

Rogers, C. R. (1980c). *The right to be desperate* [Film]. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development.

Rogers, C. R. (1980d). *A way of being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Notes

1. A detailed description of the course may be obtained from the author.

2. Audiocassette recordings of Carl Rogers conducting person-centered counseling sessions with many different clients can be obtained from the Center for Studies of the Person, 1125 Torrey Pines Road, La Jolla, CA 92037.
3. I thank Kathy Bauman, Susan Kanor, Becky Regeth, Sande Webster, and Carol Williams for their critical readings of the article and editorial assistance.
4. Requests for reprints should be sent to Peter S. Fernald, Conant Hall, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824.

Gender Bias in Leader Selection

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In this classroom exercise, students experience how stereotypes can result in biased leader selection and learn some introductory information about task-oriented competitive and social cooperative leaders. Students are placed in initially leaderless, mixed-sex (two men, two women) groups and asked to select leaders in preparation for a group activity. Half of the groups receive instructions that focus on competition; the other half receive instructions that emphasize cooperation. Overall, a disproportionate number of men are selected as leaders, substantiating past research that shows gender stereotypes guide individuals in selecting leaders. However, this bias appeared only after task-oriented competitive instructions. Men and women were selected as group leaders equally often after receiving social cooperative instructions. Questions that probe these findings are provided for class discussion. Students find this simple demonstration to be provocative, and they indicate that it helps them understand difficult concepts.

The pervasiveness of stereotypes and how they affect behavior are often not evident to students. Helping students see this relation is also not easily illustrated through textbooks or class discussions. The present exercise is designed to show the possible behavioral ramifications of gender stereotyping. Specifically, students experience firsthand gender stereotyping when they select leaders of small, mixed-sex groups.

Past research has indicated that men are significantly more likely to be chosen as leaders than women in initially leaderless, mixed-sex groups (Eagly & Karau, 1991). Gender stereotypes about leadership may have influenced these findings. For example, subjects endorsed the abilities to "separate feelings from ideas," "act as leaders," and "make decisions" as being much more descriptive of men than women (Brownerman, Vogel, Brownerman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972, p. 63). These and other stereotypically masculine items have been positively correlated with college

students' perceptions of leaders (Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986). Eagly and Mladinic (1989) proposed that gender stereotypes also are comprised of beliefs that men occupy advantaged social positions of power and status relative to women. Such views lead people to perceive men as more in control and more powerful than women, even when they are not. Indeed, research by Porter, Geis, and Jennings (1983) revealed that, given an ambiguous setting involving both men and women, independent raters perceive men to be in charge much more often than women.

Stereotypes about women may also enhance biases in leader selection (Geis, Brown, Jennings, & Corrado-Taylor, 1984; Nye & Forsyth, 1991). Geis, Brown, Jennings, and Porter (1984) suggested the most general stereotype about women is that they are not autonomous and are unqualified to assume achievement-oriented responsibilities in the world. However, women, relative to men, are believed to be more "talkative," "tactful," and "aware of others' feelings" (Brownerman et al., 1972, p. 63), as well as more expressive and communal (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). Thus, gender stereotyping may have a differential impact on leader selection when type of leadership is manipulated (Eagly & Karau, 1991). Whereas task-oriented competitive leaders focus on task contributions and productivity, social cooperative leaders focus on social contributions, prosocial behavior, and social climate. Male group members make more task-oriented contributions than do females (Wood, 1987), so group members may choose male leaders in task-oriented competitive situations. However, social leaders may focus on prosocial behaviors, so men may be selected as social leaders less often than they are selected as task-oriented competitive leaders.

The present demonstration illustrates the gender bias in leader selection. The type of group leadership (task-oriented competitive or social cooperative) is manipulated across

groups.¹ Men were expected to emerge as leaders more often than women in task-oriented competitive groups but not in social cooperative groups.

Procedure

Students are divided into groups of four or six, each comprised of an equal number of men and women. Any students left over can be grouped together and their data later discarded or analyzed separately. If possible, students should not know other members of their group because previous direct experience may override the heuristics of gender stereotyping and weaken the effects of the demonstration.

The demonstration should be used before students read about gender stereotypes and group dynamics. The activity can be introduced as a psychology game. Distribute written instructions describing the group task to each member of each group; otherwise, the person receiving or reading the instructions may be chosen or accepted as the leader. The two sets of instructions are as follows:

Task-Oriented Competitive

You will be playing a board game with your group. The board game involves competition against another group, and you will focus on specific tasks. You should try your hardest to win the game. To do this, you should focus on the game's objectives as much as possible. To start, your group should first select a person who will be in charge of the group. After this leader is selected, specific instructions about the game will be given and you will start playing.

Social Cooperative

You will be playing a board game with your group. The board game does not involve winning but, instead, involves agreeing with each other, supporting one another, and setting aside differences in order to get along maximally with each other. To start, your group should first select a person who will be in charge of the group. After this leader is selected, specific instructions about the game will be given and you will start playing.

Students take 2 min to read their instructions and select group leaders. Groups are not specifically instructed about how to select leaders. Any method of nomination and selection is acceptable as long as all group members ultimately agree on the leader.

After verifying that leaders for each group have been chosen, the instructor informs the groups that they will not play a game after all. Instead, the actual purpose of the activity was to examine leader selection and processes. The gender of each student chosen as task-oriented and social

¹It may be possible to differentiate a social orientation from cooperation and a task orientation from competition. Future research may address this issue by including social competitive instructions and task-oriented cooperative instructions in addition to the social cooperative and task-oriented competitive instructions described herein.

leaders is compiled. The instructor or a student volunteer can tally both the gender of the leader selected as well as the technique each group used in selecting its leader.

Results

This study examined leader selection in 103 groups of introductory psychology students, with two men and two women comprising each group. Students participated in one of eight sessions that varied from 30 to 250 members each. Fifty-one of the groups received the task-oriented competitive instructions, and 52 groups received the social cooperative instructions. The results, by gender and type of instruction, are displayed in Table 1.

A binomial test revealed that, as predicted, significantly more men than women were selected as leaders, $z = 2.66$, $p < .01$. Also as predicted, a chi-square test using the Yates correction revealed that, as the type of instruction differed, the gender of the leader selected also differed, $\chi^2(1, N = 103) = 8.93$, $p < .01$. This significant effect is largely attributable to the underselection of women for task-oriented group activities (11 observed and 18.8 expected) coupled with the overselection of women as leaders of social activity groups (27 observed and 19.2 expected).

Evaluation

To evaluate the impact of the demonstration, 71 students completed a questionnaire about the activity. They responded on a 7-point scale ranging from *not at all* (1) to *very much* (7). Items on the scale and mean ratings were as follows: (a) This activity would be a valuable addition to a class discussion on stereotypes ($M = 6.24$). (b) This activity gave me a clear understanding of the influence of stereotypes on behavior ($M = 5.97$). (c) How aware of stereotypes' influence on leadership behavior are you as a result of this demonstration ($M = 6.38$)? (d) This activity would benefit other students in psychology ($M = 6.06$).

Students were also asked for additional comments about the activity. Only positive aspects of the exercise were mentioned, such as the following: (a) "This activity was a good way of meeting others and loosening up the classroom." (b) "Very interesting . . . surprising . . . opens many questions." (c) "It's interesting how gender subconsciously affects our

Table 1. Number of Leaders Selected by Gender and Instructions

Type of Instruction	Gender		Total
	Men	Women	
Task-oriented			
Observed	40	11	
Expected	32.2	18.8	
			51
Social			
Observed	25	27	
Expected	32.8	19.2	
			52
Total	65	38	103

decisions." (d) "After you explained it, it really made sense. I never thought about stereotypes in that way." (e) "Most people already realize that there are stereotypes, but this graphically demonstrates how prevalent they are." (f) "I was fooled. I really thought we were going to play a game and nominated our leader because he was the tallest and biggest member of the group, and he looked like he already had authority."

Discussion

Results revealed that, overall, leadership positions were most likely to be filled by men, but this finding was evident only under task-oriented competitive conditions in which the ratio of male to female leaders was nearly four to one. Eagly and Karau (1991) suggested that, as leadership goals change from a position that requires task-oriented behaviors to one requiring socially complex tasks or the maintenance of good interpersonal relationships and group harmony, slightly more women than men emerge as leaders. Although a comparable finding was not statistically significant in the present study, data from the social cooperative instructions were in that direction. The classroom activity produces reliable and provocative effects that should make students more cognizant of gender stereotypes and their effects on leader selection.

Class discussion after the activity could be stimulated by the following questions:

1. Discuss the selection procedure. Did men or women more commonly nominate themselves? Which gender was more commonly nominated by other group members? What were the common procedures used in selecting leaders? In the present study, students' descriptions of their selection process included (a) "He was chosen because he was the tallest . . . he looked like he should be in charge," (b) "I knew from the beginning he would be the leader—he just looked the part," and (c) "The two women in our group asked him to be the leader."

2. Discuss the stereotypes students use in selecting leaders. When and why are stereotypes about men and women likely to influence leader selection? Are these stereotypes used when the groups meet for longer periods of time?

3. Discuss possible causes for the bias against female leaders. In everyday life, we witness more men than women as leaders; how may that affect leader selection? Do women avoid leadership positions? When women become leaders, how are they typically viewed in comparison with men?

4. Examine the gender differences that result when the task becomes one in which a social leader is required. Why does the gender bias disappear?

One possible variation of this demonstration is to assign groups to either feminine or masculine sex-typed activities. For instance, one group may be told to choose a leader for their discussion of the use of cloth versus disposable diapers for babies. The other group's discussion topic may be the choice of repairing cars at home with the guidance of manuals and friends versus taking the car to a repair shop. The visibility of stereotypes should be demonstrated as women are selected more often when the task is feminine sex-typed and men when the task is masculine sex-typed. In both cases, gender stereotypes guide individuals in their selection of leaders.

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Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 16th annual National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology, St. Petersburg Beach, FL, January 1993.
2. I thank Ludy Benjamin, Jr., Deborah Kashy, and Wendy Wood for their assistance in preparing this article and Ruth Ault and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version.
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