Men and Women in Management: The Myths Continue

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MEN AND WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT: THE MYTHS CONTINUE

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The Honors Program
College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

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by
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Introduction

--"Women don't belong in the workplace... That's what's wrong with our country today--women are getting jobs rather than being at home with their children (that is, the few they choose to have these days) like they should be."

---White male, age 84

--"Sometimes I feel like I can conquer the world, but then reality hits. Women still do not have the same amount of opportunity in the business world as men. Maybe someday we'll be able to change that."

---African American female, age 21

--"When I graduated from college in the early 60's women had three occupational choices; you could become a nurse, a teacher, or a secretary. Women have more choices than ever. They can go into occupations now that have typically been categorized as male."

---White female, age 51

--"Someday my wife and I are going to have kids. I'd love to stay home and take care of them--she could work--but that's just not acceptable in our society yet."

---White male, age 24

These quotations come from conversations I have had with various people about my research on the myths that hinder women's advancement in management positions. The comments varied greatly, from male chauvinism to extreme feminism, but they all agreed on one thing: women still are considered inferior to men in the business field. Why is this? Why do women face the same constraints in the workplace as they did twenty years ago (Freeman, 213)? What effect does this have not only on women, but on men and on the organization?

This thesis will examine the effect of gender myths on women in management. I argue that women in management are held back, not by incompetence or inadequacy, but rather by the myths and social
constructions surrounding them as women. The myths American society holds about sex and gender hinder women from obtaining equality in the workplace.

According to Webster's Dictionary, myths can be defined as popular beliefs or traditions that embody the ideals and institutions of a society or part of a society (1497). One way to detect the myths of a society is to study its communication; one must look not only at verbal communication, but also at the structures, customs, myths, and institutions that give meaning to and are given meaning by verbal interaction. I plan to explore this relationship between myth and communication by looking at the myths about women in organizational life as these myths are revealed, reinforced and created through language.

The first section explores why societies have myths and what roles myths play. Myths are able to justify a society’s past and its current actions, and predict its future actions. Second, I examine gender stereotypes and their relation to myth. I argue that myths and stereotypes have a circular relationship; although myths and stereotypes are two different things, they feed off of and influence each other. Third, I examine the myths that pervade the business world. An effective manner by which to study the myths within an organization is to study the stereotypes the members of an organization hold to be true. Fourth, to uncover the overriding myths of an organization, I explore the sex-role stereotypes of men and women and the stereotype of the "effective" manager as well as the effects these stereotypes have on the organization. Not only do I look at the
stereotypical characteristics men, women, and effective managers are supposed to have, but also at how these stereotypes feed the myths which justify the present and past of a company, and dictate the behaviors and roles expected in the future. Because of the ability of myths and stereotypes to perpetuate behaviors and roles, they have serious consequences today for both women and men.

Fifth, and finally, I examine how myths may be conquered. Although data obtained through empirical studies and the beliefs evoked by myths vary drastically, we continue to believe our myths. Because myths are beliefs and deeply attached to emotions, they cannot be disproven by fact alone. We try to hold onto myths, despite conflicting information, in order to retain our culture and sense of security. However, this is not to say that conflicting information does not influence our myths in some way. It may not negate our myths, but it may change them slightly to take the new information into account.

Myths may change, but they will never simply disappear. Myths are able to justify what we do by reaffirming our beliefs and by giving us reasons for our actions. If we dismiss our reasons for our actions, we will put our sense of direction for the future in jeopardy. All predictability that myths provide will cease and any sense of security we might have had will be eliminated (Robertson 21).

When myths have negative effects on a society, or when members of that society question the principle upon which the myth is based, the myth may change more drastically or even may be replaced by yet another myth more representative of the beliefs of the time. Before
women will be viewed as equals the American myths pertaining to women's inferiority must be dissolved. These myths must be replaced with new myths that view women and men as equals.
Myth and its Place in Society

When one thinks of myth, the most likely things to come to mind are the myths of ancient Greece. These myths are stories of heroines and heroes, gods and goddesses, and numerous creatures. They explain how the sun moves around the earth, why there are changes in the seasons, and many other paradoxical problems of ancient times. Those who believed these stories felt that they solved the paradox in some way (Robertson 6). Just as these ancient Greeks stories reduced the complexity of the ancient world, we too rely on mythic stories to explain the world we live in. Myths explain the world around us by doing three things: one, justifying our actions in the past; two, justifying our present actions; and three, providing a model which our society can expect to follow in the future. However, a myth cannot do any of this until it has been legitimized by a society.

In order for a society to legitimize a myth, it first must believe that the myth is valid and that there are good reasons for accepting its claim to validity. According to Jurgen Habermas, legitimation or validation is a necessary component in securing mass loyalty to a myth. Only through legitimation is a large group of people willing to follow the myth (180). Habermas states:

The claim to legitimacy is related to the social-integrative preservation of a normatively determined social identity.
Legitimations serve to make good this claim, that is, to show how and why existing (or recommended) institutions are fit to employ political power in such a way that the values constitutive for the identity of the society will be realized. (182-183)

A society must believe in the myth; it must believe that enough good reasons exist for it to be considered valid. In order for a myth to be legitimate it must "possess the quality of rightness, of appropriateness, of the morally good, and ought to be recognized in virtue of this quality" (Habermas 199). In other words, a society must be motivated by good reasons to justify a myth's claim to validity and accept it into their belief system. However, the society that participates in the myth is the only entity which can attribute these quality to a myth. Even though an outsider may not believe these qualities are present in a myth, the participants may. If the participants believe a myth is legitimate, only then is it actually legitimate. As Habermas states: "The legitimacy of an order of domination is measured against the belief in its legitimacy on the part of those subject to the domination" (199). The more a society believes that a myth is legitimate, the more legitimate it becomes.

After a myth is legitimized by the society, the legitimimized belief not only becomes part of a society's identity, but it also helps to preserve and maintain that identity. By legitimizing a myth a society also secures mass loyalty to it by creating the norms people shy away from breaking or challenging. Without legitimation a myth does not have the power necessary within a society to secure loyalty or
to shape social identity.

Legitimized myths create norms for behaviors and thought patterns; they influence which beliefs are correct and how these beliefs are upheld in the society. As long as the myth is a part of the society's identity, it will perpetuate norms and behaviors in an attempt to maintain itself. If a person fails to follow the myth, he or she would go against the societal norms and, in doing so, challenge the identity of the society itself. Needless to say, the challenge probably would not be accepted by the other members of the society because it goes against their basic beliefs.

Along with securing loyalty and creating social identity, a legitimate myth also justifies a society's past. As James Robertson concluded in *American Myth, American Reality*: "Myths are self-justifying. Because they often carry social ideals, the people who use them and participate in them assume that the ideals justify the past out of which these ideals came" (19). For example, in grade school we were all taught that "in fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue;" we were taught to believe that Christopher Columbus was the first to discover America. This myth deflects out conflicting information about the many other groups, such as the Vikings and the Native Americans, who had previously "discovered" America. By believing the Christopher Columbus myth, Americans are able to legitimize its actions against the Native Americans and against the land of this "New World," Labeling Columbus as the true founder of the New World creates the perception that America was land owned by no one and therefore free for anyone's taking. Because of this perception,
Europeans were able to justify taking over the land and its inhabitants due to the mindset of that time that whomever claimed a land first had all rights to it.

By still believing the Christopher Columbus myth, society is ignoring the fact that the Native Americans have been treated unfairly throughout our country's history. Although Native Americans have tried to call attention to the injustices done to them in the past, our society justifies its past actions through the use of myth. The Columbus myth justifies our taking of the land we now call "America" as well as our treatment of the Native Americans by letting us believe that by claiming America Columbus also gained all rights to it. Since the American society believes he made the first claim to the land, Americans feel justified in taking "what was free for the taking" and "rightfully" theirs. However, one must point out that at present this myth is being challenged; Americans are beginning to question just how valid Columbus's claim to North America is.

The Columbus myth not only attempts to explain our actions in the past but also justifies our current situation and the future (21). According to Thomas Burkholder, "When cultures and ideologies come under attack, myth can be rallied to defense" (Burkholder 294). When Native Americans protest against the discrimination to which they are subjected, the strong defensive weapon appears: the myth. Although the Columbus myth is changing in light of America's new commitment to cultural diversity, it still is able to justify the past and present actions of Americans and perpetuate the belief that a Native American is inferior to a person with an Anglo-Saxon heritage. This belief
allows caucasian Americans to justify their actions toward Native Americans; it allows them to discriminate and to hold prejudices for no rational reason. As Americans become more aware of the difficulties and injustices involved in the Columbus myth and become familiar with the people he uprooted from their own land, the racial discrimination in the United States eventually may cease.

Myth also maintains society. Through social mythology, as well as the norms and behaviors based on that mythology, a society not only is able to maintain itself but also to direct its members. These norms and behaviors shape the roles a society creates. In turn, these roles direct members in terms of how they are to act. Social myths and role behaviors are ways in which to understand society (Janeway 144-5).

Looking at what a society believes and what it considers the norm can reveal a great deal about the society itself. "In short, myth shapes society's understanding of itself and the world around it" (293).

Myths provide the necessary history and explanations for a people to comprehend who they are and where they came from.

Along with being related to a society's understanding of itself, myths are also related to reality "through shared feelings and as a response to actual situations which call forth common reactions" (295). Myths provide a common belief on which people base their responses and reactions. Myths are related to reality in two other ways: they attempt to explain the actual world so we understand events and how we fit into them, and myths also attempt to manipulate the world so we can change what is happening to what we believe should be happening (295). Myth provides a framework that allows us to see
ourselves in relation to the world around us; it creates a mindset in which one can understand where he or she fits into everything going on in the world. According to sociologist Peter Berger, myth is able to do this through internalization. We "internalize" the values and norms of our society's myths. We then evaluate ourselves, our actions, and what is going on around us in light of the "taken-for-granted assumptions" of our culture (Condit 9). By internalizing myths, we are given a foundation on which to judge events, people, and actions.

Myth also allows us to change what is happening in the world to what we would like it to be. Myth is the mindset that shapes our perceptions of current events; it attempts to create the situation described by the myth (Janeway 37). Myths allow us to take what is happening and interpret it in such a manner that it is consistent with our beliefs. A myth is not a "true" depiction of events, but rather is a message of what the society wants to occur. A myth portrays an ideal of a society, an outlook for the future.

Just as myths justify the current situation, they also justify and provide a model for the future. The legitimate myths we hold today we, more than likely, will hold tomorrow. In this way we can indeed "see the future," or at least know that our myths will continue to shape norms, behaviors, and roles. However, a challenge to myth may result in a "frightened society." If for some reason the ability of myth to predict the future is challenged, the society may hold on tightly to its myths for fear of losing its sense of security. In this way myths are dangerous and may lead to closed-mindedness. Elizabeth Janeway, in Man's World, Woman's Place, warns:
This is the real danger in myth: it encourages rigid thinking, a black-and-white, right-or-wrong view of the world where only give-and-take can adjust institutions and social change. Closed minds accept myth most easily, but a frightened society seeks it actively. (191)

Although myth is helpful for a society to gain understanding of itself and how the world operates, myth harms that society because it does not actively encourage social change even if change is necessary for justice to take place. Because mythic thinking is of a black-and-white nature, it often does not allow for the gray areas of life. An institution is either entirely evil or entirely good according to myth. By employing myth we may be closing our minds to the other side of the story, to anything that does not fall within the guidelines of the myth. If opposition to a myth is threatening, society may hold on tightly to that myth for fear of change, and in doing so refuse to take part in the "give-and-take" aspect of social change that Janeway describes.

Only a legitimation crisis challenges the way myths shape our future norms, behaviors, and roles. A legitimation crisis occurs when a society questions the very principle of the myth. These questions can only be countered by the society interpreting the questionable parts of a myth, such as the norms or behaviors it produces, as "dysfunctional side-effects." The society must convince its members, or those in power must convince the rest of the society, that these side-effects are harmless to the individual and are within the boundaries of what is to be accepted and legitimate (Habermas 194). Habermas states: "Such
conflicts can lead to a temporary withdrawal of legitimation; and this can in certain circumstances have consequences that threaten the continued existence of a regime" (179). Information contrary to myth may influence that myth in such a way that the people who believe the myth take that information into account when retelling the myth. In this way it may be that, "the world [or myth] evolves as a result of internal tensions between opposites" (Morgan 257). The tension between the myth and the contrary empirical data may indeed be what causes or allows a myth to change.

This idea is central to Marx's dialectical method. This method is based on three principles: 1) the mutual interpenetration of opposites, 2) the negation of the negation, and 3) the transformation of quality into quantity (Morgan 258). These three principles account for how change can take place within society and its myths. The first principle covers self-generated change where myth changes itself to include or exclude information as a result of the tension between the myth and contrary empirical data. The second principle requires that every change between myth and empirical data influences the other. If myth is changed to reflect the empirical data and then later is changed back to reflect the original mythic beliefs, the current belief reflects those that came before it; despite the change, each negation carries over some of the previous beliefs. The third principle accounts for changes Marx refers to as "'totality shifts'" (258). Morgan explains: "A process of [myth] and [countermyth or contrary empirical data] may continue until [myth] is no longer possible, leading to a new phase of collaborative or destructive activity."
Cumulative changes in society may thus provide the platform for a revolution that changes the underlying basis of that society" (258). At this point in the process, the myth has become so far removed from the current realities of empirical data that the members of society believe that it can no longer exist. Because of this a revolution takes place in which a society completely changes its belief, thus replacing an old out-dated myth with a new, different myth.

If one combines these three principles, one can understand the complexity of social change. The process of negation and counter-negation will eventually culminate in a position where the two opposites, myth and empirical data, can no longer coexist. At this point, the myth is dissolved (258). The myth becomes illegitimate when it no longer has the power to produce consensus, shape motives, provide norms, etc. If this happens, social change may take place.

However, dissolving a myth is no easy task because myths are attached to and part of those who believe them, and consequently are tied with emotion. Although myths are, as Condit terms, "inevitably partial," they usually capture and preserve what a society believes to be important truths and portrays these truths with emotional intensity (Condit 28). Janeway explains the role emotion plays in dissolving a myth. She says, "logic may disprove it, but it will not kill it... prove it false a hundred times, and it will still endure because it is true as an expression of feeling" (27-8). Because it is almost impossible to dissolve a myth solely by means of rationality, a society must do so by changing feelings as well as rationality. Rather than trying to dispell myths strictly through logic, we must evaluate them
in a manner which allows for the emotional content as well as the logic (295). We must recognize that myths are emotionally bound to societies because they create a sense of identity. To change a myth means to change or transform a society. One must note that to change a myth is to transform a society's identity, but not to destroy it. To destroy a society's identity, more than just one of its myths must be changed. Changing a myth may change the character of the society, but will not turn it into an entirely different entity. Change and transformation are often very difficult for society's members to deal with. The process of repeated negation of the negation is a very difficult and time-consuming task. Considering how long it sometimes takes just for an individual's feelings to change despite conflicting information, changing an entire society's feelings about accepted ideas and social structures is a long, challenging battle. Social change cannot take place until this battle is won.
The Roles of Gender Myths and Gender Stereotypes
in Society and the Organization

Myths play an important role in any society and in each sub-section of a society. One example of a sub-section of American society is the business organization. Although organizations belong to the American society, they act as societies or cultures in and of themselves. According to Charles Conrad in Strategic Organizational Communication, "Organizations are communicative creations. . . . Members of the culture develop distinctive ways of perceiving, interpreting, and explaining the events and actions they observe around them" (17). He further explains that the members of the organization enact their culture through role playing, behaving in accordance with norms, and telling stories (17). In this way, an American business organization may be said to be a subsection of our society, or a sub-culture within the larger North American culture. For this reason, I have chosen to examine the organization as a sub-society to reveal how the myths it enacts affect its members; specifically, how an organization's myths hinder women in management positions from advancing as far and as quickly as their male counterparts.

Organizations have their own myths, based on those of the larger society, that shape their identities. These myths also enable an organization to justify itself and to show how it fits into the world around it. Myths act as a foundation, as a belief basis, on
which to judge and interpret what goes on in the world and within the organization. However, sometimes myth becomes detrimental in that it blocks an organization from seeing the "truth" as defined by empirical data and in doing so hinders advancement for women, for men, and for the organization. If an organization's members are unable to see the detrimental effects of its myths, they may lock themselves into a certain way of thinking which hinders them from advancement possibilities. The organization and its members are unable to advance because they are caught up in thinking patterns and beliefs that originate in, or are at least influenced by, their myths. In this situation an organization's members must first go through the process of changing their feelings about the organization's myths; they must make the myths that are detrimental to the organization and themselves illegitimate so that social change can take place.

Organizations accept a variety of myths. The myths dictate what the members should wear, how they should act, how they should speak, and what role they should play, among many other things. However, out of all organizational myths, some of the most intriguing ones are those pertaining to gender.

In order to begin this exploration of gender myths, one must first look at the mythic constructions provided by American society, myths the members of an organization bring with them to the organization. To understand the gender myths of an organization, one must first understand those of the society since it is upon these that the organization members build their beliefs. Organizations do indeed have their own myths, but they usually build upon or complement those
of the society to which they belong.

Gender myths in American society manifest themselves in gender stereotypes. A stereotype, as defined by Edith Highman in *The Organization Woman*, is "the set of attributes that are attributed to all individuals who occupy a particular role" (85). Ann-Marie Rizzo and Carmen Mendez define stereotypes as "deceptive shortcuts that are perceived to be helpful for immediate usage" but in the long term turn out to be oversimplified generalizations (Rizzo and Mendez 10). And according to *Webster's Dictionary*, a stereotype is, "a standardized mental picture held in common by members of a group and representing an oversimplified opinion, affective attitude, or uncritical judgment" (2238). Although myths and stereotypes are two different things, they feed off of and influence each other. Myths and stereotypes have a circular relationship (See figure 1). Myths are a society's general beliefs that create stereotypes within that society. Stereotypes are generally more personal and specific beliefs about a person or group of people. Off of one myth may come many stereotypes. Stereotypes in turn may influence and reinforce myth. Because of this circular system, the more pervasive a stereotype is, the stronger the overriding myth becomes and vice versa. If stereotypes are discredited and a society no longer holds them to be true, the myth or myths from which they originated may also lose their validity.

Gender stereotypes originate from gender myths. These myths influence what role a person is supposed to play and the behaviors he or she is supposed to exhibit. A gender stereotype is the specific description of anyone falling under one of the roles prescribed by the
$S=$Stereotype

FIGURE 1
myth. These descriptions or stereotypes, in turn, influence the original myth. Any change in a stereotype changes the roles implied by the myth and any change in the myth influences how roles will be defined by stereotypes. When a person is judged against stereotypes, important information about the person is overlooked. However, even though stereotypes are not always consistent with the whole truth, just like myth, they are based upon a small bit of truth (Colwill 21).

Interestingly enough, people are more likely to remember information consistent with stereotypes since the behaviors and actions influenced by the stereotypes are expected. In this way, stereotypes are often immune to information which may prove them to be incorrect because people will not remember the conflicting information (Colwill 22). However, if an individual completely falls outside of a stereotype, that individual is seen as an exception and, thus, the stereotype is once again preserved (25).

Preserving stereotypes is one way in which a society maintains its identity. These stereotypes influence how a person is supposed to act depending on the role to which they are relegated, and on the type of person he or she is to be. Individuals attempt to follow gender stereotypes so that they "fit in." Because of the human need for acceptance and companionship, "people are motivated to be rational and consistent in their attitudes and behaviors. If they see their beliefs, feelings, and behaviors as incongrous [with their society's myths and stereotypes], they experience discomfort, or dissonance, and try to achieve balance" (23). In this way individuals as well as the
entire society help to preserve stereotypes and myths.

Stereotypes pertaining to gender are prominent in American society as well as in American organizations. The following list mentions some of the feminine and masculine stereotypes believed in society and accepted by organizations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminine Stereotype</th>
<th>Masculine Stereotype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incompetence:</td>
<td>Competence:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all aggressive</td>
<td>Very aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all independent</td>
<td>Very independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very emotional</td>
<td>Not at all emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not hide emotions at all</td>
<td>Almost always hides emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very subjective</td>
<td>Very objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easily influenced</td>
<td>Not at all easily influenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very submissive</td>
<td>Very dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes math and science</td>
<td>Likes math and science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very much</td>
<td>very much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very excitable in a minor crisis</td>
<td>Not at all excitable in a minor crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very passive</td>
<td>Very active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all competitive</td>
<td>Very competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very illogical</td>
<td>Very logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very home-oriented</td>
<td>Very worldly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all skilled in business</td>
<td>Very skilled in business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very sneaky</td>
<td>Very direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not know the way of the world</td>
<td>Knows the way of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings easily hurt</td>
<td>Feelings not easily hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all adventurous</td>
<td>Very adventurous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty making decisions</td>
<td>Can make decisions easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cries very easily</td>
<td>Never cries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost never acts as a leader</td>
<td>Almost always acts as a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all self-confident</td>
<td>Very self-confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very uncomfortable about being aggressive</td>
<td>Not at all uncomfortable about being aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all ambitious</td>
<td>Very ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to separate feelings from ideas</td>
<td>Easily able to separate feelings from ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dependent</td>
<td>Not at all dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very conceited about appearance</td>
<td>Never conceited about appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks women are always superior to men</td>
<td>Thinks men are always superior to women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not talk freely about</td>
<td>Talks freely about sex with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sex with men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warmth/Expressiveness:</th>
<th>Distance/Inexpressiveness:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't use harsh language at all</td>
<td>Uses very harsh language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very talkative</td>
<td>Not at all talkative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very tactful</td>
<td>Very blunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very gently</td>
<td>Very rough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very aware of feelings of others</td>
<td>Not at all aware of feelings of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very religious</td>
<td>Not at all religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interested in own appearance</td>
<td>Not at all interested in own appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very neat in habits</td>
<td>Very sloppy in habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very quiet</td>
<td>Very loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very strong need for security</td>
<td>Very little need for security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys art and literature</td>
<td>Does not enjoy art and literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily expresses tender feelings</td>
<td>Does not express tender feelings at all (Powell 50-51)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The masculine stereotypes reflect what the American society expects from males and the feminine stereotypes reflect what is expected from females. These stereotypes play an important role in evaluating our own capabilities and the capabilities of others. We employ gender stereotypes, and the norms and behaviors they imply, to judge and interpret the behavior and actions of others (Colwill 104). We also use them to form an opinion of another and to influence how we should interact with him or her depending on the gender of the individual (15).

A popular poem by Natasha Josefowitz demonstrates how individuals in an organizational setting use gender stereotypes to judge others:

**Impressions from an Office**

The family picture is on HIS desk.
---Ah, a solid, responsible family man.
The family picture is on HER desk.
--Umm, her family will come before her career.

HIS desk is cluttered.  
--He's obviously a hard worker and a busy man.  
HER desk is cluttered.  
--She's obviously a disorganized scatterbrain.

HE is talking with his co-workers.  
--He must be discussing the latest deal.  
SHE is talking with her co-workers.  
--She must be gossiping.

HE'S not at his desk.  
--He must be at a meeting.  
SHE's not at her desk.  
--She must be in the ladies' room.

HE'S not in the office.  
--He's meeting customers.  
SHE'S not in the office.  
--She must be out shopping.

HE'S having lunch with the boss.  
--He's on his way up.  
SHE'S having lunch with the boss.  
--They must be having an affair.

The boss criticized HIM.  
--He'll improve his performance.  
The boss criticized HER.  
--She'll be very upset.

HE got an unfair deal.  
--Did he get angry?  
SHE got an unfair deal.  
--Did she cry?

HE'S getting married.  
--He'll get more settled.  
SHE'S getting married.  
--She'll get pregnant and leave.

HE'S having a baby.  
--He'll need a raise.  
SHE's having a baby.  
--She'll cost the company money in maternity benefits.

HE'S going on a business trip.  
--It's good for his career.  
SHE'S going on a business trip.  
--What will her husband say?
HE'S leaving for a better job.
-- He knows how to recognize a good opportunity.
SHE'S leaving for a better job.
-- Women are not dependable. (Powell 103-104)

The differences Josefowitz cites in this poem are stereotypical gender differences, not sex differences. The judgements people make using these stereotypes are not based primarily on physical differences, but rather on the differences we have attributed to men and women through the creation of gender. The characteristics a society attributes to females and males are separate from physical characteristics. There are a few proven differences between men and women. Men tend to have more upper-body strength, are more physically aggressive, more self-confident, and have more spatial, quantitative, and analytical skills. Women are more accurate in predicting success, have less upper-body strength, and have more advanced verbal and social skills. However, one must remember that these are only group averages which may not be true of each individual in the group (Colwill 60), and the studies that were used to prove these differences may be warped by the respondents' exposure to their culture. Of the differences that are psychological in nature, Elizabeth Janeway says: "we can go no further than to say that their existence is an unresolved hypothesis" (9). Unlike physical differences, the gender differences we attribute to men and women are not based upon factual truth, but rather on what the organization or society believes to be true.

Because gender differences are not based on empirical evidence, many inequalities exist in the organization. Women are believed to be unreliable and unable to lead others so they may be denied many
managerial positions. Gender stereotypes may also cause women to believe that they truly are inferior to men. After hearing and seeing these stereotypical beliefs repeated in words and actions day after day, women may start believing that they are what the stereotypes make them out to be. Gender stereotyping affects not only how co-workers interact with and view each other, but how they view themselves.

The gender myths of the organization are based upon the gender stereotypes discussed in this section. These stereotypes and myths manifest themselves in many facets of the organization: the roles people play, how they interact, and how they move up in the organization, etc. The next section is a discussion of one of the most common myths of organizations that pertain to gender and some of the stereotypes that stem from it.
Gender Myths of the Organization

One of the most prominent gender myths of organizations concerns the roles played by men and women. A role is defined as "the expected and actual behaviors or characteristics that attach a particular social 'status' in our society" (Harriman 85). According to this myth men and women are better suited to different roles. This myth influences the behaviors, actions, and characteristics people display and the roles they choose to play. If the characteristics of a role match up with feminine stereotypes, the role is considered a "woman's" role and is expected to be occupied by a woman; if the characteristics of a role match up with male stereotypes, the role is considered a "man's" role and is expected to be occupied by a man. As Elizabeth Janeway states, "we understand who people are only in terms of what we think they ought to be" (70). In other words, an organization understands who a woman is by looking at the myths it holds about women, and understands who a man is by looking at the myths pertaining to men.

Janeway goes on to say that a role itself implies a relationship and is built around a certain activity. The role creates a relationship between the person playing that role and the "role-other" who acts in response to the actions of the person playing the role. To understand each other, both of these people must rely on a common organizational culture between them (70-71). In terms of gender, this means that to understand who a woman is, an organization must also understand who a man is and vice versa. The role a man plays influences his relationship with
women, and the same is true for the roles women play. In this way, roles create a sense of identity, for men and women.

In organizations, role-playing creates familiarity for its members. Playing the roles indicated by the organization through its myths creates a sense of stability for the members of the organization. This allows the members of the organization to feel like they know where they have been, where they are now, and where they are going and in doing so creates an organizational identity. However, role-playing becomes detrimental to an organization when it portrays nothing but falsehoods (Janeway 80). When roles begin to be used as masks or as shields from the truth about individuals rather than as devices for learning or creating an organizational identity, they become negative (81). Roles may stand in the way of an individual, creating or simply exposing, his or her identity and force that individual to abide by a set of rules he or she cares not to.

However, gender roles are not set in stone; there is room for change. Just like other myths, the role myth may change by means of interpenetration. This is possible if people change their behaviors from what is expected of them given their role (Giddens 117). This, in turn, will affect the role prescriptions myths have assigned to each gender. For example, during World War II, as numerous men went to war, they left the organizations they worked for without enough employees. In response, many women began working, filling the jobs the men had to abandon. Because of the great change in the behaviors exhibited by those playing the "woman's" role, the role of women changed. Women’s role switched from loving wife and contented homemaker to hard-working laborer making
ends meet for her family and her country. When the male soldiers returned home they were startled by the new role their wives, mothers, daughters and female friends had taken; women were no longer playing the "correct" role. The male soldiers were so disturbed by this that they were determined to change the role of women back to what they felt it should be. In order to do this the government began a huge campaign known as the Better Homes and Gardens Campaign to convince the public that women's actions needed to fit the role they used to play. Eventually, the campaign was successful in bringing this change about; women went back to being loving wives and contented homemakers, but they still had a hint left of what was once their new found freedom (Altman 287).

Today the roles women traditionally hold in organizations tend to be more docile or passive and less ambitious. They tend to be roles in which a person can be more emotional and use intuition and sympathy, but they are typically not too demanding, large-scale, or long-term (Altman 87). According to Rizzo and Mendez, "Women have traditionally held positions in the job market that were filled for the most part only by women and were at a lower rank and pay than positions held by men. In most cases, these positions were supportive by function and were an extension, outside of the home, of the woman's nurturing role" (9). The type of work women have traditionally done and the roles they have played are based upon the gender differences attributed to them through organizational myths. Rizzo and Mendez explain:

Masculine or feminine images embedded in work roles derive neither from the task at hand nor from the characteristics of
individual personalities. Rather, all positions within the organization carry gender typing, depending heavily on the dominant group that traditionally occupies that position. (17)

The fact that roles are often deemed as either feminine or masculine hinders both sexes from advancing in non-traditional roles. In organizations, "people are rewarded for conforming to the sex role that is seen as appropriate for their sex" (Stewart 218). In fact, being congruous with a sex role has often been looked upon as being the "best route to happiness and harmony with nature" (Powell 61). If a person adheres to the role set by their organization's myths, he or she maintains the status quo and avoids rocking the boat. If a woman or a man does attempt to step out of his or her traditional sex role, the person is looked upon as violating nature, or in mythic terms as "threaten[ing] the order of the universe by resisting the demands of [his or] her 'role'" (Janeway 96). However, it is only through challenging this universe that there is room for change. Although roles play an important part in creating an organization's identity and teaching its members about norms and expected behaviors, the roles may be more detrimental in that they feed stereotypes which block advancement in certain areas for men and women, and the organization as a whole.

The myth that women and men are different, and hence should fulfill different roles, manifests itself through a variety of stereotypes. The main stereotypes to be examined in this chapter include those concerning commitment, motivation, communication differences, and effective management. While other stereotypes exist, these are chosen as the focus because they are some of the most prominent and widely accepted
stereotypes.

Commitment

From the gender role myth of an organization comes many different stereotypes. One stereotype concerns commitment; women are believed to be less committed to their jobs than men. Being committed to an organization means being willing to work longer hours when needed, to relocate, and to put a greater emphasis on the organization rather than on personal interests when conflict between the two exists. A person who is less committed often emphasizes family over the organization and looks at his or her position as merely a job. The more commitment an organization receives from its members, the more effective the organization is. Commitment from an organization’s members will result in them working harder and longer to the organization’s benefit (Powell 157). The definition of commitment is based on the amount of time one is willing to devote rather than the amount of responsibility or work one is willing to take on. The definition of commitment is, in itself, gender biased and anti-family.

According to the gender role myth, a woman’s primary role is with her family. From this myth comes the stereotypes that women are not committed to their jobs, organizations, or careers, but rather to their families. Because of this stereotype, women may be passed up for jobs or promotions because they will be less effective for the organization than a man in the same position would be due to his greater level of
commitment. However, research has indicated that there is no clear relationship between gender and commitment; women are neither more nor less committed than men (158).

There are many variables in determining the level of commitment from a person. These include: age, education, needs (e.g., Maslow's hierarchy), job satisfaction, meaningful work, utilization of skills, and family status (Powell 158). Individuals who are older, more educated, have greater job satisfaction and more meaningful work, utilize more of their skills and are closer to self-actualization, will theoretically be more committed to the organization.

Family status is also a large factor in determining commitment. Because society believes that a woman must put her family first, a woman with a family is often less committed to her job if she has internalized the societal belief. If she does not put her family first, she is going against a societal myth and risks assuming a negative role. In this case, a woman with a family may be less committed than a man with a family simply because societal myths say that it is acceptable for a man to be committed to his job when he has a family; he doesn’t necessarily have to put the family first. If he does, this stereotype negatively affects him too since he is punished for not adhering to the societal belief.

In another situation a woman may be more committed than a man. This is often true in upper-level management. Women who have advanced in the business world to the point of upper-level management have had to work harder than the men in the same positions; they have had to overcome many gender related barriers in order to advance to the same point as
their male peers. This extra effort from women helps to build their commitment level (Kanter 161). If a woman in upper-level management had not been committed to the organization, she would not have had what it takes to overcome the gender barriers lying in her path to the top.

Apparently, the stereotype that women are less committed exists because of organizations' definition of commitment. This definition, based on time rather than willingness to accept responsibility or added work loads, contributes to this stereotype and denies that there are other types of commitment. Some women may be committed in different ways than this stereotypical definition suggests. Although there are some women who do abide by the organization definition of commitment, the only way to totally overcome the stereotype that women are less committed to their jobs than their male counterparts is to redefine "commitment" to include things outside of time commitment.

Motivation

Another stereotype resulting from the gender role myth is that women are less motivated than men. The roles typically assigned to men, or termed "masculine," involve the need to be more motivated than those roles typically assigned to women. Because many women occupy roles which involve less motivation that those occupied by the average man in an organization, all women are viewed as less motivated.

Motivation is determined by three factors: the need for achievement, the need for power, and the need for affiliation (Powell
The higher a person's need for achievement, the more he or she desires challenging assignments which will progress a career. A high need for power is characterized by a high desire for influence and control over others. Power, however, can be divided into two types: socialized and personalized. Socialized power is influence employed to serve the organization or others; personalized power is influence used to control or exploit others. The motivational factor is the need for affiliation which is the need for warm, friendly relationships (Powell 156). The higher a person's need for achievement, power and affiliation, the higher his or her motivation level is. Men are perceived in their "male" roles as having a higher need for achievement, power and affiliation and therefore are seen as being more motivated than women.

The motivation stereotype suggests that women are not motivated in their careers; women, deep down, really have no desire to succeed in the workplace. However, this is not congruent with empirical data. According to one study, women have a higher need for achievement and socialized power than men, and have equal need for affiliation and personalized power. This indicates that women, on average, are likely to be more motivated than men; "women managers exhibited a more mature and higher-achieving motivational profile than the male managers" (Powell 157). Powell also gives a possible explanation for this. He states, "Because they have had to overcome stereotypical attitudes about their unsuitability for management, women who have successfully gained management positions may have been motivated by a higher need for achievement and self-actualization than male managers" (157).

Just as with commitment, Powell believes that the extra effort a
woman has to put forth to achieve the same level in an organization as her male counterpart may prove that she is more committed and more motivated. Ann Harriman, in Women/Men Management, states: "A woman must work harder and be generally smarter than her male counterpart to get the same level as him in the corporation, especially so if she wants to progress" (Harriman 21). She goes on to say that when progressing in her career, a woman must be aggressive and outwork her male counterpart. This may cause the man to become an enemy because his ego will be hurt; the woman may then be seen as "shrill" or "abrasive" (21-22). Although women and men tend to be about equal in aggressiveness when it comes to their work, organizations are more sensitive to female aggressiveness (35). It is interesting to note that a man who is aggressive and outworks others is perceived as assertive while a woman acting in the same manner is shrill or abrasive. An aggressive woman is a "bitch," but an aggressive man is a "go-getter."

When women appear to be less motivated, it may be due to lack of advancement opportunities. Rosabeth Moss Kanter states:

When women seem to be less motivated or committed, it is probably because their jobs carry less opportunity. There is evidence that in general the jobs held by most women workers tend to have shorter chains of opportunity associated with them and contain fewer advancement prospects. (159)

If there is no way to fulfill a person's need for achievement or power beyond the level the person occupies, that person, male or female, will not have a high level of motivation. If individuals are as high as they can go in a particular field even though they would like to go further,
there is no way they will be able to fulfill their needs. If fulfilling one's needs is impossible, how can one be motivated to try to do so?

Although it is common for women to hold jobs with less advancement opportunities than men, women in management fields where they have the same opportunities to achieve as men tend to have greater motivation than men. Unfortunately, women often are not given the chance to prove how motivated they are. When stereotypes are employed, a woman may be overlooked and a man preferred because he will be more motivated and get more done according to the male stereotype.

Communication Differences

Along with commitment and motivation, a third stereotype of the gender role myth involves communication differences. Nancy Harper and Randy Hirokawa state: "Recently, several authors have suggested that behavioral differences between men and women managers, if they do exist, are most likely to be found in their patterns of communication with other organization members" (158). The communication stereotype says that there are distinct differences between male and female managerial communication with their co-workers. Females are said to be more concerned and attentive in their communication, while males are thought to be more dominant and directive in their communication (Baird and Bradley 106). This stereotype is reinforced by many studies such as the study done on persuasive strategies by Harper and Hirokawa (1988) and the study of management communication styles done by Baird and Bradley
Because women are viewed as "unpredictable," co-workers often report feeling uncomfortable communicating with them because one never knows where they stand; they are always changing their minds, and they are hard to comprehend. However, coworkers also admit that ninety percent of this is merely their perception. They admit that they would rather work within a homogenous group; therefore, they convince themselves that women are hard to work with, or in this case, communicate with (Kanter 58). This justifies their feelings and gives them reason to stay in a comfortable homogenous group where they don't have to deal with "the Other." The gender role myth and the stereotype that there are communication differences between men and women give subordinates the justification they need to continue treating male and female managers differently and preferring one over the other.

The Baird and Bradley study concludes: "females generally were perceived to give more information about other departments, to place greater emphasis upon happy interpersonal relationships, to be more receptive to subordinates' ideas, and to be more encouraging of subordinates' efforts than were males" (106). Women's communication style is seen as different from that of male managers because it shows more concern about employees and employee morale, it gives more positive reactions, and it displays more warmth, rewarding concern, affiliation, helpfulness, and sensitivity (108-109). One should note, however, that it is necessary for women to do in order for them to overcome their co-workers' discomfort in communicating with them. They need to make their co-workers as comfortable as possible and build up their morale through
communicating a sense of teamwork and shared vision (109). This is most easily accomplished by communicating more concern, positive reactions, and information. Since men do not need to overcome the "comfortability barrier" as often as women, they do not need to communicate with co-workers in this manner.

According to Gary Powell, women's managerial communication is also different in their responses to poor performers. Responding to poor performers is a two-step process. The first step is to attribute the inadequate performance to some other cause such as lack of ability, lack of effort, difficulty of the task, or bad luck. The second step is to decide upon corrective action based upon the decision made in the first step. The difference between male and female responses to poor performers is on what the response is based: males base their responses on equity, or what is "just" according to the organization's implicit and explicit rules, while females base their responses on equality, or what they feel is fair. Males are more inclined to punish for lack of effort than for lack of ability. On the other hand, female managers are equally likely to punish for lack of ability or lack of effort, but overall are more supportive and less likely to punish at all. This may be due to their socialization to minimize status and maximize group harmony (Powell 154). Overall, these differences may be attributed to the fact that male and female managers have internalized their organizations' and society's myths which influence how they communicate with others.

Although women make fewer attempts to influence subordinates' performances, they may do so because of lower self-confidence. The role a woman is supposed to play may directly relate to the amount of self-
confidence she has. Certain roles, typically masculine, are known to be associated with higher self-confidence levels. This, in turn, may affect the manner in which she communicates with her coworkers. When a woman has a higher level of self-confidence, there is less difference between herself and her male counterpart on average in influence strategies. Powell states: "These results suggest that sex differences in influence strategies may disappear as women gain experience and thereby self-confidence in managerial positions" (154-5).

Another study concerning persuasive strategies was done by Harper and Hirokawa. It’s results differ from those reported by Powell in that it concentrates on persuasive strategies used to "influence and control the attitudes, values and behaviors of their subordinates, rather than those used to improve subordinates' poor performance" (Harper and Hirokawa 157). Like Powell, this study also finds that male and female managers' persuasive strategies differ greatly. Male managers rely on punishment-based strategies, while female managers tend to rely on altruism- and rationale-based strategies (157). Women's strategies and their use of tag questions and disclaimers depict their "passivity, open-mindedness, and nurturance." Men's strategies and their use of clear arguments show their "strength, power, assertiveness, and strength" (158).

Harper and Hirokawa’s study found several other differences in the persuasive strategies employed by male and female managers. When a manager attempts to convince a subordinate to perform an obligatory or mandatory task, male managers will tend to rely on punishment-based strategies, while women will rely more on altruism-based strategies.
When attempting to get a subordinate to do a non-obligatory or non-mandatory action, there is little difference between male and female managers. When attempting to convince a subordinate to perform obligatory or non-obligatory tasks, females more than males use different strategies to deal with female and male subordinates (164). Harper and Hirokawa noted, however, that male managers do not always use power-based strategies as the male stereotype would dictate; they do so only with obligatory tasks. And females do not always use altruistic strategies as the female stereotype would dictate; they often use power-based and rationale-based strategies when dealing with obligatory tasks (165). The authors of this study summarized their findings as follows: "In general, it seems that when power is a legitimate source, males are more likely to use it than are females. Moreover, females seem to be more flexible, adapting their strategies to the contingencies of the situation. Otherwise, males and females appear to be more similar than different" (166).

Two years later, Harper and Hirokawa, along with Rachel Kodama, did another study; this time, instead of reinforcing the stereotype that there are communication differences between male and female managers, they challenged this stereotype. This study focused on the idea of power and how it influenced communication, especially persuasive strategies. They state:

Insofar as women have traditionally found themselves in positions of powerlessness, whereas men have enjoyed positions of power, any difference between the influence tactics of men and women is likely to be attributable to the relative amount
of power they possess rather than to their gender as such. (35).

The study found that when male and female managers have the same amount of power, they do not display differences in the persuasive strategies they employ (45-6). This reiterates what Rosabeth Moss Kanter had argued thirteen years earlier, that power negates sex differences (Kantor 200).

Hirodawa, Harper, and Kodama found that low-power managers, whether they were male or female, were more likely to resort to altruism-based or rationale-based tactics and give counsel or explanations. High power managers, on the other hand, were more likely to resort to punishment-based tactics such as threats, warnings, and ultimatums (46). This suggests that it is not gender that dictates the difference in persuasive strategies, but rather the relative amount of power a manager holds. Because women have traditionally occupied positions with less power, they tend to use tactics associated with low-power managers. However, this study also indicates that powerful male and female managers tend to use their power differently. Powerful male managers often are utilitarian and resort almost exclusively to power-based strategies. Some powerful female managers will also resort to power-based strategies, but others will chose to forgo their power and use non-power based strategies (46). But, once again, one must remember that this difference in the use of power may be a result of women internalizing the myth of gender roles and the stereotypes that stem from it.

Even if female and male managers do not differ in any respect, responses from subordinates and their preferences for working with either a male or female manager may. Powell reports: "Over half of male
executives and almost one-fifth of female executives surveyed in 1985 reported anticipated discomfort at the prospect of working for a woman" (163). These findings indicate that these individuals may be prone to gender stereotypes and may fear the unknown. However, this could be alleviated, most likely, through working with a female superior (163). Stereotypical beliefs often disappear when a person enters into relationship with the "other." When subordinates work under a female superior they may eventually dispel their stereotypes or personal biases.

Other studies have shown that subordinates do not respond differently to female or male managers under whom they have worked in the past (165). This shows that the communication difference between a male manager and a female manager may be the response he or she gets from his or her subordinates. This response is based, most likely, on the gender stereotypes the subordinate has internalized. Once subordinates work under a certain manager, whether male or female, the gender stereotypes once held about that individual disappear or at least are mitigated. When subordinates see that the behaviors that are supposed to be attached to women are not displayed by a woman they know, they may feel conflict between what they see and what they are taught to believe. Their beliefs may change through a long process where the tension between their beliefs and their experience becomes too much to handle and they give in to change. The subordinate may also begin to see value in the female manager's approach, which may be different, when they see it in action.

At this time, female managers still are thought to communicate differently than male managers despite the recent studies suggesting
otherwise. If people are exposed to female superiors more often, if people change their feelings about female managers and their perceived communication style, maybe this stereotype will go through a metamorphosis. If this happens it could in turn affect the gender role myth and its claim to legitimacy.

The Effective Manager

The last stereotype connected with the gender role myth to be discussed here involves the stereotype that the effective manager is supposed to be masculine, aggressive, competitive, firm, and just; she or he should not be feminine, soft, yielding, dependent or intuitive, nor should she or he be emotionally expressive. Although this description may seem outdated, the effective manager stereotype is still with us. Powell states: "Managerial stereotypes have stayed essentially the same despite the considerable increase in women managers in recent years" (149). Recently, a study of both female and male executives found that these executives believed "successful middle managers possessed an abundance of characteristics that were more associated with men in general than with women in general" (145). The characteristics assigned to the effective manager by executives are consistent with the male stereotype.

This stereotype indicates an organization's preference for power; a preference for men indicates a preference for power. Historically, men
have held positions of higher power and have had more access to opportunities and efficacy through activities or alliances than women have had. This has resulted in men typically having more power than women in the organization (Kanter 199). Because organizations want strong leaders to help them get ahead in the business world, they adhere to the effective manager stereotype and choose a person whose gender has possessed power in the past. Adhering to the effective manager stereotype also means adhering to the gender role myth. Upholding the gender role myth allows an organization to justify its past and present and to predict the future. This myth justifies organizations' actions against women in the past and at present. It says that it was, and still is, acceptable to discriminate against women for managerial positions since these positions are not consistent with what the myth suggests as appropriate roles for women. Nor are the attributes needed for these positions consistent with the female stereotype. The effective manager stereotype and the gender role myth allow a company to believe that by continuing to choose male managers it will continue to have powerful and effective leaders.

The gender role myth and the effective manager stereotype hinder both men and women from becoming anything other than what society dictates. To fit the description of the effective manager, a male or female manager must eliminate all characteristics he or she may have that are not associated with the masculine stereotype. The effective manager stereotype encourages women to only go into areas that utilize "feminine" qualities, or to portray characteristics deemed "masculine" (Kagan, "How Management Myths Hurt Women" 75). The description of the effective
manager may be faulty, however, due to the fact that it was derived from observations of male managers. One must realize that even though managers tend to be male, that does not necessarily mean that effective managers are masculine (Powell 166).

Rosabeth Moss Kanter argues that women may be even more effective than men in managerial positions. She says, "In fact, if sex stereotypes were true, then an argument could be made for the greater capacity of women for leadership roles in organizations, given socialization experiences emphasizing 'people-handling' skills" (199). She argues that if women are true to their stereotypes they would be better able to deal with subordinates, as well as colleagues, and in doing so would most likely prove to be better leaders.

According to Gary Powell, there are two main types of leadership behaviors a manager must possess to be effective. The first is initiating structure. This includes initiating group activities, organizing, defining a manner in which a task is to be done, and setting standards and deadlines (152). The other type of behavior he terms consideration behavior. This includes showing concern for the welfare of the group and its members, expressing appreciation, treating group members as equals, making the group feel at ease, taking ideas into account, and seeking approval before proceeding with action (153).

Powell states that female and male managers exhibit the same amount of initiating structure and consideration behavior and do not differ in task or people oriented behavior towards subordinates. They both provide exposure, open sharing of feelings and information, and feedback, getting feelings or information from others. He says that
where they differ is in specific responses to situations: "Initiating structure, consideration, exposure, and feedback represent global measures of managerial behavior. Even if female and male leaders generally did not differ in behavior according to these measures, they could differ in their responses to specific situations" (153). In other words, male and female managers both use the same amount of behavior in the categories of managerial behavior, but their specific behaviors, or responses, may vary. Once again, this may be due to internalized gender myths.

Other studies, such as that done by John Baird and Patricia Hayes Bradley (1979), attempt to prove that male and female managers use very different types of managerial behavior. Baird and Bradley state: "male and female managers exert leadership in their own distinct fashions" (108). However different the styles are, this study makes no attempt at rating one gender over the other. As the study states, "Male and female managerial styles, although often different, typically are appropriate to the situation" (110). Baird and Bradley, as well as Powell, believe that a manager's actions are contingent on the situation and often on a manager's sex.

As many studies have indicated, there may be differences between male and female managers in how they go about doing things, their interactions with subordinates and others, or even in their internal motivations, but not in their abilities to manage or their effectiveness in doing so. Powell concludes:

The only meaningful difference between managerial men and managerial women may be in the environments in which they
operate, with imbalanced sex-ratios—particularly at the top management level—contributing to stereotype-driven perceptions and unrealistic expectations for managerial women. The stereotype that men make better managers is simply not true.

(165-6)

Although many women have made inroads into management positions, there are very few women in upper management (Rizzo and Mendez 33). The lack of women in these positions may contribute greatly to an organization's gender role myths and the corresponding stereotypes. For example, the fact that the majority of managers are men helps to perpetuate the stereotype that men are better managers, which in turn reinforces gender role myths. If there had always been more women in these positions than men, women would be seen as better managers; organizations would justify their choice to make women managers by believing that they were superior to men. However, even if more women become managers, there is little reason to believe that the managerial stereotypes and corresponding myth will change (Powell 149). Gender stereotypes and myths will change only when women become top executives, when the behaviors associated with certain roles conflict with the expected behaviors. Until this happens women on the whole will always be seen as subservient and as inferior to men in the workplace since they are ultimately under male control.
Consequences of Gender Myths in the Organization

Myths, such as the gender role myth, have many consequences for the organization in which they are employed. An organization’s myths may help to maintain its identity by acting as a model for behavior and attitudes, but the myths also hinder the organization and its members in many ways. The stereotypes which ultimately result from myths may have negative consequences for the organization. The stereotypes in the organization which come from gender related myths may result in discrimination, stress, social isolation, lack of advancement, and sexual harassment.

Sexual discrimination is one of the prominent consequences of gender stereotypes, and it negatively affects both men and women. Lea Stewart, in *Communication Between the Sexes: Sex Differences and Sex-Role Stereotypes*, states: "Women may be hindered in their career advancement, while men may not be able to develop nurturing or expressive behavior" (233). The stereotypes an organization employs most often result in one group being seen as superior to another. In the case of gender stereotypes this often results in discrimination against women since they are seen as inferior to men. Because members of an organization are socialized by the surrounding environment to believe these stereotypes, controlling or changing these stereotypes is out of the organization’s control. However, an organization can control its own planning, training, recruiting, pay, and promotions (Powell 216). The stereotypes
that are employed in these areas are under the organization's control. Although some type of discrimination may happen due to the members' socialization, the organization itself can control and should try to eliminate the discrimination that may go on in these areas. Members of an organization, especially those in upper management, must make sure they recruit, promote, pay and train all of that organization's members in an equal and fair manner.

Gender stereotypes also result in managerial stress. Gary Powell defines stress as:

- a negative by-product of both commitment and motivation.
- Managers who feel a high degree of commitment work extra hours, relocate when their organization wishes, and make other personal adjustments that are more in the organization's best interest than their own. This pattern of putting the organization first takes its toll in the form of added stress.

(161)

However, stress may also be a result of the pressures an organization puts on its members to conform to norms and abide by rules of behavior. For example, men of the organization may feel added stress because they must try to live up to the masculine stereotype the organization employs (Powell 162). Male stress caused by stereotypes is not as great as women's. Women have to endure another set of stress factors that men rarely encounter. They have to deal with discrimination, gender stereotypes, social isolation, work and family demands, and sexual harassment (161). This leads to greater managerial stress for women.

Another consequence of gender stereotypes in the organization is
social isolation that occurs when women are viewed as risks and consequently left out of informal networking that goes on within the organizational setting. Females represent the unknown in some organizations and therefore are seen as risks. Males are frequently in the majority so it is assumed that they will be competent; others before them have justified their acceptance. Viewing males as competent is a part of some organizations' unconscious selection process. Humans are more comfortable with people like themselves and assume those like them will be acceptable (Rizzo and Mendez 22). Because females may not be as familiar in the workplace they are tested more stringently and forced to earn their acceptance much more so than males (Freeman 212). When a new male manager is hired, the organization's members might assume he is trustworthy but this may be overturned by his behavior. A new female manager, on the other hand, may not be granted either of these benign assumptions that her male counterpart was granted. She is often distrusted, doubted, watched carefully and people experience great discomfort in dealing with her (197).

Because women are seen as "outsiders" or "risks," they often are excluded from informal networks such as sports teams or poker groups. Women need to develop both formal and informal networks because they provide valuable information resources, a support system, and inclusion (Freeman 24). Without these networks a woman could quickly become isolated from the rest of the organization; gender myths could result in social isolation.

These informal networks of the organization also facilitate quicker advancement; without access to these groups women may be losing
out on valuable opportunities (Rizzo and Mendez 12). There is a belief that because women do not have access to informal networks they can only advance to a certain level. This belief is commonly known as the glass ceiling (Kagan, "Cracks in the Glass Ceiling," 10). As Julia Kagan states:

While individual women—especially our pioneers—undoubtedly are encountering the glass ceiling today, the image that better describes our progress so far is a pipeline, a pipeline increasingly full of well trained women managers with good track records and of men who have gotten used to working with them. As the new generation makes its impact, that notorious ceiling will likely shatter and fall away. (10)

Hopefully, as more and more people work with women, their gender stereotypes and gender biases will diminish and gender myths will become illegitimate. The new myths or beliefs that take the place of the gender myths once they are illegitimate will allow women to gain greater access to informal as well as formal networks, and shatter the glass ceiling.

Another consequence of gender myths in the organization is that women may start adhering to the gender stereotypes that result from the myths. This could, in fact, result in women hindering themselves. When gender myths are constantly being reinforced in the workplace through stories, norms, behaviors and stereotypes, women often start believing them. They start believing that they are less motivated, less committed, inferior managers, or as the female stereotype suggests, uncomfortable about succeeding. Once this happens they may also start enacting the female stereotypes and in doing so perpetuate them and their overriding
myths. Rather than enacting these stereotypes and the behaviors attached to them, women need to be countering them in hopes to make them illegitimate. Gender myths and gender stereotypes in the organization often take away women’s belief in themselves, especially if their beliefs are contrary to that of the organization.

One of the most detrimental consequence of gender myths in the organization is sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is related to gender myths and their consequential stereotypes through what is known as "sex-role spillover." Sex-role spillover is "the carryover into the workplace of gender-based expectations that are irrelevant or inappropriate at work" (Powell 119). This is most likely to happen when the ratios of men and women are uneven or one group is looked at as being different from the others. Sexual harassment results when gender stereotypes pertaining to sexuality, which do not pertain to the workplace, are enacted (119).

In general terms, sexual harassment may be defined as "unwelcome and unsolicited behavior, either verbal or physical, which is sexual in nature" (Powell 116). Specific definitions vary greatly—from sexual activity, that if denied would hurt one’s job, to positive comments of a sexual nature such as "My, you look hot today!" (117). The definition an individual or an organization uses is influenced by a person’s gender or the gender of the majority in an organization. Women are the traditional victims of sexual harrassment and therefore are more sensitive to it and tend to see more harassment than men. When there are more men in an organization, relatively less sexual harassment is perceived to be going on. According to law, organizations have an obligation to discourage
sexual harassment, but this becomes difficult because of all the different definitions of sexual harassment. All of the various definitions make it difficult for the members of organizations to figure out where to draw boundaries (118). Depending on one's definition, quite a bit or very little sexual harassment may be going on in the same organization.

Unfortunately, as long as organizations hold onto the gender stereotypes and gender myths they hold in 1992, sexual harassment will occur. The female stereotype held by many organizations encourages its members to engage in sexual harassment as a result of "sex-role spillover." By believing the stereotype that women are submissive and enjoy harassing behavior, members of organizations are able to justify their harassing behavior in the workplace. Until the stereotypes change, harassing behavior can be expected to continue. Women cannot expect all men to quit engaging in harassing behavior when this kind of behavior is consistent with the female and male stereotypes and is accepted by many people as "normal." Although education may convince some to change their behaviors, the behaviors will not disappear until stereotypes and their overriding myths change from the belief that this behavior is acceptable to the belief that this behavior is unacceptable and wrong. Gender myths and the stereotypes associated with sexual harassment must become illegitimate so inappropriate, harassing behavior will no longer be justified.

If sexual harassment declines, women may gain greater strength to fight off the other negative consequences of gender myths and gender stereotypes. This behavior reinforces the stereotypes that hold women
back as well as taking away any power a woman may have had. Sexual harassment treats women as second-class citizens and may take away their self-confidence. It reinforces female stereotypes that women are weak, subservient, and their role in life is to be mothers. If a woman were to be harassed often, she may begin believing these stereotypes and be unable to get ahead in her organization or even want to do so. On the other hand, if this behavior were to cease, women might feel better about themselves because they would not be treated as second-class, sexual beings and consequently have more self-confidence and ambition to oppose the other injustices done to her gender in the workplace. Women and men alike must work together to make gender myths that suggest people should be judged by their gender rather than by their individual merit illegitimate so that men, women and organizations may all move ahead.
Countering Gender Myths Within the Context of the Organization

With all the gender stereotypes that exist in the workplace and the problems they create, where does one begin to attempt to counter these stereotypes and the gender myths that drive them? Who does one blame, if anyone? According to Ray Killian:

If problems of working women must be attributed to someone, much of the blame must rest on men, companies, and traditions that have unjustifiably restricted the opportunities of women. To a lesser degree, women themselves are to blame, especially those who have given less than their best effort, engaged in unprofessional job antics, and provided partial justification for the sometimes less than enthusiastic attitudes about women workers. (175)

Men, the organization, and women all play a contributing role in mythic thinking. Each of these groups must reform their actions and their thinking if social change is to take place, if myths are ever to cease hindering women's advancement.

Let us begin with men of the organization. According to Ray Killian, men usually fall into two categories: those who believe women are inferior to men and those who are threatened by having to compete with a woman (148). To Killian's categories I must add a third -- men who understand the problem women face in dealing with organizational and
societal myths and who genuinely treat women as equals. Most believe that men who are threatened by women or think they are inferior feel this way because they do not understand women. Although there are some differences between men and women, the differences are small. Only the men in one of these categories, that being the last, understand how small the differences between men and women are. These men have, fortunately, looked past the female stereotypes and see women for the individuals they are. The men of Killian’s two categories tend to be filled with anxiety when they try to understand women (16). Killian also says, “Perhaps the single most significant error committed by men and management is that they tend to assume that all women are the same, that women are not individuals” (171). In other words, the men in Killian’s categories are not able to overlook stereotypes or do not have the desire to do so for various reasons. They never may have had the experience of working with a woman and find it easier to assume all women fall under female stereotypes, or they may fear that changing stereotypes, and consequentially myths would endanger the stability of the organization. Whatever the reasoning is for men assuming that all women are the same, this attitude contributes to gender myths and especially gender stereotypes. Instead of viewing women as separate individuals, men attempt to come up with one common understanding for all of them, thus attributing the same characteristics to each one.

Many men do not understand that it would be beneficial for them to counter the gender myths in their organizations rather than contributing to them. Some of the benefits for not basing job opportunities on sex include: greater flexibility in job choice, better
talent-job matches, breadwinning roles could be shared with women who have the same money-earning potential, greater career flexibility, and responsibility would go to those most willing and able to handle it (Colwill 9). If more men realized the benefits of looking at women as individuals and considering them for positions on the basis of their personal merits, gender stereotypes would greatly diminish, or at least change. Although women must work towards this same goal by proving their worth, what is also needed is the support of men since they currently hold the power in organizations (Kagan, "How Management Myths Hurt Women," 78).

Another entity which needs to help bring about change is the organization itself. Kanter states: "These obstacles that inhibit women’s advancement trace their origins to the internal dynamics that control the organization. Organizations by definition must be self-perpetuating and are designed to ensure their continued existence" (33). In most organizations the hierarchy is male. Because of this fact, and the organization’s need to duplicate itself to remain stable in the eyes of its members, women often are excluded from opportunities within organizations. Accepting women is deviating from the norm; change in the organization would have to take place for that to happen. Kanter also suggests, "Despite attention to the women’s issue, change has been slow to nonexistent" (261). Although many organizations may say they are addressing women’s issues, stereotypes still need to be dealt with or changed and myths need to be countered.

Kanter suggests that for organizations to change the way they are operating, they must step back and take a look at the structural
conditions that have an impact on its members' behaviors. An organization must try to look objectively at the myths they hold and see how these myths influence the members' behaviors and attitudes. Only then will they be able to choose policies and programs that are appropriate and improve the quality of the work life in the organization. They must be able to recognize their myths and the behaviors and attitudes attached to them before they can really change. Kanter believes that critical to the future of the American Society as a whole, is action on women's work issues and inclusion of women in the workplace (264). Two areas, in particular, that organizations need to be responsible for are: 1) even distribution of men and women across jobs and occupations within the organization and 2) equal pay distribution (Powell 208). Organizations must make sure that sex ratios and pay become closer to equal. Closer sex ratios would increase the likelihood that men and women would have the experience of working with each other, and equal pay would eliminate a great source of explicit inequality. If both of these things are done, behaviors may change. This, in turn, could result in less stereotyping and some myths may eventually lose their legitimacy. However, the increase in the organization's female population must be due to recognized competence rather than preferential treatment or else the organization will begin to participate in reverse discrimination (Powell 243). If a woman is hired over a man simply because she is a woman, she will not be treated with equal respect and women and men will both lose out. Organizations may also want to consider training programs for their employees to counter gender stereotyping (131). Organizations must be sensitive to women's concerns
and genuinely attempt to solve the problem of discrimination. It must look for long-term solutions rather than short-term ones. Organizations need to enforce policies aimed at eliminating discrimination in the workplace such as equal employment opportunities policies, sexual harassment policies, and educational programs. As Ray Killian states: "The longer management delays in getting its house in order and providing realistic equality for women, the more needless time and valuable potential will be wasted" (175).

Women are the last group that needs to be concerned about challenging the gender myths in the organization. Edith Highman says: Ultimately, success for women will come when they create their own individual responses to the work situations they meet—responses not predicated solely on being women or on what any one book says, but predicated on being their own unique selves, with individual goals, strengths and strategies. (9)

Women must make sure that they are acting out of their own consciousness or they may never be considered individuals. Hopefully there will be a reciprocal process where women will not mask their individuality and organizations will treat them as individuals (Freeman 204).

It is interesting to note that Highman buys into gender stereotypes. This is evident in her recommendations to women. She believes that to counter female stereotypes women must avoid, "emotionalism, personalization of business decisions, undue sensitivity to criticism, pettiness, complaints, and gossip" (22). She feels that by avoiding these behaviors women may avoid perpetuating the female stereotype; in order to build a career, a woman must portray the
qualities of a professional individual rather than the qualities attributed to women or men through stereotypes (23). Women must ask to be judged on the basis of their performance alone rather than on their gender. Highman sums up her advice as follows:

What all this amounts to is that a woman on the way up has simply got to develop a thick skin, even thicker than an upwardly mobile man's. She is going to face more criticism than will a man if she's able enough and aggressive enough to push herself ahead. She is going to meet discrimination, condescension, comments, and gibes that really are personal, because she's a woman. (25)

The recommendations Highman makes suggest that she is buying into the gender stereotypes she is fighting against. Her recommendations seem to rest on the presupposition that women tend to act in accordance with feminine stereotypes. To get ahead women must stop behaving in these stereotypical patterns.

According to Killian, the biggest obstacle a woman has to achieving equal status in terms of pay and position is her own lack of self-confidence. He believes that if a woman lacks self-confidence she will be defeating herself before she even has the opportunity to achieve her goal (13). Without self-confidence, a woman has very little chance of overcoming all the other obstacles in her path.

For women to change the stereotypes pertaining to their gender is no easy matter. Because these beliefs are so prevalent, women will not be able to make the myths illegitimate simply through words; they must prove themselves and their beliefs through example. Hopefully they at
least will be given a chance by organizations and men to do this (Rizzo and Mendez 11). Without that chance, they have little hope of bringing about change. Changing the gender myths of the organization cannot be done solely by one group within the organization; it must be an effort on the part of all groups if positive change is to take place.

What women can choose to do on their own is to adopt a managerial style known as the androgynous strategy. Freeman states, "This involves a deemphasis on gender as an issue in the workplace and the use of professionalism to deal with gender-related problems" (204). The androgynous strategy involves enacting highly valued behaviors of both the male and female strategies; it is an interpenetration of the gender role myth. This interpenetration takes into account that there are highly valued attributes associated with both the male and female stereotypes and combines them into one prescription for effective management. Androgyny is a means by which a person could possibly move beyond gender stereotypes by adopting characteristics of both genders. Androgyny involves having a higher self-esteem and more flexible responses to situations calling for feminine or masculine behaviors, being psychologically healthier, not being as restricted in terms of self-image and behaviors as one is when dealing with sex-roles, and being more ready to meet societal demands. Androgyny has become the "new ideal" (Powell 54). As one author states, "Everyone who works in organizations will gain if men and women in management positions are encouraged to exhibit the behavioral flexibility of androgynous managers" (170).

Although androgynous management has been praised by many, there
is opposition to this strategy of management as well. Those against androgyny suggest that it is masculine behavior and not androgynous behavior that yield positive outcomes for managers in American organizations. There is no conclusive evidence to support either side.

Basically, if gender myths in the organization are ever to be countered, all members must be aware of women's issues, be sensitive to how they use stereotypes, and be open to change. Men, women, and the organization must all do their parts to ensure that everyone, whether male or female, is insured of equal opportunity in the workplace. Equality in the workplace will come only after the gender myths hindering women's advancement are countered; these myths must be made illegitimate. The suggestions I have made in this section may eventually lead to an organization and its members (and maybe even the society surrounding it) dissolving their gender myths. Changing actions and changing feelings may cause a society to change its beliefs about women and men and how they define each. Only if an organization is able to change its feelings about a myth, and its actions and behaviors associated with that myth, will the myth be made illegitimate. Only then will women and men be seen as individuals, as equals.
Conclusion

All societies and sections of societies have myths. These myths play very important roles; they justify the past and present and give an indication of what will happen in the future, thus providing a sense of identity and security for a society. However, they may also hinder members of that society because they discourage actions and behaviors outside of those suggested by the myth. In this way myths may be detrimental to a society and its members since they do not readily allow people to get ahead if that means going against the norms of behavior and roles suggested by myths.

Like societies, organizations also use myths to justify their actions and predict their futures. Organizational myths justify the actions of an organization in the past; the gender role myth justifies action taken to exclude and discriminate against women on account of their gender. This same myth justifies and explains why discrimination still exists. The gender role myth of organizations also predicts that women will continue to be held back in organizations by their gender.

The question here is, how do we change this? To stop the cycle of discrimination we must make gender myths illegitimate by changing the way we feel about men and women, how we act towards them, and the stereotypes we hold about them. Men and women must re-evaluate their thinking; they must make sure they are judging people according to their individual merit rather than on their gender in accordance with the
masculine and feminine stereotypes. Organizations must redefine who will be promoted or demoted; they need to make sure that their decisions are not based on gender in any way.

Women are very well-educated and capable of attaining great things in the business world; they are no less capable or adequate than their male counterparts. However, they are still held back by the myths and social construction surrounding them in society and in the workplace. Our society and organizations have made some progress in terms of interpenetration of myth. We have taken into account some of the empirical data that conflicts with out myths. However, discrimination will cease only when gender myths have been made illegitimate and replaced with new myths more representative of women and men's equality. To accomplish this our society must take an active role in discouraging stereotyping and mythic thinking and work on being sensitive to women's needs. Joseph Conrad states, "It is clear that both cultural mythologies and organizational life are beginning to change. But the change will continue only if employees of both sexes use communication to manage the paradoxes created by social myths and organizational realities" (327).
Works Cited


