"You're not my Leader." The Impact of Gender and Ethnic Stereotypes on Leadership
Evaluations

By

Arief B. Kartolo

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Psychology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2022

ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of a leader is important to the success of an organization across many levels. Because the effectiveness of leadership is subject to the evaluation and perception of followership, it is often influenced through biases and expectations – such as stereotypes. Although ample studies have demonstrated the impact of stereotyping on leadership roles, several gaps still need to be addressed in the literature. First, the literature tends to focus on the impact of gender stereotypes, while fewer studies have considered the impact of ethnic stereotypes on leadership roles. Second, few studies have investigated the impact of stereotypes based on multiple identities on leadership evaluations. Lastly, there is a lack of consistency as to how stereotypes are understood and approached within the leadership literature.

The aim of this project is to address these research gaps by introducing the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002) as a standardized framework to understand the impact of stereotypes on leadership expectations. The project explored the effects of both ethnic and gender stereotypes, and their intersections, on leadership expectations across two studies. The first study investigated the specific stereotypes associated with several demographic groups, while comparing the stereotypes with the expectations of effective leaders to highlight the (mis)matches between specific demographic groups and perceptions of effective leadership. The second study investigated the impact of stereotype-congruent and -incongruent information on subsequent leadership evaluation.

The first study found all leaders, regardless of demographic groups, were evaluated with the expectations of high warmth and high competence. However, despite the overall positive ratings, biases persisted affirming the barriers that women and ethnic minority individuals must navigate through in their pursuit of leadership roles. The second study found all leadership

groups were evaluated as most effective when displaying high warmth and high competence behaviours regardless of stereotypical expectations.

Overall, results of this study suggest the possible gatekeeping mechanisms that cultural stereotypes have in preventing otherwise potentially effective leaders from attaining leadership roles, due to biases in expectations stemming from gender and ethnicity. While women and members of ethnic minority groups elicited lower expectations of warmth and competence compared to White male leaders, such expectations did not influence the evaluation of perceived leadership effectiveness based on behavioural observations. This suggests biases stemming from cultural stereotypes mainly manifest during the early stages of the organizational hiring and promotion process, as leadership behaviours are more indicative than stereotypes in evaluating perceived leadership effectiveness.