



ISSUE 03

## ETHICS IN LEADERSHIP: SEXUAL BIASES LEADER NOTES

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“Women’s leadership cues may be less recognizable than the same evidence presented by a man. If we once learned the traditional stereotype that “women can’t be leaders,” our brain continues to use this previous knowledge, automatically, to interpret all evidence pertaining to women in terms of meanings other than “leadership.” Even when we focus consciously on evaluating a woman for leadership, our perceptions of her qualifications have already been discounted by the same automatic interpretation, before they registered consciously.”

“Specifically in the area of leadership, women have not been viewed as leaders; when they were presented as leaders they have been evaluated as ineffective; when they were explicitly defined as competent, their personalities were denigrated.”

“Women have often been rated lower in leadership abilities and credentials, even though there has been little evidence of actual sex difference in performance. Not only have the stereotype taught us that most women have little interest and less ability in leadership, they have also described those few women who did succeed in the male domain as having exceedingly unpleasant personalities. Research has shown assertive women socially rejected and competent women excluded from task groups in favor of either competent men or incompetent women.”

“Sexual discrimination operated largely outside of conscious awareness. College students’ descriptions of males and females are converging, with more socially desirable masculine and feminine traits attributed to both sexes. Conscious attitudes have shifted rapidly, but this does not mean that stereotypes have lost their influence.”

On campus it is important that the female leaders be aware of these stereotypes. As more and more females are elected to leadership positions, they will be faced with the problems of sexual biases and stereotypes about their gender. With a working knowledge of these problems, women can more successfully carry out their duties as leaders.