Tilburg University

Gender stereotypes in management

Curseu, P.L.; Boros, S.

Published in:
International Journal of Psychology

Publication date:
2011

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Curseu, P. L., & Boros, S. (2011). Gender stereotypes in management: A comparative study of communist and post-communist Romania. *International Journal of Psychology*, 46(4), 299-309.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

This article was downloaded by: [Tilburg University]

On: 03 October 2011, At: 01:40

Publisher: Psychology Press

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

International Journal of Psychology

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/pijp20>

Gender stereotypes in management: A comparative study of communist and postcommunist Romania

Petru Lucian Curşeu^a & Smaranda Boros^a

^a Department of Organisation Studies, Tilburg University, Tilburg, The Netherlands

Available online: 24 May 2011

To cite this article: Petru Lucian Curşeu & Smaranda Boros (2011): Gender stereotypes in management: A comparative study of communist and postcommunist Romania, *International Journal of Psychology*, 46:4, 299-309

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2011.554554>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Gender stereotypes in management: A comparative study of communist and postcommunist Romania

Petru Lucian Curşeu and Smaranda Boroş

Department of Organisation Studies, Tilburg University, Tilburg, The Netherlands

This study sets out to investigate the changes in the perception of women in leading positions in communist and postcommunist Romania. The study uses a noninvasive paradigm of analyzing the content of obituaries for women and men in leading positions published in a national journal, and shows that the gender gap in management widened during the postcommunist period. In postcommunist Romania, women are perceived as being less able to lead/manage and more relational in their leadership style as compared to men, while in the communist period the gender differences were not significant.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes; Communism; Dynamic stereotypes; Romania.

Cette étude porte sur le changement de la perception à l'égard de femmes dans des postes de direction en Roumanie sous l'ère communiste et après celle-ci. Cette étude utilise une approche non invasive qui consiste à analyser le contenu des notices nécrologiques d'hommes et de femmes dans des postes de direction telles que publiées dans un journal national. Elle montre que l'écart entre les genres dans la direction s'amplifie lors de la période suivant celle du communisme. Les femmes y sont alors perçues comme moins capables de mener ou de diriger et sont plus centrées sur les relations interpersonnelles dans leur style de leadership comparativement aux hommes. Sous l'ère communiste, les différences entre les genres ne sont pas significatives.

El presente estudio se propone investigar los cambios en la percepción de las mujeres en cargos de liderazgo o gerencia durante y después del comunismo en Rumania. Se utilizó un paradigma no invasivo al analizar el contenido de las necrologías de hombres y mujeres en cargos administrativos publicados en publicaciones nacionales. Se pudo observar que la brecha entre los géneros fue muy marcada en el período después del comunismo en Rumania. A las mujeres se las percibe como menos capaces de dirigir y más relacionales en su estilo de liderazgo, en comparación con los hombres; mientras que durante el comunismo no se observaron diferencias significativas entre los géneros.

Women in transition economies from Eastern Europe have lower wages, higher unemployment, and higher underemployment rates than men (Metcalf & Afanassieva, 2005). These are clear indications of discriminatory practices in personnel recruitment and career advancement in organizations operating in the former communist countries. Two explanations were advanced to

make sense of the accentuated gender discrimination in transition economies. First, these results were considered a communist legacy and attributed to the degrading way in which women were perceived and treated under communist regimes (Fodor, 2002). Second, the results were attributed to the erosion of social support (childcare facilities, training opportunities), to the

Correspondence should be addressed to Petru Lucian Curşeu, Department of Organisation Studies, Tilburg University; Room P1.161; Warandelaan 2, PO Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 13 466 2153. Fax: +31 13 466 3002. (E-mail: p.l.curseu@uvt.nl).

The authors would like to thank Prof. Dr Sandra Schruijer, Prof. Dr Klaus Boehnke and several anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper, and Alina Rusu, Anamaria Lefterache, Ariadna Zaharia, Livia Viziteu, Raluca Buda, and Simona Ştefan for their assistance in data collection and coding.

change in social roles, and to the exacerbation of negative stereotypes towards women during the democratization process (Metcalf & Afanassieva, 2005; Rudd, 2000).

Macrosocietal dynamics and stereotypes are closely connected (Diekmann, Eagly, Mladinic & Ferreira, 2005; Pettigrew, 2009), yet few studies have explored the dynamics of stereotypes in communist and postcommunist societies, and the evidence on the impact of communism on gender-related stereotypes is narrative and based on circumstantial evidence (Metcalf & Afanassieva, 2005). Our study fills the gap on gender stereotypes research in Eastern Europe by providing first-hand empirical support for the change in the content of gender-related stereotypes in communist and postcommunist Romania. We use insights from role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and stereotypes as dynamic constructs (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000) to investigate the changes in the perception of women in leading positions in Romanian organizations between 1975 and 2003, and to explore the impact of communist state-controlled propaganda and related institutional norms and practices (e.g., “working with women” policies) on the content of gender stereotypes in management. Therefore, by combining sociological and macrosocietal elements (e.g., egalitarian propaganda in communist Romania, erosion of social support in postcommunist societies, decreased presence of women in the public arena) with insights from psychological literature (e.g., role congruity theory, dynamic stereotypes) we explore the change in stereotypes contingent on the change in gender roles induced by the transition to a market economy in Romania. Finally, we build on previous research using obituaries as a valuable resource for studying stereotypes (Kirchler, 1992; Rodler, Kirchler, & Hölzl, 2001; Radtke, Hunter & Stam, 2000) and use this noninvasive paradigm to analyze the obituaries of women and men in leading positions published in a national journal (*România Liberă*).

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Stereotypes are cognitions (beliefs, expectations, and convictions) referring to the traits, attributes and behaviors specific to the members of a given social category/group (Hilton & Hoppel, 1996). A social structural perspective on stereotypes argues that these consensual beliefs about social groups are derived from their relative position, status, and involvement in specific social roles. Gender stereotypes are beliefs about the attributes of a typical

man and typical woman. Due to their presence in high-status social roles, men are seen as more active, instrumental, action-oriented, assertive, and competent, while women are seen as kind, expressive, empathetic, supportive, and nurturing, as they often occupy caretaking roles (Diekmann et al., 2005; Kirchmeyer, 2002). Moreover, referring to management roles, attributes of successful managers are closely associated with the typical male image. Research extensively explored the content, antecedents and consequences of gender stereotypes in management, and the “think-manager-think-male” stereotype received ample attention (Sczesny, 2003). The core argument in this stream of literature is that the analysis, evaluation, and attribution of managerial jobs are affected by the congruence or incongruence of gender roles and managerial roles expectations. More specifically, role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) argues that the prejudicial behavior of blocking women from acceding to top managerial positions in modern organizations is the result of incongruent expectations concerning two sets of social roles: gender and managerial. Managerial activities are associated with the “typical” man rather than with the “typical” woman. Women are thought to have inferior managerial skills to men and to be significantly less efficient than them in these positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 2001; Sczesny, 2003).

Two views on the dynamics of gender stereotypes can be distinguished in the literature: The first view holds that gender stereotypes are relatively stable in time and the typical representations of men and women persist even when there is a substantial change in sex roles across time (Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo & Lueptow, 1995), while the second holds that consensual beliefs about men and women change as a consequence of changing social roles (Diekmann et al., 2005). The idea that gender stereotypes are stable cognitive structures is in line with the conceptualization of stereotypes as stable personality traits (Lueptow et al., 1995). However, more recent longitudinal research shows that changes in work settings impact on gender stereotypes (Kirchmeyer, 2002) and thus support a certain plasticity of gender stereotypes. Moreover, research on dynamic stereotypes (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000; Diekmann et al., 2005) shows that changes in social roles induced by political or economic transitions lead to changes in gender stereotypes. The transition to capitalism and democracy emphasizes masculine values such as competition and assertiveness. For instance, since women in Latin America experienced a change from predominantly private roles

(focused primarily on family needs) to public roles, they were more likely to be perceived as sharing these masculine attributes with men. In other words, the content of stereotypes changes as the typical role of a particular social group changes. This core argument was supported in several experimental studies in which participants were asked to imagine the average man and woman in the present, past, or future. The results showed that gender stereotypes portrayed a social group as having a trajectory over time in close dependency with the social roles occupied by that particular group (Diekmann et al., 2005).

In two studies using a noninvasive method (analysis of obituaries), Kirchler and colleagues (Kirchler, 1992; Rodler et al., 2001) add further support to the dynamic nature of gender stereotypes in management. The analysis of obituaries for deceased managers is a valid way of exploring the content of stereotypes because (1) gender stereotypes are constructed and changed through (social) discourse and (2) the implicit use of gender-bound norms in describing the deceased parallels the attribution process in everyday life (Radtke et al., 2000). In his 1992 paper, Kirchler explores the content of 562 obituaries for female and male leaders published in four daily newspapers between 1974 and 1986 in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. His results show that attributes used to describe male leaders did not change substantially across time, while the typical female leader changed from adorable, likeable, and nice in 1974 to courageous and committed in 1986. Rodler and colleagues extended the analysis to 894 obituaries published in the same four newspapers up to 1998, and showed a substantial reduction of the gender gap (Rodler et al., 2001). These results are in line with those reported by Diekmann and colleagues (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000; Diekmann et al., 2005), in the sense that in time, the typical female leader becomes more masculine as women become more visible in public roles, while descriptions of the typical male leader remain consistent. Another set of relevant findings in Rodler et al. (2001) refers to gender differences in leadership styles. Men were described as task-oriented leaders, while for women the task and person orientations were balanced. Overall men were described as more successful than women.

The transition from communism to democracy (and capitalism) in Central and Eastern European countries influenced the (re)distribution of social roles and thus is likely to have triggered changes in the content of gender stereotypes in management.

We will argue below that in Romania, during this transition the participation of women in public life and the upper organizational echelons dropped significantly. This change in social roles was ultimately reflected in the change of gender stereotypes and accentuation of the gender gap in management after 1989.

Although communist political ideologies were similar in many respects, the way they were implemented across Eastern Europe was rather diverse. Concerning the position of women, two aspects distinguish the Romanian context from other communist countries in Eastern Europe. First, following the Soviet example, the communist party had a clear strategy of involving women in the public arena. Organizational structures parallel to the communist party (but closely associated with it) were created and women were offered ample support concerning access to (higher) education, improved childcare systems, and extended maternity leave. Another institutional norm was that departments with a large majority of women employees were to be managed by women and that women should have representatives in leading positions within the communist party as well as within the organizational boards and unions (Jinga, 2008). Second, Elena Ceaușescu, the wife of Nicolae Ceaușescu, played a very active role in politics and organizational life. This had a strong impact on gender equality in Romania, which was in itself a widespread idea across other communist regimes in Eastern Europe (Metcalf & Afanassieva, 2005).

According to Fodor (2002), the gender stereotypes in communist Hungary portrayed men as warriors and fighters, while women were perceived as caring mothers. As opposed to this view, the myth of the “heroic working mother” was a central feature of Romanian political ideology. Romanian women were expected to play important roles in both private and public spheres. The results concerning the representation of women in public life support this view, Romania having the highest percentage of women active in politics in the former East European communist countries (Galligan & Clavero, 2008). However, Romania registered the highest gender gap in political representation after the first multiparty elections (the proportion of women in the Romanian Parliament dropped from more than 34% after the 1985 elections to around 3% in the Chamber of Deputies and 1% in the Senate after the 1990 elections¹) (Inter-parliamentary Union, 1995). These findings open an important area of

¹ Prior to 1990 the parliament of Romania was unicameral.

exploration in the dynamics of gender stereotypes in relation to political regimes and political ideologies. The drop in the number of women in politics and organizational life overlaps with a dramatic shift in social ideologies, namely the shift from an idealized icon ("heroic working mother") during the communist regime to an actor deemed to perform the routine duties associated with the private life of a modern and democratic Romania.

Previous research shows that egalitarian organizational cultures reduce gender discrimination (Haas & Hwang, 2007). It is therefore not unreasonable to argue that egalitarian values imposed by communist propaganda led to a significant reduction in the gender gap that might otherwise be expected in traditional societies such as Romania. Moreover, the active presence of women in the public arena during communism was likely to increase the chances for intergroup contact and thus disconfirm the male-manager role association. As the presence of women in higher organizational echelons decreased after 1989 (IMAS, 2006), it is likely that the "think-manager-think-male" stereotype became amplified during the transition to a market economy. In postcommunist Romania, the Gender Barometer (2000) clearly depicts the socially shared perception of women in management: 54% of the respondents thought that men are more capable leaders than women, 46% that women are taught that leadership positions are not meant for them, and 68% that women are too busy with the household to have time for leadership positions. Therefore our first general hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1: Gender-related stereotypes ("think-manager-think-male") amplify with the transition from communism to democracy.

Another factor that can be related to the content of the gender stereotypes in managerial activities is leadership style. Several empirical studies show that women leaders more frequently adopt a transformational leadership style, while men adopt a more transactional one. According to these results, a relevant part of the socially shared stereotype regarding women managers is that they are less task-oriented and more relationship-oriented in comparison to men managers. Therefore, women in leading positions are *typically perceived* to have a transformational leadership style and to be more relationship-oriented and less task-oriented compared to men (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Van Engen, 2003; Sczesny, 2003). These results are in line with empirical data

collected after 1989 in Romania. A national survey performed in 2006 (IMAS, 2006) revealed that employees perceive women managers to be supportive and to have good relations with their coworkers and superiors, while male leaders are seen as decision-makers and risk-takers. Therefore we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1a: Compared to men, women are perceived to be more relationship-oriented in the postcommunist regime than they were during the communist era.

Hypothesis 1b: Compared to men, women are perceived to be less task-oriented in the postcommunist regime than they were during the communist era.

METHODS

Starting from Rodler et al.'s (2001) content analysis grid, we analyzed the obituaries of women and men in leadership positions published in the sole national periodical printed between 1975 and 2003: *România Liberă*. In our analysis, we focused on the following dimensions: success as a leader, orientation to task vs. relationships, presence in public/private life. The study pursued a longitudinal analysis of stereotypical contents on these dimensions, and compared these contents in the communist and postcommunist periods.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Initially, we investigated two national Romanian newspapers published before as well as after 1989: *Scântea* (after 1989 this changed name to *Adevărul*) and *România Liberă*. No obituaries were found in *Scântea*, therefore only the obituaries from *România Liberă* were kept for further analysis. We selected all the available issues of this daily periodical between January 1975 and December 2003. For each day of the week (e.g., Monday), the sampling scheme had a sampling interval of 7 weeks. More precisely, we chose Monday's newspaper for the first week of 1975, Tuesday's for the second week, Wednesday's for the third, and so forth, up to the last week of 2003. From these issues, we selected all the obituaries of people in leadership positions. The resulting sample of obituaries is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Sample of obituaries from the daily periodical *România Liberă*, 1975–2003

Obituaries of:	Before 1989 (communist period)	After 1989 (postcommunist period)
Male leaders	668 (87.09%)	285 (90.47%)
Female leaders	99 (12.91%)	30 (9.53%)
Total	767	315

Content analysis

Six trained independent coders (unaware of the aim and hypotheses of this study) conducted the content analysis of the selected obituaries. Before coding, the coders ran a common preliminary analysis to improve inter-rater reliability. In this trial, the differences in coding between them were solved by reaching consensus. Each coder had to analyze and code a number of obituaries on two dimensions. First they were asked to count in each of the selected obituaries the themes referring to the task vs. relational orientation of the leader/manager. We used this general strategy of coding themes because task/relational orientation also refers to perceived social roles and is often described over and above a simple attribute or trait. Two scores were derived from this first coding procedure, namely task and relational orientation of the deceased leader. Second, the coders were also asked to record, using a predefined attribute list (Rodler et al., 2001), the attributes used to describe each leader. We started from the list of attributes presented in Rodler et al. (2001) and instructed the coders to also record any other attribute used in the obituaries. No additional attributes were identified, and from the 58 attributes taken from Rodler et al. (2001), 10 were not identified in the Romanian obituaries. These attributes are: convincing, decision-maker, farsighted, independent, natural, reliable, religious, servant, sociable, and venerable. Most of these omissions were not surprising, given the Romanian sociopolitical context of the time. The content of communist propaganda explains why attributes such as religious (deemed to be a drug for the clear, visionary mind), farsighted (only the supreme leader was entitled to such labels as farsighted and visionary), and servant (often associated with the capitalist social order) are not used in the managerial obituaries. Moreover, the general climate of mistrust dominating Romanian society of the time explains why attributes such as venerable, reliable, and sociable are not used either.

The frequencies of these attributes were further used to compute three scores. The first score is effective leadership. In line with the results reported by Rodler et al. (2001), we used 27 attributes as indicators of effective leadership. These are: active, devoted, thorough, persuasive, courageous, creative, potent, efficient, energetic, entrepreneurial spirit, esteemed, experienced, expert, innovator, intelligent, leader, open, opinion leader, organizer, amazing, road-opener, professional, respected, responsible, competent, successful, work-oriented. The summed frequencies of these attributes were used as an indicator of leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, we asked a group of four experts to evaluate the extent to which all 48 attributes in the analysis refer to task or relational orientation. The attributes for which we obtained 100% agreement were labeled either as task or relational. Therefore, the second score refers to the task orientation and contains the frequencies of the following attributes: active, committed, conscientious, creative, efficient, entrepreneurial spirit, experienced, expert, indefatigable, innovator, organizer, outstanding, pioneer, professional, responsible, skillful, and work-oriented. Finally, the interpersonal orientation is the summed frequency of the following attributes: amiable, caring, consensus-oriented, compassionate, esteemed, ethical, fair, friendly, humane, instructor, kind, likeable, loyal, opinion leader, regardful, respected, supportive, and unselfish.

In order to check whether the themes identified by coders are consistent with the results of the attribute analysis based on the predefined list, we carried out a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the four evaluations (the number of rating themes referring to task or relational orientation as counted by the coders and the summed number of task or relational attributes as grouped by the four experts). The results show two distinct factors. The PCA results and the factor loadings are presented in Table 2. Given the results of the PCA and the high correlations between the respective variables evaluating task orientation and relational orientation, we conclude that the scores of the four variables can be aggregated in two main scores indicative of task and relational orientation of the leaders.

RESULTS

In order to test the hypotheses, we carried out an analysis of variance (ANOVA), with the gender of the leader/manager and period (communist/post-communist) as factors, and sum score for

successful leaders, task orientation, and relational orientation as dependent variables. Because the dependent variables are summed scores, and the assumptions for multivariate normality are violated, we transformed the data using a natural logarithm procedure (before transformation we added 1 as a constant to adjust the values lower than 1; Cleveland, 1984). For the natural log transformed variables, Levene's test for equality of variance is not significant: for task orientation $F(3, 590) = .83, p = .47$, for relational orientation $F(3, 590) = 1.16, p = .32$ and for attributes describing successful leaders $F(3, 590) = 2.39, p = .07$; while Box's M is 26.01, $F(18, 20798) = 1.40, p = .11$, therefore we can further perform a multivariate analysis. Moreover, in order to control for discourse peculiarities (e.g., freedom in using language and creativity), we have added the total

TABLE 2

PCA results for theme coding and attribute-based scores for task vs. relational orientation

	Component	
	1	2
Task-related themes (coders)	.93	.07
Relational themes (coders)	-.13	.92
Task-related attributes	.88	.19
Relational attributes	.21	.74

For PCA, with Oblimin rotation, the correlation coefficient between task-related themes and task-related attributes scores is .69, while that between relational themes and relational attributes is .44.

number of attributes presented in the obituaries as covariate. The covariate is significantly associated with all three dependent variables. The main effect of period (communist vs. postcommunist) is not significant for the three dependent variables, while gender has a significant effect on attributes associated with successful leaders, $F(1, 594) = 6.10, p = .01$, as well as a marginally significant effect on relational orientation, $F(1, 594) = 3.85, p = .05$. Women are perceived as more oriented towards relations ($M = .90$) and less successful ($M = .60$) as compared to men (for relational orientation $M = .76$ and for success $M = .74$). The results of the interaction support Hypothesis 1, stating that gender-related stereotypes in leadership were exacerbated during the postcommunist period. For the attributes describing successful leaders, the interaction between gender and period (communist vs postcommunist) is significant, $F(1, 594) = 6.80, p = .009$. No differences in the descriptions of men ($M = .68$) and women ($M = .62$) as successful leaders are noticeable for the communist period (before 1989), whereas after 1989, attributes associated with effective leadership are used more often to describe men ($M = .81$) as compared to women ($M = .49$) leaders (Cohen's d is .67, and effect size r is .31) (see Figure 1).

Concerning leadership style (Hypotheses 1a and 1b), and differences in terms of task or relational orientation, the results are in the hypothesized direction. During the communist period, women and men leaders/managers are equally described as task- or relationship-oriented. However, during the postcommunist period, men are described as

Figure 1. Interaction effects between gender and period (communist vs. postcommunist) on attributes describing successful leaders.

Figure 2. Interaction effects between gender and period (communist vs postcommunist) on task orientation.

Figure 3. Interaction effects between gender and period (communist vs postcommunist) on relational orientation.

more task-oriented ($M = .87$ for men and $M = .61$ for women, Cohen's d for task-related attributes is .46, and effect size r is .22), while women are described more in relational terms ($M = .90$ for women and $M = .69$ for men, Cohen's d for relational orientation is .32, and effect size r is .15). The general interaction effect between gender and period is significant for relational orientation, $F(1, 594) = 3.43$, $p = .04$, and not significant for task orientation, $F(1, 594) = 2.67$, $p = .10$ (yet in

the hypothesized direction). The differences between means are depicted in Figures 2 and 3.

DISCUSSION

Gender stereotypes in management generate a substantial amount of research, in an attempt to understand the causes of gender discrimination in modern organizations and ultimately inform

effective ways of reducing glass-ceiling effects (Curşeu & Boros, 2008; Sczesny, 2003). The current study offers insights into the way in which the communist propaganda and institutional norms and practices related to "working with women" in communist Romania shaped the content of gender stereotypes in management. Our results for the Romanian context document that the "think-manager-think-male" stereotypes were prevalent only during the postcommunist period. These results are in line with other Romanian national studies on women managers (IMAS, 2006), which reported that during the communist period institutional pressures towards egalitarianism were also reflected in the proportion of male/female leaders in organizations: a certain percentage of women were maintained in leadership positions and gender equality was declaratively promoted. Those studies also noticed an increase in discrimination against women after 1989.

As noted in the separate analyses of task- vs. relational-related attributes, differences between men and women leaders are only observed in the postcommunist period, men being generally described more in task-related terms and women more in relational terms. Therefore, our results do not support the existence of a gender gap in management during communism. One possible explanation advanced here is that egalitarian communist propaganda and institutional practices led to the dissolution of traditional gender-role expectations. Certainly before the Second World War, Romania was a patriarchal traditional society, with public roles dominated by men, and with women confined to private roles and tasks. During communism (especially after the 1960s), women's presence in public roles and in top managerial positions increased substantially. We therefore argue that it was the increased female participation in public and organizational life that generated the dissolution of gender-related role expectations. Interaction with atypical members of a category (e.g., women with a typical man's role) leads to the modification of stereotyped representations (Hilton & Hoppel, 1996). The more frequent interactions in social life with women in leading positions and the social norming of gender equality regarding rights and opportunities are factors that strengthened the association between modified stereotyped representations of women and cognitions regarding the role of manager. Rodler and colleagues (2001) interpret in a similar vein the reduction of the "stereotype gap" in the late 1990s in three Western European countries (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland), by concluding that the "increasing number of women particularly in

intermediate leadership positions, the decline of gender barriers to opportunity and the observable convergence of gender images give rise to hope that stereotypes of leaders start to change" (Rodler et al., 2001, p. 841).

Although the distribution of obituaries across genders is skewed (both during communism and in the postcommunist period; see Table 1), the objective statistical reports support a more active participation of women in public and organizational life during communism as compared to the postcommunist period (Inter-parliamentary Union, 1995; Jinga, 2008). We could argue therefore that the labor force composition and public participation of women accounts for the lack of stereotype gap during communism, when men and women were equally described as successful leaders. However, an alternative explanation should also be considered, namely that women were more present yet were mostly powerless.

Different organizational forms that aimed at increasing women's participation in public and political life (such as the Women's Committee of the Romanian Communist Party) were often parallel organizational structures, and the work of men and women was often disconnected. In other words, it is not unreasonable to argue that although women's public and organizational presence was substantial, informally, gender segregation and gender barriers were still present. In this case the explanation of increased exposure to atypical group members as a means of reducing negative stereotypes does not hold. The substantial gender difference recorded in the postcommunist period for attributes describing successful leaders could actually reflect an already existing deep-level (latent) difference, not expressed during the communist period due to institutional pressures towards egalitarianism. Therefore, the changes visible under a new political regime and social order may reflect a change in the social discourse associated with the newly gained freedom of speech, rather than a real change of stereotype content.

If the content of the shared stereotypes really changed (due to the change in social roles), the change should occur rather slowly, following the pattern of change in social roles. If, however, the differences are just attributable to the change in discourse (freedom of speech), the change in stereotypes after the collapse of communism should occur rather quickly, and we should observe marked differences in the use of different attributes during communist and postcommunist periods. We compared the frequency for each individual attribute during the communist and

Figure 4. Gender differences in attributes of successful leaders across time.

postcommunist periods, and the χ^2 test reveals significant differences for 8 of the 48 attributes. Conscientious was used more frequently during the communist period, while admirable, courageous, entrepreneurial spirit, expert, leader, organizer, pioneer, responsible, and strong personality were used more to describe leaders in the postcommunist period. Further, in order to check whether the change in stereotypes reflects only a change in discourse, we plotted the scores for the variables describing successful leaders across six time periods (we aggregated data across several years due to the rather small number of women in our sample). The results presented in Figure 4 show a steady widening of the stereotype gap after 1990 towards 2003. This would suggest that the change happened rather slowly and it is probably not only a change in social discourse, but a substantive change in the content of the stereotypes across time, following the change in social roles during the transition to democracy.

LIMITATIONS

Although this study has important implications for the societal determinism of stereotypes, it has several limitations. Some of these are inherent to the method we used to study stereotypes, while others refer to the theoretical claims made based on the results reported here. First, in line with previous research we assumed that gender stereotypes are transparent in obituaries. Our analysis of the obituaries revealed that during the communist period, obituaries had a rather standard form (so-called wooden language, largely used in propaganda and political circles), which is another factor that accounts for the similarity of men and women's portrayal during communism and for the differentiation occurring afterwards (with men more richly described in terms of the attributes of a successful leader). Second, the skewed gender distribution in our sample (a similar limitation as in Rodler et al., 2001 and Kirchner, 1992) certainly impacts on the quality of our results. Due to this limitation, we were unable to control

for factors likely to impact on the dynamics of stereotypes such as type of industry or type of managerial position. Third, it was impossible to make inferences about the gender of the person who wrote the text for the obituaries. Although it is acknowledged that stereotypes are largely shared within societies, it would have been relevant to take account of the gender of the person who wrote the description. Fourth, when analyzing the trend of the data, one notices large variations of the descriptions of women leaders and less variation for male leaders. Two aspects should be debated here: the first is that the variations in the descriptions of women leaders are partially accounted for by the lack of obituaries for women during certain years. The second, as noticed by Rodler et al. (2001) is the fact that current obituaries are written for older people, therefore they are likely to reflect the stereotypes and realities of an older generation. Finally, we have put forward the claim that egalitarian propaganda and the active presence of women in the public and organizational sphere accounts for the lack of gender differences in how managerial success is portrayed. We have explored a few alternative explanations for these findings, yet it is impossible to completely refute all of them and fully accept the one advanced as the sole valid interpretation. For example, based on the data presented here we cannot fully rule out the possibility that freedom of speech could also account for the gender-related differences documented in the postcommunist period.

Manuscript received April 2010

Revised manuscript accepted December 2010

First published online March 2011

REFERENCES

- Cleveland, W. S. (1984). Graphical methods for data presentation: Full scale breaks, dot charts, and multibased logging. *American Statistician*, 38(4), 270–280.
- Curşeu, P. L., & Boros, S. (2008). Stereotypes and prejudice towards women managers: An experimental illustration using the Goldberg-paradigm in a Romanian sample. *Studia Psychologica*, 50(3), 233–254.
- Diekmann, A. B., & Eagly, A. H. (2000). Stereotypes as dynamic constructs: Women and men of the past, present and future. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(10), 1171–1188.
- Diekmann, A. B., Eagly, A. H., Mladinic, A., & Ferreira, C. M. (2005). Dynamic stereotypes about women and men in Latin America and United States. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36, 209–226.
- Eagly, A. H., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C., & van Engen, M. L. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 569–591.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573–598.
- Fodor, E. (2002). Smiling women and fighting men: The gender of the communist subject in state socialist Hungary. *Gender & Society*, 16(2), 240–263.
- Galligan, Y., & Clavero, S. (2008). Prospects for women's legislative representation in post-socialist Europe: The views of female politicians. *Gender & Society*, 22, 149–171.
- Gender Barometer (2000). *Survey carried by the Gallup Organization Romania for the Open Society Foundation*. Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Open Society Foundation Press.
- Haas, L., & Hwang, C. P. (2007). Gender and organizational culture: Correlates of companies' responsiveness to fathers in Sweden. *Gender & Society*, 21(1), 52–79.
- Hilton, J., & Hippel, W. (1996). Stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47, 237–271.
- IMAS (2006). *Femei si barbati in organizatii* [Men and women in organizations]. Bucharest, Romania: CPE Press.
- Inter-parliamentary Union (1995). *Women in parliaments 1945–1995: A world statistical survey*. Geneva, Switzerland: Inter-parliamentary Union.
- Jinga, L. M. (2008). Forme de organizare a “muncii cu femeile” in cadrul PCR [The organization of “working with the women” in the Romanian Communist Party]. In *Structuri de partid si de stat in timpul regimului comunist* [Party and state organizational structures during communist regime III]. Iasi, Romania: Polirom Press.
- Kirchler, E. (1992). Adorable woman, expert man: Changing gender images of women and men in management. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 22, 363–373.
- Kirchmeyer, C. (2002). Change and stability in managers' gender roles. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(5), 929–939.
- Lueptow, L. B., Garovich-Svabo, L., & Lueptow, B. (1995). The persistence of gender stereotypes in the face of changing sex roles: Evidence contrary to the sociocultural model. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 16(6), 509–530.
- Metcalf, B. D., & Afanassieva, M. (2005). Gender, work and equal opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe. *Women in Management Review*, 20(6), 397–411.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (2009). Probing the complexity of intergroup prejudice. *International Journal of Psychology*, 44, 40–42.
- Radtke, H. L., Hunter, M., & Stam, H. J. (2000). In memoriam as in life: Gender and psychology in the obituaries of eminent psychologists. *Canadian Psychology*, 41(4), 213–229.

- Rodler, C., Kirchler, E., & Hölzl, E. (2001). Gender stereotypes of leaders: A content analysis of obituaries from 1974 to 1998. *Sex Roles, 45*, 827–843.
- Rudd, E. C. (2000). Reconceptualizing gender in post-socialist transformation. *Gender & Society, 14*(4), 517–539.
- Schein, V. E. (2001). A global look at psychological barriers to women's progress in management. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*, 675–688.
- Sczesny, S. (2003). A closer look beneath the surface: Various facets of the think-manager-think-male stereotype. *Sex Roles, 49*(7/8), 353–363.