration of the interplay between these two concepts is warranted; for only by experimentally testing topics so subjective in nature can we really begin to comprehend their impression on our lives.

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# *Figure 1.* Illustration of Hypotheses

# Appendix A

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**JOB TITLE:**  EXECUTIVE CHIEF OF STAFF

**REPORTS TO:**  SENIOR EXECUTIVE

**SUMMARY OF POSITION:**

The Executive Chief of Staff works for a senior executive in a complete sense. An Executive Chief of Staff must have a high level understanding of the executive's work and the company so that the executive may appropriately delegate work which may be complex. The duties involve giving instructions to other staff, using considerable judgment to make routine and non-routine decisions, and representing the executive's views when the executive is not available. Also, the Executive Chief of Staff is responsible for supervising several secretaries and other office staff.

Supervision of staff consists of delegating routine tasks to a number of work groups varying in the complexity of work. The Executive Chief of Staff personally coordinates the work of the groups, maintains standards of quality and performance, decides training programs, maintains morale, makes decisions regarding work priorities, and assists with selection of new staff.

Other duties include receiving visitors, dealing personally with telephone inquiries, planning travel itineraries in the US and abroad, providing information on routine matters of the executive's work, generally dealing with routine affairs not delegated to an assistant and, in the executive's absence, making arrangements for important matters to be dealt with.

# Appendix B

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**JOB TITLE:**  EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**REPORTS TO:**  SENIOR EXECUTIVE

**SUMMARY OF POSITION:**

The Executive Secretary works for a senior executive in a complete sense. An Executive Secretary must have a high level understanding of the executive's work and the company so that the executive may appropriately delegate work which may be complex. The duties involve giving instructions to other staff, using considerable judgment to make routine and non-routine decisions, and representing the executive's views when the executive is not available. Also, the Executive Secretary is responsible for supervising several secretaries and other office staff.

Supervision of staff consists of delegating routine tasks to a number of work groups varying in the complexity of work. The Executive Secretary personally coordinates the work of the groups, maintains standards of quality and performance, decides training programs, maintains morale, makes decisions regarding work priorities, and assists with selection of new staff.

Other duties include receiving visitors, dealing personally with telephone inquiries, planning travel itineraries in the US and abroad, providing information on routine matters of the executive's work, generally dealing with routine affairs not delegated to an assistant and, in the executive's absence, making arrangements for important matters to be dealt with.

# Appendix C

**JOB POSITION QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. What was the exact title of the job position you just reviewed?
   1. Executive Secretary
   2. Sales Representative
   3. Executive Chief of Staff
   4. Customer Service Professional
2. What percentage breakdown would you estimate is representative of men and women who occupy that position across the U.S.?
   1. Men (30%) and Women (70%)
   2. Men (40%) and Women (60%)
   3. Men (50%) and Women (50%)
   4. Men (60%) and Women (40%)
   5. Men (70%) and Women (30%)
3. What would you estimate the average annual salary is for employees in that position across the U.S.?
   1. Lower than or equal to $30,000
   2. $35,000
   3. $40,000
   4. $45,000
   5. $50,000
   6. $55,000
   7. Higher than or equal to $60,000
4. How would you estimate the job outlook is for that position in the U.S.?
   1. Fewer positions available than people to fill them (poor outlook)
   2. A proportional amount of available positions and people to fill them (decent outlook)
   3. More positions available than people to fill them (excellent outlook)

# Appendix D

Amy Marie Johnsonamjohnson@gmail.com

512 Elm Street, Wayzata, MN 55391 (612) 215 7743

Executive Assistant

Dynamic professional with some experience in organizational administration, computer/technical support, and office management. Versed in staff supervision, scheduling, reporting, office logistics, and service provider management. Detailed understanding of policies, procedures, and office politics. Effective in the management of top organizational initiatives. Maintain great written and oral communication skills, problem resolution abilities, and a high level of confidentiality.

Administrative Skills

Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Access, Publisher)

Oracle Calendar, Type 50 WPM

Professional Experience

Executive Assistant

*Global Systems International, Wayzata, MN 55391 April 2006 - present*

* Provide administrative support to upper level executives
* Coordinate corporate and special events
* Process expense reports and supporting documents
* Collaborate with departmental managers and staff

General Office Clerk

*GCF Incorporation, St. Paul, MN 55102 August 2000 – March 2006*

* Perform writing, typing, and entering information into computer
* Arrange file records
* Distribute information to staff
* Copy documents

Customer Specialist

*Smith & Sons Enterprises, Plymouth, MN 55447 October 1998 – May 2000*

* Assist customers with regular information and concerns
* Provide appropriate support for areas in need
* Address and resolve problems
* Consult customers to analyze business needs

Education

**Associate’s Degree in Business Management (May, 2000)**

MN School of Business, Plymouth, MN 55447

GPA: 2.9

# Appendix E

David Michael Johnsondmjohnson@gmail.com

512 Elm Street, Wayzata, MN 55391 (612) 215 7743

Executive Assistant

Dynamic professional with some experience in organizational administration, computer/technical support, and office management. Versed in staff supervision, scheduling, reporting, office logistics, and service provider management. Detailed understanding of policies, procedures, and office politics. Effective in the management of top organizational initiatives. Maintain great written and oral communication skills, problem resolution abilities, and a high level of confidentiality.

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Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Access, Publisher)

Oracle Calendar, Type 50 WPM

Professional Experience

Executive Assistant

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Customer Specialist

*Smith & Sons Enterprises, Plymouth, MN 55447 October 1998 – May 2000*

* Assist customers with regular information and concerns
* Provide appropriate support for areas in need
* Address and resolve problems
* Consult customers to analyze business needs

Education

**Associate’s Degree in Business Management (May, 2000)**

MN School of Business, Plymouth, MN 55447

GPA: 2.9

# **Appendix** F

**GLOBAL SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL**

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**EMPLOYEE EVALUATION FORM**

**Name of Employee Being Evaluated:** David/Amy Johnson

**Name of Employee Completing Evaluation:**  Jordan Murphy

**Rate the employee’s work performance by indicating whether they demonstrated poor (1), fair (2), average (3), good (4) or excellent (5) work behavior. Please be honest.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Poor** | **Fair** | **Average** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **Planning and Organizing** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Follow Through** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Dependability** |  |  |  |  | **√** |
| **Efficiency** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Accuracy** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Accepting of responsibility** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Versatility** |  |  | **√** |  |  |
| **Capacity to work** |  |  |  |  | **√** |
| **Emotional Stability** |  |  |  | **√** |  |

**Please describe the employee’s typical work behavior:**

David/Amy arrives to work on time and makes sure his/her work area is always covered. His/her work is completed on time with minimal errors. He/she strives to improve work performance, takes pride in his/her work, and has shown he/she is a team player. David/Amy is usually able to answer customer questions and uses good judgment in solving problems and working with others. He/she adjusts moderately well to changes in the work place. Once I was in a panic because I had to make copies of some presentation materials for an important meeting the next morning. The copy machine broke down on me and would not collate or staple the pages. It was 5:15 and all the support staff was gone, and everyone else was preparing to go out for another coworker’s birthday dinner. We’d all been looking forward to it. I ran around looking for help to manually collate and staple the 500 pages. When David/Amy learned what had happened, he/she immediately volunteered to help me even though he/she would miss part of the dinner. That’s just the way David/Amy is.

# Appendix G

**GLOBAL SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL**

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**EMPLOYEE EVALUATION FORM**

**Name of Employee Being Evaluated:** David/Amy Johnson

**Name of Employee Completing Evaluation:**  Jordan Murphy

**Rate the employee’s work performance by indicating whether they demonstrated poor (1), fair (2), average (3), good (4) or excellent (5) work behavior. Please be honest.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Poor** | **Fair** | **Average** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **Planning and Organizing** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Follow Through** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Dependability** |  |  |  |  | **√** |
| **Efficiency** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Accuracy** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Accepting of responsibility** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Versatility** |  |  | **√** |  |  |
| **Capacity to work** |  |  |  |  | **√** |
| **Emotional Stability** |  |  |  | **√** |  |

**Please describe the employee’s typical work behavior:**

David/Amy arrives to work on time and makes sure his/her work area is always covered. His/her work is completed on time with minimal errors. He/she strives to improve work performance, takes pride in his/her work, and has shown he/she is a team player. David/Amy is usually able to answer customer questions and uses good judgment in solving problems and working with others. He/she adjusts moderately well to changes in the work place. Once I was in a panic because I had to make copies of some presentation materials for an important meeting the next morning. The copy machine broke down on me and would not collate or staple the pages. It was 5:15 and all the support staff was gone, and everyone else was preparing to go out for another coworker’s birthday dinner. We’d all been looking forward to it. I ran around looking for help to manually collate and staple the 500 pages. When David/Amy learned what had happened, he/she said he/she could not help me because he/she was on his/her way to the party but suggested I try to find a copy shop that was still open. That’s just the way David/Amy is.

# Appendix H

**GLOBAL SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL**

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**EMPLOYEE EVALUATION FORM**

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**Name of Employee Completing Evaluation:**  Jordan Murphy

**Rate the employee’s work performance by indicating whether they demonstrated poor (1), fair (2), average (3), good (4) or excellent (5) work behavior. Please be honest.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Poor** | **Fair** | **Average** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **Planning and Organizing** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Follow Through** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Dependability** |  |  |  |  | **√** |
| **Efficiency** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Accuracy** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Accepting of responsibility** |  |  |  | **√** |  |
| **Versatility** |  |  | **√** |  |  |
| **Capacity to work** |  |  |  |  | **√** |
| **Emotional Stability** |  |  |  | **√** |  |

**Please describe the employee’s typical work behavior:**

David/Amy arrives to work on time and makes sure his/her work area is always covered. His/her work is completed on time with minimal errors. He/she strives to improve work performance, takes pride in his/her work, and has shown he/she is a team player. David/Amy is usually able to answer customer questions and uses good judgment in solving problems and working with others. He/she adjusts moderately well to changes in the work place. Once I was at an employee meeting where it was David/Amy’s responsibility to present a status report to the group on a recent project being developed.  David/Amy's presentation was informative and clear. He/she made sure to keep the meeting on schedule and he/she provided us with handouts. That's just the way David/Amy is.

# Appendix I

**PERSONNEL MANAGER QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please complete a few questions about the applicant you just reviewed.

***Should this person be hired? Circle your response.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Should Should Should Neutral Should Should Should

Definitely Not Be Probably Not Probably Be Hired Definitely

Not Be Hired Hired Be Hired Be Hired Be Hired

***Is this person a good fit for the job? Circle your response.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

An A very A Bad Neutral A Good A Very An

Extremely Bad Fit Fit Fit Good Fit Extremely

Bad Fit Good Fit

***How successful would this person be in this position? Circle your response.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely Very Unsuccessful Neutral Successful Very Extremely

Unsuccessful Unsuccessful Successful Successful

***In your own words, please explain your responses to the previous three questions:***

***In addition, we would like to know your impression of the applicant’s personality characteristics. Please indicate your level of agreement that the applicant you just reviewed possesses these traits:***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Neither Somewhat Agree Strongly

Disagree Disagree Agree nor Agree Agree

Disagree

Dependable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Caring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Shy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Supportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Selfish 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Understanding 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Self-Reliant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Arrogant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Patient 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Ambitious 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Uncooperative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Hard-working 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Warm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Inconsiderate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Creative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Aggressive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Unsupportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

***In your own words, please describe the applicant’s personality***

***What was the gender of the person you just evaluated? Circle your response***

Male Female

***What was the job position that the person you evaluated was applying for?***

***What is your age?***

***What is your gender?***

***What is your major?***

***Do you have a minor? If so, what is it?***

***How many semesters have you attended college?***

***What is your cumulative GPA?***