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Gender Stereotypes and the Attribution of Leadership Traits: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

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Abstract

In the present study we analyzed cultural variations of managerial gender typing, i.e., that managers are perceived as possessing traits that are part of the masculine stereotype. Management students of both sexes from three different countries—Australia, Germany, and India—estimated the percentage to which one of three stimulus groups, i.e., executives-in-general (no gender specification), male executives, or female executives, possesses person-oriented and task-oriented leadership traits. Participants also rated the importance of these characteristics for the respective group. Furthermore, another group of participants described themselves regarding the two types of traits and their importance for themselves. Altogether, the results indicate a less traditional view of leadership compared to previous findings, which is very similar in all three countries. Nevertheless, there exists an interculturally shared view of a female-specific leadership competence according to which women possess a higher person orientation than men. The self-descriptions of the female and male management students regarding person- and task-oriented traits were found to be very similar.

Key words: Leadership; Self Perception; Sex Role Attitudes; Stereotyped Attitudes; Cross Cultural Psychology

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Despite the fact that women have been moving up the hierarchical ladder of organizations during recent decades (see Eagly, 2003; Wirth, 2001), women are still under-represented in management positions in comparison to men all over the world (Powell, 1999; for an overview, see Schein, 2001). For example, in the United States women currently represent 15.7 percent of corporate officers in the 500 largest companies (the "Fortune 500") of the country, an increase from 12.5 percent in 2000 and 8.7 percent in 1995. Almost 5.2 percent of the top earning corporate officers in these companies are women. This represents an increase from 1996 when 1.9 percent of the top corporate earners were women (Catalyst, 2002). The under-representation of women in management positions is described as a "glass ceiling," a barrier so subtle that it is transparent but simultaneously so strong that it prevents women and ethnic minorities from moving up in the management hierarchy (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

Gender stereotypes resulting in a perceived incongruity between the feminine and the leader roles can be seen as one possible explanation for this phenomenon (Eagly & Karau, 2002). From a sociocultural perspective, stereotypes about women and men are based on observations of their behaviors in gender-typical social roles (e.g., breadwinner, homemaker) and contain consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men (Eagly, 1987). Research has consistently demonstrated that men are generally seen as more agentic and more competent than women, whereas women are seen as more expressive and more communal than men (e.g., Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Williams & Best, 1990). In leadership research an analogous dichotomy of leadership characteristics can be found. For example, a differentiation between "initiating structure" and "consideration" is common (for an overview, see Schriesheim, Cogliser, Neider, Fleishman, & James, 1998). Cann and Siegfried (1990) examined the relationship between those two types of leadership styles on the one

hand and feminine and masculine behaviors on the other. The results showed that consideration is perceived as more feminine and initiating structure is perceived as more masculine.

The aim of the present study was to analyze the impact of cultural background in terms of a possible moderator on the perceived incongruity between the feminine and leader roles and on the self-descriptions regarding leadership traits among women and men. Before we report the results of our empirical study, we will review research on gender stereotypes and leadership and on self-description of leadership traits by women and men.

Gender Stereotypes and Leadership

One area in which gender stereotypes manifest themselves is the attribution of leadership abilities (Heilman, 2001). In her earlier research, Schein (1973; 1975) examined the social image of successful middle managers in U.S. samples and found that the attributes ascribed to managers yielded a significantly higher correlation with the description of a typical man than with the description of a typical woman. This phenomenon of *think-manager-think-male* was confirmed in many subsequent studies; thus management is still associated with being male (e.g., Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002; Sczesny, 2003a, 2003b; Willemsen, 2002). Schein extended her research with cross-cultural comparisons, which indicated that the impact of gender stereotypes on the perception of leadership can also be observed in different countries: in Germany, the United Kingdom (Schein & Mueller, 1992), China, and Japan (Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996).

Former studies have identified *perceivers' sex* as a moderating variable in the evaluation of men's and women's leadership abilities. Male individuals were found to evaluate women more negatively relative to men than female individuals did (e.g., Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Results of Deal and Stevenson's (1998) study indicated that male and female college students have similar perceptions both of prototypical managers and male managers,

whereas male students were more likely than female students to have negative views of female managers (using the Schein Descriptive Index, 1973). The male students were less likely than the female students to describe female managers as ambitious, competent, intelligent, objective, well-informed, etc., and more likely to describe female managers as easily influenced, nervous, passive, having a strong need for social acceptance, uncertain, etc. A recent review by Schein (2001) indicated a less gender-stereotypic perception of leadership among women than among men in the United States, but not in several other countries (China, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom). Schein (2001) assumed that such "variations in the degree of managerial sex typing, however, may reflect the females' view of opportunities for and actual participation of women in management in their respective countries" (p. 680). Following Schein, the responses of women may serve as a "barometer of change."

Moreover, two *types of expectations or norms* were specified (e.g., Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Fiske & Stevens, 1993): Descriptive norms contain beliefs about what people actually do, prescriptive norms contain beliefs about what people ought to do. Most previous research on the think-manager-think-male stereotype has focussed on the descriptive norms regarding leadership abilities. Eagly and Karau (2002) emphasized that descriptive as well as prescriptive norms ought to be taken into consideration because they have different implications for the development of prejudice toward female leaders. Sczesny (2003a) has also investigated prescriptive aspects. In her study ratings concerning the ascribed importance of leadership characteristics yielded a less traditional view of female and male leaders by German students than expected: Male students were more prone to share traditional expectancies with respect to global gender roles. In contrast, the evaluations by female students indicated a more non-traditional view of gender/leadership roles. This result reflects

the impact of perceivers' sex on descriptive norms as observed in previous studies (see, e.g., Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Schein, 2001).

Following Heilman (1983), expectations about the success of an individual are determined by the fit between the perception of an individual's attributes and the perception of the job's requirements in terms of skills and abilities. She described a divergence as "lack of fit." For organizational jobs that are typically associated with men, e.g. leadership positions, a lack of fit between the perceived requirements of the job and the abilities typically attributed to women as a group was proposed. Such a lack of fit was assumed to be responsible for sex-biased judgments or behaviors. Following Eagly and Karau (2002), prejudice toward female leaders occurs especially in situations that heighten perceptions of incongruity between the feminine gender role and leadership roles. In their *role congruity theory*, Eagly and Karau proposed that there are two forms of prejudice toward female leaders. The first type, the less favorable evaluation of women's *potential for leadership* compared to men's potential, stems from the activation of descriptive beliefs about women's characteristics and the consequent ascription of feminine-stereotypic qualities to women, which are unlike the qualities expected or desired in leaders. The second type, the less favorable evaluation of the *actual leadership behavior* of women compared to men, derives from prescriptive norms. When women break through the glass ceiling to occupy leadership roles, they are in danger of biased evaluations that originate from their nonconformity to the cultural definitions of femininity. In the context of leadership of women, the violation of their traditional gender role results in the dilemma of either being "too feminine or too masculine."

Self-description of Leadership Traits

However, gender differences in traits, skills, and behavior do not only exist in the eye of the beholder, but also in *self-description* (e.g., Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). Nevertheless, a decrease in gender differences in self-description of masculine and feminine

traits over a 20-year period (1973-1993) was observed by Twenge (1997). Her results indicated that women increasingly reported possessing masculine-stereotyped traits, whereas men showed no changes regarding feminine-stereotyped traits, that is, their non-endorsement of these traits continued. Furthermore, recent meta-analytical research regarding one core leadership trait indicated an increasing similarity between women and men: In many recent samples, Twenge (2001) found no gender differences in self-reported assertiveness. Women described themselves as similarly assertive and dominant as men. She concluded that "women's assertiveness varies with their status and roles. Social change is thus internalized in the form of a personality trait" (p. 133). In the above-mentioned study by Sczesny (2003a) German female students—although they reported to possess more person-oriented traits (consideration) than male students—described themselves as similarly task-oriented (initiating structure) as male students. These results support the idea of *gender stereotypes as dynamic constructs* as proposed by Diekman and Eagly (2000) and reflect the recently reported changes in masculine typed personality traits and assertiveness (Twenge, 1997; 2001).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Concerning the contents of gender stereotypes, i.e., the attribution of personality traits, there is a broad consensus across cultures. Williams and Best (1990) reported that the typical images of men and women described above were prevalent in all 30 investigated countries (see also Williams, Satterwhite, & Best, 1999). Besides these universal traditional gender roles, there is also a high global resemblance with respect to leadership roles, that is, what kind of characteristics a leader should possess, for example, communicative skills, trustworthiness, and dynamism. Den Hartog et al. (1999) reported such similarities in 62 countries. To sum up, previous research indicated a global resemblance of the leadership role

as well as the persistence of gender stereotypes and of managerial gender typing in different countries.

One theoretical approach suggests cultural influences on leader and gender roles: Following the role congruity theory by Eagly and Karau (2002), changes in descriptive contents of gender and occupational roles require a "general change in the distribution of men and women into social roles" (p. 590). Such distributions differ between cultures (see below). This raises the question of whether the cultural background influences the perceived incongruity between feminine role and leader role as well as the self-descriptions of women and men regarding their own leaderhip traits. We assume a greater fit of feminine role and leader role in countries in which the actual participation of women in leadership is higher than in countries in which women's participation in leadership is still quite low.

Based on various indicators regarding the *equality of women and men* in different countries, the following three countries were chosen to analyze such cultural variations: Australia, Germany, and India. The Human Development Report of the United Nations (UNDP) provides information about the achieved equality of women and men in these societies (e.g., the gender-related development index; the gender empowerment measure; see Wirth, 2001, reporting data of the Human Development Report of 1999).

As one indicator to account for inequalities between women and men in their standard of living, the *Gender-Related Development Index* (GDI) measures the average achievement in three basic dimensions—a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. This specific index adjusts the more general *Human Development Index* (HDI), which, for example, takes life expectancy or education into consideration as a criteria for gender equality. Higher GDI ranks indicate more equality between women and men regarding life expectancy, education, and income in Australia (rank 4 from 143 ranks) and Germany (rank 15) compared with India (rank 112).

Furthermore, the *Gender Empowerment Measure* (GEM) assesses gender inequality in economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources. Higher GEM ranks indicate more gender equality in key areas of economic and political participation in Australia (rank 9 from 102 ranks) and Germany (rank 5) compared to India (rank 95).

Although Australia and Germany seem to be quite similar regarding their achieved gender equality, both countries differ with respect to values relevant in the context of work. Hofstede (1980; 1998) studied *work-related values* in more than 50 countries. Participants in different countries had to indicate their agreement/disagreement to value questions, such as "competition between employees usually does more harm than good". One culture-related dimension that he found was masculinity–femininity. This dimension distinguishes societies with masculine work-related values focusing on performance, assertiveness, and material success from societies with feminine-related work values in which people focus on relationships, modesty, and quality of life. For example, masculinity was represented by a high importance of the opportunity for high earnings, femininity by a high importance of a good working relationship with superiors. For the countries investigated in the present study, Hofstede's findings on work-related values show that the (West) German work culture received the highest rank on masculinity (rank 9 from 52 ranks), whereas the Australian (rank 16) and Indian (rank 20) work cultures were less pronounced masculine.

To summarize, Germany and Australia are similar regarding gender equality and leadership participation, whereas Australia and India are similar in masculinity–feminity of work-related values. Based on the reported differences in gender equality and leadership participation of women and men as well as differences in work-related values in these countries, our predictions read as follows.

Of the three investigated countries, the most gender-stereotypic *perception of leadership traits* was expected in India. We expected to find a less gender-stereotypic view in Germany, and in Australia, we expect the least gender-stereotypic view of all three countries. That is, regarding person- and task-oriented leadership traits, we expected Australian participants (management students) to perceive no differences between female executives and executives-in-general (no gender specification) at all, German particpants to perceive only small/modest differences, and Indian participants to percedive the largest differences of all three investigated countries (i.e., they would ascribe fewer task-oriented and more person-oriented traits to female executives than to executives-in-general). In all three countries, participants were expected to perceive no differences between male executives and executives-in-general (Hypothesis 1).

In addition, we assumed the impact of culture and leaders' sex on the perception of leadership traits to be moderated by perceivers' sex. As reported above, some cultural variations in the degree of managerial gender typing among women and men have been observed in previous research, i.e., in the United States women reported a less gender-stereotypic view of leadership than men did (for an overview, see Schein, 2001). Schein (2001) suggested that such variations among women of different countries as those described above can be assigned to their different opportunities for and actual participation in management in the respective country. Therefore, in Germany and especially in Australia, we expected a less gender-stereotypic view of leadership among women than among men. That is, regarding the leadership traits of female executives and executives-in-general in both countries, women were expected to perceive no differences, whereas men were still expected to perceive differences, although less pronounced ones. In contrast, in India both sexes were expected to hold a traditional view of leadership. Indian women as well as Indian men were

expected to report pronounced differences between female executives and executives-in-general (Hypothesis 2).

Finally, we assumed an impact of the cultural background described above on the *self-descriptions of women and men regarding their own leadership traits*. As no change in men's self-view of feminine-typed traits in general has been observed in previous research, this is taken to mean that their non-endorsement of such traits for themselves remains. We assumed that in all three investigated countries, men would report that they possess or a desire to possess *person-oriented leadership traits* to a lesser extent than women would (Hypothesis 3a). Based on the idea of gender stereotypes as dynamic constructs and the recently observed changes in the self-images of women in masculine-typed global personality traits and assertiveness (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Twenge, 1997; 2001), we assumed gender differences in the self-view of *task-oriented leadership traits* depending of the respective cultural background. Women were expected to report that they possess or desire to possess task-oriented leadership traits to a similar extent as men in countries in which the actual participation of women in leadership is higher and/or the work-related values are more masculine-typed, i.e., in Australia and Germany. Whereas in countries in which women's participation in leadership is lower, i.e., India, gender differences would be observed (Hypothesis 3b).

All three predictions were expected to hold for descriptive as well as prescriptive norms.

Method

Design

Female and male management students in three different countries were asked to estimate the *percentage* to which one of the three stimulus groups "executives-in-general (no gender specification)," "male executives," or "female executives" possesses two types of leadership traits (within-subjects factor), namely person-oriented and task-oriented traits (descriptive

norm). Furthermore, they were asked to rate the *importance* of these traits for the respective group (prescriptive norm). Thus, the experiment was based on a 3 (country) x 3 (leaders' sex, i.e., stimulus group) x 2 (participant's sex) x 2 (type of trait) design. Furthermore, another group of participants described themselves regarding the two types of leadership traits and their importance to themselves.

Contrary to previous research, in the present study managerial gender typing was investigated in a context specific way: As an alternative to gender role inventories typically used in previous research that contain global traits of the gender stereotypes (e.g., athletic, aggressive, gentle, affectionate, child-loving; see Bem, 1974; Schein, 1973; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974), we analyzed the influence of gender stereotypes on *leadership specific traits*. Examples of such traits, which are often discussed as requirements for success in leadership, are the ability to convince or to make decisions (e.g., Jeserich, 1989). The impact of gender stereotypes on leadership perception has recently been replicated with such specific traits (see Sczesny, 2003a, 2003b).

Participants

As in most of the former studies (see e.g., Dodge, Gilroy, & Fenzel, 1995; Schein, 1973; Schein, Mueller, & Jacobson, 1989) the sample consisted of management students; a similar pattern of gender stereotypes between management students and corporate managers was ascertained (see Schein, 2001). Samples were carried out in three countries: The 130 *Australian* participants (66 male and 64 female students) were questioned at the University of Adelaide (age in years: *M* = 20.63; *Range* = 18 to 44). The 127 *Indian participants* (89 male and 38 female students) were questioned at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore (age in years: *M* = 23.71; *Range* = 20 to 38). The 253 *German participants* (128 male and 125 were female students; age in years: *M* = 23.48; *Range* = 19 to 33) were questioned at the Universities of Mannheim (47%) and Leipzig (53%)[i]. The participants of every sample were

randomly assigned to the experimental conditions. Their participation was voluntary. They were offered candy as a reward.

Materials

The independent and dependent variables were measured by a questionnaire. The German participants answered a German version, and the Australian and Indian participants answered an English version. As English is one of the official languages in India, higher educated students have the linguistic competence to answer the questionnaire in English.

Independent variables. Regarding the independent variable "stimulus group/person," participants evaluated the leadership traits of "executives-in-general/Führungskräfte im allgemeinen," "female executives/weibliche Führungskräfte," "male executives/männliche Führungskräfte" or themselves. The independent variable "participant's sex" was requested at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Dependent variables. Participants were asked to evaluate the particular group/themselves with regard to leadership characteristics. Leadership-specific characteristics served as dependent variables. These characteristics have been shown to be universally valid (see Brodbeck et al., 2000; Den Hartog et al., 1999). In order to reduce the item pool, synonyms were identified and only one respective attribute was included on the questionnaire. To create the German Version, the English items were translated and retranslated by native speakers. Finally, 16 person-oriented and 18 task-oriented leadership characteristics were selected for the final version of the questionnaire (they were presented in two rotated versions).

In order to develop a measure for *descriptive norms*, a pretest indicated that our respondents found it difficult to answer the question to what extent the leadership characteristics can be ascribed to all members of a certain group, although this way of asking seemed to suggest itself. The reason for this can be seen in the complex nature of the corresponding question that required participants to determine the average of the extent of the

respective characteristic over all members of the group. Therefore, we decided to measure the descriptive norm by the following question (item example “executives-in-general”): ”In your opinion, what percent of all executives possess this characteristic?” (*percentage estimates*). Each question was answered on a scale from 0 to 100% (in decadic steps). In the self-description group, participants indicated whether they possessed the given characteristics or not (in order to avoid the forced-choice character of a yes/no answer, four categories were offered: 1 = *no*, 2 = *rather no*, 3 = *rather yes*, or 4 = *yes*).

Although *prescriptive norms* can probably be measured most efficiently by asking how members of certain groups should be, the pretest indicated that respondents were unwilling to answer such questions. In order to avoid the possibility that participants would break off their participation or answer in a socially desirable manner, in terms of an approximation of prescriptive norms we chose a less explicit measure by asking the following question: ”How important do you find this characteristic to be for an executive?” (*importance ratings*). These questions were to be answered on a 7-point rating scale that ranged from *not at all important* (0) to *extremely important* (6). The participants in the self-description group indicated to what extent they considered the respective characteristics to be important for themselves to possess.

The *person-oriented traits* were dependable, just, intuitive, visionary, encouraging, compassionate, trustworthy, confidence-builder, communicative, diplomatic, innovative, cooperative, inspirational, team-builder, honest, and motivational. The *task-oriented traits* were decisive, career-oriented, effective bargainer, plans ahead, courageous, independent, ambitious, persuasive, able to cope with stress, dynamic, hard-working, competitive, administratively skilled, self-confident, rational, performance-orientated, assertive, and intelligent. The classification of these selected leadership characteristics to the two types of traits was based on a pre-test. The respective person-oriented and task-oriented characteristics were combined in the following highly reliable scales: “Percentage estimates – Person-

oriented traits" (perception of executives: all alpha's > .91; self-description: all alpha's > .85), "Percentage estimates – Task-oriented traits" (perception of executives: all alpha's > .88; self-perception: all alpha's > .88), "Importance ratings – Person-oriented traits" (perception of executives: all alpha's > .80; self-perception: all alpha's > .81), and "Importance ratings – Task-oriented traits" (perception of exutives: all alpha's > .80; self-perception: all alpha's > .79).

Participants who evaluated the stimulus group "executives-in-general" were additionally asked which group they had imagined while answering the questionnaire: male executives, both male and female executives, or female executives.

Procedure

In all three countries, participants were queried at the end of lectures on economics, and they were asked for demographic data, such as age, sex, and subject of study, before they were requested to evaluate the particular stimulus group/person. The instructions contained the following cover story:

"Over the last years, the effective selection of managers has been much discussed in research as well as in practice. Here, the question of relevant personality characteristics has been raised again and again. The following questionnaire is designed to assist in answering the question of which personal characteristics and behaviors are relevant in leadership context. As a future manager, your participation is very important to us. We are very interested in your personal opinion on this topic."

After completion of the questionnaire, participants were asked about the cover story and the hypothesis of the experiment. None of the participants were able to guess the hypotheses. Participants were then debriefed.

Results

Image of Executives-in-General

Participants who completed questionnaires concerning executives-in-general imagined predominantly male executives in India (53.8%) and in Germany (68.3%), but not in Australia (40.6%). Of the Australian participants, 57.7% imagined male and female executives. Male and female executives were imagined by 46.2% of the Indian and 30% of the German participants. Only female executives were thought of by 3.1% of the Australian participants, by 1.7% of the German participants, and by none of the Indian participants. Only in the Australian sample did women and men differ significantly in their answers, *Chi square* (df = 2) = 9.14, $p < .05$, such that there was a more sex-balanced view of leadership among women than among men (see Table 1; a similar pattern of means was observed in the Indian sample, although the differences were below a conventional level of significance).

In all three countries, executives-in-general were more often attributed with task-oriented traits than with person-oriented traits; Australia: $M = 69.2\%$ vs. $M = 59.2\%$, $t(32) = 6.43$, $p < .05$; Germany: $M = 64.6\%$ vs. $M = 49.2\%$, $t(59) = 14.66$, $p < .05$; India: $M = 60.2\%$ vs. $M = 47\%$, $t(29) = 10.13$, $p < .05$. Women and men of the respective countries did not differ in their attributions regarding both types of traits; Australia: both $F's < .66$, $p's > .42$; Germany: both $F's < .22$, $p's > .64$; India: both $F's < 1.11$, $p's > .30$.

In Australia, person-oriented traits were valued as more important for executives-in-general than were task-oriented traits, $M = 4.61$ vs. $M = 4.39$, $t(32) = -2.28$, $p < .05$. A similar pattern of means was found in India, although the difference was below a conventional level of significance; $M = 4.70$ vs. $M = 4.60$, $t(29) = -1.54$, $p = .067$. In Australia and India, women and men did not differ in their attributions regarding both types of traits; Australia: both $F's < 1.01$, $p's > .32$; India: both $F's < 1.64$, $p's > .21$. In Germany, task-oriented traits were seen as more important for executives-in-general than were person-oriented traits: $M = 4.43$ vs. $M = 4.24$, $t(60) = 2.93$, $p < .01$. German men valued person-oriented traits as less important for executives-in-general than did German women; $M = 4.07$ vs. $M = 4.42$, $F(1, 59) = 5.54$, $p <$

.05. German men and women did not differ in their attributions regarding task-oriented traits; F (1, 59) = 2.29; p = .14.

Perception of Leadership Traits

Regarding the perception of leadership traits (see Hypotheses 1 and 2) two 3 (country) x 3 (leaders' sex) x 2 (participants' sex) x 2 (type of trait) multivariate analyses of variance of participants' percentage estimates were conducted (percentage estimates of person- and task-oriented traits: r = .59; importance ratings of person- and task-oriented traits: r = .58). The results of both multivariate analyses are summarized in Table 2, and the results of the following four univariate analyses of variance are found in Table 3.

To sum up, in almost all analyses of *percentage estimates* of person- and task-oriented traits (except the respective two-way interaction in the ANOVA on task-oriented traits) the interaction of country and leaders' sex (see Hypothesis 1) and the moderation of this interaction of country and leaders' sex by participants' sex (see Hypothesis 2) reached significance. The means and standard deviations of percentage estimates are reported in Table 4. Concerning the *importance ratings*, the three-way interaction (see Hypothesis 2) was only significant in the multivariate analysis. In the following ANOVA on the importance ratings of task-oriented traits, only the interaction of leaders' sex and participant's sex reached significance. The means and standard deviations of importance ratings are displayed in Table 5.

Based on the results of these analyses, we calculated (separately for female and male participants) one-sided a priori contrasts, i.e., male executives vs. executives-in-general, and female executives vs. executives-in-general. The results of these a priori contrasts revealed the following patterns:

Percentage estimates. Regarding *person-oriented leadership traits*, Indian participants especially were expected to differ between *female executives* and executives-in-general (see

Hypothesis 1). However, participants of all three countries estimated *female executives* to possess person-oriented traits more often than executives-in-general (see Table 4 for significant a priori contrasts: *p's* < .05). In line with our prediction, German and Indian participants did not distinguish between *male executives* and executives-in-general. Whereas Australian participants attributed *male executives* with person-oriented traits less often than executives-in-general. Regarding the impact of participants' sex, German women and especially Australian women were expected to ascribe person-oriented traits to a similar degree to all stimulus groups of executives (see Hypothesis 2). Contrary to this expectation, in all three investigated countries, women and men ascribed person-oriented traits to a greater extent to *female executives* than to executives-in-general. Regarding the comparisons of *male executives* vs. executives-in-general, in line with the hypothesis, men from all three countries and German women did not differentiate between the groups with regard to person-oriented traits. Moreover, Australian and Indian women indicated a low prevalence of this person-oriented competence in *male* executives compared to executives-in-general (see also Table 1 for the more sex-balanced image of leaders-in-general among women of both cultures).

With respect to *task-oriented leadership traits* (see Table 4), in Germany and in Australia *female executives* and executives-in-general were perceived as similarly task-oriented, as we predicted (see Hypothesis 1). Contrary to the prediction, *female executives* and executives-in-general also were perceived as similarly task-oriented in India. Regarding the impact of participants'sex (see Hypothesis 2) Australian women even described *female executives* as possessing task-oriented traits more often than executives-in-general (a priori contrast: $p < .01$), whereas the Australian men made no such difference (a priori contrast*:* $p > .10$). In Germany, not only women as predicted but also men perceived no significant differences between *female executives* and executives-in-general (a priori contrasts*:* $p > .10$). Contrary to our predictions for India, both sexes did not differentiate between *female executives* and

executives-in-general (a priori contrasts*: p* > .10). With one exception, female and male participants of all three cultures ascribed task-oriented traits to a similar degree to *male executives* and executives-in-general: Indian women attributed *male executives* with task-oriented traits less often than executives-in-general (a priori contrast*: p* < .01).

Importance ratings. With regard to the *person-oriented traits,* no significant effects of country and leaders' sex on the importance ratings were found (see Table 5; see Hypothesis 1). Regarding the impact of participants' sex, German and especially Australian women were expected to perceive *female executives* and executives-in-general as similar task-oriented (see Hypothesis 2). However, not only women of those countries, but also Indian women and men of all three countries valued person-oriented traits to a similar degree as important for *female executives* and executives-in-general (a priori contrasts*: p* > .10). Also as predicted, female and male participants of all three countries did not differentiate between *male executives* and executives-in-general (a priori contrasts: p > .10).

Concerning the *task-oriented traits* (see Table 5), none of the predicted differences reached significance (see Hypothesis 1 and 2). In Germany, participants even ascribed a lower importance of task-oriented traits to *male executives* compared to executives-in-general. This effect was moderated by participants' sex: German women and also Australian women valued task-orientation as less important for *male executives* than for executives-in-general compared to the men in the respective countries.

Self-description of Women and Men

Regarding the self-description of women and men, we assumed that men in all countries would report that they possess or desire to possess *person-oriented traits* to a lesser extent than women (see Hypothesis 3a). Women in comparison to men would report that they possess or desire to possess *task-oriented traits* to a similar extent in Australia and Germany, whereas in India, gender differenceswould be observed (Hypothesis 3b). Four ANOVAs with

the independent variables "participants' sex" and "country" and the respective self-evaluations of person-oriented and task-oriented traits as dependent variables were conducted for each of the three samples (reported task- and person-oriented traits: r = .85; importance ratings of task- and person-oriented traits: r = .52). Participants indicated to what degree they possess the given characteristics (scores ranged from 1 = *no*, 2 = *rather no*, 3 = *rather yes*, to 4 = *yes*) and how important they find the given characteristics for themselves (scores ranged from 0 = *not at all important* to 6 = *extremely important*), The results of the ANOVAs and the means and standard deviations are reported in Tables 6 and 7.

Reported traits. Contrary to Hypothesis 3a, men in all three countries reported possessing *person-oriented traits* to a similar extent as women in the respective countries.

Not only in Australia and Germany, as predicted in Hypothesis 3b, but also women and men in India reported possessing *task-oriented traits* to a similar degree.

Importance ratings. In agreement with Hypothesis 3a, men of all three countries desired to possess *person-oriented traits* to a lesser extent than did women; M = 4.42, SD = .07 vs. M = 4.72, SD = .09.

As predicted in Hypothesis 3b, German women and men desired to possess *task-oriented traits* to a similar extent (a priori contrast: $p > .10$). In Australia, the women reported a higher importance of task-orientated traits for themselves than the men did (a priori contrast*: $p <$ .01)***.*** Contrary to the predictions, in India women as well as men desired to possess task-oriented traits to a similar extent (a priori contrast: $p > .10$).

Discussion

The think-manager-think-male stereotype can be understood as the perception of leadership as being either predominately associated with being male (based on the higher base rate of men compared to women in leadership positions) or with task-oriented traits (which are also perceived as more masculine, see Cann & Siegfried, 1990). In the present study, the

stereotype was clearly found in the male participants of the three investigated countries as well as in German female participants, who all imagined mainly male executives when answering the question about leaders-in-general. The stereotype was less pronounced in Australian and Indian women, who showed a more gender-balanced image of leadership in general. Throughout all three countries, task orientation was estimated in leaders-in-general as more prevalent than person orientation. Whereas task-oriented traits were valued as less important than person-oriented traits in Australia and India, task-oriented traits were favored in Germany, in line with the think-manager-think-male stereotype, especially by men. These cultural variations correspond with the findings on the masculinity/femininity of work-related values by Hofstede (1980; 1998).

The results regarding the image of leadership in the present study give hints that gender stereotypes still influence the perception of leadership, that cultural variations exist, and that women's view of leadership is less traditional than men's view. Here we have to keep in mind that the mental representations of leaders-in-general are not commonly shared by individuals, they are influenced by perceivers' cultural background and their gender.

The women's perception of leadership in contrast to men's was assumed not to be predominately associated with being male (see Schein, 2001; see Hypothesis 2). The results revealed a very similar pattern in all cultures: There exists an interculturally shared view of a feminine-specific leadership competence (e.g., Friedel-Howe, 1993) according to which women possess a higher social competence (person orientation) than men (contrary to the similar self-views of women and men with respect to person-oriented traits). However, not only the women's view, as predicted, but also the men's view of descriptive and prescriptive norms regarding leadership competence is hardly influenced by gender-stereotypes Besides these intercultural similarities, one cultural deviation seems to be noteworthy: Australian women ascribed a higher task orientation to female executives and valued this specific

competence as particularly important for female executives. As Schein (2001) suggested, cultural variations in the degree of managerial gender typing among women can be ascribed to their different opportunities for and actual participation in management in the respective countries. However, to date there is no empirical confirmation of this explanation. Consequently, some questions arise, for example, whether the counter-stereotypic effect shown by the Australian women can possibly be related to disadvantageous or preferential treatment of women in their counrty (see "reversed discrimination effect," Branscombe & Smith, 1990; "women-are-wonderful effect," Eagly & Mladinic, 1994). The investigation of such culture-specific findings might be an interesting issue for future research by analyzing the relevance of diverse sociocultural indicators, e.g., promotion opportunities or demand for professionals with higher education, to perceivers' mental representations of leadership in different cultures.

Not only these results regarding the perception of leadership, but also the results regarding the self-perception of women and men support the idea of gender stereotypes as dynamic constructs (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). Moreover, they reflect the recently observed changes in the self-images of women in masculine-typed global personality traits and assertiveness (Twenge, 1997; 2001). In all three countries, women and men reported that they possess and desire to possess task- and person-oriented traits to a similar extent (see Hypotheses 3a and b). Unexpectedly, a change in men's self-view of person-oriented traits was observed. Contrary to previous studies on global personality traits, men in our study endorsed feminine-typed (person-oriented) leadership traits for themselves. Participants in every country estimated that about 50% of leaders-in-general possess person-oriented traits, and, at least in Australia and India, person-oriented traits were valued as more important for leadership than were task-oriented traits. Thus, in all three countries, women and men

corresponded to social expectations relevant in the leadership context with their self-characterization.

In sum, the first reported results on the image of leadership indicated a persisting gender-stereotypical influence on the perception of leadership in terms of think-manager-think-male and the existence of cultural variations in women's and men's views. These observations are in line with previous findings reported by Schein (2001) that connect global gender stereotypes and the perception of management. Beyond these examinations, we investigated the managerial gender typing in a context-specific way, and analyzed leadership specific gender roles (rather than of global gender roles) and the influence of these roles on leadership specific abilities (rather than on global personality traits). These examinations were based on the assumption that traditional global gender stereotypes also affect the perception of leadership in this particular context (as already shown by Sczesny, 2003a, 2003b). The present results indicate a non-traditional view of leadership not only among women (as in Schein, 2001) but also among men, and to a similar degree, in the three countries (see Den Hartog et al., 1999). This universal perception of leadership was almost not superimposed by cultural variations which may indicate a homogeneity of the management context in countries with free-market economies. The Human Development Report (see Wirth, 2001) emphasized that countries with a poor gender-related development (such as India) are diverse in terms of economic, cultural, and political environment, which suggests that gender equality can be achieved in varying cultural contexts. This suggests that female management students in India may be similarly socialized as female management students in other countries, and probably differ to a greater extent from other female subgroups within their own country.

Although previous studies ascertained a similar pattern of attitudes between management students and corporate managers (see Schein, 2001), it would be interesting to extend the cross-cultural investigation to managers' perception of leadership. Such research could

increase the understanding of socialization or selection processes and their impact on the social perception of leadership (e.g., Hawley & Little, 2002; London, 2002; Wigfield, Battle, Keller, & Eccles, 2002).

The measurement of the prescriptive norms in the present study might be problematic. The question regarding the importance of the respective characteristics probably does not represent an adequate measure of prescriptive aspects of social norms, that is why the present results for the prescriptive norms have to be interpreted cautious way. Future research based on implicit measurements should therefore answer the question of to what extent such results reflect motivated judgments (controlled information processing, e.g., Petty & Wegener, 1993) or even internalized personal attitudes or traits (e.g. Ely, 1995).

In conclusion, the present research showed that gender stereotypes still influence the perception of leadership, albeit to a lesser degree thab in previous research, as expected. Nevertheless, in an actual professional environment the think-manager-think-male stereotype must still be considered as one possible source for gender-stereotype-driven biases in judgement and decision making regarding leadership.

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Table 1
Executives (no gender specification) as Stimulus Group: Percentage of Participants Who Thought of Male Executives, Male and Female Executives, or Female Executives While Working on the Questionnaire

		Male Executives	Male and Female Executives	Female Executives	Chi2
Australia					9.14**
Participant's Sex	Men	64.7	35.3	0.0	
	Women	13.3	80.0	6.7	
	Both Sexes	40.6	56.3	3.1	
Germany					—
Participant's Sex	Men	74.2	22.6	3.2	
	Women	62.1	37.9	0.0	
	Both Sexes	68.3	30.0	1.7	
India					—
Participant's Sex	Men	66.7	33.3	0.0	
	Women	36.4	63.6	0.0	
	Both Sexes	53.8	46.2	0.0	

Note. Australia: $N = 32$ (17 men/15 women); Germany: $N = 60$ (31 men/29 women); India: $N = 26$ (15 men/11 women); ** = $p < .01$.

Table 2
Results of the Two Multivariate Analyses of Variance on Percentage Estimates and Importance Ratings of Person-Oriented and Task-Oriented LeadershipTraits

Effect	Wilks Lambda	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p
PERCENTAGE ESTIMATES					
Country	.89	14.24	4	966	.000***
Leaders' Sex	.06	519.78	6	966	.000***
Participants' Sex	.99	2.22	2	483	.110
Country x Leaders' Sex	.91	3.77	12	966	.000***
Country x Participants' Sex	1.00	.41	4	966	.803
Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	.92	6.89	6	966	.000***
Country x Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	.95	2.23	12	966	.009**
IMPORTANCE RATINGS					
Country	.89	14.29	4	970	.000***
Leaders' Sex	.97	2.87	6	970	.009**
Participants' Sex	.98	6.13	2	485	.002**
Country x Leaders' Sex	.98	1.04	12	970	.412
Country x Participants' Sex	1.00	.32	4	970	.864
Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	.97	2.11	6	970	.050
Country x Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	.96	1.89	12	970	.032*

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Table 3

Results of the Four Univariate Analyses of Variance on Percentage Estimates and Importance Ratings of Person-Oriented and Task-Oriented LeadershipTraits

Effect	SS	df	MS	F	p
PERCENTAGE ESTIMATES					
			Person-Oriented Traits		
Country	3035.51	2	1517.76	12.85	.000***
Leaders' Sex	28125.18	2	14062.59	119.07	.000***
Participants' Sex	2.20	1	2.20	.02	.892
Country x Leaders' Sex	1262.90	4	315.73	2.67	.032*
Country x Participants' Sex	168.07	2	84.03	.71	.492
Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	3081.53	2	1540.77	13.05	.000***
Country x Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	1220.81	4	305.20	2.58	.037*
Error	41807.94	354	118.10		
			Task-Oriented Traits		
Country	4264.34	2	2132.17	20.43	.000***
Leaders' Sex	1259.96	2	629.98	6.04	.003***
Participants' Sex	282.17	1	282.17	2.70	.101
Country x Leaders' Sex	608.36	4	152.09	1.46	.215
Country x Participants' Sex	53.16	2	26.58	.26	.775
Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	2211.60	2	1105.80	10.59	.000***
Country x Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	1926.20	4	481.55	4.61	.001**
Error	36953.68	354	104.39		
IMPORTANCE RATINGS					
			Person-Oriented Traits		
Country	7.81	2	3.90	11.87	.000***
Leaders' Sex	.46	2	.23	.70	.495
Participants' Sex	1.83	1	1.83	5.56	.019*
Country x Leaders' Sex	.79	4	.20	.60	.665
Country x Participants' Sex	1.03	2	.51	1.56	.211
Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	.52	2	.26	.78	.457
Country x Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	2.20	4	.55	1.68	.155
Error	117.05	356	.33		
			Task-Oriented Traits		
Country	1.21	2	.60	2.10	.124
Leaders' Sex	2.62	2	1.31	4.55	.011*
Participants' Sex	.01	1	.01	.02	.886
Country x Leaders' Sex	1.07	4	.27	.93	.446
Country x Participants' Sex	.65	2	.33	1.14	.322
Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	2.00	2	1.00	3.48	.032*
Country x Leaders' Sex x Participants' Sex	2.06	4	.52	1.79	.130
Error	102.37	356	.29		

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Table 4
Percentage Estimates: Means and Standard Deviations of Person- and Task-Oriented Leadership Traits by Country, Leaders' Sex, and Participants' Sex

Country	Leaders' Sex	Participants' Sex		
		Both Sexes	Women	Men
		PERSON-ORIENTED TRAITS		
Australia	Executives-in-general	59.2	58.2	60.1
		(11.3)	(11.5)	(11.3)
	Male Executives	50.8*	47.4*	54.3
		(11.5)	(9.2)	(12.7)
	Female Executives	71.3*	75.5*	67.1*
		(10.6)	(9.2)	(10.4)
Germany	Executives-in-general	49.2	49.8	48.6
		(10.4)	(10.7)	(10.2)
	Male Executives	47.4	47.5	47.2
		(11.3)	(8.9)	(13.8)
	Female Executives	66.8*	68.8*	64.4*
		(11.4)	(10.7)	(11.9)
India	Executives-in-general	47.0	46.6	47.3
		(9.4)	(10.0)	(9.3)
	Male Executives	47.3	34.1*	49.9
		(13.5)	(15.9)	(11.6)
	Female Executives	68.4*	75.8*	63.5*
		(10.9)	(9.7)	(8.9)
		TASK-ORIENTED TRAITS		
Australia	Executives-in-general	69.2	68.0	70.5
		(8.8)	(7.4)	(10.0)
	Male Executives	66.8	65.2	68.4
		(10.6)	(9.7)	(11.6)
	Female Executives	71.3	76.8*	65.7
		(12.5)	(11.4)	(11.3)
Germany	Executives-in-general	64.6	64.8	64.4
		(9.5)	(10.1)	(9.1)
	Male Executives	65.3	67.7	62.6
		(11.7)	(8.6)	(14.0)
	Female Executives	66.8	68.4	65.0
		(9.8)	(9.6)	(10.0)
India	Executives-in-general	60.2	62.1	58.9
		(8.4)	(8.9)	(8.0)
	Male Executives	57.8	46.7*	60.0
		(11.3)	(11.4)	(10.1)
	Female Executives	61.5	69.4	56.2
		(12.7)	(13.2)	(9.3)

Note. Australia: N = 97 participants (49 female/ 49 male); Germany: N = 185 participants (96 female/ 89 male); India: N = 90 participants (29 female/ 61 male); one-sided a priori contrasts: 1. male executives vs. executives-in-general, and 2. female executives vs. executives-in-general; * $p < .05$ (grey background).

Table 5
Importance Ratings: Means and Standard Deviations of Person- and Task-Oriented Leadership Traits by Country, Leaders' Sex, and Participants' Sex

Country	Leaders' Sex	Participants' Sex		
		Both Sexes	Women	Men
		PERSON-ORIENTED TRAITS		
Australia	Executives-in-general	4.61	4.71	4.51
		(.58)	(.68)	(.47)
	Male Executives	4.49	4.53	4.44
		(.62)	(.57)	(.68)
	Female Executives	4.52	4.74	4.30
		(.58)	(.55)	(.54)
Germany	Executives-in-general	4.24	4.42	4.07
		(.60)	(.54)	(.61)
	Male Executives	4.31	4.49	4.10
		(.57)	(.47)	(.61)
	Female Executives	4.29	4.29	4.29
		(.55)	(.60)	(.50)
India	Executives-in-general	4.71	4.86	4.60
		(.54)	(.45)	(.58)
	Male Executives	4.64	4.41	4.68
		(.62)	(.79)	(.59)
	Female Executives	4.56	4.52	4.58
		(.60)	(.86)	(.37)
		TASK-ORIENTED TRAITS		
Australia	Executives-in-general	4.39	4.36	4.42
		(.51)	(.61)	(.43)
	Male Executives	4.18	3.94*	4.42
		(.68)	(.73)	(.54)
	Female Executives	4.57	4.75	4.39
		(.64)	(.61)	(.63)
Germany	Executives-in-general	4.43	4.52	4.34
		(.48)	(.53)	(.41)
	Male Executives	4.26*	4.30*	4.22
		(.50)	(.52)	(.48)
	Female Executives	4.55	4.58	4.52
		(.47)	(.50)	(.43)
India	Executives-in-general	4.60	4.63	4.58
		(.45)	(.40)	(.49)
	Male Executives	4.62	4.34	4.67
		(.58)	(.91)	(.50)
	Female Executives	4.52	4.55	4.50
		(.67)	(.89)	(.49)

Note. Australia: N = 97 participants (49 female/ 49 male); Germany: N = 185 participants (96 female/ 89 male); India: N = 90 participants (29 female/ 61 male); scores ranging from 0 = *not at all important* to 6 = *extremely important;* one-sided a priori contrasts: 1. male executives vs. executives-in-general, and 2. female executives vs. executives-in-general; * $p < .05$ (grey background).

Table 6
Self-Descriptions: Results of the Four Univariate Analyses of Variance on Reported Person- and Task-Oriented Traits and Importance Ratings

Effect	SS	df	MS	F	p
PERCENTAGE ESTIMATES					
		Person-Oriented Traits			
Country	29.27	2	14.64	49.56	.000***
Participants' Sex	.66	1	.66	2.22	.139
Country x Participants' Sex	1.17	2	.58	1.97	.143
Error	38.39	130	.30		
		Task-Oriented Traits			
Country	19.61	2	9.81	38.51	.000***
Participants' Sex	.31	1	.31	1.21	.273
Country x Participants' Sex	.76	2	.38	1.48	.231
Error	33.10	130	.26		
IMPORTANCE RATINGS					
		Person-Oriented Traits			
Country	8.28	2	4.14	11.47	.000***
Participants' Sex	2.45	1	2.45	6.79	.010**
Country x Participants' Sex	.88	2	.44	1.22	.298
Error	46.95	130	.36		
		Task-Oriented Traits			
Country	3.69	2	1.85	4.50	.013*
Participants' Sex	1.80	1	1.80	4.37	.038*
Country x Participants' Sex	2.45	2	1.23	2.98	.054
Error	53.36	130	.41		

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Table 7
Self-Descriptions: Means and Standard Deviations of Reported Person- and Task-Oriented Leadership Traits and Importance Ratings Traits by Country and Participants' Sex

Country	Participants' Sex		
	Both Sexes	Women	Men
REPORTED TRAITS			
	Person-Oriented Traits		
Australia	1.60	1.52	1.69
	(.36)	(.33)	(.38)
Germany	2.55	2.60	2.51
	(.70)	(.74)	(.67)
India	1.68	1.39	1.77
	(.32)	(.24)	(.28)
	Task-Oriented Traits		
Australia	1.81	1.70	1.91
	(.52)	(.36)	(.63)
Germany	2.55	2.61	2.51
	(.58)	(.50)	(.63)
India	1.77	1.61	1.82
	(.33)	(.32)	(.32)
IMPORTANCE RATINGS			
	Person-Oriented Traits		
Australia	4.64	4.82	4.47
	(.62)	(.59)	(.61)
Germany	4.23	4.27	4.19
	(.61)	(.70)	(.54)
India	4.71	5.07	4.60
	(.61)	(.51)	(.60)
	Task-Oriented Traits		
Australia*	4.28	4.60	3.97
	(.83)	(.69)	(.85)
Germany	4.28	4.26	4.30
	(.57)	(.62)	(.53)
India	4.66	4.78	4.61
	(.62)	(.49)	(.66)

Note. Australia: $N = 33$; Germany: $N = 66$; India: $N = 37$; * $p < .05$; scores ranging from 0 = *not at all important* to 6 = *extremely important*; one-sided a priori contrasts: female vs. male participants; * $p < .05$ (grey background).

[i] Different analyses for the two samples of the western (Mannheim) and eastern (Leipzig) part of Germany showed similar results, therefore the samples were merged.