

Think manager—think male: a global phenomenon?

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Summary

The relationship between sex role stereotypes and characteristics perceived as necessary for management success was examined among 361 male and 228 female management students in Japan and the People's Republic of China. The results revealed that males and females in both countries perceive that successful middle managers possess characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general. These results were compared with previous studies done in the U.S., Great Britain and Germany, using the same Schein 92-item Descriptive Index, and similar samples and procedures. The comparison supports the view that 'think manager—think male' is a global phenomenon, especially among males. Regardless of country context, there was a strong and similar degree of managerial sex typing among male management students in all five countries. Among females, the managerial sex typing hypothesis was confirmed in every country except the U.S., in which men and women are seen as equally likely to possess requisite management characteristics. Unlike those of their male counterparts, the females' pattern of outcomes varied across countries, possibly a reflection of their respective opportunities for managerial participation. The implications of managerial sex typing as a global phenomenon are discussed.

Introduction

In the early 1970s Schein's empirical investigations of managerial sex role stereotyping revealed that 'think manager—think male' was a strongly held belief among middle managers in the United States. Both male (Schein, 1973) and female (Schein, 1975) managers perceived that the characteristics associated with managerial success were more likely to be held by men than by

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women. Recent U.S. replications reveal that this view is still held today by male managers (Brenner, Tomkiewicz and Schein, 1989; Heilman, Block, Martell and Simon, 1989) and male management students (Schein, Mueller and Jacobson, 1989). Female managers (Brenner *et al.*, 1989) and female management students (Schein *et al.*, 1989), however, no longer see the managerial position. They perceive women to be as likely as men to possess characteristics required of successful managers.

Despite changes in women's progress in the workforce, males, unlike their female counterparts, continue to perceive the managerial position as requiring masculine characteristics. To the extent this attitude is unchecked by structural limitations, the male decision-maker may still favor the male candidate. As a psychological barrier to the advancement of women in management, the 'think manager—think male' phenomenon can foster bias against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion and training decisions.

The globalization of management brings to the forefront the need to examine this phenomenon in the international arena. Antal and Izraeli (1993), in an overview of women in management worldwide state that, 'probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialized countries is the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male' (p. 63). In an empirical test of this assertion Schein and Mueller (1992) found that German and British management students of both sexes perceive the managerial position to require characteristics more commonly held by men than by women. The psychological barriers to women in management worldwide appear to be strong. As such, we need to determine to what extent 'think manager—think male' may be a global phenomenon.

Internationalizing the research question suggests studies in several countries, in more than one continent, preferably using the same instrument for comparison purposes (e.g. Haire, Ghiselli and Porter, 1966; Hofstede, 1980). The present research attempts such a global look by expanding the stereotyping research to another continent, Asia, and testing the hypothesis in two countries, the People's Republic of China and Japan, within that continent.

In Japan only 5 per cent of all managers and professionals are women (Sato, 1990). Although Japanese women constitute 40 per cent of the workforce (*The New York Times*, 1992), they hold different types of jobs and earn less money than their male counterparts (Rosenfeld and Kallenberg, 1990). Most working women in large corporations are 'office ladies'—clerical workers who serve tea to businessmen (Toshiko, 1983). Since women are expected to 'retire' when they become married (Hiroshi, 1982) or raise children, they are viewed as part-time workers who receive low pay and none of the benefits that male employees receive (Cook and Hayashi, 1980).

Since the 1949 revolution in the People's Republic of China, official government policies have promoted the equality of the sexes and all Chinese women are expected to take part in production (Stacey, 1984). Although the employment of women in China is relatively high, about 78 per cent of the female labor force work in low tech industries and sections (Yi-hong, 1992). Hildebrandt and Liu (1988) report that 8.9 per cent of Chinese managers are women. Korabik's (1992) interview study of Chinese managers suggests that this may be somewhat higher if all types of industries and enterprises are considered. 'Women hold posts as factory production workers, workshop directors, chief accountants, although they still account for only a small percentage compared to men . . . the higher the post, the fewer the women' (p. 204).

The purpose of the research was to examine the relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics in these two Asian countries and compare the results to those found by Schein and Mueller (1992) in Western Europe and Schein *et al.* (1989) in the United States, all using similar samples and procedures. As with the previous studies, it was hypothesized that males and females in both Asian countries would perceive successful middle

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managers as possessing characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general.

Method

Sample

The Chinese sample consisted of 123 female and 150 male undergraduate upper class students enrolled in a school of business in a large city in China. The Japanese sample was composed of 105 females and 211 males enrolled in business courses at a university in a large Japanese city. All of the male students and 36 per cent of the female students were in the university's four-year business program. The remainder of the females were enrolled in a two-year college on the same university campus.

Measuring instrument

The 92-item Schein Descriptive Index (Schein, 1973, 1975) was used to define sex role stereotypes and the characteristics of successful managers. Three forms of the Index were used. Each contained the same descriptive terms and instructions, except that the one form asked for a description of women in general (Women), one for a description of men in general (Men), and one for a description of successful middle managers (Managers). Each of the forms were back-translated (Brislin, 1970) into either Chinese or Japanese.

The instructions on the three forms of the Index were as follows:

'On the following pages you will find a series of descriptive terms commonly used to characterize people in general. Some of these terms are positive in connotation, others are negative and some are neither very positive nor very negative.

We would like you to use this list to tell us what you think (women in general, men in general or successful middle managers) are like. In making your judgments, it might be helpful to imagine you are about to meet a person for the first time and the only thing you know in advance is that the person is (an adult female, an adult male, or a successful middle manager). Please rate each word or phrase in terms of how characteristic it is of (women in general, men in general, or successful middle managers)'.

The ratings were made according to a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (not characteristic) to 5 (characteristic) with a neutral rating of 3 (neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic). The respondents used arabic numbers to make the ratings. Items from the Index include: leadership ability, intuitive, aggressive, emotionally stable, dominant, curious and competent.

Procedure

The procedure was similar in both countries. Course instructors at the institutions were given a packet containing distribution instructions and the Schein Descriptive Index. Care was taken with any specific instruction that might be different from usual country procedures, such as placing of the responses before or after the descriptive terms. Each packet contained an equal

number of Women, Men and Manager forms so that the Index could be distributed randomly within each class. The questionnaires were completed during class time and returned to the instructor immediately after completion. Each student received only one form of the Index and was not made aware of the purpose of the study. For the questionnaires eliciting descriptions of Women, Men and Managers, respectively, the number responding to each form, by country and gender, was as follows: Chinese males, 53, 45, 52; Chinese females, 37, 42, 44; Japanese males, 77, 82, 52; and Japanese females, 29, 39, 37.

Analyses

The degree of resemblance between the descriptions of men and managers and between women and managers was determined by computing intraclass correlation coefficients (r') from two randomized-groups analyses of variance (see Hays, 1963, p. 424). The classes (or groups) were the 92 descriptive items. In the first analysis, the scores within each class were the mean item ratings of men and managers, while in the second analysis they were the mean item ratings of women and managers. According to Hays, the larger the value of r' , the more similar do the observations in the class tend to be relative to the observations in different classes. Thus, the smaller the within-item variability, relative to the between-item variability, the greater the similarity between the mean item ratings of either men and managers or women and managers.

The two analyses were performed separately for the male and female samples within the two countries.

Results

Chinese sample

As shown in Table 1, for males there was a large and significant resemblance between the ratings of men and managers and a near zero, insignificant resemblance between the ratings of women and managers. For females, there was also a large and significant resemblance between the ratings of men and the ratings of managers. Although there was a small significant resemblance between the ratings of women and the ratings of managers, this coefficient was significantly lower than that of the intraclass coefficient between men and managers ($z = 8.38, p < 0.01$). Thus, for both males and females the hypothesis that managers are perceived to possess characteristics more commonly ascribed to men than to women is confirmed.

Japanese sample

As shown in Table 2, there was a large and significant relationship between the ratings of men and managers and a near-zero, non-significant relationship between the ratings of women and managers for the males. Before testing the hypothesis within the female sample, a check for possible response differences between those in the two-year versus the four-year degree program was made. There were no significant differences between the overall mean ratings of each subgroup on the three questionnaire forms (Women, $t = -0.61, p > 0.05$; Men, $t = 1.83, p > 0.05$; Managers, $t = 0.78, p > 0.05$) and the data were pooled for the analyses. Among the

Table 1. Analyses of variance of mean item ratings and intraclass coefficients

Source	Chinese sample		<i>F</i>	<i>r'</i>
	<i>df</i>	Mean square		
Males				
Managers and Men				
Between items	91	1.74	22.33	0.91*
Within items	92	0.08		
Managers and Women				
Between items	91	0.63	0.92	-0.04
Within items	92	0.69		
Females				
Managers and Men				
Between items	91	1.75	20.29	0.91*
Within items	92	0.09		
Managers and Women				
Between items	91	0.94	1.76	0.28*
Within items	92	0.53		

* $p < 0.01$.

Table 2. Analyses of variance of mean item ratings and intraclass coefficients

Source	Japanese sample		<i>F</i>	<i>r'</i>
	<i>df</i>	Mean square		
Males				
Managers and Men				
Between items	92	0.64	3.31	0.54*
Within items	91	0.19		
Managers and Women				
Between items	92	0.43	0.88	-0.07
Within items	91	0.49		
Females				
Managers and Men				
Between items	92	0.89	5.26	0.68*
Within items	91	0.17		
Managers and Women				
Between items	92	0.46	0.92	-0.04
Within items	91	0.50		

* $p < 0.01$.

females, there was a large and significant relationship between the ratings of men and managers and a near-zero, non-significant relationship between the ratings of women and managers. As such, the hypothesis is confirmed for both males and females.

Item comparisons

An exploratory examination of the individual items was done to gain further understanding of the outcomes. The 15 items with the highest means for each target, i.e. men, women and

managers, were displayed by gender within each country. In the Chinese sample, males and females agreed on 14 items as being very characteristic of managers. Of these 14 items, males and females agreed that analytical ability, self confident, competitive, firm, ambitious, creative and vigorous were characteristic of managers and men. Males also saw leadership ability and self-controlled as characteristic of managers and men, while females included competent and prompt as very descriptive of managers and men. Females viewed understanding as very characteristic of managers and women. Males had no overlapping manager-women descriptive terms. Finally, both males and females viewed skilled in business matters and emotionally stable as very characteristic of managers, but neither gender included them among the items seen as most descriptive of either men or women.

In the Japanese sample, males and females agreed on 12 items as being very characteristic of managers. Of these 12 items, males and females agreed on desires responsibility and decisive as very characteristic of managers and men. Females also saw prompt and knows the way of the world as highly characteristic of managers and men. Six items—leadership ability, analytical ability, competent, self-controlled, assertive and well informed—were highly characteristic of managers, but not among the items viewed as most descriptive of men or women by either gender. Finally, two items, curious and sociable, were viewed as very characteristic of managers, men, and women by both males and females.

International managerial sex typing

Table 3 displays the Chinese and Japanese outcomes, along with those found by Schein and Mueller (1992) for male and female British and German management students and by Schein *et al.* (1989) for male and female U.S. management students. The comparison reveals that males in all five countries perceive successful middle managers as possessing the characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than women in general. Within all five country samples there was a high and significant resemblance between ratings of men and managers and a low, often close to zero, resemblance between descriptions of women and managers. The Chinese male sample exhibited the highest degree of male manager similarity, suggesting the greatest degree of managerial sex typing.

Among the females, the comparison reveals that the managerial sex typing hypothesis is confirmed in every country except the U.S. Females in the U.S. see males and females as equally likely to possess requisite management characteristics. The major cross country difference shown in Table 3 is the varying degrees to which females in each country perceive women to be similar to

Table 3. Intraclass coefficients for five country samples

Source	China	Japan	Country sample Germany*	U.K.*	U.S.†
Males					
Managers and Men	0.91‡	0.54‡	0.74‡	0.67‡	0.70‡
Managers and Women	-0.04	-0.07	-0.04	0.02	0.11
Females					
Managers and Men	0.91‡	0.68‡	0.66‡	0.60‡	0.51‡
Managers and Women	0.28‡	-0.04	0.19§	0.31‡	0.43‡

* From Schein and Mueller (1992).

† From Schein *et al.* (1989).

‡ $p < 0.01$; § $p < 0.05$.

managers. As with the U.S. females, the British, Chinese and German females also exhibited varying, but significant degrees of resemblance between descriptions of women and descriptions of managers. Unlike the U.S. sample, however, all of these coefficients were significantly smaller than their respective manager–men coefficients. Only the Japanese female sample exhibited no significant resemblance between ratings of managers and ratings of women.

Discussion

Overall, the results lend strong support to the view that ‘think manager—think male’ is a global phenomenon, especially among males. The strong degree of managerial sex typing found among Chinese and Japanese male management students is similar to that previously found among British, German and U.S. male management students. Despite the many historical, political and cultural differences that exist among these five countries, the view of women as less likely than men to possess requisite management characteristics is a commonly held belief among male management students worldwide.

The Chinese males show a very strong degree of managerial sex typing. These outcomes are perhaps not unexpected. Chinese women have been considered men’s appendage during the many thousands of years of feudal society (Xi-hong, 1992). Gender discrimination is often not considered as such, but rather as a true difference based upon a belief in the males’ basic superiority (Korabik, 1992). Even women who do become managers are termed ‘iron women’, meaning that they are masculine or without innate female characteristics (Xiao-tian, 1992). Despite government policies promoting equality (Stacey, 1984), the Chinese male appears to have strongly-held attitudes more closely akin to those of his feudal patriarchal history than to modern day reforms.

On the other hand, Chinese females hold somewhat less closely to the managerial stereotype. Unlike their male counterparts, females see some resemblance between characteristics held by women and requisite management characteristics. The increased participation of women, perhaps dramatic given the years of patriarchal submission, a long time government commitment to equality, as well as their opportunities for female role models and networking, especially through the All-China Women’s Federation, (Korabik, 1994) may account for the slightly more positive view of women as managers among Chinese females.

Japanese females see no similarity between women and managers, sharing closely the view of their male counterparts. This may reflect a culture without any impetus to improve opportunities for women. Indeed, barriers such as long work hours, extensive socializing after work, family pressures for university women graduates to marry a manager rather than be one (Steinhoff and Tanaka, 1988), and an equal employment opportunity law with no teeth and passed reluctantly by Parliament (*The New York Times*, 1992) seem to reinforce the status quo for women in Japan.

The display of items within the Chinese sample highlights the characteristics underlying the strong male–manager resemblance found among both males and females. Within the Japanese sample, the target item comparisons highlight several characteristics descriptive of managers, but less descriptive of either men or women, reflective of the significant, but lower male–manager resemblance than that found within the Chinese samples. While the sex role stereotyping hypothesis is confirmed within the Chinese and Japanese samples, that there may be somewhat different views of managerial characteristics as they relate to masculine and feminine characteristics warrants further research.

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The global nature of managerial sex typing among males should be of concern to those interested in promoting gender equality worldwide. The similar pattern of outcomes found among male management students in five different countries suggests that attitudinal barriers to women's advancement may be in place for some time. As they become the managers and decision makers of the future, their stereotypical attitudes are apt to limit women's access to and promotions within management internationally.

Schein and Mueller (1992) recommend continued international efforts for equal employment opportunity legislation and the encouragement of corporate structural mechanisms to circumvent the negative impact of stereotypical attitudes on women's opportunities. In addition, more research examining the development of stereotypical attitudes, mitigating factors and approaches to change is also needed. This research might include experimental studies to determine effective interventions during the educational years. With such research and interventions, coupled with continued legal pressures, there may be hope for changes in gender equality as these students of today become our managers of tomorrow.

The variations in the females' degree of managerial sex typing, both in these results and in the comparisons across the five countries, may reflect their views of opportunities for and actual participation of women in management. For example, in the U.S., with large numbers of women in management and strong efforts for continuing change, females do not sex type the position. Direct investigations of explanations for these variations, including the effects of perceived or actual opportunities for women, as well as efforts for change, would seem warranted.

Finally, as a global phenomenon, research on the relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics can be expanded from a sample and a geographical perspective. Managers, as well as management students, need to be investigated and studies of managerial sex typing conducted in South American (see Adaniya and de Perez-Costa, 1992) and African countries, as well as other countries. Such empirical investigations can fuel further research and applied efforts promoting gender equality in management worldwide.

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