

**Impact of Socio-cultural Context on the Susceptibility of Female Managers
to Stereotype Threat**

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Abstract

The present study investigates the impact of the socio-cultural context on the susceptibility of female managers to stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is defined as a circumstance which “prevents members of negatively stereotyped groups to perform up to their full ability” (Appel & Kronberger, 2012, p. 609). For women in management this can occur when they fear being evaluated on the basis of a negative stereotype attached to their gender (e.g. “women do not fit into the manager role”). Negative effects of stereotype threat on the professional aspirations and performance of women pursuing a career in predominantly male fields have been documented by previous research (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Given the influence of social and cultural factors on gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002) as well as on individual key moderators of stereotype threat (Baron, Schmader, Cvencek, & Meltzoff, 2014; Feitosa, Salas, & Salazar 2012), the author of this study assumes that the socio-cultural context has an impact on how susceptible women in management are to stereotype threat. This effect was tested by an independent samples *t*-test, using validated subscales to measure the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat (Picho & Brown, 2011) for female managers from two culturally distinct samples. The samples consisted of 31 women in Germany and 32 women in Spain. Additionally, participants were asked about their experiences with gender-related interactions in professional contexts. A content analysis was conducted to analyze their comments and identify patterns and differences in the experiences of female managers with gender-related treatment. Findings of this study revealed a significant difference in management identification between German and Spanish women in management. Differences in gender stigma consciousness, gender identification and the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat were non-significant. Nonetheless, this study obtained valuable insights into how female managers perceive their treatment at work in relation to their gender. Results show amongst others that it is still commonplace for women in management to be treated and evaluated based on existing gender stereotypes. These outcomes can serve as a starting point for companies’ diversity strategies, which need to place more focus on the sensitization of employees to negative gender stereotypes and their explicit or implicit activation by certain attitudes and behavior in the organizational context. Future research might consider addressing limitations of the present research, which for the most part consist in its relatively small samples and thus a limited generalizability of the results. This study contributes to existing management literature, as it is the first one that attempts to quantitatively assess the impact of the socio-cultural context on the stereotype threat susceptibility of female managers.

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List of Abbreviations

- GSC** Gender Stigma Consciousness
MI Management Identification
GI Gender Identification
SST Susceptibility to Stereotype Threat

1. Introduction

Gender stereotypes, which represent consensual expectations on how men and women are and should ideally be (Eagly & Karau, 2002), are commonly identified as a major reason for the underrepresentation of women in management positions (Debebe, 2017; Heilmann, 2012; Kossek, Su, & Wu, 2017; Rincón, González, & Barrero, 2017). A great amount of research has studied how gender stereotypes may negatively affect people's perceptions of women as managers; these culturally shared beliefs about qualities as well as desired behavior of women are frequently not perceived to fit in with the manager role, associated with assertiveness, confidence and control (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). Such perceptions can result in prejudice and unconscious bias against female managers (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and consequently lead to their disadvantaged treatment at work. This makes it more challenging for women to effectively move into a management position and, if so, succeed in the management domain.

This perception of a misfit between the female stereotype and the manager role, however, does not solely cause prejudice against women holding a management position, it can also have a strong impact on the cognitions of women who wish to pursue a manager career. More or less conscious anxiety about being judged unfavorably or treated differently due to existing gender stereotypes are important examples (von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & McFarlane, 2015). This phenomenon is defined as stereotype threat and is widely studied within social psychology (Steele, 1997). Although stereotype threat was proved to substantially affect female leaders' performance and career aspirations (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016) it remains rather unattended within management literature (Kossek et al., 2017; Heilmann, 2012).

Furthermore, existing research on stereotype threat for women in the occupational context has mainly focused on the influence of organizational culture on the occurrence of stereotype threat (e.g. male-dominated companies have been proved to promote the occurrence of stereotype threat for women pursuing careers in such environments) (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). However, studies so far did not examine whether the social and cultural setting, which plays a pivotal role in the formation of gender stereotypes, might have an impact on the susceptibility of female managers to stereotype threat.

To fill this gap in literature, a comparative analysis was conducted to investigate if the cultural context in which female managers are embedded significantly contributes to differences in the susceptibility to stereotype threat. Potential variations were examined between

female managers in Germany and Spain. These two countries were chosen as they are supposed to vary considerably with respect to their cultural values and social norms and hence, show a discrepancy in the content and amount of gender stereotypes, respectively. Findings of this research, thus, allow to gauge the impact of socio-cultural context on the susceptibility to stereotype threat for women in management.

Therefore, this analysis does not only represent an alternative approach to study the underrepresentation of women in management; it offers the possibility to disclose cultural differences in the susceptibility to stereotype threat for female managers. This knowledge can provide valuable implications for the implementation of diversity promoting strategies in globally acting companies, making them not only aware of cross-cultural differences, but also helping them to create environments in which women from any cultural background feel comfortable and are enabled to perform to their optimum. This is of great interest for companies, because only if both men and women alike are enabled to deliver an optimal performance, a company's full potential will be exploited.

The present paper is structured in five further sections. First, the literature review introduces some of the main theories around the topic of gender stereotypes and stereotype threat. In doing so, their relevance for women in management shall be outlined as well as the impact that the socio-cultural context has on key moderators of stereotype threat. Secondly, the methodology part informs about the applied philosophy of science, data collection methods and data analysis. After that follows the results section, in which findings from the data analyses are displayed. These findings are further discussed in connection with existing theories presented within the literature review. Moreover, the discussion section contains the limitations of this research as well as practical implications. It is followed by a short conclusion which summarizes the main outcomes of this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Gender Stereotypes and the Importance of Socio-cultural Context

Gender stereotypes, as defined in social role theory, attribute characteristics and qualities to men and women which are believed to be inherent for each sex (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender stereotypes are normative, as they represent appropriate and socially desired attributes of men and women (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Social role theory posits that the ascription of these attributes follows from the observation of men and women in roles that they typically occupy

within the family and occupational context, also called social role occupancy (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Based on the original division of labor among men and women, women usually occupy the care-taker role within family, looking after children and household. Men on the other hand occupy the breadwinner-role, pursuing an employment and therewith supporting their families (Nowack, Petter, Bünning, Brück, & Schupp, 2018). Accordingly, gender stereotypes ascribe communal attributes, which are associated with affection, kindness and a strong sense for interpersonal relations, to women; as these qualities are thought to be required for the caretaker-role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). On the contrary, gender stereotypes ascribe agentic characteristics associated with assertiveness, confidence and control to men, since these are thought to be needed to perform men's breadwinner-role (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Although gender stereotypes seem to be consistent (Williams & Best, 1990), societies are constantly changing and women as well as men have started to occupy different roles in society which vary from the traditional ones (Eagly & Wood, 2016). For example, women entering the paid workforce and, thus, increasing their participation in roles which before were held exclusively by men. Such developments, accordingly, are followed by changes in the content and extent of gender stereotypes (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). However, the speed and dimension of these changes in social role occupancy by men and women can differ considerably across cultures, and hence does the evolution of gender stereotypes (López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011). Economic activities of women in Spanish society, for instance, were severely restricted under Franco's dictatorship (1936-1975) (Bark, Escartín, & van Dick, 2014). This regime at the same time promoted cultural values through which women were exclusively perceived as wives and mothers of their children (Pérez-Samaniego & Santamaría-García, 2013). At the same time, other countries, such as Germany, were growing economically, accompanied by a higher labor market participation of women and a reduced sex segregation (López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011). It can thus be assumed that the resolution of the traditional distribution of roles among men and women in countries like Germany has counteracted the persistence of gender stereotypes, while the more traditional understanding of women's role in Spanish society might have fostered stereotypic beliefs about women at that time (López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011).

Social role theory, therefore, becomes especially relevant within this research, because it calls for the consideration of the individual socio-cultural context when examining gender stereotypes and their impact on women in management. Social role theory does not only argue

for dynamics in gender stereotypes, but also for cross-cultural variations in the content and extent of gender stereotypes.

2.2. Gender Stereotypes and their Impact on Women in Management

Stereotypic beliefs about characteristics and qualities of men and women have received great attention within management literature, as they were proved to constitute one of the main barriers to women's advancement into management positions (Heilman, 2001; Kossek et al., 2017). In this research, management or managerial position are defined according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). There, managers "plan, direct, coordinate and evaluate the overall activities of enterprises, governments and other organizations, or of organizational units within them, and formulate and review their policies, laws, rules and regulations" (International Labour Office, 2012).

Like other professions that are characterized by a high level of political power and decision making, management traditionally has been (Heilman, 2012), but still represents a domain numerically dominated by men (Eurostat, 2018). Typically associated with agentic characteristics, the manager role is believed to be ideally occupied by men, while women mostly are perceived to not fit in the manager role due to their stereotypic ascription of predominantly communal attributes; these contrast the qualities thought to be essential to succeed in management (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Consequently, a misfit or an incongruity between the female gender and the manager role is perceived, caused by and based on existing gender stereotypes (Kossek et al., 2017).

A major part of research explains how this stereotype-based incongruity perceived between the female gender and the manager role can trigger prejudice and unconscious bias against women who hold a position as a manager. Therefore, it is often used to explain the pervasive underrepresentation of women in management. Next to this, another important documented effect of the perceived incongruity between the female gender and the manager role represents stereotype threat.

2.3. Effects of the Stereotype-based Incongruity on Female Managers – Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat occurs "when the awareness of a negative stereotype about a social group in a particular domain produces suboptimal performance" (Beilock, Rydell, & McConnell, 2007, p. 256). Hence, the existence of the perceived incongruity or the negative stereotype about women "not fitting in the manager role" can trigger feelings in female

managers of being judged or treated in terms of this negative stereotype (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). This psychological state, moreover, represents a situational phenomenon, as it requires a certain cue in order to be activated (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). In the case of female managers, these negative thoughts or feelings of stereotype threat can be triggered by an imprudent comment of a male colleague or merely by being the only women in a boardroom full of men (Davies et al., 2005) – the latter one certainly a frequently occurring situation. The experience of stereotype threat, then, can have substantial implications on the performance, as well as on the career aspirations of the negatively stereotyped person (e.g. woman) in the targeted domain (e.g. management) (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

Studies on the consequences of stereotype threat have been largely conducted in the academic context. A classic example represents the study on women and their performance in mathematics tests (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). Accordingly, those women who were reminded of the negative stereotype attached to women about “being bad in mathematics” performed poorer in the test than women who were not aware of this negative stereotype (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Fogliati and Bussey (2013) explain that this decrease in performance by individuals who face stereotype threat, “arise[s] from the pressure to disconfirm the relevant stereotype” (p. 311).

Compared to that, studies on stereotype threat in the work and leadership context are more recent. Nevertheless, a variety of effects of stereotype threat identified in earlier studies on stigmatized individuals have been confirmed for women who hold traditionally men-occupied roles (e.g. finance, leadership) within the organizational context. Hoyt and Murphy (2016), for example, developed a set of implications on women in leadership who experience stereotype threat. According to them, female leaders who face stereotype threat perform poorer in certain functions, such as negotiation, decision-making or perseverance, because they feel that they are more likely to be critically evaluated than their male colleagues. This underperformance in essential management tasks leads to frustration and demotivation in female leaders, on the one hand; while on the other hand, it supports the false assumption of their supervisors or coworkers that this performance accurately reflects women’s ability (Roberson & Kulik, 2007).

A further study on stereotype threat within the leadership context demonstrated that the experience of stereotype threat undermined leadership aspirations of women and their interest to pursue a career in this domain (Davies et al., 2005). Such negative related job attitudes by women in the occupational context were confirmed by von Hippel et al. (2015), who conducted

a study on women in finance and stereotype threat. They similarly found that women who faced stereotype threat were less likely to recommend their job field to other women which in fact becomes critical, considering that female role models have been identified to be highly important for other women to pursue a career in traditionally male occupied roles or areas such as finance or management (Castaño, Martín, Vázquez, & Martínez, 2010).

Taken these consequences of stereotype threat together, women in management who experience stereotype threat are at a high risk of demonstrating low management aspirations and a lack of well-being at work, while at the same time performing to an extent which is below their actual potential. Considering these negative effects on women pursuing a career as a manager, stereotype threat can have a decisive impact on their career advancement and, therefore, represents a reasonable factor that possibly explains the extensive and continuing scarcity of women in management positions.

2.4. Influence of Socio-cultural Context on the Susceptibility to Stereotype Threat

As demonstrated before, stereotype threat for women in management is caused by the perceived incongruity between the female gender and the manager role. Various studies have proved that the negative stereotype about women “not fitting into the manager role” prevails globally and especially among men and in men-dominated industries (Catalyst, 2007; Walker & Aritz, 2015). However, the strong influence of the socio-cultural context on the perpetuation and resolution of gender stereotypes suggests that country differences not only exist in regards of the amount and content of gender stereotypes, but also regarding the perception of incongruity between the female gender and manager role (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000; Garcia-Retamero & López Zafra, 2009).

In socio-cultural contexts, where the female gender stereotype is more salient, the incongruity between the female gender and the manager role must also be perceived more strongly, thus raising the potential for female managers to experience stereotype threat (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). However, despite the influence of the socio-cultural context on gender stereotypes and the perceived incongruity, so far, marginal attention has been placed on how social and cultural factors might effectively influence the susceptibility of women in management to stereotype threat.

The likelihood that female managers experience negative effects on their performance due to stereotype threat depends on two factors. As introduced previously, a situation that might activate the negative stereotype about women “not fitting into the manager role” can trigger

stereotype threat in female managers. The extent to which individuals are affected by such situations, however, is posed to be dependent on key moderators of stereotype threat, which account for the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat. Hence, based on the manifestation of these factors, a prediction can be made on how susceptible a person is to stereotype threat (Picho & Brown, 2011). In the following these factors will be introduced, and the impact of the wider socio-cultural context on these constructs will be explained.

2.4.1. Gender stigma consciousness (GSC). Gender stigma consciousness is defined as the extent to which one is self-conscious of the negative stereotype attached to one's gender (Picho & Brown, 2011). Women who are high on this construct "typically think about their stereotyped status when interacting with other people" and they perceive that gender stereotypes affect them personally (Brown & Pinel, 2003, p. 627-628). Therefore, female managers who exhibit high levels of gender stigma consciousness are more likely to experience stereotype threat in situations in which the negative stereotype about women "not fitting into the manager role" becomes activated, as opposed to those who demonstrate lower levels of gender stigma consciousness (Picho & Brown, 2011).

While research on stigma consciousness has mainly focused on its effects on individuals (Brown & Pinel, 2003), less is known about how it is actually obtained and influenced. However, cultural contexts in which the negative stereotype about women "not fitting into the manager role" is strongly prevalent can be assumed to increase the awareness of female managers regarding their negatively stereotyped status. It is thus argued that cultural variations in the perceived incongruity between the female gender and the manager role might consequently lead to cultural variations in the consciousness of this negative stereotype by female managers themselves.

Garcia-Retamero and López Zafra (2009), for instance, found out that their Spanish participants hold more prejudice against female candidates for a leadership position than German participants did. The authors substantiated this result by the fact that Spain holds rather traditional values and views on women which fosters stereotypic beliefs and, in this way, triggers the perceived incongruity between the female gender and the manager role. On the contrary, Germany represents a society with respectively high levels of egalitarian values, which call for the rejection of traditional role occupancy between men and women. These counteract the persistence of gender stereotypes, and consequently lower the perceived incongruity between the female gender and the manager role (Garcia-Retamero & López Zafra, 2009). The country

differences in the perceived incongruity thus might lead to a different consciousness of the negative stereotype attached to women in management for female managers in Germany and Spain. Accordingly, the first hypothesis can be formulated.

H1a: The gender stigma consciousness of female managers differs across cultures.

2.4.2. Domain identification / management identification (MI). Identifying with the domain about which a negative stereotype exists in connection with a certain group in society, is one of the prerequisites for stereotype threat to occur (Picho & Brown, 2011). This is in accordance with Fogliati and Bussey (2013, p. 311) who found that “stereotype threat appears to have the greatest effect on the performance of those who are highly engaged with the relevant performance domain”. Therefore, female managers who identify to a high extent with the management domain, become more likely to experience stereotype threat than those who identify less strongly with management.

Baron et al. (2014) demonstrate how one’s self-concept with respect to a given domain is influenced by cultural stereotypes. Self-concept refers to how we as individuals conceptualize and define ourselves (Baron et al., 2014). Accordingly, women are less likely to identify with the management domain in cultures in which women normally do not occupy managerial positions. This is further supported by Steele (1997), who demonstrates that domain identification often happens after the evaluation of prospects that the engagement within a given domain might entail for the individual. Such considerations can be “Will I be seen as belonging in the domain?” or “Will I be prejudiced against in the domain?”. This evaluation, however, can be decisively “downgraded by sociocultural influences” (Steele, 1997, p. 616). For women in management which try to anticipate the consequences of their job engagement, the following is presumed: Women in cultures where traditional gender stereotypes prevail, might be more likely to identify less with management, because when engaging in management they are at higher risk of being judged negatively by society.

Applied to this case, women in Spain possibly assess their prospects of their engagement in the management domain more negatively compared to women in Germany, because Spaniards hold more prejudice against women in high-power and decision-making positions (García-Retamero & López Zafra, 2009). Consequently, women in Spain are supposed to identify less strongly with the management domain compared to women in Germany, considering that pursuing a management career would not fit the norm in Spanish society. The German culture, which was found to promote women’s engagement in traditionally male-occupied roles, on the

contrary, represents an environment in which women in leadership roles are less prejudiced (García-Retamero & López Zafra, 2009). Thus, they might identify more easily and stronger with the management domain. Based on that, the second hypothesis is formulated.

H1b: The management identification of female managers differs across cultures.

2.4.3. Social group identification / gender identification (GI). Negative stereotypes target certain groups within society (Davies et al., 2005). Gender represents a category of social groups which is very dominant (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and acquired early in life (Baron et al., 2014). As the identification with social groups forms an important part of one's self-concept (Picho & Brown, 2011), Gender Identification is introduced as the "extent to which one's gender forms a central part of one's self-concept" (Picho & Brown, 2011, p. 381). As the perceived belonging to a certain group has an impact on the vulnerability to experience stereotype threat, negative stereotypes about women in a certain domain are more likely to affect and trigger stereotype threat in those women who highly identify with their gender (Schmader, 2002). Therefore, female managers who show high levels of gender identification are more likely to experience stereotype threat, compared with women in management who do not identify with their gender to a high extent.

Feitosa et al. (2012) have examined whether the identification of individuals with their social groups (e.g. their gender) varies across cultures. The authors have demonstrated that cultural values shape the extent to which individuals identify with their social group. For instance, persons from individualistic cultures tend to feel less committed with social groups; their membership in a social group attributes low value to their individual life. On the contrary, the identification with their social groups is more important for persons from collectivistic cultures, in which belonging to groups is considered more important. Although no direct impact of gender stereotypes was shown by these authors, the influence of the cultural context on the identification with one's social groups becomes evident.

German society, for example, "is a truly individualist one", one's "self" is generally valued more than belonging to a social group (Hofstede Insights, 2019). Hence, although most women "recognize their membership" to the social group "women", the importance that women in Germany attribute to gender as a part of their identity might be lower (Schmader, 2002, p. 195-196) compared to women from more collectivist cultures. In comparison to other European countries, Spain, for instance, represents a rather collectivist culture (Hofstede Insights, 2019). This could imply that belonging to the social group of women might be more important for

women in Spain and thus their identification with gender might be higher than for women in highly individualistic cultures. Therefore, the third hypothesis is formulated.

H1c: The gender identification of female managers differs across cultures.

2.4.4. Susceptibility to stereotype threat (SST). Considering these three presented constructs, women in management are more likely to experience stereotype threat at work when they are highly conscious of the negative stereotype attached to female managers, strongly identify with the management domain and define themselves strongly based on their gender. As the hypotheses presented above demonstrate, cultural variations are assumed in gender stigma consciousness, management identification and gender identification. Since these constructs represent key moderators of stereotype threat, female managers’ overall susceptibility to stereotype threat is assumed to be influenced by the socio-cultural context and, hence, is also supposed to vary across cultures. This leads to the last hypothesis.

H2: The susceptibility of female managers to stereotype threat differs across cultures.

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized model which assumes an effect of the socio-cultural context on the susceptibility of female managers to stereotype threat. Therefore, I aim to test for cultural variations in key moderators of stereotype threat (GSC, MI, GI), gauging the impact of the socio-cultural context on the overall susceptibility of women in management to stereotype threat.

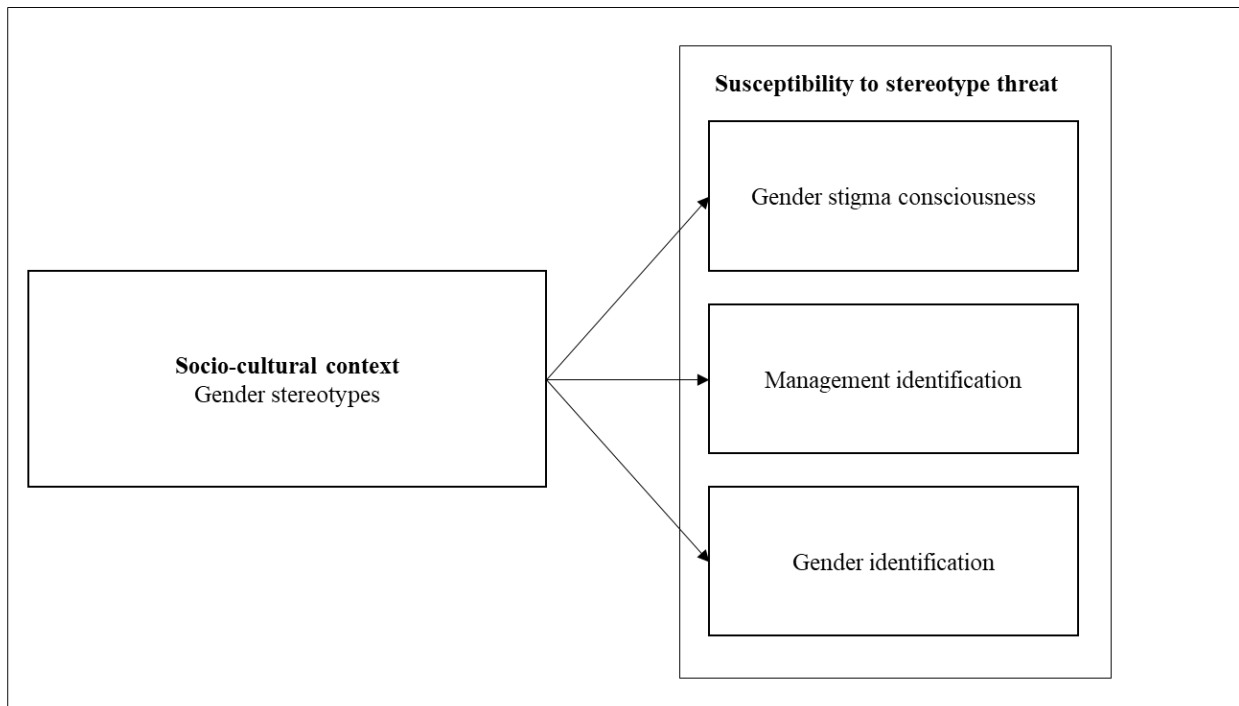


Figure 1. Hypothesized model

To validate the hypothesized model, a comparative analysis between Germany and Spain was conducted. These two specific countries were chosen to compare gender stereotypes and their impact on women in management across cultures by previous studies (Garcia-Retamero & López Zafra, 2009; López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011).

In fact, these countries are assumed to represent distinct contexts with regards to men and women's roles in society: on the one hand, more drastic and recent changes have been detected in Spanish society. Accordingly, Spain is substantially progressing regarding gender policies and female participation in the labor market (Lombardo, 2016), which has led to a faster assimilation between men and women in Spain in the recent years compared to Germany, where the promotion of gender equality has been an ongoing progress for decades (López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011). In accordance with López Zafra and Garcia-Retamero (2011), these changes were also reflected by changes in gender stereotypic beliefs about women in Spain. While women in this country are still associated with communal attributes, they are increasingly perceived to show male characteristics. The perception of these counter-stereotypic characteristics in women was proved to be stronger in Spain than in Germany (López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011), which seems reasonable considering that German society did not undergo such rapid changes in society as Spain did.

Despite these recent changes in Spanish society, cultural values seem to “remain anchored in the traditional gender relation model” (Mínguez, 2010, p. 106). The presence of the traditional view on men and women's roles in Spanish society (Mínguez, 2010), for instance, is reflected by the widely perceived implicitness of women as responsible of domestic tasks in Spain (European Commission, 2017). Compared to Spain, German society is often portrayed as a gender egalitarian, conveyed amongst others by its high labor market participation of women as well as a general support (by 94% of all Germans) of the assimilation of the genders and a non-traditional distribution of roles among men and women (Nowack et al., 2018).

The contrasting social and cultural differences between these countries are expected to lead to a different evolution of gender stereotypes and thus make Germany and Spain interesting comparison groups for this study; these introduced socio-cultural differences are expected to influence the susceptibility of female managers to stereotype threat in these countries, respectively.

3. Methodology

3.1. Philosophy of Science

A post-positivist view on science was adopted within this research. Post-positivist research puts a strong focus on the explanation of social reality (Gamlen & McIntyre, 2018). It expands on and, to some extent, criticizes the positivist view on science, which attempts to capture general and reliable patterns of social behavior, but not to scrutinize them (Gamlen & McIntyre, 2018). Hence, one central goal within post-positivism is to go beyond the merely objective description of reality and make sense of this reality (Gamlen & McIntyre, 2018). A post-positivist perspective matches with the present study, as I do not only seek for the identification of differences among cultures by measurable factors (female managers' GSC, MI, GI and SST) and thus for statistical evidence; I also account for the individual perspectives of women in management and therefore ascertain what specific interactions (i.e. gender-related treatment) means for them.

Indeed, I believe that within the present research it is necessary not only to describe results of the statistical analysis and validate or reject hypotheses, but also to explain and interpret its findings. This can be done by addressing the following questions: What do certain levels of susceptibility to stereotype threat imply for female managers themselves, but also for companies? In case the hypotheses cannot be confirmed, what could have caused the contrary result? The need for both quantitative and qualitative methods (Gamlen & McIntyre, 2018) is reflected by the chosen design of methodology, which will be presented in the following.

3.2. Research Design and Procedure

A mixed methods approach was chosen within this research, which allows to integrate quantitative data with qualitative data. More specifically a concurrent embedded strategy was pursued in this study (Creswell, 2009). With this strategy, both sets of data are collected within the same single data collection phase and priority is given to one method, while the other one plays a rather supportive role and is thus "embedded" into the primary method (Creswell, 2009, p. 214).

The primary focus, in this study, is placed on the collection of quantitative data that consists of countries' mean scores on the four stereotype threat constructs presented previously (GSC, MI, GI and SST). These numeric scores are required in order to test the hypotheses and were collected via a questionnaire, whose structure will be explained in more detail below.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data was collected by means of an additional question that has been embedded into the same questionnaire that was used to collect the quantitative data. Hence, both sets of data were collected concurrently. The additional question was subdivided into a polar question and an open-ended question, which further asked the participants to share their experiences in case of an affirmative answer. No interviews have been conducted additionally. Qualitative data was collected in order to inform the results of the statistical analysis. Although qualitative data does not enable me to prove the hypotheses, it rather helps to gain further information about the topic at a more individual level (Creswell, 2009).

For the design of the questionnaire and in order to validate the hypotheses, I based myself on the academic work of Picho and Brown (2011) who validated a set of items, which allow to accurately identify levels of GSC, MI and GI for individuals. These items have shown high levels of reliability and validity when measuring a person's overall susceptibility to stereotype threat (Picho & Brown, 2011). I, therefore, included each of these items into the questionnaire, in order to measure the single scores for gender stigma consciousness, management identification and gender identification and finally calculate the total score for the susceptibility of female managers to stereotype threat.

However, since the authors originally aimed at measuring stereotype threat for women from ethnic minorities in mathematics, the questionnaire was adapted to the managerial context. This means that words which were specific for the academic context, such as "teacher" or "math" have been replaced by their equivalents in the managerial context ("boss", "management") (see also the bold words in Table 1). Furthermore, the measure of management identification represents a modified version of the original measure "mathematics identification".

In Table 1 the original version of the items is shown next to the version that I included into the questionnaire to measure the GSC, MI and GI for women in management.

In line with Picho and Brown (2011), the participants of the present study were asked to respond the items by rating them on a 7-point-Likert Scale, ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree". Participants who strongly agreed with the statements, scored high and thus demonstrate higher levels in the key moderators of stereotype threat. Gender stigma consciousness was identified by five validated items. Management identification was measured by six items. Gender identification was assessed by four items.

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Table 1

Comparison between original items and items included in the questionnaire

Construct	Original items (Picho & Brown, 2011)	Items included in the questionnaire
GSC	My gender affects how people act towards me	My gender affects how people act towards me
	Members of the opposite sex interpret my behaviour based on my gender	Members of the opposite sex interpret my behaviour based on my gender
	My gender affects how people treat me	My gender affects how people treat me
	Most people judge me on the basis of my gender	Most people judge me on the basis of my gender
	My gender influences how my teacher interprets my behavior	My gender influences how my boss/superior interprets my behavior
MI	My math abilities are important to my academic success	My management abilities are important to my professional success
	Doing well in math is critical to my future success	Doing well in management is critical to my future success
	Being good at math will be useful to me in my future	Being a good manager will be useful to me in my future
	I value math	I value management
	Doing well in math matters to me	Doing well in management matters to me
GI	Math is important to me	Management is important to me
	My gender is central to defining who I am	My gender is central to defining who I am
	My gender contributes to my self-confidence	My gender contributes to my self-confidence
	My gender influences how I feel about myself	My gender influences how I feel about myself
	My identity is strongly tied to my gender	My identity is strongly tied to my gender

Additionally, to these validated constructs, the following question (Q16) was formulated and added to the end of the questionnaire: *During your professional career, have you ever felt that you were treated differently or that different expectations have been placed on you than on your male colleagues? If yes, would you like to describe it in the comment field below?* The answering of this question was optional and response options were either “yes” or “no”. After that participants could share their experiences and opinions in a comment field below.

The first part of the question aimed at gaining knowledge of how many of the female participants experienced unequal treatment at work which they perceived to be due to their gender. Affirmative answers (“yes”), can be a hint that women, in fact, found themselves in situations in which they potentially could have experienced stereotype threat and thus may attribute a certain relevance to this study. The purpose of the second part of the question, and this is also the qualitative part of the data collection, was to gain valuable insights into how different treatment based on gender is manifested in the individual experiences of the participants. Such qualitative information ought to be integrated with findings from the quantitative analysis within the discussion.

Finally, the survey was administered using the online-survey tool SurveyMonkey. The original set of questions is formulated in English. As it was assumed that the mother tongue of most of the participants in Germany and Spain was German and Spanish, the questionnaire was additionally translated from English into German and Spanish, to increase participants' comprehension. Therefore, when participants felt that they would not properly understand the statements in the English version, they had the chance to consult the German or Spanish translation below.

The link to the questionnaire was shared via e-mail with contacts of my occupational network with the request to forward the link to women who hold managerial positions; these were again asked by my acquaintances to share the link with other female managers in their networks. With this sample building method, I expected to reach a high amount of the target persons of this study and consequently attain a high response rate.

When clicking on the link of the questionnaire, the participants were guided to the introduction page of the online questionnaire. This included information about the purpose of the research, approximate duration, type of questions and contact details. By continuing to the next page, participants gave informed consent. The questionnaire is attached to Appendix A.

3.3. Participants

Two samples of women in management from two different cultures were selected, as they are the group of interest within this study. One sample is constituted by female managers in Germany and the other sample is constituted by female managers in Spain. The prerequisite for participating in this study was a minimum of one year working experience within the managerial position, irrespective of age and sector.

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Analysis of quantitative data. G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner & Lang, 2009) was used to estimate the sample sizes that have enough power to detect the effect of the socio-cultural context on the susceptibility to stereotype threat. With G*Power, an a priori sample size calculation was performed using an α -level of .05 and a beta of .80. As a medium effect of culture on the key moderators of stereotype threat is expected, $f^2 = .25$ was chosen (Faul et al., 2009). Thereupon, the analysis suggested a sample size of at least 60 participants per sample. In the scope of this research, it was not feasible to reach the expected sample size. The survey was completed by 31 female managers in Germany, and 32 female managers in Spain.

Data was processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 (IBM Corp., 2017). I chose an independent sample *t*-test because it allows to compare the means of the two different groups (Field, 2013). This applies in the present study, in which the objective is to examine differences between female managers in Germany and female managers in Spain regarding their mean scores of GSC, MI and GI and their overall susceptibility to stereotype threat. Samples were independent, since the compared scores of the two cultures are independent from each other. As my hypotheses are non-directional, I conducted two-tailed testing.

To test the hypotheses, four sets of bootstrapped independent sample *t*-tests were performed. Bootstrapping is a valid resampling method to reduce bias. This is particularly relevant in smaller sample sizes, as they are prone to sampling bias (Field, 2013). Results were seen as significant, when $p \leq .05$.

Means scores for GSC, MI and GI as well as for SST were computed and a preliminary analysis of descriptive statistics and intercorrelations was performed. Furthermore, Levene's tests were computed to validate the assumption of equality of variances (Field, 2013).

For the final question (Q16), the percentages were calculated for both possible answers ("yes" and "no") in each sample.

3.4.2. Analysis of qualitative data. Personal experiences described by the participants within the text field of the optional question were assessed conducting a content analysis following Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017). The content analysis is a process of abstraction by which a large content of text is condensed into overarching categories, which convey the manifest content of the data (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

In a first step of the content analysis, comments from both samples were re-written in separate documents and read through thoroughly in order to gain a first overview of the experiences depicted by the participants. When re-reading the individual comments, a special focus was placed on words or whole sentences that best captured how different treatment based on gender is manifested, e.g. "(...) *people act surprised when they hear that I am a software development manager (...)*". Such meaning units were then summarized under codes of only a few words, e.g. *act surprised*. When codes that emerged out of different comments recurred or were interrelated content-wise, they were developed into a category that best captured the meaning of these codes, e.g. *underestimation* (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017)

Given the formulation of the question, categories were supposed to emerge around the topics "different treatment/ different expectations". However, the categories were not

determined in advance, but rather developed out of the comments. Therefore, the approach of the content analysis can be described as abductive. This means that although theory, which I consulted before collecting and analyzing the data, certainly defined the focus within the content analysis, I was also open for new empirical knowledge to emerge out of the data which could furthermore help to develop existing theory (Gehman et al., 2018).

4. Results

4.1. Statistics

In the following, mean scores (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for each key moderator of stereotype threat (GSC, MI, GI) and the overall SST in both samples will be summarized, as well as the intercorrelations between these four variables (see also Table 2). The mean score of the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat resulted from the mean scores of GSC, MI, and GI; therefore, mean scores of GSC, MI and GI were added, and their sum was divided by their number of three.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Country		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	GSC	MI	GI
Germany N = 31	GSC	4.06	1.34			
	MI	6.19	.71	-.12		
	GI	4.74	.98	.24	.25	
	SST	5.00	.67	.75**	.39*	.74**
Spain N = 32	GSC	3.41	1.73			
	MI	6.59	.60	.32		
	GI	4.51	1.64	.54**	.40*	
	SST	4.84	1.08	.87*	.56**	.87**

Note. * indicates $p < .05$ ** indicates $p < .01$

Furthermore, the significances of the mean differences (*p*-values) are presented together with *t*-values, a standardized test-statistic which compares two sample means, considering the

sample sizes and variabilities (Field, 2013) (see also Table 3). As mentioned before, differences in the mean scores of the two sample groups are considered significant, when $p \leq .05$. Furthermore, deviations from the mean M are considered high when $SD \geq 1$. Cohen's d was calculated to assess the effect sizes of the mean differences between Germany and Spain. The effect size, as compared to the p -value, considers the sample sizes (Field, 2013).

Table 3

Independent t-test

		t	df	p	Mean Diff.
GSC	Equal variances assumed	1.66	61	.101	.65
MI	Equal variances not assumed	-2.42	56,69	.019	-.40
GI	Equal variances assumed	.68	60	.502	.23
SST	Equal variances assumed	.73	60	.471	.17

There was no significant difference in the mean scores of gender stigma consciousness for German ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.34$) and Spanish ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.73$) women in management ($t(61) = 1.66$, $p = .101$). These results suggest that the socio-cultural context did not have a significant impact on GSC of managers participating in this study. However, the effect size $d = .42$ can be considered as medium. Moreover, there is a significant positive correlation between GSC and GI of women in Spain. This means that women in Spain who showed high levels of GSC generally also demonstrated higher levels of GI.

A significant difference can be observed in the mean scores of management identification for German ($M = 6.19$, $SD = 0.71$) and Spanish ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 0.60$) women in management ($t(57) = -2.42$, $p = .019$) with a medium to large effect size $d = .61$. This suggests that the socio-cultural context has an effect on the extent to which female managers of this study identify with the management domain. MI, in addition, correlates positively with GI of women in Spain. This implies that women in Spain who identify highly with the management domain generally also showed higher level of GI.

There was no significant difference in the mean scores of gender identification for German ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.98$) and Spanish ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.64$) women in management ($t(60) =$

.68, $p = .502$), and the effect size was small ($d = .17$). These results propose that there is no effect of the socio-cultural context on GI of managers participating in this study.

Differences were also non-significant in the total mean scores of SST for German ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 0.67$) and Spanish ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.08$) women in management ($t(60) = .73$, $p = .471$) and the effect size was small ($d = .18$). This result proposes that there is no effect of the socio-cultural context on female managers' overall susceptibility to stereotype threat. Besides that, there is a significant positive correlation between the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat and the other three constructs in both countries. This indicates that GSC, MI and GSC represent reliable factors to measure the susceptibility to stereotype threat.

The optional question Q16 was answered by 29 out of 31 participants in Germany, and by 32 out of 32 participants in Spain. According to the results of the statistical analysis, 65,5% of the participants in Germany have experienced different treatment or felt that different expectations were placed on them based on their gender, opposed to 62,5% in Spain. A negative answer to this question was given by 34,5% of participants in Germany and 37,5% in Spain. Figure 3 shows the answers of the two samples in percentages.

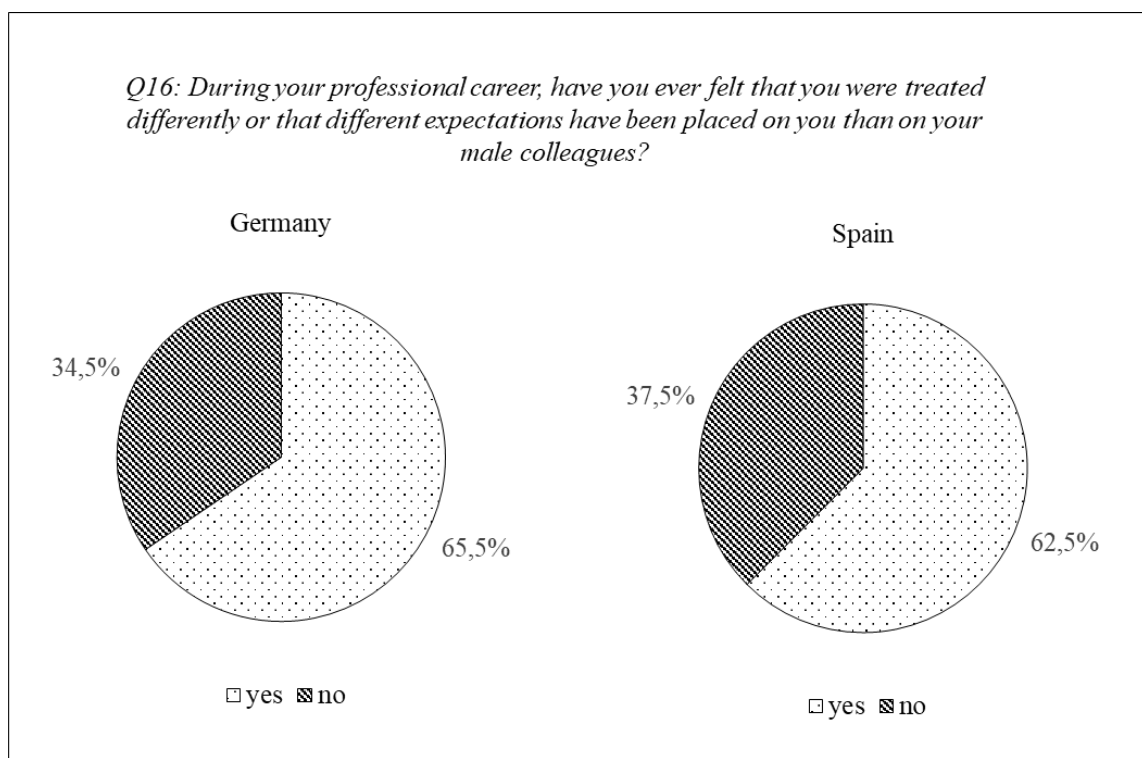


Figure 3. Answers in percentages per sample

4.2. Categories of Content Analysis

The categories, which are presented in the following, emerged out of 15 comments of participants in Germany and 9 comments of participants in Spain. Therefore, 24 participants in total responded with a comment to the optional question Q16. These participants are also referred to as “respondents” in the following. To read all comments see Appendix B.

4.2.1. Underestimation. When describing experiences, in which the participants felt treated differently at work because of their gender, six respondents (25% of all respondents) pointed out that they were or are underestimated by their co-workers or bosses. Three of these six respondents stated that they are often perceived to be less capable as women and that less expertise is expected from them compared to their male colleagues. The underestimation of the participants’ potential and management qualities furthermore became apparent through comments, reactions or concrete actions of colleagues or their superiors. One female manager, for instance, got to hear the comment “Funny that a woman is doing the evaluation of this big project”. Another participant was once told that the “position [was] actually for a stronger and more aggressive person”. Underestimation was a category that emerged exclusively from comments of participants in Germany.

4.2.2. Higher demands. Another category that developed within the content analysis was “higher demands”. Three respondents (13% of all respondents) felt that higher demands were or are placed on them due to their gender. These respondents told that they needed to demonstrate a higher level of competence and prove themselves more than their male colleagues in order to get promoted. One female manager, for example, wrote the following: “In a previous occupation I got the strong impression that I was expected to work harder than my male colleagues for the same task. This was expressed through the task definition and expected behavior”. “Higher demands” represents a category that emerged only from comments of participants in Germany.

4.2.3. Disregard. Three participants of this study (13% of all respondents) have experienced disregard which they believe to be due to their gender. Disregard was mainly manifested by actions or non-actions from colleagues; for example, situations in which ideas from the participants were not taken seriously or were even ignored. One respondent, for instance, described the following situation: “My comment was not taken into account during a discussion. But after a while a man in the room just said the same thing and everyone agreed and picked up the conversation even though they understood it from me the first time. I felt like this is on gender”.

Another participant said that she has the impression that contributions of minorities in companies, such as woman, are often not “heard” or “not taken into account”. As a category, “disregard” appeared in the German as well as in the Spanish sample.

4.2.4. Contextual influence. Apart from the first three categories that describe how different treatment/ expectations are manifested, another category emerged that was termed “contextual influence”. This category originates from comments of seven participants (29% of all respondents) who indicated under which conditions they have especially experienced such gender-based treatment against them. Four out of these seven participants reported that they experienced such treatment when working in a very masculine environment, often sectors that are male-dominated such as energy, oil or gas; but also, being a single woman in a room full of men. Another participant told that she experienced such behavior especially when she was working in smaller companies and when her boss was a man. In accordance to her, this changed completely, when changing to a multinational company. A further participant said that in Germany she never experienced different treatment compared to her male colleagues, while in India there was “a subtle expectation of having to work harder” as a woman. This category was formed on the basis of comments from participants in the German and Spanish sample.

4.2.5. Influence of other personal characteristics. Two participants (8% of all respondents) commented the question saying that they believe different treatment or expectations may not be on the basis of their gender. They rather ascribe such behavior to other of their personal characteristics. One participant, for instance, said: “This type of treatment, I don’t believe that it is due to my gender, but rather due to my personal situation, the care-taking of the children as well as domestic tasks (...) and without doubt, this conditions my professional development”. (Spanish version: *Este tipo de conductas, no considero que se deba a mi género, sino más bien a mi situación personal, el cuidado y la atención a los hijos, así como las gestiones domésticas (...) y sin duda condiciona mi desarrollo profesional*) Another participant told that she considers different treatment to be based on her status as an immigrant. This category emerged exclusively from comments of participants in Spain.

4.2.6. Normality of gender-related treatment. A last category that emerged from the comments is termed “Normality of gender-related treatment”, because half of the respondents emphasized that different treatment based on gender represents no isolated cases for them but is rather commonplace. One female manager, for instance, told: “For promotions I, as a woman, always had to prove myself more and show a higher level of competence than men” (German

version: *Für Beförderungen musste ich als Frau immer mehr kämpfen und ein höheres Maß an Kompetenz aufweisen als Männer*). Another female manager explained: “The treatment has always been different due to my gender during my whole professional live (...)” (Spanish version: *El trato ha sido distinto por mi género a lo largo de toda mi vida profesional (...)*). This category was formed based on comments of both participants in Germany and Spain.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore whether cultural variations exist in female managers’ gender stigma consciousness (H1a), management identification (H1b), gender identification (H1c) and their overall susceptibility to stereotype threat (H2). By doing so, the impact of the socio-cultural context on each of these variables could be gauged.

The results from the statistical analysis indicate that there is no significant difference in GSC, GI and SST between women in management in Germany and Spain. Hence, the hypotheses H1a, H1c and H2 are rejected. This means that an effect of the socio-cultural context on female managers’ gender stigma consciousness, gender identification and susceptibility to stereotype threat could not be supported in this study. The management identification, however, differed significantly in Germany and Spain. Therefore, hypothesis H1b is accepted.

The findings of this study shall be further discussed within this section. In the discussion the qualitative data will be integrated into the results of the quantitative data analysis. I will further outline limitations of this research and suggest implications for companies’ practices.

5.1. Similarities in the Susceptibility to Stereotype Threat

The *t*-test allowed to compare the scores of GSC, MI, and GI as well as the total score of SST between Germany and Spain. Based on previous research (Baron et al., 2014; Feitosa et al., 2012; Steele, 1997), all scores were hypothesized to differ across cultures, because the social and cultural factors were shown to represent an important influence on gender stigma consciousness, domain identification and social group identification and consequently on the susceptibility to stereotype threat. Contrary to my assumptions, the results of the statistical analysis did not reveal significant differences between female managers in Germany and Spain in these constructs, except for management identification. Conversely, considering that differences are assessed as significant when $p \leq .05$, discrepancies between female managers in Germany and Spain regarding their gender stigma consciousness ($p = .101$), gender identification

($p = .502$) and the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat ($p = .471$) can be seen as non-significant.

5.2. Overestimated Differences between Current Spanish and German Culture

Germany and Spain were chosen as countries for this comparative analysis because they are believed to represent two socio-culturally different contexts. Social and cultural differences between these two countries were portrayed before by various comparative culture studies (Brodbeck et al., 2000; Garcia-Retamero & López Zafra, 2009; López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011). In accordance with these, Germany represents a culture with high levels of gender egalitarianism which favors the political and economic participation of women in society, whereby Spain is represented as a culture with a more traditional understanding of men and women's roles within society. As these contrasting social and cultural circumstances were argued to lead to discrepancies in the amount and content of gender stereotypes, cultural variations in the three key moderators of stereotype threat as well as the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat were assumed for female managers across these countries.

However, results of the current study question such strong discrepancies between Germany and Spain. Similarities are not only reflected by the mean scores of GSC, GI and SST for female managers in Germany and Spain, but also by the share of participants who confirmed that they have been treated differently in comparison with their male colleagues at work: 65,5 % of the participants in Germany and 62,5 % of the participants in Spain faced – at least once in their professional career – different treatment which they attributed to their gender. These similarities in the results of both samples could be related with more recent developments in German and Spanish society: The almost equal share of women in managerial positions (Spain: 32,2%; Germany: 29,6%) (Eurostat, 2018), the increasing advancement on gender equality issues in Spain (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018) and the concurrent “reversal of recent progress” regarding gender equality in Germany (World Economic Forum, 2018, p. 28) suggest that Spain is possibly “catching up” with Germany's longstanding advancement of gender parity. Therefore, it is certainly possible that these recent changes have led to an assimilation of these two countries not only regarding gender equality but also with regards to existing gender stereotypes. This in turn could explain why differences in the susceptibility to stereotype threat are not as distinct as expected for female managers in these two countries. However, more research needs to be done to further support the assumption that disparities between Spain and Germany might have diminished over time.

It thus can be argued that findings of previous comparative studies on Germany and Spain are possibly outdated by the constant changes of society and, hence, do no longer accurately reflect current realities. However, this does not dissent the impact of culture on the susceptibility to stereotype threat. Conducting a comparative analysis between countries with greater discrepancies in gender stereotypes, could probably have yielded more significant differences in female managers' susceptibility to stereotype threat and might be subject for future research. One participant of this study, for instance, reported that in Germany she never experienced different treatment compared to her male colleagues, while in India there was "a subtle expectation of having to work harder" as a woman. India effectively represents a country which, compared to Germany and Spain, demonstrates extremely low levels of gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2018). Hence, it could in fact be interesting to compute scores of GSC, GI, MI and SST for female managers in India and compare them with results of the current analysis within a future research.

5.3. Individual Influences on Key Moderators of Stereotype Threat

Individual scores of gender stigma consciousness (Germany: $SD = 1.34$; Spain: $SD = 1.73$) and gender identification (Germany: $SD = 0.98$; Spain: $SD = 1.64$) deviated rather strongly from the mean scores in both cultures. This shows that female managers within the same country diverge strongly regarding their individual GSC and GI. Hence, although culture might impact the key moderators of stereotype threat and thus, the overall SST, its influence could be overruled by interindividual differences.

For instance, women who are repeatedly told or given the impression that they could not achieve themselves in the management domain, are probably more aware of the negative stereotype attached to them due to personal experiences as compared to women who did not face such gender-related treatment. Such conditions, however, can also depend strongly on the organizational setting, regardless of the socio-cultural context this organization is embedded in. This is also supported by findings from the qualitative data analysis of this study. They revealed that different treatment of the participants based on their gender was often conditional on organizational factors. For example, working in a small-sized company, being the single women in a room full of men or having a man as one's superior, fostered such treatment, according to some of the participants. To further illustrate this point; one woman in Germany commented that she experienced unequal treatment solely "during various jobs at smaller enterprises", while in a multinational company she was "treated completely equally". These results are,

furthermore, in line with findings from previous research which have demonstrated that organization specific characteristics, such as male-dominance (e.g. gender share), increase the potential of experiencing stereotype threat for the few women who engage in these fields (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Hence, results of the content analysis support quantitative results. Some key moderators of stereotype threat (GSC and GI) seem to be rather determined by individual careers than the broader socio-cultural context. This, however, contradicts suggestions of existing theory which argues that social and cultural factors lead to a distinct identification with social groups, such as gender, among countries (Feitosa et al., 2012), which led me to formulate my hypothesis H1c. Nevertheless, identity consists of several attributes (woman, manager, nationality, wife, mother, etc.) (Schmader, 2002). That gender for some individuals does not constitute the dominant element in their self-concept seems reasonable. Furthermore, the samples of this study do not represent the average society. Women in management possess the highest educational degree and hold a high socio-economic status, hence they differ from the average population in these respects. Maybe these women identify themselves more based on their individual passions and interests (such as their hobbies or careers) instead of designated characteristics such as their gender. This is further supported by the participants' answers to the open question; some women reported that unequal treatment was not based on their gender, but rather on other elements of their identity such as being an immigrant or a mother that takes care of children and domestic work.

Therefore, although I do not rule out possible effects of the socio-cultural context on female managers' susceptibility to stereotype threat, further studies should place an additional focus on factors on a more individual level that could have an impact on GSC and GI and therefore influence the overall susceptibility of female managers to stereotype threat.

5.4. Significant Differences in Management Identification

Since all women that participated in this study hold a managerial position, it might not be surprising that their identification with the management domain is very high in both countries (Germany: $M = 6.19$; Spain: $M = 6.59$). Moreover, variances in MI (Germany: $SD = 0.71$; Spain: $SD = 0.60$) among participants of each country are low, compared to GSC and GI. Nevertheless, management identification represents the only construct in which female managers in Germany score significantly lower than those in Spain ($p = .019$). This finding supports the

assumption that the socio-cultural context has an effect on female managers' identification with the management domain.

However, considering that previous studies showed more prejudice towards women in leadership positions in Spain than in Germany, this result is unexpected. Negative stereotyping of women in management was assumed to decrease the likelihood of a strong management identification in Spain. In this study, nonetheless, female managers in Spain identified even stronger with management than female managers in Germany. One possible explanation might be a more recent shift from traditional gender-stereotypic beliefs about women in Spain (e.g. women should run the household) towards an increased perception of counter-stereotypic characteristics (e.g. women can be competent managers) in women (López Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011). This increased perception of masculinity in women is, accordingly, perceived stronger in Spain than in Germany. The fact that women are observed to possess counter-stereotypic characteristics can consequently question the dominance of traditional gender stereotypes and thus lower the perceived incongruity between female gender and manager role in Spain. Hence, recent changes in gender role perceptions in Spain might explain why female managers in Spain identify even more with the management domain than female managers in Germany.

In this context, it is furthermore important to emphasize that the categories "underestimation" and "higher demands", as results of the content analysis, emerged exclusively from comments of female managers in Germany. More concretely these results indicate that women in Germany (29% of all participants in Germany) often feel that they are perceived as less capable than their male colleagues and that higher demands are placed on them, which consequently implies that they need to prove themselves more compared to men in order to succeed in the management domain. As Fogliati and Bussey (2013) have shown in their research, the pressure which arises out of such treatment is not conducive to women's identification with the management domain. On the contrary, it can cause gradual disengagement and, finally, might lead to the disidentification from the domain (Fogliati & Bussey, 2013). Hence, this could be a possible explanation for German women to identify less with the management domain, compared to women in Spain.

5.5. Disparate Managerial Conception

The fact that women from the Spanish sample identify to a higher extent with management than women from the German sample, could also be explained by differences in the

conception of management or the qualities needed to successfully perform as a manager in Germany and Spain. Germany as a clearly masculine culture that values competition, achievement and success, is supposed to hold a strong focus on performance, while Spain as a rather feminine culture values people orientation over performance orientation (Insights, 2019). These work-related values (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Arrindell, 1998) suggest what is considered “good” management in these two countries. As outlined previously, typical female qualities are associated with a strong sense for interpersonal relations, sympathy and kindness (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This does clearly align closer with the managerial qualities valued in Spain. Therefore, women in Spain might feel more socially accepted and valued as managers and thus identify more with the management domain than women in Germany, where femininity is less associated with management (see also Sczesny, Bosak, Neff, & Schyns, 2004), leading to a stronger perception of incongruity between the female gender and the manager role.

Indeed, one female participant in Germany reported that she was refused for promotion because she was not considered “strong” and “aggressive” enough for the position. These attributes are traditionally associated with masculinity and their use thus tells us much about the persons’ preferences for masculine candidates when filling the vacant position. Another woman in Germany has experienced a similar situation. Accordingly, she was “not [even] considered for a promotion whereas a male colleague was promoted”. Both examples demonstrate that male colleagues were favored over the participants, seemingly without any reasonable explanation; thus, indicating that masculinity is more valued for higher management positions in Germany. However, these two situations represent single cases, and further results of the content analysis did not reveal more information about preferred characteristics of managers in Germany and Spain.

Future research thus might additionally consider the role of work-related values and the predominant management style existent in a country, when examining the perceived incongruity between the female gender and the manager role. Different conceptions and stereotypes of management might influence to the same extent as gender stereotypes whether women are likely to be perceived as fitting the manager role which then again might affect the management identification of women.

5.6. General High Susceptibility of Female Managers to Stereotype Threat

Although this study did not reveal significant cultural variations regarding female managers’ overall susceptibility to stereotype threat, the mean scores of SST in both samples are

noteworthy: Mean scores in the SST in both samples (Germany: $M = 5.00$; Spain: $M = 4.84$) can be considered high scores on a 7-point Likert-scale. These results in specific terms mean that under conditions in which the negative stereotype about women not fitting in the manager role becomes salient, it is quite probable that female managers in Germany and Spain experience stereotype threat and, thus, are likely to perform below their actual potential.

This finding becomes especially critical when considering the high rate of participants who indicated that they have been treated differently at work because of their gender (Germany: 65,5%; Spain: 62,5%) as well as the results of the content analysis. In accordance with the results of the content analysis, 19 percent of all participants in Germany and Spain stated explicitly that they feel or have felt disregarded, underestimated or that higher demands are placed on them based on their gender. This behavior towards female managers seems to be in accordance with the negative stereotype about women “not fitting into the manager role”. Such behavior thus does not only point to an unfavorable treatment of the participants by colleagues or their superiors, it also suggests that the negative stereotype about women “not fitting into the manager role” is quite present in the minds of male and female managers alike in Germany and Spain.

Although women in Germany and Spain seem to make such experiences to an equal extent, it is remarkable that not even half of the Spanish participants who indicated that they have experienced such treatment (45%), showed evidence for this by sharing tangible experiences, compared to women in Germany who in general made more often specific comments to the question whether participants had experienced different treatment compared to their male colleagues (79% of those participants in Germany who answered Q16 with “yes”, supported this answer by sharing experiences).

Despite this peculiarity, gender-related evaluations or treatment by colleagues or superiors is described by both German and Spanish participants (in total 19% of all participants) to be commonplace instead of unique experiences. Hence, it is quite likely that female managers, more than just once in their career, are confronted with the negative stereotype attached to them, and thus find themselves often in situations in which they might fear to confirm this negative stereotype while at the same time feeling pressure to prove the opposite.

Therefore, the variety and frequency of situations, in which female managers explicitly felt to be treated in accordance to the negative stereotype attached to them, combined with their generally high susceptibility to stereotype threat implies that gender stereotypes in Germany

and Spain have a high impact on the cognitions of women in management. This in turn was proved to lead to decreases in their performance and a loss of desire to pursue success (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016) in the management domain. The findings of this study thus contribute to present literature as they bring new evidences for the still existing influence of gender stereotypes on female managers' cognitions.

5.7. Limitations

In the scope of this research, unfortunately, it was not feasible to reach the suggested sample size. As a consequence, the smaller samples have weaker predictive power. Accordingly, there might be significant differences across Germany and Spain which could not be detected due to the small sample sizes. Future research may address the impact of culture on the susceptibility to stereotype threat with larger samples to provide generalizable results.

Another issue is the broadness of the participants' definition of "female managers". Within this research, the term "management" was deliberately defined broadly, and the present study did not differentiate between lower management, middle management or senior management. However, the participants of both samples might have differed regarding their experiences and positions, possibly resulting in somewhat heterogenous samples. There might be differences between female managers at lower level and with less experience and senior manager women regarding their susceptibility to stereotype threat, which possibly also explains the high standard deviations in gender stigma consciousness and gender identification.

5.8. Practical Implications

Although this research did not, as expected, reveal cultural differences in the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat for female managers in Germany and Spain, the results of this study have brought new findings on the issue of gender stereotypes and their impact on women in management. These findings also have practical implications for companies, which aim at improving conditions for women to seek their full potential and closing the gender gap in management positions.

Findings of this analysis, such as the relatively high susceptibility to stereotype threat or the seemingly common confrontation of female managers with the negative stereotype attached to them, should be alerting for companies. The study demonstrates that gender stereotypes still seem to be an issue in the professional context and daily work routine, creating an unfavorable environment for qualified women who wish to pursue a career as managers. Although it was

argued in this study that socio-cultural context does or does not favor the existence of gender stereotypes, thus influencing the SST for female managers, findings have shown that other factors (i.e. more organization-specific characteristics), might even have a stronger impact on whether women in management are likely to experience stereotype threat at work or not. This should be a call for companies to create organizational cultures in which individuals, regardless of their social identity, are enabled to perform to their full potential without fearing to be treated or judged on the basis of a negative stereotype. This can be achieved by actively changing mindsets of the employees and raising awareness of the problematic effects of stereotype threat, thus reducing situations in which the negative stereotype is explicitly or implicitly activated through attitudes and behavior of employees. I believe this sensitization strategy to be especially important, since female managers who are highly susceptible to stereotype threat might easily face stereotype threat based on behavior that may not even be intended to bring in the negative stereotype about women “not fitting into the manager role”.

6. Conclusion

The present study complements existing research on gender stereotypes and their impact on women in management, by investigating the socio-cultural context as a potential influence on female managers’ susceptibility to stereotype threat. While stereotype threat generally represents a rarely addressed topic within management literature, this study is truly novel, as it measures and compares the mean scores of three validated key moderators of stereotype threat and the overall SST for female managers in Germany and Spain. This study thus aimed to capture a more general scope of women in management (quantitative research), yet, incorporating their individual perspectives into the analysis (qualitative research).

Results of the analyses did only partially support the hypothesis that the socio-cultural context influences the three key moderators of stereotype threat and the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat of women in management. Significant differences between Germany and Spain were supported for female managers’ identification with the management domain, while the dimensions gender stigma consciousness and gender identification as well as the overall susceptibility to stereotype threat did not differ significantly. These findings suggest that the present study might actually capture the consequences of a quite recent development regarding gender equality in Spanish society, which counteracts the supposed adherence to traditional gender stereotypes and identified prejudice towards women in management in Spain. Prevalent

discrepancies between Germany and Spain in this respect might not be as large as previous comparative studies have shown.

At the same time, findings of this study challenge existing literature which point out the influence of social and cultural factors on some of the key moderators of stereotype threat. Instead, results of the present study support previous findings which have demonstrated that the susceptibility is rather influenced by organizational than socio-cultural context.

Finally, results of this study demonstrate that the negative stereotype about women “not fitting into the manager role” remains present in the minds of most women in management across Germany and Spain. As a consequence, the potential for female managers in Germany and Spain to suffer from the negative effects of stereotype threat is relatively high given the evidence that results brought about the fact that different treatment of women compared to their male colleagues in the managerial context still seems to be commonplace. This study hence provides one possible explanation for the fact that women are still underrepresented in top management positions.

However, in the case of stereotype threat, policies or regulations (e.g. gender quotas) alone might not represent sufficient actions. Instead, organizations need to foster mindsets and shape organizational cultures that value gender diversity and in which employees become more conscious of gender-related actions and their negative impact on their female colleagues. This will be necessary to realize the full potential of women in management, and therefore the full potential of an organization.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire in English version

- GSC
- Q1. My gender affects how people act towards me
 - Q2. Members of the opposite sex interpret my behaviour based on my gender
 - Q3. My gender affects how people treat me
 - Q4. Most people judge me on the basis of my gender
 - Q5. My gender influences how my boss/ superior interprets my behavior
- MI
- Q6. My management abilities are important to my professional success
 - Q7. Doing well in management is critical to my future success
 - Q8. Being good at management will be useful to me in my future
 - Q9. I value management
 - Q10. Doing well in management matters to me
 - Q11. Management is important to me
- GI
- Q12. My gender is central to defining who I am
 - Q13. My gender contributes to my self-confidence
 - Q14. My gender influences how I feel about myself
 - Q15. My identity is strongly tied to my gender
- Q16. During your professional career, have you ever felt that you were treated differently or that different expectations have been placed on you than on your male colleagues? If yes, would you like to describe it in the comment field below?
-

Appendix B

Comments on Q16 (German sample)

-
- 1 In Meetings von männlichen Kollegen/Vorgesetzten unterbrochen
 - 2 « Funny that a Woman is doing the évaluation of this big project »
 - 3 Konflikte austragen wird eher als 'zickig' oder 'persönlich frustriert' konnotiert, Netzwerken eher als 'mit Frauen plauschen'
 - 4 you are often a single lady in a group of men and they behave as in "Stammtischmanier"
 - 5 during various jobs at smaller enterprises I have experienced - less confidence in my abilities compared to male peers - less support in negotiating a raise - less trust in my leadership skills (not considered for a promotion whereas a male colleague was promoted) In all these situations I had a male Boss. In an MNC I was treated completely equally no matter of the bosses' gender.
 - 6 Leistungsbreitschaft anderes wie bei einem Mann, Ausfallrisiko höher als bei einem Mann
 - 7 I believe that people never expect that I am a software development manager because I am a woman and, based on that, many act surprised when they hear it. Once I was told that a position is actually for a stronger and more aggressive person. Afterwards the person was convinced of my abilities and apologized. That would have never happened to a man.
 - 8 An meinem Management Fähigkeiten wurden höhere Ansprüche gestellt
 - 9 Bin in der it tätig. Hatte ab und zu das Gefühl dass manche Männergruppen erstaunt waren wenn ich mich technisch gut auskannte hab
 - 10 Für Beförderungen musste ich als Frau immer mehr kämpfen und ein höheres Maß an Kompetenz aufweisen als Männer.
 - 11 Forced / desired resignation of a younger, male colleague that I could not achieve myself but my new manager "jumped" in to solve the situation and by a sudden the ex-colleague resigned. Do not know what happened behind the scenes...
 - 12 I haven't experienced a different set of expectations versus my male colleagues in my professional experience. The companies I have worked for have been mostly meritocracy-driven and being a part of teams with women managers has to some extent bridged the "gender gap" . In India specifically however, there is a subtle expectation of having to work harder to bridge the corporate gender gap which can be thought of as a skewed expectations to consistently raise the bar.
 - 13 Situation where my comment was not taken into account during a discussion. But after a while a man in the room just said the same thing and everyone agreed and picked up the conversation even though they understood that from me the first time. I felt like this is on gender, but can also be sth else.
 - 14 This wasn't communicated verbally but in a previous occupation I got the strong impression that I was expected to work harder than my male colleagues for the same task. This was expressed through the task definition and expected behavior.
 - 15 Eher die Erfahrung, dass weniger erwartet bzw. zugetraut wird
-

Comments on Q16 (Spanish sample)

- 1 El trato ha sido distinto por mi género a lo largo de toda mi vida profesional. En mi opinión esto no es ni positivo ni negativo, ser mujer forma parte de mi esencia, y por tanto es una cualidad más de mí. La diferencia de trato creo que ha sido más una consecuencia de ser una minoría, a lo largo de mi carrera profesional siempre he estado en un mundo muy masculinizado donde las mujeres somos minorías, por lo tanto, me han resultado más difíciles algunas cosas como por ejemplo desarrollar redes profesionales dentro y fuera de la compañía, tener soporte en situaciones de discrepancia, tener con quien compartir concerns, ideas, formas de trabajar o entender los equipos. La diversidad es muy enriquecedora, pero para que realmente funciones ha de existir un mínimo soporte de las minorías para que sus aportaciones sean oídas y tenidas en cuenta e incluso para que se atrevan a hacerlas.
 - 2 Este tipo de conductas, no considero que se deba a mi género, sino más bien a mi situación personal, el cuidado y la atención a los hijos, así como las gestiones domésticas, en mi caso, cae más sobre mí y, sin duda, condiciona mi desarrollo profesional, pero no me atrevo a afirmar que mi vida sea menos satisfactoria por este rol que me ha tocado jugar. La familia merece una atención única y la dedicación a ella nos humaniza.
 - 3 Yes, always related to negotiation or commercial discussions.
 - 4 It has been in occasions when I have worked in sectors where men have more representation than women such as Energy and oil and gas.
 - 5 En mis inicios laborales, afortunadamente no he vuelto a encontrar gente así
 - 6 Trabajo en un sector, q habitualmente hay más hombres q mujeres
 - 7 When on interview for a job I was asked if I was planning to get pregnant because if I said yes it could affect my role at work
 - 8 Yes, sometimes but I felt that most as immigrant.
 - 9 He trabajado con jefes autoritariamente machistas.
-