



The Role of Stereotype Endorsement in Attributing Outcomes to Discrimination



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INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes help maintain the status quo by making it seem as though social positions are deserved and well-suited for the groups that occupy them (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The stereotype that women are nurturing, for example, explains and justifies why women tend to occupy caretaking roles. **But do stereotypes also maintain the status quo by minimizing perceptions of social injustice?**

The present work examines the possibility that stereotype endorsement is associated with fewer attributions to discrimination. Specifically, participants who either strongly endorsed or rejected gender stereotypes evaluated possible causes of the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and male-dominated occupations.

HYPOTHESIS

Stereotype Endorsers (vs. Stereotype Rejecters) will attribute the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and male-dominated occupations:

- **Less** to gender discrimination.
- **More** to dispositional differences between women and men.

METHOD

Stereotype Endorsers (6 women, 7 men) and **Stereotype Rejecters** (5 women, 5 men) read an article describing the gender representation of senior-level leadership positions and male-dominated occupations (e.g., math, computer, engineering).

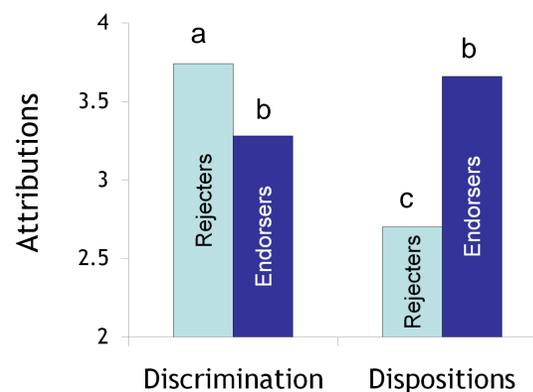
Participants then indicated (on a 5-point scale) the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements indicating that the underrepresentation of women in **leadership positions** (and on a separate scale, **male-dominated occupations**) was due to:

- **Gender discrimination** ($\alpha = 0.87$)
- Differences between women's and men's **dispositions** (e.g., skills, interests, and personalities) ($\alpha = 0.91$)

RESULTS

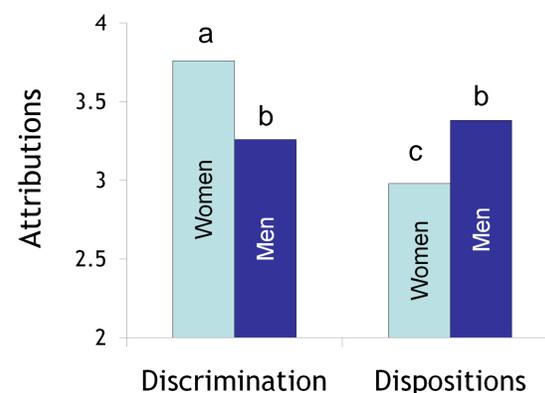
Consistent with predictions, Stereotype Endorsers perceived less discrimination and made more dispositional attributions than Stereotype Rejecters.

Interaction: Attribution Type X Stereotype Endorsement
 $F(1, 17) = 12.96, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.43$



Men perceived less discrimination and made more dispositional attributions than women, consistent with previous literature (Inman & Baron, 1996; Crocker & Major, 1989)

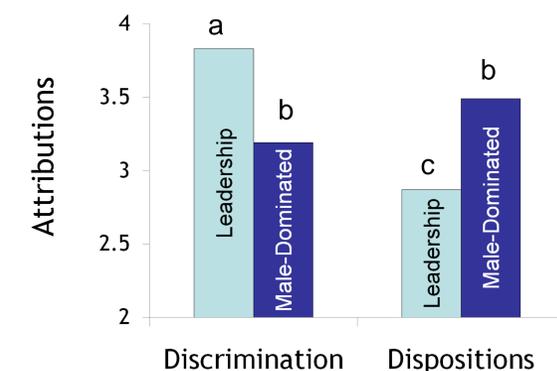
Interaction: Attribution Type X Participant Gender
 $F(1, 17) = 5.37, p < 0.04, \eta^2 = 0.24$



RESULTS (Continued)

Unexpectedly, attributions varied across domains. Participants perceived less discrimination and made more dispositional attributions when explaining the underrepresentation of women in male-dominated occupations than when explaining such outcomes in leadership positions.

Interaction: Attribution Type X Domain
 $F(1, 17) = 36.06, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.68$



IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Results are consistent with the notion that people who strongly endorse stereotypes use those stereotypes to minimize perceptions of discrimination and maintain the view that existing social arrangements are fair, just, and legitimate.

Future directions:

- Test hypothesis with other dimensions of stereotyping (e.g., age, race, social class)
- Assess the causal nature of the relationship by manipulating stereotype endorsement
- Examine underlying motivations of stereotype endorsement that may be driving effects (such as motivation to justify the existing social system)
- Assess explanations of stereotype-consistent outcomes experienced by an individual rather than a group