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THE EFFECT OF GENDER STEREOTYPES ON EVALUATION OF NEW ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

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Principal Topic

Gender stereotypes are widely-shared beliefs about characteristics attributed to men and women. These stereotypes are fairly common in our society and can exert a powerful influence on the way people think and behave. Workplace discrimination is believed to be an important consequence of gender stereotypes. Entrepreneurship researchers have argued that these stereotypes can affect people who want to become entrepreneurs as well as those whose support entrepreneurs need to survive and succeed. The present study examines the impact of gender stereotypes on new venture evaluations. Specifically, we study how stereotype activation, modern sexism, gender-type of venture, and respondent gender interact to influence evaluations of business plans.

Method

The data for this experimental study was collected from 678 undergraduate business students in an introductory management class through a web-based survey. We employed a 3 (venture type: male-typed, female-typed, gender neutral) x 4 (stereotype condition: control, implicit activation, explicit activation, nullified) x 2 (respondent gender: male, female) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were asked to read an entrepreneurship-related article which was the stereotype activation manipulation, examine a brief business plan for a new venture in a male-typed, female-typed, or gender-neutral industry, and provide an evaluation of the new venture proposal. The ventures were in industries chosen by a sample of business students as male-typed (machine tool manufacturing), female-typed (herbal cosmetics manufacturing), and gender-neutral (supplemental education). Modern sexism was measured as an individual difference variable.

Results and Implications

We believe the findings of our research advance extant knowledge in three important ways. First, entrepreneurship researchers have noted that new venture evaluations are often subjective and based on perceptions. Our research highlights the role of gender stereotypes in the evaluation of new ventures. Second, we examine the moderating role of modern sexism, a form of sexism that manifests itself in subtle, indirect, and rationalizable beliefs and behaviors about gender roles, in influencing differential evaluation of male- and female-typed ventures. Finally, we extend stereotype activation theory (SAT) by comparing men and women’s evaluation of new ventures when presented with masculine stereotypes, stereotype nullification, and in normal “everyday” situation, providing a systemic examination of the role of stereotype activation in new venture evaluation.

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