

**Pumps and Pinstripes:**  
**Feminine Stereotypes in the Male-Dominated Workplace**  
**An Empirical Study of Women in Investment Banking**

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**M.A. Thesis in Cognition and Communication**  
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## INTRODUCTION

A woman in today's professional work environment must be good at her chosen profession to succeed, but she must also be good at something else: knowing how to look and act "just enough woman". On the one hand, a woman should be feminine enough to inspire trust and conform to our expectations. Trying too hard to fit in with the men in the workplace can cause distrust and dislike, a backlash that many women suffer when trying to adapt to male-dominated work environments. On the other hand, a woman should not be so feminine so as to be distracting. She should not look or act more woman than executive, banker, lawyer, accountant, etc. Legendary Hollywood costume designer Edith Head once said something to the effect of "a woman's dress should be tight enough to show she's a woman, but loose enough to show she's a lady".<sup>1</sup> The professional woman in the workplace must wear her femininity in much the same way, this time substituting "lady" with "competent professional". The professional man just needs to wear a suit.

Of course men have their own standards to live up to, but for women, negotiating an appropriate level of femininity has always been tricky – both in and out of the workplace. Women are urged to look sexually attractive but criticized for being sexually available (*see* Black, 2004, p. 74), a troubling paradox which makes it difficult to know where the line is when making appearance choices that don't fall at either end of the spectrum. Women are often advised that they should not cry at work nor react to any situation with too much anger or emotion. The assumption seems to be that a woman's "voice" will lose credibility if she allows her emotions to make an appearance in any uncontrolled way. This is presumably good advice, but do we offer it to the men as well? Do we discredit a man as "emotional" if he rants a bit at a perceived injustice or frustrating circumstance at work? Generally, men are not expected to know how to manage an appropriate level of "manliness" or masculinity. They are just men. In a way, boys are still allowed to just be boys.

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<sup>1</sup> The exact quote: "Your dresses should be tight enough to show you're a woman and loose enough to show you're a lady."

There is a great deal of existing research on how women in the workplace are viewed differently from men. (See Belkin, 2007). A lot of this research focuses on how women who act consistently with our expectations of women are deemed to be less competent, and those who act inconsistently with our expectations are simply viewed as less likeable. These “expectations” have to do with stereotypes, the influence of which is often subtler than one might expect, arguably. The issues arising from women behaving counter-stereotypically are particularly pronounced in male-gendered and/or male-dominated work environments. Male-gendered jobs are those characterized as requiring traditionally “masculine” traits for success, so male-gendered workplaces are usually also male-dominated, and vice-versa. Also, what constitutes a female or male occupation usually involves some measure of a percentage majority constituted by one gender. Some analysts have defined occupations as masculine or feminine if they have 80% or 70% representation by one gender (Wootton, 1997, p. 19). The U.S. Department of Labor uses a 75% majority figure, defining a nontraditional occupation for women as “one in which women comprise 25 percent or less of total employment.”<sup>2</sup> How women working in a male-gendered, male-dominated work environment are viewed differently from men and how they respond to these different expectations is the subject of this research study.

### **Gender Differences in the Workplace: Reality or Requirement?**

Some post-feminist theorists believe that today’s career woman can enjoy her status as a professional as long as she does not go “too far”, maintaining certain feminine traits such as a sensitivity and vulnerability that keeps her desirable to men. (McRobbie, 2009, p. 79). These traits are not only pleasing to the men and for, admittedly, reasons unrelated to the work itself. They are also comforting for both men and other women too, because they meet their expectations. People generally acknowledge that men and women are different, but in today’s society, we hope most people acknowledge that they are also *equal*. “Different but equal” is a tricky concept, much easier to articulate than to conceptualize and

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<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Department of Labor statistics can be found at <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2008.htm>. (See also Catalyst, 2011).

act upon. In the United States<sup>3</sup> and even in Denmark – a relatively egalitarian society by international standards,<sup>4</sup> people still hold some very old and deep ideas about how men and women *are* and how they should *behave*. On some level that is not necessarily the conscious level, men are expected to be men, and women are expected to be women. The notion of different but equal is particularly challenging in male-gendered work environments, where the nature of the job itself implies traditionally male characteristics and strengths as requirements for job performance. In fact, research continues to show that men and women have different experiences and enjoy different levels of objective and subjective success, usually to the advantage of the men. Different is not *yet* equal.

### **Feminine Stereotypes in the Male-Dominated Workplace**

Differences between men and women's experiences in the workplace are partly due to gender stereotypes. Studies indicate that gender stereotypes can have a significant effect on people's behavior at work, their relationships with their co-workers and their judgments in the workplace. (See Heilman & Welle, 2005, pp. 25-26, 35). The influence of stereotypes is not always apparent, as stereotypes are often expressed implicitly in the behavior of people who explicitly deny them. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 15). Research has indicated that the ways in which men and women are treated differently in the workplace often result from such "implicit" gender stereotyping, which can be difficult to perceive given that women typically believe gender discrimination exists but tend to exempt themselves from its effect. (See Heilman & Welle, 2005, pp. 24-25; *see also* Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 13). Additionally, research shows that the influence of gender stereotypes is especially strong when women behave counter-stereotypically, which is particularly the case in male-gendered workplaces. (Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p. 615-616). Banking, particularly investment banking, has traditionally been and continues to be a male-gendered industry often operating in male-dominated work environments.

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<sup>3</sup> Much of the research cited comes from studies conducted in the United States.

<sup>4</sup> The present study was conducted in Copenhagen, Denmark. According to the OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development), 2010, Denmark had the 4<sup>th</sup> narrowest gender gap in median earnings as of 2006 (following Belgium, New Zealand and Poland). (OECD, 2010, p. 13).

## **A Study of Women in Investment Banking**

The finance industry or “financial services” is difficult to characterize in terms of gender ratios because there is no official definition of the field. Within the U.S. financial industry, the occupations that fall into the category of “Investment Banking & Securities Dealing” were comprised of 37.7% women in 2009, with women representing 15.3% of executive/senior-level officials and managers. (Catalyst, 2011 (citing the U.S. EEOC figures for 2009)).<sup>5</sup> According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2010, 35.7% of financial analysts in the U.S. were women. (Catalyst, 2011). Gender ratios for the banking industry are problematic because they do not separate the banking professionals from support staff and related professionals necessary for the operation of the business. Similarly, isolating the individual professions like “financial analysts” does not provide an accurate account of the gender ratio in a particular workplace. Banks tend to publish company-wide gender ratios but not ratios by divisions within the organization, so it is difficult to determine the exact gender composition of any particular workplace based on gender ratios by industry, occupation or organization. Nonetheless, women working in investment banking often feel they are “out-numbered” by the men (*See* Tr. P1-P11), whether their workplace is male-dominated or simply predominately male (between 50% and 75% male).

The focus of the following study is not the banking industry nor women in banking, generally, but the effect of gender stereotypes on women working in male-gendered, male-dominated workplaces. Investment banking offers a fair supply of such workplaces. Accordingly, this study was conducted within the investment banking division of a major financial institution in Copenhagen, Denmark that served as an example of such an

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<sup>5</sup> In 2009, Danish banks had 47,682 employees in total, of which 25,014 (52.5%) were women. (*See* Finanssektorens Arbejdsgiverforening, 2010). Once again, this includes not just banking professionals but *all* employees. For Danish investment banks, no aggregate statistics on gender distribution are available, perhaps because most Danish investment banks were never separate entities, but divisions within a larger financial institution. This contrasts with U.S. investment banks, many of which were historically founded as pure investment banks.

environment. Throughout this paper and all the transcripts of the participants' interviews, the institution itself will be referred to as "Bank X", and the investment banking division as "Investment Bank". The women working within the Investment Bank have all confirmed that their workplaces were male-dominated as outlined above, consisting of at least 75% men and usually even above 80% men. (*See* Tr. P1-P11).

Not all participants were Danish, but the effect of cultural norms was a factor that was taken into account in the analysis of some of the participants' interviews. While the influence of culture is acknowledged and addressed in the analysis, it will not be explored separately as it extends beyond the scope of this paper. Still, the implications of the findings extend beyond this small segment of the Danish banking industry, when viewed in light of existing research conducted in the U.S. and other parts of Europe.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVE**

### **The Interview Study**

The following is a qualitative research study that uses in-depth interviews to explore how women in the male-dominated workplace are viewed differently from men, and how they respond to these expectations. Expectations in this context are about stereotypes. Are women expected to maintain a certain level of femininity to be successful, as claimed by some theorists, and what happens when women enter what have traditionally been considered male-gendered occupations, making them counter-stereotypic to some extent? As part of this examination of the impact of gender stereotypes on the women's experiences in the male-dominated workplace, the study also investigates the women's awareness as to the influence of gender stereotypes in their own judgments and behaviors in the workplace. These objectives can be summarized as the following research question, to be presented via theory and existing research and explored empirically in five inter-related parts:

**Research Question: How are women in the male-dominated workplace viewed differently from men, and how do they respond to these expectations?**

1. *What's happening outside*: How does being a woman, and particularly a counter-stereotypic woman, lead to different experiences for women working in male-dominated workplaces?
2. *How is femininity expected or expressed*: How is “appropriate femininity” negotiated in male-dominated work environments?
3. *What happens when expectations are not met*: What are the consequences of violating gender expectations/stereotypes for women?
4. *How do women find a balance*: The more competent/less likeable dilemma: How do women balance perceptions of competency with an appropriate femininity at work?
5. *What's happening inside*: How aware are women as to the influence of gender stereotypes in their own judgments and behaviors in the workplace, and how can we reduce or eliminate the influence of such stereotypes?

To meet these objectives, the study investigates the correlation between women's own accounts of their experiences as women in the workplace – how they *perceive* their gender as a factor - and their self-reported views on the influence of gender stereotypes in their work lives.

Gender stereotyping in the workplace has been studied from sociological, psychological, legal and occupational perspectives, among others. From the research perspective, stereotyping studies have often taken the form of experiments, particularly when exploring theories regarding people's control over stereotype influence and prejudicial behavior. From the theoretical perspective, many of the discussions regarding women's experiences in the workplace focus on the psychological causes behind gender stereotypes and/or the effects of the presumed stereotyping. The present study seeks to contribute to this investigation by using research methods from the field of communications and a range of theories from cognitive science and related disciplines to explore (1) the impact of gender stereotypes on the women's experiences and (2) the cognitive operations involved in such stereotype-influenced thinking and behavior. Of course, the impact of *gender* in the workplace is not only a product of expectations, but also of “natural” gender differences that will be addressed briefly in the following section.

## **Gender Differences: At the Root of Expectations**

Where do notions regarding the correct level of womanliness for a career woman come from? To some extent, they arise from actual differences between men and women. Evolution, social conditioning and Mother Nature have all been credited for these differences. Most recently through neuroscientific studies of the brain, biological arguments for gender differences look at the body itself and point to the brain to explain why women and men think and act differently. Evolutionary psychology also points to the brain but focuses on its development going back several hundreds of thousands of years. Lastly, social conditioning theories also look to the effect of outside influences on shaping these differences, but focus more on current influences on the individual. Stereotypes –origins and influence – do not run against these theories but are woven in between in the development of gender differences and expectations. In order to properly address the influence of stereotypes on gender expectations, a brief summary of some of these relevant theories and research findings regarding actual gender differences is provided.

### **Different Brains**

Some theorists posit that gender represents a “fundamental divide” of the “natural world, based on what are perceived to be deep and stable (presumably biological) foundations.” (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 113 (citing e.g. Gelman et al., 1994; Hirschfeld, 1996; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992; Yzerbyt et al., 1997b)). Neuroscientific research has discovered that the male and female brains are not organized in quite the same way. ((Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, p. 77). In female brains, there is more “communication and cooperation” between the two hemispheres: “The more intricately wired female brain allows for more information to be exchanged between both sides: emotions are better integrated with our verbal abilities, making us more fluent at expressing our feelings to others.” ((Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, p. 77).



Newborn baby research also helps to understand gender differences “before culture and society exert their influence”. (Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, p. 78). Infant studies have revealed that newborn girls are better at picking up social cues than newborn boys. (Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, p. 78). They develop language earlier than baby boys do, and their senses of hearing and touch are also sharper than that of newborn boys. (Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, p. 78; *see also* Cassidy & Ditty, 2001 (regarding gender differences in infant hearing)). Newborn girls have also been found to be more susceptible to emotional contagion than baby boys, and this greater sensitivity is thought to be related to the development of empathy. (Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, p. 78).

Difference in stress responses between men and women is one of the most well documented gender differences. ((Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, p. 82). Under conditions of stress, men will exhibit more of the “fight or flight” response whereas women will seek to connect with others for support. ((Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, pp. 81-82). This is due to different surges of various hormones in men and women under stress. ((Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2003, pp. 81-82). However, studies have not found a significant difference between men and women when it comes to cognitive processes such as verbal and math tasks, and little biological basis for the difference. (*See* Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 682).

### **Evolutionary Psychology**

Evolutionary psychology applies evolutionary principles to the study of the evolution of the mind. (*See* Campbell, 2002, p. 8 (citing Tooby and Cosmides 1992)). From this perspective, differences between men and women are “ancestrally programmed” and have changed little since the “ancestral era”. (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, pp. 679-680). Such a theory proposes that boys and girls are born already with different interests and preferences. (Campbell, 2002, p. 124). These differences grew out of the distinct pressures and responsibilities each gender was under “several hundred thousand years ago.” (Campbell, 2002, p. 32). Evolutionary psychologists claim that our “present behavior is a

function of the *past* adaptive success of genetically-encoded mental modules.” (Campbell, 2002, p. 10). In other words, as women were presented with similar types of challenges over and over again hundreds of thousands of years ago, the mental characteristics that were most successful in overcoming the challenges were selected. (See Campbell, 2002, p. 9). Many gender stereotypes, such as the belief that women will tend to cry when they are upset whereas men will tend to fight, can be explained via evolutionary psychology. Similarly, findings that men prefer young and physically attractive women while women prioritize men who are financially well-off are supportive of the evolutionary theory of biological selection (of mates). (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 679).

Evolutionary theory is the voice that argues that men and women *are* different, and no amount of social pressure from employers, friends and family, or society at large “can make women into something they are not.” (See Campbell, 2002, pp. 32-33). However, a theory that claims such genetic “fixedness” over such a long period is problematic, given that today’s women have considerably different preferences, attributes and “social and occupational roles” from those of our ancient ancestors. (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 680).

### **Social Conditioning**

Social cognitive theory is one theory that acknowledges the role of evolutionary factors in gender differences but proposes that there are other important influences on gender development, as well as different mechanisms for cognitively processing these influences. (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, pp. 683-685). According to social cognitive theory, gender roles (or gender differentiation) are actively constructed through the interrelation of various influences: (1) personal factors (e.g. gender-linked concepts), (2) behavioral patterns (that are linked to gender) and (3) environmental events (daily social influences). (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, pp. 685-689). That is, people construct their ideas about gender and adopt corresponding behavior depending on how they incorporate these influences into their lives. Social cognitive theory will not be explored in this paper but is simply

presented to lay down the scope of the different types of theories that continue to develop and contribute to the field.

Where does the stereotypical stop being typical, turning from expression of gender differences to expectation? The extent to which stereotypes represent gender differences has a limit, and beyond this point, they have been shown to influence social judgments and behavior, often below the level of conscious awareness. These social judgments and behavior translate into different experiences for women in the workplace. Women in traditionally male jobs (hereinafter often referred to as “counter-stereotypic women”) share certain experiences in common due to the fact that they violate gender-stereotypes as described in the following sections.

## **1. Different Experiences Based on Gender**

*How does being a woman, and particularly a counter-stereotypic woman, lead to different experiences for women working in male-dominated workplaces?*

Women are viewed differently from men in the workplace and have different experiences. For example, men still tend to earn more than women<sup>6</sup> and male-dominated occupations tend to pay higher salaries than female-dominated ones. (See Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 690; see also OECD, 2010, p. 13; Hegewisch & Liepmann, 2010). Women working in traditionally male occupations also experience certain specific differences from the men. Research has indicated that the nature and quality of the interactions between men and women in male-gendered work environments are different from those between and among male employees. (See Heilman & Welle, 2005, pp. 29-30). These differences involve difficulties forming social and mentoring relationships at work for women, and benefiting less from these relationships than men. (See Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 30). These women have been viewed less positively and as less competent than

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<sup>6</sup> The OECD found in a gender study published in March 2010 that as of 2006, men still earned more than women by an average of 18% across the developed countries included in the study. The gender wage gap for the United States is slightly above 18% in favor of men, and for Denmark it is slightly above 10% in men’s favor as well. (OECD, 2010, p. 13).

men with comparable skills, receiving less support from peers and mentors, and often being excluded (directly or indirectly) from the informal after-work or weekend get-togethers among men where work-related business often occurs. (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 703 (citing Pfoister & Fiore, 1990; Alban-Metcalfe & West, 1991; Paludi & Strayer, 1985); *see also* Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 24; Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p. 616).

### **Implications of Disparate Treatment**

Viewing women differently and interacting with them differently often results in the type of disparate treatment that can rise to the level of discrimination. Such discrimination is often subtle. For example, the social exclusion resulting from men's tendency to affiliate with men, as mentioned above, can act as a barrier to career advancement. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 24). Also making the discrimination sometimes difficult to perceive is the fact that even a slight negative bias against women candidates can have a significant impact in the long-run on "top-level representation", which is why we may see gender parity at lower levels and increasing disparity at the highest levels of organizations. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 24). It might be easier to adopt measures such as quotas to bring women into an organization than it is to develop strategies to lessen the impact of negative biases towards women when it comes to salary raises or promotions. Gender stereotypes often underlie these negative biases and may form the basis for these and other types of disparate treatment and/or gender discrimination.

Additionally, women's beliefs about their career capabilities and opportunities are shaped by a combination of societal influences and examples from family and friends, the educational and occupational systems, mass media and culture in general. (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, pp. 692, 698-704). How they are viewed and treated in the workplace may get incorporated into their ideas about their own competencies but at the very least, how they see the female models in their lives be treated by the workplace can have an affect on their assessment of their own professional capabilities. Research indicating that women as capable as men for male-gendered jobs feel less able to perform the jobs supports this idea.

(Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 692 (citing Betz & Hackett, 1981)). Another practical implication of disparate treatment in the workplace for women is that it can lead to lower job satisfaction (*see* Heilman & Welle, 2005, pp. 30-31), which can in turn lead to reduced performance. As with most forms of discrimination, the group enjoying the “privilege” will continue to reap the benefits of the privilege, which enhances its members’ performance and reinforces their status as privileged. (*See infra* at p. 59, fn. 31). This is not to say that women can’t perform as well as men or even better, but they seem to have more issues to contend with than simply the requirements of their chosen profession.

So, what do we expect of women? The literature and research suggest that we are okay with women working in male-gendered jobs and male-dominated work environments as long as they remember to still be women.

## **2. Appropriate Femininity In the Male-Dominated Workplace**

*How is “appropriate femininity” negotiated in male-dominated work environments?*

What is an “appropriate femininity” for the workplace, and why is it even negotiable? To do their jobs well and avoid formal<sup>7</sup> & social penalties, how “appropriately feminine” are women expected to be?

### **Appropriate Feminine Appearance**

Feminine identity is so much about a feminine appearance. “Clothes and appearance are constitutive of how we see and feel about ourselves and how we construct ourselves for the rest of the world to see.” (Fisk, 2006, p. 1). How we dress and present ourselves not only shows the world who we are, but also *affects* who we are and how we feel. (*See* Fisk, 2006, p. 2). Like clothing, makeup is also a tool for self-expression and a

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<sup>7</sup> Formal discrimination refers to biases in hiring decisions, promotions, evaluations, salary decisions and job responsibilities. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 28).

nonverbal communication that affects and is affected by others. (*See* Black, 2004, p. 7; *see also* Carbado, *et al.*, 2007, p.1; Diaz, 2010). In this way, our appearance choices and self-presentation are an important aspect of our identity performance, including gender performance. (*See* Fisk, 2006, pp. 1-3). Women in male-dominated work environments feel a tension between expressing a certain degree of femininity (individual to each woman) and conforming to the predominately male environment around them. If a woman continuously negotiates her femininity to “dress the part” of the expected appearance for her workplace, it will become a part of who she is and affect her views, particularly about gender roles. To borrow from Erving Goffman’s imagery,<sup>8</sup> women as social actors may put on the required “costuming” for the job, but they cannot necessarily take it off just as easily at the end of the workday.

The gender ratio of a workplace is a specific factor influencing appearance choices. Constraints on a woman’s appearance choices also arise generally from an employer’s direct or indirect expectations, or by the expectations of the industry in general. (*See* Black, 2004, pp. 133-136). Another constraint on a woman’s physical self-presentation choices involves the notion of corporate identity, whereby the conduct and appearance of a particular company’s employees should reflect the company’s image. (*See* Black, 2004, p. 112 (citing Witz *et al.*, 2003, pp.38, 43); *see also* Fisk, 2006, pp. 37-38). In high-status jobs, however, these appearance requirements regarding image are usually implicit (*see* Fisk, 2006, pp. 15-16) and expressed through social norms. Employers of high-status employees rarely ask directly that their employees project a certain image because to do so is both ineffective and unnecessary. (Fisk, 2006, p. 16). Instead, they rely on the fact that most people will adhere to appearance norms in the workplace so as to avoid attracting negative attention to themselves. Of course differentiating between feminine expression and expectation is about choice, but the degree of choice is harder to discern when appearance is dictated by practice, not policy.

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<sup>8</sup> Erving Goffman’s theories comparing social action and interaction to the front and back stage aspects of a theater performance are contained in his book, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, 1959.

Appearances are also meaningful because they allow both the individual and the person observing the individual to “establish a social identity” based on category membership. (Fisk, 2006, pp. 41-42). A person’s appearance identifies him or her as a member of a group, and to the extent that your appearance says something about who you are, such self-expression is necessarily related to group identity. (Fisk, 2006, pp. 41-42). Women who alter their degree of feminine appearance on a daily basis for their work environment may start to develop blurred notions of group identity. (*See infra* at p. 41). Do these women identify more with women or with men? Trying to fit in with the men, be it in dress or in behavior, may affect notions of gender identity in a way that extends beyond the workplace.

### **Appropriate Feminine Behavior**

Just like appearance, what constitutes the appropriate level of feminine behavior has to do with expectations. This paper focuses on expectations arising from gender stereotypes as addressed in the following sections.

## **3. Violating Gender Stereotypes: The Counter-Stereotypic Woman at Work**

*What are the feminine stereotypes and what consequences do women suffer for violating these expectations?*

Counter-stereotypic information tends to have a stronger impact on people than stereotype-consistent information, (*see* Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 103), so exhibiting traditionally masculine traits will raise eyebrows if not done skillfully.

### **Masculine and Feminine Traits in the Workplace**

Dominance traits such as self-confidence, aggressiveness, competitiveness, decisiveness and assertiveness, as well as ambition, strength, and a willingness to take risks have traditionally been considered as masculine traits, whereas nurturing traits such as kindness and a caring nature, as well as modesty, good interpersonal skills, sensitivity and

the ability to build trusting relationships have been categorized as feminine traits. (See Campbell, 2002, p. 104; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 421, Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 27; Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p. 616). Most interestingly, research has found that “stereotypically male traits are associated with success in the business world” and “stereotypically female traits are not”. (Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p. 616).

High-level female executives tend to have the same qualities as high-level male executives. (Campbell, 2002, p. 119). “To make it to the very top of the corporate world requires a particular constellation of traits: initiative, decisiveness, self-assurance, assertiveness, ambition, willingness to take risks and masculinity.” (Campbell, 2002, p. 119 (citing Browne 1995)). In fact, research has found that particularly in male-dominated work environments, female managers and women in high-level positions behave more like men. (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999, pp. 302, 310-311). For example, these women tend to focus less on interpersonal relations when they work in an environment with mostly male leaders. (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999, p. 302). Also, given that the climate of a workplace is particularly affected by the actions and demeanor of the organization’s leaders (Gruber, 1998, p. 304), the marked absence of female leaders to look to reinforces the male leaders as exemplary figures. What happens to women who exhibit the necessary “male” traits for success? In comparison to successful men, successful women and female managers have been depicted as cold and as lacking interpersonal skills – such as being argumentative, bitter and devious. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 417). Men are not “expected” to have strong interpersonal skills so when they lack this quality, it is not as offensive.

Regardless of their level or seniority in the organization, it is the professional women in these male-dominated work environments – in this case, the investment banking professionals – who tend to exhibit more of these traditionally masculine traits. Interestingly enough, the roles of other women in these organizations tend to be even more *stereotypical* than they would be in more gender-balanced or female-dominated work environments. Research has indicated that gender roles tend to be more stereotypical in



workplaces with relatively low percentages of women in senior positions. (Ely, 1995, p. 589). In such workplaces, women working in typically female-gendered positions or departments such as secretaries and Human Resources, respectively, tend to be stereotypically feminine and/or stereotyped as more feminine. (See also *infra* at pp. 38-39). That is, these roles are characterized as more feminine, and the women filling these roles exhibit more traditionally feminine traits. These notions of gender roles tend to weaken as the level of education increases and as the age of the employees decrease,<sup>9</sup> but they do not seem to disappear entirely.

### **Gender Stereotypes**

These are some of the traits and behaviors we expect of women and men, which are also the traits we deem typical of women and men, respectively. This is because the qualities we ascribe to each gender are also the ones we then require or expect them to demonstrate. (See Prentice & Carranza, 2002, p. 269). These gender stereotypes are closely tied to the social roles associated with each gender. (See Prentice & Carranza, 2002, p. 269). In fact, gender stereotypes form the basis of social role theory – the notion that sex differences begin at the division of labor in society. (Campbell, 2002, p. 7). According to social role theory, men take jobs that require qualities like competitiveness and aggression, and women take ones that entail nurturance and cooperation. As the men and women hone these skills in their respective jobs, they in turn form the stereotypes regarding appropriate femininity and masculinity. (See Campbell, 2002, p. 7). Some theorists believe these stereotypes are internalized and form the sex differences in behavior and self-perception, while others claim they may more accurately reflect the gender differences rather than cause them.<sup>10</sup> (Campbell, 2002, pp. 7, 122-123). Regardless of whether gender

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<sup>9</sup> Research in occupational employment has found that occupational gender differentiation is lower in the higher education levels as well as in the younger age brackets. (Wootton, 1997, p. 18).

<sup>10</sup> Research has shown that gender stereotypes do not seem to be more extreme than the actual gender differences, but may be “reasonably accurate appraisals of the differences between men and women”. (Campbell, 2002, pp. 7, 123). According to social cognitive theory, referenced *supra* at p. 9, children can learn gender stereotypes by observing the ways and behaviors of male and female models in their lives (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 687, 695-696), which supports the notion that the stereotypes reflect the actual differences observed.

stereotypes cause or reflect gender differences, they describe these differences and prescribe what is expected.

### **Descriptive and Prescriptive Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes are both descriptive and prescriptive. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 416; *see also* Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p. 616). “That is, gender stereotypes not only denote differences in how women and men actually are but also denote norms about behavior that are suitable for each – about how women and men ‘should be’”. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 416 (citing Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001)). Descriptive stereotypes correspond to the constellation of traits describing men and women, respectively. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 25). Prescriptive stereotypes focus on the qualities men and women need to perform their respective roles. (Prentice & Carranza, 2002, p. 275).

Descriptive stereotypes are generally stronger, meaning people will engage in cognitive distortion to maintain the impression that women are exhibiting the qualities they are supposed to have. (*See* Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 420). When these descriptive stereotypes cannot be engaged because the facts to the contrary are simply too clear and undeniable, then the prescriptive stereotypes kick in – disapproval arises from violation of the prescriptive stereotype (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 420). It is as if we say to a woman, “you are not supposed to be good at this (descriptive stereotype), so you can’t be; but you are! Well, you should not have been (violation of prescriptive stereotype).” In a sense, descriptive stereotypes might prevent a woman from getting the job, and prescriptive stereotypes (violating them) may punish the woman once she has the job, for being *good* at it! Being good at a *male-gendered* job necessarily means violating prescriptive stereotypes, often leading to experiences of disapproval, dislike or social backlash of some sort. As such, gender stereotypes seem to be the underlying cause

for disparate treatment in the workplace and a problem faced by many women particularly in male-gendered, male-dominated workplaces like those found in investment banking.

These women in “non-traditional” roles need to possess more typically masculine traits while still maintaining their feminine characteristics. (See Prentice & Carranza, 2002, p. 275). They need to be “man enough for the job” but woman enough for the office, possessing the necessary qualities to perform but also those needed to keep others at ease. Again, it is okay to be a little “masculine” as long as you remain “appropriately feminine”. (See Prentice & Carranza, 2002, p. 280). Additionally, women need to perform better than men in order to be perceived as competent as men. (Prentice & Carranza, 2002, p. 280). They are fighting against the feminine stereotype that presumes they are not “as good” as men in certain competencies. This is the very same stereotype they must comply with sufficiently to avoid being disliked. What a dilemma.

#### **4. The More Competent/Less Likeable Dilemma**

*How do women balance perceptions of competency with an appropriate femininity at work?*

Impression management is particularly tricky for women working in male-gendered industries, given that these women will often need to act counter-stereotypically to succeed. (See Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p.p. 617-618). Research indicates that these women will need to “choose between being successful and being liked. Only when women self-promote *and* behave in an overtly friendly and sociable manner do the gender discrimination patterns seem to disappear.” (Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, pp. 623-624). Accordingly, women *can* be perceived as both likeable and competent, as long as they have the traits of the prescriptive *feminine* stereotype. (See Heilman & Welle, 2005, p.27).

If a woman is disliked because of stereotyped ideas of what she should be and how she should act, she is experiencing prejudice. Research has shown that in male-gendered workplaces, gender stereotypes still prompt prejudice *even when* the women have proven

their competence. (See Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, pp. 416-426; *see also* Borgida, Hunt & Kim, pp. 618-624 (citing Rudman & Glick, 1999)). The problem is that women will usually need to self-promote in order to be seen as competent, but experimental research suggests that self-promoting is not considered a leadership trait, so these women are often seen as less likeable (for violating the leadership stereotype prescription). (Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, pp. 618-619). Additionally, modesty is part of the feminine stereotype and self-promotion is not, so these women also violate the feminine stereotype, which also makes them less likeable. (Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, pp. 619-620). Experimental studies in gender stereotyping have also indicated that agentic (or assertive) women tend to be viewed as lacking the stereotypically feminine interpersonal skills. (Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, pp. 620-621). It is worth noting here that the women in the present research study mainly *are* these more agentic women, and it is *their* views on gender stereotypes and their accounts of their experiences that I was exploring. Accordingly, when speaking of experimental research finding agentic women generally “less likeable” by both men and women, it must be noted that the participants evaluating the subject-women in those studies were not pools of agentic women working in male-gendered industries. Accordingly, the data from the present study may offer certain insights that might be lacking in the current body of existing research.

Experimental studies have found that when women working in male-gendered jobs are acknowledged as successful, they are not only less liked but also more personally belittled or depreciated than equally successful men. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 416; *see also* Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 28; Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, pp. 618-624). This bias against women working in male-dominated fields has been attributed to cognitive distortion arising from the inconsistency between stereotypes about what women are like (or supposed to be like) and the qualities these ‘typically male jobs’ require. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 416). A woman being successful at what is typically a man’s job provokes reactions because what she is perceived as being like (a man) is now different from what we think she should be like or expect her to be like (a woman), often resulting in “social penalties”. (See Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins,

2004, pp. 416-417). This is the counter-stereotypic woman at work, and we disapprove. However, when a woman is truly and undeniably excellent at the job, the stereotypical expectations may be overridden and she may be accepted as competent, (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 416), but the prejudice often remains. That is, we don't like it. It is not how it is supposed to be, so we don't like *her*.

If a woman's success at a man's job can cause her to be disliked<sup>11</sup> (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, pp. 416-417) in this way, this in turn can block her from further advancing up the corporate ladder. As such, these women often get fewer promotions compared to comparable men. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 416 (citing Lyness & Judiesch, 1999), p. 423). Of course, both men and women may lose out on promotions or raises for being un-likeable, but "whereas there are many things that lead an individual to be disliked, including obnoxious behavior, arrogance, stubbornness, and pettiness, it is only women, not men, for whom a unique propensity toward dislike is created by success in a nontraditional work situation." (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, pp. 425-426). This is not to say that women are not allowed to be successful. It is only when the success implies that they have violated gender stereotypes that they might suffer the social penalties described above. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 426; *see also* Gardiner & Tiggeman, 1999, p. 304). Again, the claim seems to be that as long as women remember to still be women, they will be okay.

So far, this paper has focused on what women, and particularly, counter-stereotypic women can do to lessen the impact of *other people's* stereotyping. What about the influence of stereotypes on *their own* judgments and behaviors? Stereotyping research indicates that to a great extent, people cannot avoid exposure to stereotypes. Stereotyping occurs largely without conscious awareness, so people are "unlikely to notice" how their

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<sup>11</sup> Research has indicated that women who behave in stereotypically male ways are less socially appealing than men who behave in stereotypically female ways or women who behave as expected. Men and women may suffer different penalties for violating gender stereotypes. Women are expected to be a certain way with others, so the penalty for them may be dislike. Men, on the other hand, are expected to take control a certain way, so the penalty for them may be disrespect. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, pp. 417, 423).

attitudes are guiding their behaviors, (Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 35) until it is brought to their attention. The next section examines the cognitive operations involved in stereotyped judgments and the circumstances needed to avoid or lessen the influence of stereotypes.

## **5. Deciding Not to Stereotype: The Conscious and Automatic Components of Stereotypes and Prejudice**

*How aware are women as to the influence of gender stereotypes in their own judgments and behaviors in the workplace, and how and under what circumstances can we reduce or eliminate the influence of such stereotypes?*

### **Automaticity**

“[M]any of our complex social actions have their origin in the impenetrable and silent workings of the unconscious mind.” (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 107). This is not a novel idea, but recent research has been revealing the extent and impact of these unconscious processes in many and various aspects of everyday life. (See Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 107). Research on social cognition’s “higher mental processes”<sup>12</sup> has revealed that social interaction, evaluation and judgment can proceed without conscious or intentional acts of will and guidance. (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000, p. 925). Growing evidence of such “automaticity” has led to the debate regarding the relevance of consciousness in social behaviors and judgments<sup>13</sup>, and the roles of conscious versus non-conscious internal mechanisms, respectively. (See Bargh & Ferguson, 2000, p. 938).

There is a strong view that social cognitive processes like decision-making in social judgments are composed of both automatic and controlled sub-processes. (See Bargh, 1994, p. 28; see also Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 20). That is, we engage in an

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<sup>12</sup> Most of the empirical research on social cognitive processes from psychology and neuroscience focuses on individual cognitive mechanisms without involving actual interaction, as it is difficult to study social interaction “under controlled conditions”. (De Jaeger, Di Paolo & Gallagher, 2010, p. 442).

<sup>13</sup> Recent discoveries in social cognition of complex mental processes and behavior that seem to occur without conscious awareness have revived the validity of determinism - the notion that behavior and other responses resulting from the higher mental processes are caused, including our choices regarding those responses. (Bargh and Ferguson, 2000, p. 926).

unconscious cognitive operation while making a conscious judgment. Empirical studies support this view and have demonstrated that most mental processes do not qualify as *exclusively* automatic because they are controllable to some degree. (See Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 98). Stereotypes involve such an unconscious or automatic cognitive operation (see Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, pp. 5-6, 15) that can and often does affect social judgments.

### **Categorical Thinking**

Stereotypes are usually thought of as false preconceptions or generalizations that prevent us from seeing people for who they really are. (See Goldstein, 2005, pp. 460-461). Nevertheless, psychology indicates it is difficult to get rid of them. (Campbell, 2002, p. 122). This is partly because the process of understanding others we first encounter is simplified by using categorical thinking. (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 95). Stereotyping is a “category-based cognitive response to another person”, whereby a belief about an individual is based on his/her group membership. (Fiske, 1993, p. 623). “Rather than considering individuals in terms of their unique constellations of attributes and proclivities, perceivers prefer instead to construe them on the basis of the social categories (e.g. race, gender, age) to which they belong, categories for which a wealth of related material is believed to reside in long-term memory.” (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 95). We use categories so that we know what to expect when we encounter new information, (see Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 103) and we are able to do this because of schemas.

### **Cognitive Schemas**

Theories from social cognition<sup>14</sup> on how the mind understands and relates to others in our environment often deal with *schemas*. Mental or cognitive schemas refer to the way in which we process and store perceived information as more compressed, general

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<sup>14</sup> Social cognition refers to the processes of perceiving oneself and others and the resulting interpersonal communications. (Amodio & Frith, 2006, p. 286). Social cognitive processes include understanding others' emotions, intentions and actions and how we act with and towards each other in social settings. (De Jaegher, Di Paolo & Gallagher, 2010, p. 441).

descriptions, and these descriptions gradually form the “schemas” or outlines of phenomenon which we use to subsequently categorize *new* information. (See Grodal, 2009, p. 253). Stereotypes are a type of cognitive schema, and gender stereotypes in particular involve the cognitive process of tagging information as “gender-relevant”<sup>15</sup> and forming mental categories for organizing the information and later retrieving it. (See Campbell, 2002, p. 5). Numerous schemas are contained in long-term memory, and once activated by triggers, these schemas can guide behavior. (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, pp. 107-108).

### **Stereotypes: the Cognitive Perspective**

Stereotypes of social groups are made up partly of collections of interrelated traits thought to be characteristic of members of a social category. (See Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 236; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 14). Stereotypes guide behavior to the extent that a “person acts toward another as if the other possesses traits included in the stereotype.” (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 14). When a stereotype guides behavior, the result is often prejudice. In this way, a stereotype can be thought of as the cognitive component of prejudiced attitudes. (See Devine, 1989, p. 5). That is, stereotypes are the knowledge structures that may influence perceptions of and actions towards members of certain groups, and prejudices are the potentially resulting attitudes, judgments and behaviors. (See Devine, 1989, p. 5).

Stereotypes and prejudice were initially thought to be driven by deliberate, conscious processes, but were increasingly shown through extensive research to have a significant automatic, non-conscious component. (Bargh, 2007, pp. 574-575; *see also* Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, pp. 100-101). In fact, research has discovered that stereotypes are activated automatically “on the mere presence of physical features associated with the stereotyped group.” (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 230). The subsequent categorizing of observed behavior in terms of personality traits and the

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<sup>15</sup> Women with a higher tendency to tag information as gender relevant become more stereotypically feminine than those with a lower tendency to do so. (Campbell, 2002, p. 5).



possibility of attributing these traits to the observed individual have also been found to happen automatically to some degree. (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 230; *see also* Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p. 617 (the processes of categorization, stereotype activation and stereotype application can all occur outside of conscious awareness)). Where a trait concept is part of a larger schema such as a stereotype, activation of one trait that is part of the stereotype can have the effect of activating *all* of the other traits in the stereotype too, when in the presence of the features of the stereotyped group member. (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 230). A person can then use the knowledge contained in the entire schema to form impressions and judgments about another. (*See* Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 95). Such findings of automatic stereotype activation<sup>16</sup> beg the question: to what extent can we control stereotype-based, prejudicial judgments and behavior?

### **Stereotypes and Prejudice**

Some theorists still argue that even if stereotypes are activated automatically, prejudiced behavior is still a conscious choice, guided by one's relevant values and motivation to overcome stereotypes. (*See* Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, pp. 230-231 (citing Devine, 1989)). However, if a person is not aware of the stereotype activation because it is happening on a non-conscious level, he/she is not aware of the interpretive bias it may cause and accordingly, may not be able to correct for it. (*See* Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 231). In order to override a stereotype's influence, a person must be aware of the stereotype's influence, have the motivation and intention to purposely override it's influence, and have sufficient attention available to carry out this intention. (*See* Bargh, 1994, pp. 30-31). As such, even assuming one is aware of the triggered stereotype, one still needs to have enough cognitive resources - such as time and attention - available, as well as the proper motivation to overcome it. (Bargh, 2007, p. 577; *see also* Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 241). When the requisite motivation, time or cognitive capacity to think

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<sup>16</sup> This auto-activation of mental representations develops from the frequent and consistent activation of these mental impressions in the presence of the stereotyped group member. After repeatedly having had the same reaction to such a stereotyped group member, the person may form an automatic association. (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 230).

accurately about others is lacking, stereotyping is likely to happen. (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 105 (citing Bodenhausen, et al., 1999; Brewer & Feinstein, 1999; Fiske, et al., 1999)).

Research on prejudicial behavior has shown that when people cannot control the activation of a stereotype, both high and low prejudiced people produce evaluations consistent with the stereotype. (*See* Devine, 1989, pp. 5, 8-12). The key seems to be knowledge of the stereotype rather than alignment with its views. This is problematic given that both high and low prejudiced people<sup>17</sup> tend to have equal awareness of certain racial and cultural stereotypes. (*See* Devine, 1989, pp. 5, 7-8; *see also* Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 100). Particularly with respect to gender, experiments have indicated that men and women share some of the same gender stereotypes. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 17). That is, women share the same stereotypical conceptions and expectations of women as men do, and vice versa. Since everyone is aware of the stereotype, including the members of stereotyped groups themselves, it acts as a starting point for the stereotype group members too, making their “easiest course” that of “stay[ing] within the bounds” of the stereotype’s expectations. (Fiske, 1993, p. 623). In other words, it is easier for men to look and act like men, and for women to look and act like women. This is not to say, however, that stereotypical lives and prejudicial behavior are inevitable.<sup>18</sup> Our personal beliefs<sup>19</sup>, if they are inconsistent with the stereotype and sufficiently supported by other cognitive factors, can influence our behavior and lead to non-prejudiced judgments and behavior. (*See* Devine, 1989, pp. 5-6; *see also* Macrae &

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<sup>17</sup> Research has shown that where high and low prejudiced people differ is in the degree of prejudicial beliefs they hold about socially stigmatized groups, with those holding less prejudiced beliefs being more likely to override the effect of the automatic stereotype activation by substituting these beliefs for the stereotypic beliefs. (*See* Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 100).

<sup>18</sup> The “inevitability of prejudice” viewpoint sees prejudice as an “inevitable consequence of ordinary categorization (stereotyping) processes”, essentially assuming that knowing about the stereotype will always result in prejudice toward the group. (Devine, 1989, p.5).

<sup>19</sup> Personal beliefs are the judgments we have made about the appropriateness of certain stereotypic ideas, (*see* Devine, 1989, p. 6), as well as our beliefs about human nature – e.g. how fixed or permanent are the traits possessed by individuals and groups (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 107). Devine adds, however, that stereotypes tend to have a longer history of activation – children learn of them before they can question them – and might therefore be more accessible than personal beliefs. As such, they might have a stronger influence on social behavior.

Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 99, 105-113). These factors, as mentioned above, include the requisite time, attention and desire.

Regarding gender in particular, practically all adults in today's society know about gender stereotypes. (See Borgida, Hunt & Kim, 2005, p. 614; *see also* Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 679). These gender stereotypes can be learned at a very early age and have a biasing influence on social perception, judgment and behavior. (Bargh, 2007, p. 578). Still, it is believed that gender stereotyping is the types of *bias* the potential of which many people seem to have some awareness<sup>20</sup>, and can accordingly correct for if they have the requisite motivation. (Bargh, 2007, p. 578). Whether women working in non-traditional roles in a male-dominated workplace have the requisite motivation to combat gender-stereotyping themselves is explored in the present study.

### **Motivation, Power and Prejudice**

As noted above, motivating people to pay attention to a person's individuating information can weaken or eliminate the stereotype's influence in a given situation. People share not only common stereotypes but also "norms concerning humanitarian and egalitarian values", so often reminding people of their "better selves" can override the influence of stereotypes. (See Fiske, 1993, p. 627). Without such reminders, some people will be more susceptible to stereotype influence. For example, research has found that people in positions of power tend to stereotype because they do not need to, do not want to, and do not have the time to "pay attention" and notice individuating information about a person. (See Fiske, 1993, p. 621). There is power in numbers, so in a male-gendered industry and workplace where men out-number the women, AND were a majority of the leaders within the organization are men, the men can be said to have the power. Social

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<sup>20</sup> Numerous studies have indicated that the "critical variable" that may determine whether a person can consciously control the effects of an environmental influence such as a stereotype is not the awareness of the environmental influence or stimulus itself, but rather an awareness of the *potential influence* of the stimulus. (Bargh, 2007, pp. 578-579 [*emphasis added*]).

structures such as workplaces that are dominated by one gender in this way will tend to contribute to a stereotypic work environment. (See Fiske, 1993, p. 622).

### **Implicit Gender Stereotyping and Prejudice**

A stereotypic work environment is not necessarily a sexist work environment. In fact, research has indicated that implicit gender stereotypical inferences are independent of a person's level of sexism. (See Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 100 (citing Dunning & Sherman, 1997)). That is, what we consciously believe and articulate about men and women's roles and what we assume and act upon implicitly are often two different things. Accordingly, gender stereotyping in the workplace is more often implicit than explicit. This difference between what people say and what they do, in this context, is due to *implicit* social cognition: social behavior that is not under conscious control because the person is unaware of an influence affecting his or her judgment. (See Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, pp. 4-5). Such unidentified influences or "implicit attitudes"<sup>21</sup> that are particularly relevant to stereotypes and prejudice are the "self-positivity bias" in judgments, whereby members of disadvantaged groups acknowledge discrimination against their group but tend not to see themselves as victims, and "implicit affiliation," whereby how related you perceive yourself to be to another influences your liking for the other, with the bias being towards those who are similar to yourself or members of your own group. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 13). Implicit affiliation supports the notion that women may be at a disadvantage when men are in positions to make hiring and promoting decisions.

### **Conscious Choice**

Can we control the influence and expression of stereotypes? As much as we may be inclined for legal and personal reasons to avoid stereotyping, can we *really*? (See Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, pp. 95, 109-114). Research has found that conscious attention to

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<sup>21</sup> Often we are exposed to situations and experiences without consciously realizing their impact, and traces of these past experiences affect our judgment even though they are not "remembered" or readily available for "self-report". These traces of past experiences form the basis of implicit attitudes. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, pp. 4-5, 8-9).

automatic influences such as stereotypes can weaken the implicit cognitive effect of the influence, provided that the actor is aware of the influence. (See Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 18; *see also* Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 109). Assuming stereotype influence can be overridden as long as we are (1) aware of the stereotype's influence, (2) motivated to override it and (3) capable of overriding it (with adequate time and attention), how – and how often - is this accomplished in real life settings? (See Bargh, 1994, pp. 28-31). We cannot rely on self-reports alone when investigating causes of behavior and judgments that are hidden from introspection, yet these personal accounts of real experiences are essential if we are to gain a better understanding of what is really going on outside the laboratory setting with respect to stereotypes. (See *infra* at p. 29).

## METHODOLOGY

The following research study examines the impact and influence of gender stereotypes on women working in a male-dominated work environment. The goal of the study was to explore women's *real* experiences, by their own accounts, of how they are viewed differently from men and how they respond to these different expectations. Further exploring the idea of “appropriate femininity” in the workplace that I touched upon in my prior study, “Makeup in the Workplace: Expression in the Face of Expectations” (Diaz, 2010),<sup>22</sup> I went beyond appearance choices and incorporated such an aspect of self-presentation within the greater context of how women are viewed differently from men. The present study focuses on women working in traditionally masculine roles within the field of investment banking.

### **Research Design: Why This Qualitative Study as Opposed to an Experiment**

Designing a research study requires choosing the strategy, tactics and techniques necessary to achieve the objective of the study. (See Jensen, 2002, pp. 237-238). Given

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<sup>22</sup> In that study, I interviewed 4 secretaries and 1 lawyer working at 2 law firms in Denmark. I sought to explore whether and how a woman's use of makeup in the workplace is an expression of her femininity, paying particular attention to the concept of an “appropriate femininity” for the workplace.

that the goal was to obtain *actual* real life accounts, I chose a qualitative study using interviews. The interview questions – content, structure and progression – were designed to investigate the correlation between women’s own accounts of their experiences in the workplace and their self-reported views on the influence of gender stereotypes in their work lives.

### **Problem with Experiments**

Experimental research in the area of stereotypes has its limitations. For one, many of the studies do not involve actual interaction between the subjects and the people they are rating, using instead “pencil and paper format” such as written descriptions of individuals and scenarios. (See Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 426). Also, the information provided to the subjects is often “sparse and uncomplicated” so as to manipulate and isolate the independent variable being studied, but this “sparseness” may end up facilitating the use of stereotypes because of the lack of individuating information. (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 426). Furthermore, an actual person exhibits many other features besides the one being studied (e.g. gender) by priming for it in experiments, and any of these other features may also be used to categorize a person in a real life setting. (See Bargh, 1994, pp. 22-23). Accordingly, there seems to be a need for additional research that “validates and extends” such experimental findings “in actual work contexts if researchers are to fully understand the effect of success on working women.” (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004, p. 426).

Interview studies are about depth, not generalizations. They are not about drawing conclusions across specific categories or about isolated factors, but about delving deeper into themes and looking for explanations of beliefs and behaviors that are more readily discovered when *not* treating the thing to be explored in isolation. In an effort to “validate and extend” experimental findings “in actual work contexts” as mentioned above, my goal in the present study was to elicit the perceived experiences of *actual* women in their *actual*

work-settings within a male-gendered workplace, and explore the influence of gender stereotypes upon their beliefs and behaviors.

### **Data Collection**

I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to collect data. The interest of the study was in variation within a type of work environment - the male-dominated workplace - rather than generalizability. (*See Carter, Spitzack, 1989, p. 205*). Accordingly, I intended to interview women (1) working in investment banking, (2) between the ages of 21 and 65, (3) employed at varying levels of responsibility, (4) with predominantly male co-workers. I chose investment banking due to its very often male-dominated work environments and traditionally male-gendered jobs – where the qualities needed to perform and succeed have been associated with stereotypically male traits. I also wanted to explore how age and position within the company might affect the women’s experiences and their own ideas of appropriate femininity in the workplace. Ultimately, 11 women between the ages of 23 and 49 were interviewed. (*See Transcripts P1-P11 in Appendix*). Eight of the women were Danish, 1 was Swedish, 1 was from the Czech Republic and 1 was from the U.K. Nine of the women were banking professionals working in Sales or Research, 1 worked in Human Resources and 1 in Communications. Of these 11 women, 2 were interns. Four of the women were married and 7 were single. Three of the women had children, of which 2 were pregnant with another child. One woman was pregnant with her first child. The length of time working in the industry ranged from 2 years to 15 years. I conducted the 11 interviews between February 21<sup>st</sup> and March 8th, 2011.

### **Samples**

The samples in my study were derived from 1 initial contact who then provided additional referrals, resulting in a total 11 participants all working as finance or communications professionals within the Investment Banking division of Bank X. This sample size was determined largely by participant availability and by the time and resources available to transcribe and analyze lengthy, in-depth interviews. I used

theoretical sampling to select participants based on the criteria set forth above, to develop theories based on the issues to be explored. (*See* Deacon, et al., 2007, p. 54; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 126).

### **Interview Form and Context**

Interviews are an effective means of obtaining explanations for people's behavior and for attaining information that cannot be gathered effectively by other means. (*See* Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 173-174). Given that I sought to compare the women's accounts of their experiences against their own views about the effect of gender stereotypes in their workplace, interviewing allowed me to obtain this information as well as indirectly present the comparison to the participants themselves. I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately one hour, working loosely from the interview guide I developed. The interview guide set forth the main themes I wanted to explore, with groupings of questions corresponding to each theme (*See* Deacon, et al., 2007, p. 67). I made sure to cover the main topics with each interviewee for consistency, but allowed the interviews themselves to lead me into deeper insights about their experiences and views. To do this, I often asked many follow-up questions, constantly trying to elicit clarifications of ambiguous or general statements, and drawing out examples from the women when they made generalizations.

The interview guide contained approximately 21 main questions (75 including potential sub-categories of questions) and 5 basic background questions. I covered all of the main questions in the first interview and then used my experience with that interview to make minor adjustments to the guide. I then added 3 or 4 questions that better allowed me to compare the women's perceived experiences with their views on gender stereotypes. Particularly important was the addition of what became my opening question for most of the women after that first interview: "What is it like to be a woman working here?" All of the interviews included follow-up questions based on what the interviewee was saying, and sometimes numerous questions trying to illicit a more substantive response. There were



some questions I began to skip entirely when they seemed to become less relevant to the direction the interviews were taking, or at least of minor significance given the scope of this project. Most of the questions in the interview fell within one of the five major categories previously outlined *supra* at p. 6.

At differing times during the interviews, I presented each interviewee with a color photograph (from a magazine advertisement) of a woman wearing a conservative, black sleeveless dress, high-heeled, open-toed shoes and her long hair down. I asked the women: Is **this** an appropriate look for your workplace, why or why not? Also:

- a. What **is** an appropriate appearance for a woman in this workplace?
- b. Is there a different standard depending on your position (executive/secretary/intern)?

The source of the photograph was concealed. I instructed the interviewees to focus on the woman's dress, hair and makeup, and asked them whether the woman's overall "look" was an appropriate appearance for a woman in their workplace. I often used the photograph early on in the interviews, to begin the dialogue in a less personal way so as to make the participants more comfortable.

The remainder of the interview questions focused on the five general categories referenced above. I asked the women about their experiences working at the Bank and within their particular departments and immediate work groups. I asked them specifically about their experiences working with men and how those experiences compared to working with women. I also asked about their *preferences* regarding working with each gender, and these questions often lead to the most interesting expressions of certain views about men and women. These views were often at odds with their own characterizations of their experiences, but they were just as often consistent. I then asked the women about gender stereotypes more explicitly. In each interview, I tried to obtain their accounts of their experiences before asking explicitly for their views on gender stereotypes in their workplace. The reason for that sequence was to try to get honest accounts of their

perceived experiences first, before they could explicitly think about their experiences in terms of their views on stereotypes.

The interviews themselves were conducted in a conference room at Bank X. Nine of the interviews took place without interruption, while 2 were interrupted with phone calls. One interview was cut significantly shorter than an hour (to about 35 minutes) due to other work commitments. In that case, I focused on delving thoroughly into the more significant topics rather than trying to do a superficial treatment of all of them. Regarding the timing, 10 of the interviews were held during the workday, and 1 was held immediately after the workday, at 6:00 P.M. My main concern was to conduct the interviews in a comfortable and private setting where the women could feel at ease and not have their attention (or the interview) interrupted by work. (See Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 185-186, regarding interview context).

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Generally speaking, analysis involved breaking down interview responses into patterns and themes in preparation for interpretation. (See Lindlof & Taylor, p. 210). I began this process by transcribing each of my recorded interviews into word-for-word transcripts (attached hereto as Transcripts P1-P11),<sup>23</sup> including indications of long pauses, laughter, relevant gesturing and related observations. These observations were sometimes incorporated into my analysis of the participants' responses. I then coded sections of the transcripts according to the five categories I had already pre-selected from theory and existing research and tweaked based on the data itself. (See Lindlof & Taylor, pp. 211-214). Categorization and coding was then followed by discourse analysis of the most relevant portions of the transcripts. This involved a deeper examination of the spoken language used by the participants during the most interesting parts of the interviews, in an effort to understand how the participants might manifest their beliefs through their actions. (See Jensen, 2002, pp. 248-251).

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<sup>23</sup> No corrections for language or grammar have been made to the participants' statements.

Specifically, I used three levels of data collection (via the content and sequencing of the interview questions) and analysis, each addressing a different goal. First, I looked for commonalities among the women to see where certain experiences or views shared by the women could shed light on the dynamics of the male-dominated workplace. Second, I looked at the more interesting, albeit individual experiences and views to gain deeper insight into the influences upon and motivation behind the women's behavior. Third and perhaps the most challenging, I tried to set-up and analyze comparisons among accounts of experiences, implicit beliefs, and explicit opinions regarding the impact of gender and gender stereotypes on the women's work lives. It was in this third level of analysis that I hoped to find clues about the implicit nature of stereotypes and to test what happens when a person becomes aware of their influence.

### **Generalizability of Results**

Given that the study was conducted in Denmark and all participants were either Danish specifically or European generally, the results may be culture-bound to some extent and/or industry specific to some extent as well. Nonetheless, many of the experiences shared and views expressed were consistent with existing research - not specific to investment banking - from the U.S., indicating similarities across the Atlantic as well as across male-dominated workplaces. Two of the non-Danish participants made numerous cultural distinctions between their home countries and Denmark, often giving the impression that they believed culture was a significant impact on their work lives as women. For women in the workplace, one of these participants considered Denmark more favorably and the other considered it less favorably, in comparison to their home countries. Their remarks and views were considered in this light.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study findings are divided into categories corresponding to each of the five main topics outlined in the first half of this paper. Specific discussions pertaining to each

section are included within each section. In a few instances, the nature of the findings fit more closely within another section (contrary to expectations), accounting for minor shifting of sub-topics within the 5 sections that do not correspond exactly to the original sections. A general discussion of the results in terms of the three levels of analysis set forth above is included at the end.

## 1. Different Experiences Based on Gender

The women were each asked about the gender ratios within their most immediate work groups, for their departments and for their particular *workspace* – the area in which they physically worked on a daily basis. While 3 of the women worked in small, immediate work groups (of less than 5 people) with an even distribution or even more women, most of the women worked within departments that were male-dominated and workspaces that were male-dominated.<sup>24</sup> *All* of the women confirmed that the Investment Bank Division of Bank X was male-dominated (greater than 75% male as defined earlier), and referred to the environment with phrases like “you see so many men in one place” (Tr. P2, p. 9), and “all those men in suits” (Tr. P9, p. 9). One woman described the feeling of walking through the trader floor as follows:

P2: . . . Sometimes when you pass by a dealer floor you can feel that you are like, the new animal in the zoo! And I definitely think it would be different if there were more women working in that environment.

(Tr. P2, p. 10). The “men in suits”, the topics of conversation during lunch, and the qualities listed as necessary for success in the industry, *all* describe a very stereotypically male environment. When I asked the women about their experiences working at the bank, their accounts very often emphasized the male-dominated aspect of their environment. (See Tr. P1-P11).

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<sup>24</sup> Some of the women were each the *only* woman in her immediate work group, workspace and/or department. (P3, P4, P6, P7).

## Experiences or Perceptions of Disparate Treatment

One woman, who openly shared the most negative experiences and views about the obstacles she faces as a woman in a male-dominated work environment, felt she might get positive recognition if she were a man, but as a woman she only gets noticed “if there’s something they think is negative”. (Tr. P4, p. 5). This raises the question of whether men get attention in the form of praise and women only receive attention in the form of criticism. None of the other women expressed the same view, although several mentioned other differences in the way they felt they were sometimes treated. One woman believed her male colleagues might get spoken to more “harshly” than her because she is a woman, and others felt the men are “nicer” when they speak to them – occasionally bordering on and even rising to flirtation or advances. (P5, P8, P9). A few women indicated they received comments they felt they got because they were women (P3, P4), while a couple of the women questioned whether they *are* treated differently as women or are just more sensitive. (P2, P3). These instances indicated a desire to blame or take responsibility themselves for their feelings rather than believe they were recipients of disparate treatment.

Several participants were either ambivalent or unsure about whether their gender was a disadvantage in their workplace. One participant, a senior dealer in sales, viewed her gender as an advantage in certain instances, saying that many of the clients actually prefer speaking with women. In her words:

P6: Well, because I’m assisting on sales, so I think I have some advantages because I’m a female, and many of my customers are men. I feel that they prefer talking to women, instead of my colleagues who are men.

(Tr. P6, p.1). Despite this perceived benefit, this participant felt that women have to choose between work and family (implying men do not, necessarily). (Tr. P6, pp. 2, 9). She also believed that women *feel* they have to perform better than the men. (Tr. P6, p. 2). It was interesting that she acknowledged this is a *feeling* women have. Several other participants used this type of language often, indicating that there is some doubt as to whether what they perceive is a reality or a reflection of their own insecurities (of course, the two are related).

### Being on Baby Watch

The issue where many of the women consistently felt they were treated differently than the men concerned family planning and expecting children. While no one shared a personal, negative experience of their own at Bank X, some expressed their concerns about the assumptions employers have regarding a woman who is married and of a certain age. One woman's worries were closely tied to a negative past experience with a former employer. A position she felt she had proven herself qualified for had become available within a team of four portfolio managers – two women and two men. Unexpectedly, the two women announced one day:

P4: . . . “we’re going to have babies,” both of them at the same time! And they were in their late 30s or starting their 40s, so it was not clear - and they did have children already, so it was not clear that they –

M: It was not clear that they would be taking maternity leave  
–

P4: Exactly, exactly, and when they left for maternity leave, the chief, he announced that *he was not ever going to employ any women in the age where you can have children*. That was of course unofficial, but I was, that was the position I had my eye on, and so my possibilities just kind of dropped to the floor because I was clearly in the age, and therefore, actually, I put in my resignation after a few months, because, I could kind of see the decline. All the responsibility I had for that team, I had a lot, you know, it was taken from me, gradually, and given to one of the newer students, and I’m not sure that was why, but from my point of view, I just saw that everything I had worked really hard for just went out the door. So I put in my resignation because I was, okay, I don’t have so much possibility here, so therefore I have to find it elsewhere . . .

(Tr. P4, pp. 2-3 (*emphasis added*)). Other women shared this concern that people assume women will have children and be the primary caretakers, making it a factor which might affect promotion decisions. (*See Tr. P3, pp. 8-9; see also Tr. P8, p. 16 (calling a woman’s*

maternity leave a “hindrance”). According to the participants, women in Denmark are entitled to take nine months to one year of maternity leave. Men at Bank X can (and by the women’s accounts, usually do) take from a few weeks up to two months of paternity leave. This makes maternity leave a more marked absence than a paternity leave, and a legitimate cause for some thought. What was interesting, however, was that the women who mentioned it as a concern in terms of promotions were also women who did not feel their gender placed them at any disadvantage for career opportunities and advancement. (P3, P8, P10). This inconsistency, possibly due to a “self-positivity bias” (*see supra* at p. 27), supports the notion that women tend to believe gender discrimination exists but usually exempt themselves from its effect, making gender stereotyping difficult to perceive. (*See supra* at p. 3).

## **2. Appropriate Femininity In a Male-Gendered Workplace**

### **Appropriate Appearance**

Most of the women initially said that the woman in the picture exhibited an appropriate appearance for their workplace. Such a statement was quickly followed by an exception to their statement,<sup>25</sup> be it the amount of bare skin showing (too much), the height of the heels (too high) or the style of the hair worn loose - the top three objections - and/or a general statement that although there was nothing wrong with the woman’s appearance, they personally would not dress that way for this workplace. (*See* Tr. P3, p. 3; Tr. P7, p. 8; Tr. P9, p. 11; Tr. P10, p. 8; Tr. P11, p. 6). The general sentiment seemed to be that the pictured woman’s appearance did not violate any explicit expectations, but it would not “fit in”. Fitting in with the environment (often explicitly phrased as fitting in with “the men”) was important to most, if not all of the participants.

An interesting observation into what some women deem an appropriately feminine appearance for women working in more stereotypically female occupations resulted from

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<sup>25</sup> Only P2 and P4 thought the woman’s appearance in the picture was “appropriate” without exceptions.

the following exchange about appearance choices:

M: Do you think there's a different expectation about how you should dress, depending on whether you are a financial professional or a secretary or an intern?

P4: Yes. Yeah.

M: What would be the difference?

P4: Well, it's very different – I noticed that already at [incomprehensible name] the first day, that secretaries are usually dressed much more sexy. And it's not like they are sluts or anything, it's just that they can pull it off more, kind of.

M: Is it more accepted, do you mean?

P4: Yeah, yeah and it's positively considered, you know, perceived.

M: So it's good that they dress a little sexier?

P4: *Yeah, I think because they are clearly the women and they have the women's role, and therefore it's positive that they look good and show their sexy, their woman side.*

M: So, they're clearly the women so it's okay for them to look like women and look sexy, but the financial professional women are not clearly the women?

P4: *No, they're, well it's more difficult* because, [pointing at the picture] I think this is a good balance[.]

(Tr. P4, pp. 12-13 (*emphasis added*); *see also* Tr. P1, p.3 (for a similar distinction between secretaries and banking professionals)). Consistent with existing research (*see supra* at pp. 15-16), this woman obviously believed secretaries fall into a more feminine role, but she could not articulate why or how women in *male-gendered* professions do not (or are not allowed to) fit the feminine role. For her, women in stereotypically feminine roles were allowed to dress more like women.



## The Balancing Act

An appropriately feminine appearance was described by many of the women working as banking professionals as a balancing act. There was a concern that “the more you dress up like a woman, the more you risk . . . that the focus turns from your skills and over to how you actually look.” (Tr. P7, p. 8; *see also* Tr. P6). These women want to be noticed as banking professionals before they are noticed as women. One participant shared that in her younger years, men thought her attractiveness gave her an advantage and often made comments:

P6: . . . But in the beginning when I was younger, I felt that they thought I had the advantages, because I was, you know, tall and slim and with light hair, and all of that kind of stuff, and it was a little annoying because you sometimes got some remarks that were because of my looks and not because of how I was actually servicing the customer and taking care of the sales business.

(Tr. P6, p. 2). For her, an attractive appearance could be a distraction that causes people to credit her looks for her success, rather than her work performance. (*See also* Tr. P1, p.17). A great example of how the women negotiate their femininity was provided by one of the two student assistants, who said she wears heels because it’s “a way of being feminine without being too flashy”. (Tr. P9, p. 12).

M: Is that important to you – to still be able to be a little bit feminine?

P9: Yes it is. Yeah, definitely.

M: Why?

P9: Because, I don’t want to pretend like I’m a man. That would be silly. It’s just, it’s a balance. On the one hand, I want to be respected *as* a woman, but on the other hand I know that if I dress *too* feminine I won’t be respected.

M: So the balance is in not hiding that you’re a woman, but also not focusing on it?

P9: Yes, exactly.

(Tr. P9, p. 12). This balancing act reflected the women's desire to express their femininity while not drawing too much attention to it. Several women indicated it was important to them to "look feminine" or to still be women. (P2, P4, P6, P9). It seemed these women were not trying to *be* men; they were just trying to fit in with them.

### **Appearance and Gender Group Identity**

Most of the participants adjusted their workplace appearance to fit in with the conservative, male-dominated environment. The goal was sometimes stated as "to not attract negative attention" to themselves and to "fit in" with what is expected. It was often unclear whose expectations they referred to – those of the men, the other women, the bank, and/or the industry. Two of the participants went a bit further, emphasizing a more dramatic distinction between their workplace and personal "looks". One of the women referred numerous times to the two distinct sections of her closet – one "more boring" for work and one "more stylish" for her personal life – and how she wished she could be more stylish at work. (See Tr. P1). The other woman indicated a more dramatic distinction in how she wore her makeup and hair to work as opposed to in her personal life. She wore minimal makeup to work, but outside of work she wore full makeup, or in her words, "the whole lot". (See Tr. P9, pp. 11-13). Like most of the women, she believed wearing hair down was very feminine and admitted, "I guess I *am* trying to dress more like a man when I'm at work, than when I'm not." (Tr. P9, p. 11). Consistent with my predictions, the women who seemed more conscious of adjusting their appearance for the workplace had the most ambiguous or inconsistent views on gender traits and roles. That is, they were the least stereotypically female or counter-stereotypic.

### **Appropriate Masculinity?**

The consensus seemed to be that dressing in very neutral colors like beige, black and gray, wearing un-revealing clothing and minimal makeup, and even avoiding looking

“stylish” or “fashionable” were smart choices for their environment. Their language often indicated that this type of dress would prevent them from getting into trouble, as described above. As illustrated by the woman’s words concerning secretaries, there was often a distinction drawn between appearance expectations for women in stereotypically female roles and those in stereotypically male roles. The penalties the women working as banking professionals tried to protect against were for *adhering* to the stereotypically feminine look, *not* for violating it. Accordingly, these women did not seem concerned with looking “feminine enough”, at least not explicitly. They primarily wanted to fit in with the men and to the contrary, seemed more concerned with dressing the part to fit in as “not *too* feminine”. Finding the “balance” involved in exhibiting the appropriate level of feminine appearance was about expressing an appropriate *masculinity* while still maintaining a level of femininity that allowed them to remain true to themselves.

### **Conceptions of Femininity**

Looking feminine was an important aspect of femininity for several of the women, and it was much easier for the women to describe than *being* feminine. A feminine look was about wearing makeup and wearing the hair loose, often with heels, jewelry, skirts or any combination thereof. (See e.g. Tr. P1, P2, P9). Several of the women had a hard time answering the question of what it meant to them to *be* feminine,<sup>26</sup> but could more easily answer my immediate follow-up question - in those instances - of what it meant to them to be a woman. An example:

M: Okay. What does it mean to you to be feminine?

P10: Um, well I’m not that feminine-type, I guess. I’m more the sporty type, so, actually I don’t know.

M: Okay. Well, what does it mean to you to be a woman?

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<sup>26</sup> The majority of the women in my prior study on “Makeup in the Workplace” were secretaries (a traditionally feminine role) and all of them worked in more gender-balanced environments. Interestingly enough, they all had an easier time of defining femininity than the women in the present study. (See Diaz, 2010, pp. 13-15).

P10: Yeah, I think it has to do more than what I wear. It is my charisma and stuff like that, how I act, how I speak, than what I wear. I can be still feminine but wearing pants, for example.

(Tr. P10, p. 12). “Feminine” was interpreted as a word much more loaded with expectations whereas “woman” seems to have been deemed as more of a factual term and easier for this participant to identify with (yet interestingly enough, I meant them as essentially the same question). Several of the women also mentioned that their femininity was not something they thought about every day. (*See e.g.* Tr. P7, p. 3; Tr. P9, p. 14).

### **3. Violating Gender Stereotypes: The Counter-Stereotypic Woman at Work**

#### **Gender Differences: Expression or Expectation**

Several participants commented that gender differences “showed up” more in social settings at work, such as in the topics men and women found interesting. (P3, P7, P8). It was sometimes difficult to distinguish gender differences from gender stereotypes when interpreting the participants’ responses. At times I asked about expectations regarding women in their workplace and received responses that spoke more to observed gender differences. As the following example illustrates:

M: For example, is it more acceptable here for men to yell than for women to yell?

P11: Yeah, I think so. But I think it’s also acceptable for women to yell. I just think it’s more unusual.

(Tr. P11, p. 12). Such responses served as a reminder that stereotypes both affect and reflect gender differences, as discussed in the theoretical portion of this paper. Descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes are born out of observed tendencies and behaviors, so it is important to note that sometimes people are just observing and not necessarily expecting.

#### **Masculine and Feminine Traits**

I asked most of the women to consider a list of traits, one by one, and tell me whether they thought the trait was typically masculine, feminine, or neutral, and whether it was a compliment to be told they possessed that trait in their workplace. Some portions of the interviews got fairly personal and sensitive, so I included these questions to relax the participants as well as transition into more explicit discussions about gender stereotypes. As expected, almost all of the women characterized the traditionally feminine traits as feminine or neutral and all of the masculine traits as masculine. Only a few women categorized a couple of the traditionally masculine traits as neutral. As for the desirability of the traits, all of the masculine traits were “compliments” and “good to have” in their workplaces, which was consistent with existing research findings that “stereotypically male traits are associated with success in the business world”. (*See supra* at p. 15). Views regarding the feminine traits were about evenly split between useful and not useful/detrimental. Several participants acknowledged that many women possess those traditionally masculine traits, but “it’s just not perceived as feminine”. (Tr. P4, p. 24). Such statements indicate the influence of descriptive stereotypes on our perceptions of women. As expected, the two women working in traditionally female positions (HR and Communications) viewed more of the feminine traits as positive traits for the workplace.

### **The Counter-Stereotypic Woman**

Most of the participants believed the women who enter investment banking are “naturally” more like men. One such woman refers to her identification with the men as follows:

P5: . . . I think one of the things is that you don’t really see yourself as that different. Also I don’t really notice it that much.

M: You don’t see yourself as that different from other women?

P5: No, from the men. I mean, you don’t notice that much because you get used to it and you kind of tell yourself that you shouldn’t notice it because you want to be [trails off].

(Tr. P5, p. 9 (emphasis added)). As much as she says the women who are attracted to this field are naturally more like the men, she seems to be making a deliberate effort to be that way.<sup>27</sup> Regardless, it was a commonly held view that investment banking is a field that attracts less “girlie girlie types” (Tr. P5, p. 9) or “feminine” women, given the nature of the skills involved. “[T]his kind of job attracts women who are a bit more like the guys.” (Tr. P7, p. 8; *see also* Tr. P3, p. 6; Tr. P11, p. 17). Mathematics and the type of economics involved in investment banking have traditionally been areas that attract more men, so the women who study these disciplines are in the minority as of the date they enroll in their university courses. (*See* Tr. P3, P4, P5, P7). Additionally, investment banking has been characterized as a very competitive field, requiring “toughness”, aggressiveness and a willingness to take risks – all traditionally masculine traits. (*See* Tr. P1-P11). The women who are drawn to this field do not necessarily view themselves as more masculine or less feminine, although several of the participants referred to themselves (directly) or spoke of themselves (indirectly) in ways that signaled their identification with men and male qualities. At times it was as if they spoke of women as a group of which they were not themselves members. (P3, P5, P9). In any case, most of them seemed to have become accustomed to the male environment.

One participant believed that women *needed* to be more like the men in order to succeed or advance in their careers, one admitted to consciously *deciding* to be more like the men, and one was convinced that she was disadvantaged simply by virtue of *being* a biological female. (P1, P9, P4). Whether naturally or consciously, being more like the men still seemed to place women at a disadvantage. For example, I asked one participant if assertive men were more influential than assertive women at the bank, and she believed that to be true “sometimes”. She expressed the view that men are more influential because there are more of them. In her own words: “you just listen more to those who are more like yourself.” (Tr. P7, p. 12). Despite such challenges, several women expressed the view that self-promoting was essential to advancing in their careers. (P3, P5, P9). Existing research

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<sup>27</sup> P5 seemed neither stereotypically feminine nor counter-stereotypic in her responses.

(*see supra* at pp. 18-19) claims such women are less likeable, but at least in the eyes of these participants, that seems unlikely.

### **Male vs. Female Co-Workers and Bosses**

Most of the women who indicated a preference preferred working with men, often stating that men were more direct and less sensitive than women. (*See e.g.* Tr. P1, p. 15; Tr. P3, p. 6; Tr. P9, p.4). One woman indicated that she preferred to work *for* a woman because “women are more sensitive and easier to talk to.” (Tr. P9, p. 4). What was most noteworthy, however, was not a general opinion one way or the other, but the extent to which the women’s preferences regarding male vs. female bosses were shaped by their experiences to date, and varied accordingly. Although many of the women had only had 1 to 3 bosses, they all had a tendency to generalize from their few experiences.

A couple of the participants felt the more senior women tended to be more masculine in either their dress or behavior - or both - (*see* Tr. P1, P6), but there was no consistency on this point across the participants. One participant described the two women she knew about who had reached very senior levels at the bank:

P6: . . . And well, none of them is like me! [Laughing a bit.] They are more, how do you say it, closed, and *more like a man*. But of course they are women because they look like women, but they are more – how do you say it in English – not cold but not as impulsive [pause].

M: More reserved?

P6: More reserved, but also more focused on their goal.

(Tr. P6, pp. 5-6 (*emphasis added*)). Both of these executive women exhibited role reversals: one had a husband who was a stay-at-home father, the other’s husband worked part-time as a secretary for some years. The participant had not worked with either of these women so she could not comment on their personalities beyond the impressions she had shared above.

### **Challenges for Women in Male-Dominated Workplaces**

One challenge the women face involves “getting the information” they need regarding organizational matters (for example, upcoming promotions or impending layoffs). Several women explained that most of the “gossip” that goes on in their workplace among the women is simply their way of becoming informed about matters that the men seem to be more privy to than the women. (*See e.g. Tr. P1, P6*). One participant felt this was due to the social structure within the bank, where groups of men at various levels (i.e., managers’ groups and levels below management) go out socially and share information. These men “protect each other” and “lock in” the information. (*See Tr. P6, p. 8*). In this way, it is difficult for women to access the information, perhaps placing the men at an advantage when it comes to personnel changes such as promotions and firings. If the women do not know about these planned changes and the men do, clearly the men are better able to position themselves accordingly.

When asked if being a woman affected their career opportunities within their work environment, some women seemed to think this gender question was about whether people question their competency because they are women. The question itself is much more open than that, encompassing several other factors that affect women’s opportunities. One woman believed her lack of directness might be a hindrance (*Tr. P8, pg. 16-17*), while another answered most interestingly with something that amounted to “only because I’m a woman; not because I’m a woman”. Her exact words:

M: Okay. Do you think that being a woman here hinders or hurts your opportunities at all?

P9: Only because of the qualities that I possess, I’m not necessarily being aggressive and, you know, I’m modest. But I don’t think the gender is a hind[rance]. Just the typical qualities of women, that you’re careful and you don’t make yourself noticed – I think that can be a hind[rance].



(Tr. P9, p. 21). How gender is a factor or even a hindrance is also about how the women perceive *themselves*, not just how others perceive them or expect them to be. It was a commonly held view by some of the participants that the women were not viewed as less competent; they were simply not known as well as the men for reasons addressed in a following section. Incidentally, one woman commented that perhaps women *are* less competent if “they are not good enough at getting it” (reaching higher management levels). (Tr. P6, p. 11).

Specifically regarding promotions, one woman expressed the view that men get promoted more often because they are more aggressive in pursuing a position, whereas women wait to be recognized and rewarded for their good work.

P9: . . . I think men tend to be more aggressive, and that’s why they get most promotions and go to the top, because they are more aggressive. They’re not scared of saying what they want. While women, they hope that things will come to them, so they don’t have to be sassy and, yeah.

(Tr. P9, p. 16). Gender is a disadvantage for this woman, but because of how women *are*, not because of others’ biases. Another participant had a different opinion about the consequences of being a non-aggressive woman in the workplace. She observed in a previous, male-dominated work environment that the women who were promoted tended to be “quiet women” who did not “stand out”. She elaborated in the following exchange:

P8: . . . [E]veryone felt that they were being promoted just so that there *were* women up there – it’s mostly men.

M: So, sort of for quota reasons?

P8: Yeah, exactly. And then if you *need* to have a woman, you might as well have one who’s quiet.

M: Who won’t go against the flow.

P8: Exactly. *Smart* women. Not *not* smart women, but just not really noticed in any way.

(Tr. P8, p. 16). For her, non-aggressive women might stand a better chance at promotions because they are less likely to challenge the status quo. This view was more consistent with the theory and existing research indicating that once women have proven their competency, they must remain sufficiently feminine (in this case, by not being aggressive or outspoken) to remain likeable. For the most part, however, the women did not express concern for remaining “feminine enough” to be likeable, but rather tried to be “masculine enough” to fit in.

#### **4. The More Competent/Less Likeable Dilemma**

##### **Absence of Female Managers**

It was difficult to ascertain whether women in higher-level positions within the bank were likeable because there simply were not enough women in those positions to speak of. These findings were consistent with the literature that claims a tendency for increasing gender disparity at the highest levels of organizations. (*See supra* at p. 11). When asked to describe the female managers or higher-level executives at Bank X, most of the women quickly responded that there weren't that many female managers or senior women to look to, and the few they had “heard about” or knew about, they really had not had any contact with on which to base an opinion. The women who provided a reason for this deficiency consistently stated that men are the ones in the position to promote, and men select men. One woman opined:

P11: . . . – well there are not that many female managers here, especially top managers. I think that has to do with the history of the place and the fact that all the managers are males, so they select male managers, but I don't think it's because they don't think women have the qualifications. I just think it's very hard for women. They have to do a bit more to get appointed, to get into management, I think.

(Tr. P11, p. 13). The general belief was that the men did not necessarily view the women as less qualified than the men, but rather that (as she says above) the women just need to “do a bit more” to compensate for the fact that men tend to select men.

### Still a “Boys’ Club” at Senior Management Level

Another commonly shared sentiment among the women was the notion that men are in the positions to promote and hire more so than women, and men tend to select other men.<sup>28</sup> They select other men because (1) they are more comfortable around other men - they understand each other and know what to expect, and (2) they socialize more with other men, getting to know them better and forming the types of relationships that make them more prone to choose these men for promotions. The first instance is a more direct impact of gender on hiring and promotions, the second is a more indirect impact, but gender-related nonetheless.

A couple of women referred to quotas and shared the belief that such measures may help women get hired, but they have little effect on getting women promoted because *those* decisions are heavily influenced by these relationships. (See Tr. P1, P7). One woman explains:

P7: I think the main challenge there is that personal relationships also matter a lot, for moving up, and for some reason it’s just easier for males to bond with other men, so *there* it’s a bit of a disadvantage.

(Tr. P7, p. 16). Interestingly enough, this participant did not feel she had to work harder to get recognized. (See Tr. P7, p. 16).

A more direct claim of discrimination came from a participant who shared the story of a female colleague at the bank who had been passed over for a promotion for what appeared to be clearly gender reasons. This colleague had worked hard and long hours to build up a certain business within the bank, and the promotion went to a man who was not nearly as knowledgeable about the area as she. (See Tr. P6, pp. 9-10). Another woman

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<sup>28</sup> One participant’s view was markedly different from the others in that she felt - amongst candidates with equal skills - an attractive woman would likely have an advantage over an unattractive woman and even over a man. (See Tr. P8, pp. 8-9). This begs the question of whether men select their potential friends or fantasy women when making hiring/promoting decisions.

described her frustration at being fired over her male coworker:

M: . . . Do you think it was because you are a woman?

P4: No, I think it was because I didn't have the relationship to the boss, so he had a harder time firing the other guy.

M: So it's not a direct result of being a woman –

P4: Exactly, because also he was very sad about firing me, it was not that he was a bad person or anything.

(Tr. P4, p. 6). Whether this woman was really fired for good cause or not is not as significant as the fact that she perceived her firing as a result of her lacking a relationship with her boss, yet she did not think her gender was the reason. Perhaps she is correct in terms of a direct impact, but she and several other women expressed the opinion that it is harder for the managers to get to know them because they have less in common with them as women. Also, men will often go out one-on-one with a male co-worker after work or for lunch but are less prone to do that with a woman, be it for appropriateness concerns (*see* Tr. P7, p. 17; Tr. P8, pp. 5-6) or lack of common interests to talk about. Of course it is not always about not being invited. Sometimes it is the women themselves who choose not to attend a social gathering because they do not feel comfortable going out with just the men, or because they are not interested in the male-gearred event (e.g. football). (*See* e.g. Tr. P8, pp. 5-6). In any case and consistent with existing research (*see supra* at p. 10), most of the participants did indicate they were either not interested in or found it difficult to form social relationships at work that extended beyond “work-only acquaintances”.

One participant, the senior dealer in sales, had a creative approach for handling the “boys’ club” in terms of the tendency for client-outings to involve typically male interests:

P6: Actually I have done it a little differently. I have asked the bank to give permission to go out with a client, a man, and he can bring his wife and I bring my husband, because then, there are two couples, and then there's not this thing about male – many customers, they don't like going out in the evening because then they're away from their families, but

they like to go home to their wives and say, “oh we’ve gotten this invitation for dinner out in a good restaurant, and you are invited as well,” and then suddenly it’s possible to get nannies and other things because then the wife is invited.  
[Laughing a bit.]

(Tr. P6, p. 5). She shared that the bank has been very receptive to her proposals about such outings and felt that women need to “speak up” and ask for what they need. (Tr. P6, pp. 5, 11-12).<sup>29</sup>

### **More Paradox than Dilemma**

The problem also seems to be in getting past the middle management levels. In this regard, some of the women seemed less concerned with proving their competency to advance their careers and more concerned with not appearing too feminine or too “threatening”, particularly in a male-dominated environment. (See e.g. Tr. P4, p. 21; Tr. P11, p. 6-7). One woman described her hesitation about looking too attractive as follows:

P4: I think you have to be on a certain level before you really show-off your attractive look, and until then, you can make yourself attractive but in a very low-key way, that doesn’t [pause].

M: Threaten?

P4: . . . it seems to me that you should go for being attractive without threatening their power. And then, you know, when you have the power, then you can just not care, because then it will be the really high bosses and they don’t get threatened that easily by your looks.

M: Because you are not going above them?

P4: Exactly. Well, that’s my take on it.

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<sup>29</sup> P6 was wearing high-heeled boots, a gray skirt and a black, boatneck top for the interview. Her hair was worn loose. She appeared femininely dressed, while still adhering to the neutral tones spoken of by the women. Her views and the traits she exhibited or shared about were a mix of traditionally masculine and feminine traits, and her comments throughout the interview indicated that she was actively striking a balance between her masculine and feminine sides, appropriate for her environment.

(Tr. P4, p. 18). Apparently the degree to which she felt women could exhibit an attractively feminine appearance was directly related to their level of success within the organization. Another participant described the “confident beauty” of the woman in the picture as “threatening” for both men and women and as something that would “scare people” at Investment Bank. She explains:

P11: It’s her, because she’s, yeah it’s definitely because she’s slim and beautiful, and she knows. It’s her attitude.

(Tr. P11, p. 7). In these cases, it seemed being more feminine might make them *less* likeable – a finding which does not support the literature on this specific issue. More a troubling paradox than a dilemma, I interpreted these ideas about a “threatening” femininity as follows: Daring to look feminine is a sign of confidence, and confidence is a masculine trait, so by exhibiting a *confident* femininity, a woman might violate the prescriptive feminine stereotype. If women can postpone exhibiting their “attractive look” until they get past the middle management levels within the organization (where they might pose a threat), they can be as feminine as they want to be once they reach senior management levels because they are no longer threatening from “the top”.

### **5. Deciding Not to Stereotype: The Conscious and Automatic Components of Stereotypes and Prejudice**

This category of data was the most challenging to analyze, but also the most interesting. It is here that I sought to compare the women’s accounts of their experiences against their expressed views on gender differences, roles and stereotypes. This comparison was usually conducted after the data was collected, but at times I was able to bring the comparison to the participant’s attention during the course of the interview itself. Research has indicated that people tend to correct stereotyped-influenced judgments or behavior when they experience a discrepancy between their thoughts or beliefs and their actual judgments or behavior. (See Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p. 112 (citing Devine et al., 1991; Monteith, 1993)). There were instances when participants made stereotyped

generalizations about men and women in the course of sharing about an experience or a view, and then adjusted their opinions when I questioned them directly about gender stereotypes. In one example, even though the participant had mentioned in an earlier portion of the interview that women supervisors tend to “do this” and men tend to “do that”, she cannot generalize men and women as such when asked directly about the female boss she had at a prior job, stating that “yeah, I guess it’s very dependant on the person.” (Tr. P3, p. 8). This realization that it depends on the person occurred a few times in similar contexts with other participants.

Particularly interesting was the following response regarding whether the participant believed the women in her workplace were stereotyped:

P3: I don’t know. So I don’t think we are stereotyped, viewed as stereotypes, the women here. I think we are just, actually, viewed very much as just one of the guys, or one of the boys, in many ways.

M: So are you viewed as one of the guys here, or one of the people here, who work here?

P3: What would be the difference?

M: Meaning, are you viewed as one of the guys?

P3: Guys as in males?

M: Yes.

P3: Okay, when I say “guys” I actually mean one of the people here.

(Tr. P3, p. 20). The participant initially said the women were viewed as one of the guys – specifically mentioning “boys” – but then backs away from that statement and says she meant “guys” as in “people”. This indicated a subtle influence on her judgment of how others and she herself perceive women in her workplace that seems to be operating below the level of conscious awareness.

Another participant believed that physical attractiveness for a woman might cause her to be deemed as less competent, but admitted she did not have any examples for why she felt that way. (Tr. P9, p. 7). Her acknowledgment of a feeling she could not substantiate with an example speaks to the subtle or implicit nature of stereotype influence. More generally, as each interview progressed, discrepancies started to arise between some of the women's accounts of their experiences and the views they expressed about gender stereotyping in their work environments. There were several instances in which the women initially claimed there was no difference in the way they were treated as compared to the men, but subsequently stated that there *were* different expectations for them as women. These findings supported the idea that gender stereotyping is often implicit and even below the level of conscious awareness, until it is brought to someone's attention.

#### **“On a Daily Basis”**

As referenced earlier, I often commenced the interviews with the opening question of “what is it like working here, as a woman?” The responses to this question often revealed a slight defensiveness about how “fine” it was, how it was “not a problem” or how it was no different than it was for the men. (See e.g. Tr. P5, Tr. P7, Tr. P9, Tr. P10). One woman answered: “I’m not sure that women get treated any differently from men, so I think it’s fine.” (Tr. P8, p.1). In fact, many of the women responded that they hardly thought about it or didn’t really notice it “on a daily basis”, and that it certainly was not a problem. For example:

M: Okay. So generally, what is it like working here, as a woman?

P7: I think it's fairly easy. Actually in some of the daily work, I don't even think about, that I'm the only woman, for example, when I have lunch together with my colleagues. Yeah, I don't even think about it. It seems like they're pretty much the same.



(Tr. P7, p. 3). It was interesting how some women said they did not really think about it on a daily basis, yet every morning, *on a daily basis*, a choice is made about what to wear, and most of them choose – every day – not to dress “too feminine”. They may not consciously choose to avoid looking feminine, but their daily appearance choices are guided by this desire. Whether consciously or sub-consciously, they are engaging in a cognitive process that is influenced by gender expectations.

### **Challenges, Not Disadvantages**

I asked all of the women if they felt they had to work harder or perform better than the men to be recognized. A few believed they did, in different respects. However, many of them said “no” but spoke about challenges specific to women alone at various points in the interviews. These challenges were based on expectations of them as women, be it about the types of interests they might have in social contexts, their plans about starting families or their tendencies as people to work with or for. Each of these challenges had to be overcome by proving themselves “not so different” from the men in conversation topics, or dispelling notions that they would inevitably take a maternity leave, or simply putting aside their modest or sensitive nature to survive and advance in their environment. Stereotype influence can be so subtle and *implicit* that even when asked directly if their gender made them work a little harder than the men, they often failed to make the connection.

### **Final Thought**

The final participant interviewed in the study concluded her interview with the following comments about feminine stereotypes in male-dominated workplaces:

P11: . . . So I don't think it's so much stereotyped as it used to be. I worked in the financial sector also twenty years ago and it was a lot worse and a lot different, so it's kind of disappearing I think. Yeah, which is good.

M: Yeah. Aside from that, nothing?

P11: No, I still think in top management, the stereotypes still hold.

M: Which ones?

P11: The, with a woman would have to be tougher than a man to get into top management.

M: Why do you think it still holds at that level?

P11: Um, maybe it's because she would have to be selected by older men who came from that generation still, and I think that in twenty years the new generation will have changed some of that.

(Tr. P11, p. 19). Ending on a positive note, she believed gender stereotypes in the workplace were changing except concerning promotions - because it is still the “old guard” that does the selecting - but was optimistic about the outlook over the next two decades.

### **The Three-Level Analysis**

Instances where many or most of the women shared similar experiences or expressed similar views allowed me to get a glimpse into the tone of their work environment. Whether characterized as a “zoo”, a “boys’ club” or just a place with “so many men”, it was clear that the environment had a very masculine feel. Commonalities regarding the women’s social relations and experiences at work revealed a social structure comprised of informal “groups” of men that the women either chose not to join or where not feasibly able to join. Moving away from the common ground explored in this first level of analysis, I found that as I delved deeper into particular experiences and views, the women often shared numerous stories – their own and of their colleagues. These stories were sometimes presented as examples of suspected stereotyping and/or gender discrimination. (See Tr. P4, P6). Some of the participants seemed happy for the opportunity to talk about these issues, and one in particular seemed as if she really needed to. These women do not seem to have many occasions or similarly situated women with which to discuss these issues in a safe environment. Their expressed behaviors often

revealed a very conscious effort to “fit in” while still remaining true to themselves, and a resulting tension between these two goals. The degree to which they felt disadvantaged, advantaged, or neither by their gender was very individual and varied. Lastly, in the comparisons among each participant’s experiences, implicit views, and expressed opinions, inconsistencies often arose. A stereotype’s influence can only be overridden when the individual is aware of its influence and has sufficient time and motivation to override it. These women work in a fast-paced environment (by their own accounts) where, on a daily basis, they may not have the time to adjust their judgments and behavior to counteract stereotype assumptions. More significantly, it was unclear whether they even have the requisite motivation. Their conviction to “fit in” with the men was so strong that perhaps *that* is the easiest path for them to follow, as opposed to conforming to the stereotype. (*See supra* at p. 25). These women seem more focused on meeting the men’s expectations of the *male* stereotypes rather than on individuating themselves. It brings into question, are they trying to be noticed as banking professionals first, women second, or as masculine enough to erode the distinction?

### **Employers’ Role in Reducing Gender Stereotyping**

Implicit cognitive operations such as the automatic aspect of stereotypes can intrude on judgment when it comes to matters such as hiring decisions, salary increases and promotions, so it would benefit employers (and consequently, employees) to learn about strategies for reducing the effects of implicit stereotyping. (*See* Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 17). Research has indicated attention to the stereotype reduces or even eliminates its effect, particularly when it comes to “weak automatic influences on judgment”. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 17-18). Social structures such as an organization’s workplace environment affect the level and type of attention that people pay to those around them, and these structures can either lessen or heighten the problems borne of gender stereotyping. (Fiske, 1993, p. 627). One could argue that there is already a heightened awareness of gender stereotypes in male-dominated work environments, yet the present study indicates this added attention might be insufficient to overcome them.

### **Suggested Approaches for Reducing Discrimination Based on Gender Stereotyping**

Research has suggested that organizations could gradually diminish or lessen the impact of implicit gender stereotyping in the workplace through their policies and practices. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, pp. 25, 31-34). For example, descriptions of job requirements and of the attributes necessary to succeed at the job should be articulated in terms of “behaviors, skills and past experiences” rather than in “vague personality characteristics” that are more susceptible to gender stereotype association. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, p. 32). Another suggestion is to hold managers accountable for the performance of the people they select and evaluate. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, pp. 33-34). Forming accurate assessments without falling back on stereotypes requires motivation as discussed above, and having such a personal stake in making accurate decisions helps to override the stereotype’s influence. (Heilman & Welle, 2005, pp. 33-34). Requiring supervisors to provide examples and context when making evaluative claims about employees in performance reviews has also been suggested as a way to minimize the gender bias. (Belkin, 2007, p. 3). Other strategies include blinding<sup>30</sup> and affirmative action<sup>31</sup>, but these have been criticized for being ineffective or even ethically reprehensible.

In any case, such measures fail to address the subtler and more prevalent forms of gender stereotyping or discrimination that arise from social exclusion in informal settings. To this end, I offer the following suggestions based on my study findings:

- Conscious efforts to include the women in company outings by planning more

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30 “Blinding” involves concealing the potentially biasing information from the person making the decision/judgment. However, the type of blinding achieved in experiments is difficult to produce in real life because usually, the potentially biasing characteristics are linked to other characteristics that cannot be hidden. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 19).

31 Affirmative action programs have often been criticized as “reverse discrimination”. However, implicit cognition research has indicated that affirmative action programs may help compensate not only past discrimination, but also may compensate against future “implicit” discrimination by people who are not intentionally discriminating. Otherwise, blinding without affirmative action only preserves the status quo because the privileged group will continue to *perform* better due to its continued privileged situation. (See Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 19).

gender-neutral activities such as dinners or performances (as opposed to sporting events and golf),

- Encouraging client outings that include spouses (as suggested and utilized by one of the participants),
- Positioning employees in physical workspaces that avoid 90% or greater male representation (as experienced by several participants) where feasible,
- Implementing same-sex mentoring programs that would allow women to “get to know” the female managers – addressing both a lack of mentoring and an unfamiliarity with the more senior executive women within the organization.

## CONCLUSION

How women in the workplace are viewed differently from men is not a new question. Theorists have been endeavoring to understand and explain gender differences since Adam and Eve, figuratively speaking. More recently, research has focused on the expectations that arise from repeatedly observed gender differences that, over time, start to form the bases of useful cognitive schemas – stereotypes; but useful is never perfect. Stereotypes often lead to expectations that overshadow individuating information, resulting in judgments (of self and others) and behaviors based on assumptions about how men and women are and how they should behave. How women respond to these expectations varies from woman to woman, but each woman’s experiences add to the story. The present study focused on women working in the male-dominated workplace, with the majority of the participants also working in male-gendered occupations (banking professionals). These women experience certain common challenges, many of which have been studied by theorists and empirical researchers alike. While the findings in the present study support much of the existing research as set forth above, the goal was not to confirm or refute specific theoretical or empirical claims to date. Instead, the goal was to explore the nature of the women’s experiences as characterized by each of them – “what is happening on the outside” - to develop new insights into the impact and influence of gender stereotypes. Regarding stereotype *influence* in particular, the goal was to leave the laboratory and develop and implement a three-level interview format and analysis, using the tools of a

qualitative research study to examine what is “happening on the inside”.

Using these insights to answer the five main questions encompassed by the research question as outline *supra* at p. 6, I found these women tended *not* to believe their experiences were that different from the men’s, but their stories often told otherwise. They were more concerned with appearing sufficiently “masculine” than feminine, as fitting in with the male environment was very important. The penalties they tried to guard against were for not conforming to the *masculine* stereotypes, rather than the feminine ones. Likeability seemed less of a problem than anonymity – the “boys club” social structure within the organization presents challenges, as women are not forming the social relations that so often affect promotions and related decisions. Interestingly, the paradox of a threatening femininity might be keeping some women from “being liked” or from being true to themselves – something many of them desired. Lastly, trying to “fit in” with the men while acknowledging how much they are “like” the men revealed some inconsistencies which signal the automatic influence of stereotypes, – an implicit, cognitive operation that can remain in stealth, even in an environment where gender is impossible to miss.

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