Gender Tutorial #2 updated Tuesday, June 13, 2006

Total Time [22:01 - approximate]

Slide 1 [00:30]
Welcome to Gender Tutorial number 2. I'm Virginia Valian and in this tutorial I'll be providing reasons for the sex disparities in rank and salary that I described in Tutorial 1. This tutorial concentrates on how all of us – male and female alike – evaluate and judge others.
I will say "next slide" when the narration for each slide has finished.
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Slide 2 [00:37]
I'll start by summarizing the data from Tutorial 1. First, there has been progress: men and women make roughly equal starting salaries at similar ranks. Second, there is a problem: advancement is slower for women than for men; as careers progress, even controlling for a variety of variables, women earn less than men and reach the milestones of success more slowly than men. Third, the problem is general, occurring in all the professions – science, business, medicine, law, academia.
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Slide 3 [00:33]
To explain the sometimes bewildering findings in which women are evaluated less positively than men, I will use two key concepts: gender schemas and the accumulation of advantage. The brief summary of the explanation is that gender schemas cause us all to underrate women and overrate men. The many small examples where schemas operate add up, with the result that men accumulate more advantage than women do.
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Slide 4 [02:52]
To give an idea of the data that need to be explained, I'll use one example, a survey conducted in 1991 by two economists, Egan & Bendick [(1994)]. The survey asked US business people who worked in internationally-related occupations questions about their income and about factors that could contribute to income, such as the kind of degree they had, how many hours they worked a week, their years of experience, and so on. Altogether, the economists analyzed 17 factors that could contribute to men's and women's salaries. The males and females in the study were similar on most dimensions, but of the 17 factors, 14 helped men more than they helped women. Women's achievements and qualifications appeared to be worth less than men's.

This slide shows how much each factor was worth to men, in the stacked bars on the left, and to women, in the stacked bars on the right. To take one of the more striking examples, a BA contributed $28,000 to a man's salary but only $9,000 to a woman's.

Not constraining one's career for one's spouse added $21,900 for men but only $1,700 for women. Being designated 'fast track' added $10,900 for men but only $200 for women.

In some cases, factors that added to men's salaries subtracted from women's. For example, having lived outside the US added $9,200 for men but subtracted $7,700 for women. Having deliberately chosen international work added $5,300 for men but subtracted $4,200 for women. Speaking another language added $2,600 for men but subtracted $5,100 for women.

Only two factors helped women more than men. Negotiating for one's salary subtracted $5,600 for men and added $3,500 for women. Traveling 10 more days per year added $3,200 for men and $6,300 for women.

This study is typical of others in the literature. Women tend to benefit less from their qualifications than men do. Even when men and women start out with equal salaries, as is more and more the case, they quickly become unequal. This is true for law, academia, and medicine.
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Slide 5 [00:40]
Before I turn to the experimental data that show the role of gender schemas, a word about exceptions is in order. We can all think of women, like Madame Curie who are exceptions to the general pattern that I've described. There are a few extremely successful women. But it is important to realize that an exception is just that - an atypical event. The fact that there are a few successful women should not distract us from the main body of evidence, which shows that - overall - women are not as successful as men even when they have the same credentials.
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Slide 6 [00:46]
What are schemas? Schemas are similar to stereotypes, but I prefer the term schema because it is more inclusive and more neutral. We can have schemas about social groups, such as men or women, or different age groups or different ethnic groups; we can have schemas about things that have nothing to do with people, such as chairs and skyscrapers. A schema is a hypothesis about the basics of some category. Schemas are useful. They allow us to categorize the people and objects and events in our environment. They help us orient ourselves, know what to expect, and make predictions. Schemas are proto-scientific.
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Slide 7 [01:05]
Gender schemas are hypotheses about what it means to be male or female, hypotheses that we all share, male and female alike. Schemas assign different

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psychological traits to males and females [(Martin & Halverson, 1987; Spence & Helmreich, 1978)]. We think of males as capable of independent action, as oriented to the task at hand, and as doing things for a reason. We think of females as nurturant, expressive, and behaving communally. In brief: men act; women feel and express their feelings. And our beliefs have support. In questionnaires, men endorse more

"instrumental" characteristics and women endorse more "expressive" characteristics. Both sexes have some of all those characteristics, and both sexes display some characteristics more in some situations than others. But, overall, there are sex differences in psychological traits.
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Slide 8 [01:47]
Experimental data demonstrate that we do not see other people simply as people; we see them as males or females. Once we activate our gender schemas, they direct and skew our perception, even in the case of objective characteristics like height. In one example, a study by Monica Biernat and her colleagues [(Biernat, Manis, & Nelson, 1991)], the experimenters exploited the fact that our schemas include the - of course correct - information that men are on average taller than women. In this experiment, college students saw photographs of other students and estimated their height in feet and inches. The photos always contained a reference item, such as a desk or a doorway, so that height could be accurately estimated.

Unbeknownst to the students who were doing the estimating, the experimenters had matched the photographs so that for every photograph of a male student of a given height there was a female student of the same height. But the students were affected by their knowledge that men are on average taller than women. They judged the women as shorter than they really were, and the men as taller.

In this experiment, as is typically the case, there were no differences in how male and female observers perceived the others; we all have nonconscious hypotheses about males and females and we all use those hypotheses in perceiving and evaluating others. The important point about this study is that a genuinely objective characteristic - height - is not immune from the effects of gender schemas.
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Slide 9 [00:56]
In the case of professional competence, we are if anything more likely to make mistakes. We are likely to overvalue men and undervalue women. We can see why that would be the case. If we consider what it means to be professionally competent and successful, we can see that our schema for males is a better fit for professional success than our schema for females. Gender schemas will play a large role in evaluations whenever (a) schemas make a clear differentiation between males and females, and they do for professional competence as much as for height and (b) when

evidence is ambiguous and open to interpretation, as is the case with professional competence. It is tempting to think excellence is straightforward, but it certainly requires more interpretation than height does.
[Next slide]

Slide 10 [01:29]
Let's go back now to the study on international business people, we can interpret the data on the lower value of women's credentials. Here's that slide again. Recall that having lived outside the United States added $9,200 for men but subtracted $7,700 for women and that speaking another language added $2,600 for men but subtracted $5,100 for women. We can now understand that employers will interpret speaking another language and living outside the US differently for males and females. As expected with gender schemas, employers will interpret such qualifications as career preparation when men have them. The gender schema for men would see a man as choosing to be abroad or learn a language not because such activities are enjoyable in themselves but because they will lead somewhere. Remember that we see men as doing things for a reason. The gender schema for women, however, would see them as choosing such activities for their own sake. When men go abroad, their choice signals career commitment. When women go abroad, their choice signals indifference to a career. It is not that employers intend to be biased, but that gender schemas influence their perceptions.
[Next slide]

Slide 11 [00:38]
Another slide that makes the same point is from Tutorial 1 and shown here. Women applying for a post-doctoral fellowship to the Swedish Medical Research Council had to have more credentials in order to get the same scientific competence rating that men received with fewer credentials. Again, it is not that the senior Swedish scientists who were rating the candidates had any conscious bias against women. But they were operating, without realizing it, under the influence of gender schemas that portray men as more capable than women.
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Slide 12 [00:40]
We can now consider the role of good intentions. Almost all of us intend to judge other people fairly. We sincerely believe that people should advance because of good performance. And we think that our good intentions guarantee that we will judge others correctly. The data from experiments like the height experiment, and real-life examples like the business people and the young scientists applying for fellowships however, shows that our good intentions are not enough. When we evaluate people, we are likely to be influenced by our beliefs about the social groups that they are members of.
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Slide 13 [00:55]

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Consider again the role of exceptions. We can all think of very successful women, this time Rosalyn Yallow, a graduate of Hunter College, who seem not to have suffered because of gender schemas. But it is important to realize that an exception is just that - an atypical event. It is a highly noticeable event, and we are likely to remember the exceptional person rather than the many people who are not exceptional. We can reassure ourselves that the system is fair by pointing to the existence of exceptional women. But the fact that there are a few successful women should – again - not distract us from the main body of evidence, which shows that - overall - women are not as successful as men even when they have the same credentials.
[Next slide]

Slide 14 [02:29]
Not only do schemas affect perceptions of competence, they also make it difficult for women to reap the benefits of their achievements and be perceived as a leader. In the head-of-the-table experiment, carried out by Porter and Geis, college students saw a slide of 5 people seated around a table. The group was described as working together on a project. Two people sat at each side and one person sat at the head of the table.

Some students saw a group in which all the people were male, others a group in which all the people were female, and yet others a group that included both males and females (Porter & Geis, 1981). Students were asked to say who was the leader of the group.

In same-sex groups, students consistently identified the man or woman sitting at the head of the table as the leader. In mixed-sex groups, if a man was at the head of the table, students saw him as the leader. But if a woman was at the head, students labeled her as the leader about half the time and labeled a man seated elsewhere at the table as the leader about equally often.

An important point is that there were no differences between male and female observers. Both made the same judgments. Nor was there any intention to discriminate. Nevertheless, notice that the female leader who is sitting at the head of a table loses out compared to the male leader. The symbolic position of leadership carries less weight for a woman than for a man. Women are less likely to obtain the automatic deference that marks of leadership confer for men.

Women are objectively hurt in situations of that sort, even if observers intend no hurt. A woman has to work harder to demonstrate that her apparent position of leadership is a real position of leadership.

Not every person behaves on every occasion in accordance with gender schemas. Many different factors affect our evaluations and behaviors. But that variability should not distract us from what the odds are: the odds are that we all have a tendency to overrate men and underrate women, and we all have a tendency to see women as less

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leaderly than men.
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Slide 15 [01:23]
Experiments on who looks at whom in a conversation show the effects of social dominance when a subordinate and a superior are talking, the subordinate tends to look at his or her superior to the same extent whether that subordinate is talking or listening. Looking at the other person while listening is a sign of deference. The social superior in that situation tends to look more while talking than listening, revealing and reinforcing a superior stance. Dovidio and his colleagues have demonstrated the importance of eye gaze both in all-male conversations where status and power differences are official – a campus ROTC situation, and in male-female conversations (Dovidio, Ellyson, Keating,

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Heltman, & Brown, 1988). When men and women talk (outside of a courtship setting), men look more while talking than listening, and women look to the same degree whether talking or listening. The exception is if the topic is one that the woman has antecedently declared she knows a lot about and the man has antecedently declared he knows very little about. (You can see how hard it would be to recreate this laboratory situation in real life.)
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Slide 16 [00:44]
Another set of experiments shows that women who adopt a friendly but assertive leadership role get different reactions - by both males and females - than do men who adopt the same role [(Butler & Geis, 1990)]. These experiments surreptitiously videotaped two naive participants reacting to two trained actors following a script. Men received more positive than negative facial expressions from the naive participants when they were leaders, but women received more negative than positive expressions. Again, there were no differences between male and female observers. We are all subject to the effects of gender schemas.
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Slide 17 [00:15]
Statements like "I treat everyone the same; I don't care if they're male or female, white or black" reveal an ignorance of the data. We'd all like that to be the case, but we're unlikely act that way.
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Slide 18 [00:49]
Each example that I have discussed is a small thing. One might be tempted to dismiss concern about such imbalances as making a mountain out of a molehill. One example that many women bring up is the meeting, where the woman, let's call her Jane, makes a suggestion. Jane's suggestion is ignored. It's as if she hadn't spoken. Five minutes later, Joe (let's call him) makes the same suggestion and everyone says, "That's a great

idea". Joe gets the credit and everyone thinks a little better of him. If Jane mentions what happened to someone, her colleague, with the best intentions in the world, may say, "don't make a mountain out of a molehill".

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Slide 19 [00:06]
But mountains are molehills, piled on top of one the other over time.

Slide 20 [00:44]
Small imbalances add up to disadvantage women. Success is largely the accumulation of advantage, exploiting small gains to get bigger ones [(Merton, 1968)]. A computer simulation shows the importance of even very small amounts of bias if they are repeatedly encountered [(Martell, Lane & Emrich 1996)].

Martell, Lane and Emrich simulated an 8-level hierarchical institution, with a pyramidal structure. They staffed this hypothetical institution with equal numbers of men and women. The model assumed a tiny bias in favor of promoting men, a bias accounting for only 1 % of the variability in promotion. After many series, the top level was now 65% male. Even very small amounts of disadvantage accumulate.

This is the lesson of compound interest and the lesson of evolution. Very small imbalances, if encountered repeatedly, add up over time to major differences.
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Slide 21 [01:12]
Let's put together what we know about gender schemas and the accumulation of advantage. Males and females tend to see men as more competent and capable than women. Every day we evaluate others, often in small ways that we are unaware of. Both males and females, to the same degree, are likely to underrate and undervalue what women do, and to overrate and overvalue what men do. The small but systematic undervaluation of women culminates over time in women's smaller salaries compared to men, and women's slower rates of promotion.

Slide 22 [00:46]
We would like to think that our genuinely held egalitarian and meritocratic beliefs and ideals would buffer us from the effects of gender schemas (Lerner, 1975). But our evaluations and reactions occur unintentionally and outside awareness. Indeed, our belief in our own good will can make it difficult for us to see what we are doing. That does not mean that we cannot institute remedies. We can, but we need to understand that good intentions are not enough. We need to understand how gender schemas work and the importance of the small daily inequities in our treatment of our colleagues.

This ends the narrative portion of Gender Tutorial number 2.

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