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Think manager, think male? Heterosexuals' stereotypes of gay and lesbian managers

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to extend the “think manager, think male” research paradigm by examining managerial stereotypes as a function of both gender and sexual orientation, thus comparing the similarity of managerial stereotypes against the stereotypes of male (heterosexual and gay) and female (heterosexual and lesbian) managers.

Design/methodology/approach – In total, 163 heterosexual participants used the 92-item Descriptive Index attribute inventory to rate one of five target groups: successful managers, heterosexual male managers, heterosexual female managers, gay male managers, and lesbian female managers. Intra-class correlation coefficients were calculated to assess the degree of correspondence between ratings of the target groups.

Findings – The findings showed a higher correspondence between the descriptions of heterosexual male or female managers and the successful manager prototype than between the descriptions of gay male managers and the successful manager prototype. Additionally, results showed that the stereotypes of lesbian female managers were seen as having a moderate level of fit with the successful manager prototype.

Practical implications – The results of this study suggest that heterosexuals' beliefs about gay male and lesbian female managers' abilities are important. In particular, heterosexuals' stereotypes that gay males lack the qualities of being a successful manager can limit gay men's access to positions with managerial responsibilities and impede their progress into leadership positions.

Originality/value – This study addresses a critical gap in the management literature as it is the first empirical investigation to assess whether the “think manager, think male” phenomenon holds for managers who are members of sexual minority groups.

Keywords Gender, Stereotypes, Discrimination, Management, Sexual orientation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Nearly four decades of research suggest that gender-based stereotypes are alive and well in a variety of organizational settings (Heilman and Eagly, 2008; Heilman, 2012). In particular, findings from these investigations indicate that the traits associated with being female “have been largely non-overlapping” with those associated with managerial or leadership positions (Kulik and Bainbridge, 2005, p. 33). This “think manager, think male” phenomenon has received empirical support in numerous studies (Duehr and Bono, 2006; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Koenig *et al.*, 2011; Ryan *et al.*, 2011) and across several organizational (e.g. Boyce and Herd, 2003; Schein *et al.*, 1989) and cultural (Schein and Mueller, 1992; Schein *et al.*, 1996; Schein, 2001) contexts.

The consequences of such gender-based stereotyping in organizations are many. In a recent review of the literature on gender bias in the workplace, Heilman (2012) noted



several areas where expectations based on gender stereotypes are likely to have pernicious effects for female and occasionally male employees, particularly when the content of those stereotypes does not fit with the stereotypes associated with a specific position. Although scholars have used this lack of fit model to explain workplace bias against members of minority groups other than women (Ahmed *et al.*, 2013; Block *et al.*, 2012), systematic explorations of the content of minority group stereotypes in the workplace have not occurred with the same frequency as they have in the gender literature (Block *et al.*, 2012; Chung-Herrera and Lankau, 2005). As a result, relatively little is known about whether other minority group stereotypes (e.g. sexual orientation stereotypes) differentially align with the stereotypes of a successful manager, or whether including information about additional minority group memberships might alter this “think manager, think male” phenomenon (e.g. think manager, think heterosexual male). The current study addresses this gap by examining the “think manager, think male” phenomenon as it applies to a common yet understudied managerial subgroup (Ragins, 2004; Ruggs *et al.*, 2013), namely male and female managers who are also gay or lesbian.

There are several important reasons for conducting research on gay and lesbian managerial stereotypes. First, findings from US national probability samples, self-report studies, and experimental investigations all support the presence of discrimination against LGB employees (Bell *et al.*, 2011; King and Cortina, 2010; Sears and Mallory, 2011). Although some of this research suggests that sexual orientation-based stereotypes may underlie the differential treatment and negative interactions faced by these workers (e.g. Giuffre *et al.*, 2008), as of yet, no studies have examined gay and lesbian managers and whether sexual orientation stereotypes convey different information about these managers than what the gender discrimination literature and the “think manager, think male” phenomenon would suggest.

Second, a number of qualitative investigations (e.g. Rumens and Broomfield, 2012; Ward and Winstanley, 2006) have documented the differential treatment experienced by LGB individuals who work in traditionally heterosexual (e.g. gay men in law enforcement) or gender non-stereotypical occupations (e.g. lesbian firefighters). However, few studies have directly examined whether this treatment is related to a lack of fit between the stereotypes associated with an employees’ LGB identity and those associated with a particular role or occupation (e.g. gay male barbers). Specific knowledge about the content of gay and lesbian managerial stereotypes would therefore directly contribute to understanding the origins of workplace discrimination against LGB individuals and represents an important contribution to research in this area.

Workplace stereotypes and lack of fit

Heilman’s (1983) lack of fit model offers the clearest theoretical understanding of the impact of minority group stereotypes in organizational contexts, particularly as they relate to gender. According to the lack of fit model, gender stereotypes are not necessarily “invariantly problematic” (Heilman, 2012, p. 116). Instead, they are problematic in instances where the stereotypes associated with a particular gender do not match or fit with the stereotypes or characteristics thought to be associated with a particular job (Heilman, 1983). For example, Heilman *et al.* (1989) found greater associations between ratings of male managers and the successful manager prototype than between ratings of female managers and successful managers. In addition, successful female managers were rated lower than men and successful managers on traits associated with leadership ability and business skill, and higher on those traits that were less than positive, including being bitter, quarrelsome, and selfish (Heilman *et al.*, 1989).

These findings are consistent with recent research suggesting that successful managers are still described in predominantly masculine terms (Koenig *et al.*, 2011; Ryan *et al.*, 2011), as they have been in each of the last three decades (Powell and Butterfield, 1979, 1989). Although there is some evidence that individuals are relying less on masculine stereotypes when describing successful managers than they have in the past (Powell *et al.*, 2002), this decreased emphasis has not been coupled with a growing emphasis on feminine characteristics. Despite an increase in the number of women in managerial and leadership positions (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) and a growing understanding of the importance of traditionally feminine styles (e.g. participative, collaborative) for effective leadership (Eagly and Carli, 2003), stereotypes of male and female managers have remained remarkably consistent over the last several decades (Powell *et al.*, 2002) and also differentially congruent with the traits typically associated with being a successful manager or business executive (Martell *et al.*, 1998). As Heilman (2012) recently noted, “the general idea that we think manager, think male seems to live on” (p. 116).

Sexual orientation stereotypes

Gender-based managerial stereotypes reflect only part of a complicated set of interconnected category memberships in the workplace. Despite the fact that the use (or misuse) of gender stereotypes in organizations is well documented (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Heilman, 2012), little is known about whether the “think manager, think male” phenomenon applies as equally to gay and lesbian individuals as it does to heterosexuals. In fact, no investigations have examined stereotypes of gay and lesbian managers, and none have sought to determine the limits of the “think manager, think male” phenomenon when gay and lesbian managers are considered.

Nevertheless, there are several reasons to suspect that sexual orientation would qualify individuals’ stereotypes of male and female managers in predictable ways. First, research generally supports an implicit inversion hypothesis regarding the stereotypes of gays and lesbians (Kite and Deaux, 1987). The implicit inversion hypothesis maintains that people hold the belief that gays and lesbians possess characteristics typically associated with the opposite gender. Gay male targets in several studies have been rated as more similar to heterosexual women than heterosexual men, and lesbian targets have been rated as more similar to heterosexual men than heterosexual women (Blashill and Powlishta, 2009; Kite and Deaux, 1987; LaMar and Kite, 1998; Madon, 1997). For example, Blashill and Powlishta (2009) found that gay men were viewed as having higher levels of femininity and lower levels of masculinity than heterosexual men and were just as low in masculinity as heterosexual women. Lesbians were also viewed as having lower levels of femininity and higher levels of masculinity than heterosexual women, but were not rated as masculine as heterosexual men. Additionally, endorsement of non-traditional gender stereotypes for gay men and lesbians does not appear contingent on rater gender (Blashill and Powlishta, 2009; LaMar and Kite, 1998). Despite the fact that heterosexual men hold more anti-gay attitudes than heterosexual women (Herek, 2000, 2002; Herek and Capitano, 1999), both appear to subscribe equally to the idea that gay men and lesbians possess reversed gender characteristics relative to heterosexuals of the same gender.

Second, research also suggests that individuals who are described with gender-atypical traits are more likely to be judged as gay (Blashill and Powlishta, 2009b) or lesbian (Deaux and Lewis, 1984) than those who are associated with gender-appropriate stereotypes. For example, Blashill and Powlishta (2009b) found that feminine male targets whose sexual orientation was left unspecified were rated as less heterosexual than masculine targets of unspecified sexual orientation. This finding is consistent with the

results of an earlier study by McCreary (1994), which found that feminine men were more likely than masculine men to be perceived as gay or becoming gay when information about their sexual orientation was not provided. In short, not only does knowing a target's gender-role characteristics lead to general presumptions about his or her sexual orientation, knowing his or her sexual orientation is likely to result in different presumptions about masculinity, femininity and other stereotype-relevant attributes.

Lastly, evidence (e.g. Block *et al.*, 2012) suggests that perceivers' global stereotypes about particular demographic categories (i.e. gays and lesbians) may still apply when category members are presented as subgroups (i.e. gay and lesbian managers). For example, Chung-Herrera and Lankau (2005) found that black and Hispanic managers were rated as less ambitious and competent than successful managers, consistent with global racial stereotypes about African Americans and Latinos. Additionally, Clausell and Fiske (2005) discovered that different subgroups of gay men were rated as either warm or competent in ways that reflected each subgroup's adherence to traditional gender roles. More masculine subgroups were rated high on competence and not warmth, whereas more feminine subgroups were rated high on warmth and not competence. In short, global stereotypes, when measured as either specific traits or as broader dimensions of warmth and competence, may still explain stereotypes toward specific subgroups, including managerial stereotypes (Block *et al.*, 2012). Thus, there is reason to suspect that in an organizational setting, gay male managers may in fact be viewed as possessing traits traditionally associated with heterosexual female managers, whereas lesbian female managers may be viewed as possessing traits traditionally associated with heterosexual male managers.

We proposed and tested the following two hypotheses in the current study:

- H1. Heterosexual male managers will be described as more similar to the successful manager prototype than any of the other three target groups (e.g. heterosexual female, lesbian, or gay male managers).
- H2. Stereotypes of gay and lesbian managers will be more similar to stereotypes of opposite gender heterosexual managers than to heterosexual managers of the same gender.

Method

Participants

Participants were 183 graduate and undergraduate students from two unaffiliated universities in the Northeast. In total 56 percent ($n = 102$) of the sample was comprised of graduate students enrolled in a master of arts program in psychology and the remainder were students enrolled in a bachelor of arts program who worked either full or part time and attended school at night. Data from nine participants that identified themselves as "Gay," "Lesbian," or "Bisexual" were excluded from analysis. Additionally, data from 11 participants who did not report their sexual orientation were also excluded. Therefore, data from 163 participants were included in the final study analyses. Preliminary analyses revealed no differences between the graduate and undergraduate samples, which were combined for subsequent analyses.

The gender composition of the sample consisted of 37 males (23 percent) and 126 females (77 percent), and participants' mean age was 26.1 years ($SD = 5.49$). In total, 54 percent of the sample was white, 8 percent black, 17 percent Hispanic, and 21 percent Asian. Participants reported having an average of 6.0 ($SD = 4.86$) years of work experience, with 95 percent of the participants indicating having had work

experience. Further, 48 percent of participants indicated that they had management experience and their mean number of years in management was 3.1 years ($SD = 2.41$). In total 65 percent of the sample was employed at the time of the study. The sample came from a variety of industries, including financial services, business consulting, education, media and communications, retail, and healthcare, among others.

Measures

Descriptive Index. The Descriptive Index is a 92-item survey containing adjectives and descriptors (e.g. competent, rational) that are used to measure gender-role stereotypes and characteristics of successful managers (see Schein, 1973, for a full description of the survey's development). The Index has been used in prior research to examine the differences between male and female managers on perceived management characteristics (Brenner *et al.*, 1989; Dodge *et al.*, 1995; Duehr and Bono, 2006; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Schein, 1973, 1975; Schein and Mueller, 1992; Schein *et al.*, 1996). The survey instructions asked participants to rate each item in terms of how characteristic it was of the target manager (e.g. gay male manager). Ratings were made using a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 (not characteristic) to 5 (characteristic).

Demographic variables. Information regarding participants' gender, race, age, sexual orientation, employment status, years of work experience, years of management experience, and industry type was also collected. To ensure anonymity, no other identifying information was requested.

Procedure

The Descriptive Index survey developed by Schein (1973) was administered to students during the last 15 minutes of classes. Participants were informed that the study was part of a research project investigating perceptions of managers in the workplace and that their participation was completely voluntary. The participants were randomly assigned into target group conditions, receiving one of five versions of the Descriptive Index and rating either successful managers ($n = 32$), heterosexual male managers ($n = 31$), heterosexual female managers ($n = 32$), gay male managers ($n = 34$), or lesbian female managers ($n = 34$). The surveys were identical in every way with the exception of the target group being evaluated.

Results

H1

The degree of correspondence between the ratings of successful managers and the ratings of heterosexual and gay men and women were examined by calculating intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs). Consistent with past research that has utilized the Descriptive Index survey (Duehr and Bono, 2006; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Schein, 1973, 1975), ICCs were computed to assess the level of resemblance between the ratings of each sexual orientation by gender target group and the ratings of the successful manager prototype on each of the 92 managerial attributes. The ICCs were calculated from randomized-groups analyses of variance where the groups, or classes, were the 92 descriptors (see Hays, 1963, p. 424). The scores within each class or group were the mean item ratings for each descriptor, provided separately for each target condition. ICCs were computed between the successful manager condition and each of the sexual orientation by gender group conditions. The ICCs report the similarity of respondents' ratings of successful managers to each of the four target group conditions. The size of the

correlation between any two comparison groups reflects the degree to which the groups are perceived to have characteristics similar to each other. A high ICC score reflects a similarity of characteristics between the two comparison groups and a low ICC score reflects differences in the characteristics between the two comparison groups. According to Hays (1963), the smaller the within-item variability relative to the between-item variability from the randomized-groups analyses of variance, the greater the similarity between the mean item ratings of successful managers and the sexual orientation and gender target groups.

Large and significant ICC coefficients were found between ratings of successful managers and heterosexual male managers ($r = 0.71, p < 0.01$) and between successful managers and heterosexual female managers ($r = 0.70, p < 0.01$). A moderate and significant ICC was also found between ratings of successful managers and lesbian female managers ($r = 0.59, p < 0.01$). A weak and significant ICC was found between ratings of successful managers and gay male managers ($r = 0.20, p < 0.05$). Table I presents the analyses of variance results for mean item ratings and the ICCs between successful managers and the sexual orientation by gender target groups.

To determine whether significant differences existed between ICC scores, independent samples *t*-tests were conducted. The results show that the correlation between successful managers and heterosexual male managers was significantly greater than the correlation between successful managers and gay male managers, $t(89) = 4.37, p < 0.001$, as well as the correlation between successful managers and lesbian female managers, $t(89) = 2.20, p < 0.05$. There were no significant differences in the ICC scores between successful managers and heterosexual male managers and successful managers and heterosexual female managers, $t(89) = 0.16, ns$. These results provide only partial support for *H1*, as ratings of heterosexual female managers corresponded just as highly with ratings of successful managers as heterosexual male managers.

H2

To test *H2*, which proposed that the stereotypes of gay and lesbian managers were more similar to opposite-gender heterosexual managers than to heterosexual managers of the

Group	df	Mean ²	F	ICC
<i>Successful/heterosexual male manager</i>				
Between items	91	1.41	5.82	0.71*** ^a
Within items	92	0.24		
<i>Successful/heterosexual female manager</i>				
Between items	91	1.21	5.61	0.70*** ^{a,b}
Within items	92	0.22		
<i>Successful/gay male manager</i>				
Between items	91	0.80	1.52	0.20* ^c
Within items	92	0.53		
<i>Successful/lesbian female manager</i>				
Between items	91	1.08	3.92	0.59*** ^b
Within items	92	0.28		

Notes: ICC scores with different superscripts differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table I.
Analysis of variance
of mean item ratings
and intraclass
correlation
coefficients (ICC)
across sexual
orientation and
gender target groups
and prototype

same gender, additional ICC scores were calculated between gay and lesbian managers and each heterosexual manager group. The ratings of gay male managers did not correspond significantly with ratings of heterosexual male managers ($r = -0.02$, ns), but there was a moderate and significant ICC between gay male managers and heterosexual female managers ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$). Large and significant ICC coefficients were found between ratings of lesbian female managers and heterosexual male managers ($r = 0.77$, $p < 0.01$) and between lesbian female managers and heterosexual female managers ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$). Consistent with *H2*, the findings show that the ratings of gay male managers corresponded more highly with heterosexual female managers and less with heterosexual male managers. However, the ICC scores were large and significant between lesbian female managers and both heterosexual male and female managers. Table II presents ICC scores for each gay or lesbian manager/heterosexual manager comparison.

Again, independent samples *t*-tests were conducted on the ICCs to determine whether lesbian female and gay male managers were stereotyped in ways consistent with traditional gender roles. Findings revealed significant differences, partially supporting *H2*. The ICC between gay male managers and heterosexual male managers was significantly lower than the ICC between gay male managers and heterosexual female managers, $t(89) = 5.04$, $p < 0.001$. Also, the ICC between lesbian female managers and heterosexual male managers was not significantly different than the ICC between lesbian managers and heterosexual female managers, $t(89) = 1.25$, ns. Overall, across all 92 traits, stereotypes of gay managers were more similar to opposite-gender heterosexual managers than to same-gender heterosexual managers, whereas for lesbian managers, there was no difference between their similarity to heterosexual managers of either gender. These results only partially support *H2*, since the ratings of lesbian female managers were equally congruent with heterosexual male managers and heterosexual female managers.

Group	df	Mean ²	<i>F</i>	ICC
<i>Gay male/heterosexual male manager</i>				
Between items	91	0.39	0.95	-0.02
Within items	92	0.41		
<i>Gay male/heterosexual female manager</i>				
Between items	91	0.43	3.28	0.53**
Within items	92	0.13		
<i>Lesbian female/heterosexual male manager</i>				
Between items	91	0.72	7.85	0.77**
Within items	92	0.09		
<i>Lesbian female/heterosexual female manager</i>				
Between items	91	0.50	5.65	0.70**
Within items	92	0.09		

Table II. Analysis of variance of mean item ratings and intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) between lesbian/gay managers and heterosexual male/female managers

Notes: ICCs in italics are significantly different from each other. It is important to note that while the theoretical limits of an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) are between 0 and +1.0, the real limits of an ICC are large negative values (less than -1.0) and large positive values (greater than +1.0). A negative ICC results from the mean square within targets having a higher value than the mean square between targets. Negative ICCs have been found in previous research examining gender stereotypes using the Descriptive Index (Brenner *et al.*, 1989; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Schein and Mueller, 1992; Schein *et al.*, 1996). An in-depth discussion of the calculation of ICCs is available in Lahey *et al.* (1983). * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Discussion

This study compared heterosexuals' perceptions of stereotypical attributes of heterosexual male and female, gay male, and lesbian female managers against heterosexuals' prototype of a successful manager. The findings show that the profiles of managerial traits and characteristics for heterosexual male and female managers were significantly more similar to the successful manager prototype than the profile for gay male managers. Despite their minority status, the stereotypes of lesbian female managers were seen as having a moderate level of fit with the successful manager prototype, although heterosexual male managers were still rated as stereotypically more similar to successful managers than were lesbian female managers. Heterosexual male and female managers were perceived as having the most in common with the successful manager prototype, with ratings of heterosexual female managers corresponding just as highly with ratings of successful managers as heterosexual male managers, contrary to what was proposed in *H1*.

Our findings also show partial support for the hypothesis that the stereotypes of gay and lesbian managers would be more similar to opposite-gender heterosexual managers than to heterosexual managers of the same gender. There was no correspondence between participants' ratings of gay male managers with ratings of heterosexual male managers but there was a moderate level of correspondence in the ratings between gay male managers and heterosexual female managers, demonstrating that gay male managers were viewed along female gender-stereotypic lines. Interestingly, the ratings of lesbian female managers corresponded highly with both heterosexual male and female managers, suggesting that lesbian female managers were stereotyped in ways consistent with heterosexual men but also retaining some stereotypes typically associated with heterosexual women. Across all 92 traits, the ratings of gay male managers matched more highly with heterosexual female managers and less with heterosexual male managers, whereas the ratings of lesbian female managers were equally congruent with heterosexual male managers and heterosexual female managers.

One unexpected finding was that the ratings of heterosexual female managers corresponded just as highly with the ratings of successful managers as heterosexual male managers. This result was particularly surprising since meta-analytic studies across research paradigms (including the think manager, think male paradigm) have shown that stereotypes of leaders are culturally masculine with individuals evaluating leaders as being similar to men but not very similar to women (Koenig *et al.*, 2011). Heterosexual female participants in our study likely gave favorable ratings to the heterosexual female manager because they were evaluating their own target group and women generally see more congruence in the characteristics between successful managers and women than men do. This explanation is consistent with other research studies that have found female participants to perceive successful managers as being more similar to female managers than male participants (Deal and Stevenson, 1998; Dodge *et al.*, 1995; Duehr and Bono, 2006).

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be noted when evaluating the implications of these findings. First, although there is precedent in the literature for using students to measure stereotypes with the Descriptive Index (Duehr and Bono, 2006; Powell *et al.*, 2002; Schein *et al.*, 1996), having only students in the sample may limit the generalizability of our results. Second, approximately one-quarter of the sample was composed of male respondents. Future research should include a higher representation

of males to increase the robustness of the findings. Third, the study only examined heterosexuals' stereotypes of the target conditions, neglecting the perspective of how LGB individuals view these groups. Additional research should examine potential group differences among heterosexual and LGB individuals in their perceptions of managerial target groups, making sure to investigate how each of these groups rates its own target manager compared to other groups. Research should also investigate how such demographic variables as gender, race, age, managerial experience, and participant occupation/industry might influence the content of gay and lesbian managerial stereotypes.

Lastly, it is possible that the participants reacted to demand characteristics after discerning that the purpose of the study was to examine stereotypes of managers based on their sexual orientation and gender. Although effort was taken to disguise the purpose of the study in the cover story, if demand characteristics were playing an important role in the findings, participants likely would have attempted to show the researchers that they were not using sexual orientation-based stereotypes and would therefore have rated gay and lesbian managers similarly to their heterosexual counterparts. Nevertheless, additional experimental research should be conducted in order to reduce the influence of possible demand characteristics (e.g. asking participants to evaluate a resume or biography that included subtle cues about the manager's sexual orientation).

Future research

Given our findings, future research should examine whether certain types of information can be presented to mitigate the negative evaluations that were received by gay male managers and to a lesser extent, lesbian female managers. One type of information that has been found to ameliorate the usage of gender stereotypes in the characterization of managers is success information. Previous research has shown that when managers are presented as being successful and there is no ambiguity regarding their performance, this results in similarly favorable characterizations of male and female managers (e.g. Dodge *et al.*, 1995; Duehr and Bono, 2006; Heilman *et al.*, 1989, 1995; Martell *et al.*, 1998). Another potential strategy for reducing stereotyping is to encourage heterosexual employees to take on the perspective of an LGB individual. This method has been shown to be effective in reducing discrimination against stigmatized groups (Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000; Weyant, 2007), in part because it encourages non-stigmatized individuals to think about the experiences of LGB employees prior to making organizational judgments about them (Ruggs *et al.*, 2011).

Implications for practice

The literature on gender discrimination (Heilman, 2012) at work indicates that some of the consequences of gender stereotyping for women include negative expectations about their performance that may make them less likely to be hired, promoted, or included in important career networks. The current study suggests that sexual orientation stereotypes may in fact have a similarly deleterious effect on the hiring, evaluation, and advancement of gay and lesbian managers, particularly when they find themselves in roles or jobs that are inconsistent with the stereotypes associated with their sexual orientation group. For example, heterosexuals' beliefs that gay men lack the qualities needed to be a successful manager can limit gay men's perceived suitability for, access to and development in positions with significant managerial and leadership responsibilities. The current study also suggests that individuals may be

likely to use gender-based managerial stereotypes (which often center around competence and warmth perceptions) as a heuristic in observing, interpreting and remembering the behaviors of LGB applicants for selection or promotion decisions (Ahmed *et al.*, 2013). Although research in this area is still in the early stages, the cumulative career impact of such sexual orientation-based stereotyping, especially for gay male managers, may in fact be similar to the glass ceiling effects faced by heterosexual women (Frank, 2006).

Beyond the influence of sexual orientation stereotypes on individual decisions about particular gay and lesbian employees, heterosexuals' stereotypes about the suitability of LGB individuals for managerial and leadership positions can have a collective impact on organizational practices, a key driver of work unit climate. For example, Bell *et al.* (2011) note that consistently identifying and promoting LGB individuals to high-level positions may result in a number of positive outcomes, including altering individual perceptions about how "gay-friendly" an employer might be and ensuring that LGB issues and perspectives become part of the organization's decision-making processes. Such downstream effects may be less likely to occur if sexual orientation stereotypes differentially align with individuals' preconceived notions of what it takes to be a successful manager, and organizational decision-makers remain unaware of this possibility.

Conclusion

The current research was able to demonstrate that the stereotypes of gay male and lesbian female managers differ from those of heterosexual male and female managers. The results suggest that individuals carry an image of a heterosexual male or female as their image of an ideal manager and evaluate these two groups as being the best match for the successful manager prototype. Additionally, heterosexual participants appear to possess stereotypical beliefs about gay and lesbian managers' abilities that may be an important contributor to the differential treatment experienced by some LGB individuals in the workplace. Although it may not yet be fair to qualify the "think manager, think male" phenomenon as "think manager, think straight male," the results of this study indicate that the phenomenon is not as straightforward, so to speak, as previous research might suggest.

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