ABSTRACT

Although scholars have long acknowledged the importance of having effective networks in business, little is known about the role of women's professional status in the effectiveness of their networks. Drawing on gender-status beliefs theory, we examine how a woman's status affects levels of trust in the information that she shares with members of her professional network. We hypothesize that network members are likely to mistrust information from women because of a *gender-status mismatch*—a perceived mismatch between a woman's work-related high status and her low social status due to widely-held beliefs about women's lack of competence. By measuring three types of status and analyzing trust levels in 3,842 dyads from communication networks in a UK railway construction project from 2014 to 2015, we find that network members trust information from women in supervisory positions and connected with central contacts less than information from lower-status women. Our study extends the literature on gender-status beliefs and effective networks, and discusses practical implications.

INTRODUCTION

"Women can no longer be trusted."

—Homer, *Odyssey XI: 456*

Trust among members of a professional network makes the network effective. Trust makes sharing information with network members easier, and seamless exchange of information helps network members achieve their common goal (Fukuyama 1995). Nevertheless, prior studies have revealed that trust in professional networks is gendered. Women are more likely to

describe fellow women as difficult (Merluzzi 2017) and instead prefer to network with men, especially in high-risk settings (Bevelander and Page 2011). Both black and white women receive less work-related help from their network than do white men, despite their ties to powerful contacts (McGuire 2002). Moreover, male managers evaluate women peers and subordinates as less competent and less influential (Sliskovic, Phillips, and Tipuric 2017). As a result, lack of trust limits not only women's progress at work but also the overall effectiveness of professional networks.

Existing literature has offered structural and psychological accounts to explain gendered trust in networks. First, gendered trust is a manifestation of structural inequality (Brass 1985; Scott 1996); because men tend to occupy higher-ranked and more powerful positions in organizations, their contacts trust them more than women. Second, gendered trust is an outcome of network members' preferences or biases toward a certain gender. Men favor men and their gender bias results in strong homophilous ties (Ibarra 1992), which benefit members of "old boy networks" (Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore 2000; Brass 1985; Moore 1990) and produce segregated networks (Kalev and Deutsch 2018, 262). Gender bias engenders lower trust in women.

Despite helping us understand gendered trust, both accounts have potential shortcomings. The former assumes a paucity of women in higher ranks, although women's managerial presence continues to increase (Bevelander and Page 2011; Cohen and Huffman 2007). The latter seems dependent on the social network context. For instance, network members' confidence in charismatic leadership depends not only on whether the leader is a man, but also on the centralization and cohesion of the network in which the leader is embedded (Brands, Menges, and Kilduff 2015). Hence, focusing exclusively on individual

tendencies may not provide a complete understanding of gendered trust in professional networks. To find out why network members mistrust women, we consider widely-held beliefs about gender and women's standing in organizational and network hierarchies.

Drawing on gender-status beliefs theory (Ridgeway 2011; Ridgeway et al. 2009), we examine gendered trust in networks. Gender-status beliefs about the men's superiority and competence compared to women are ingrained and shared at a societal level (Ridgeway 1997), leading to a social hierarchy of gender and contribute to reinforcing individual gender biases or a form of in-group bias that excludes and harms certain genders (Dovidio and Gaertner 2010). When women are in supervisory positions, represent higher-ranked organizations, or have a higher network status as they are linked to well-connected individuals, their professional status signals their competence which conflicts with gender-status beliefs. Contacts are likely to unconsciously react to the professional status of women by showing less confidence in information they share. We call this mechanism of gendered trust the *gender-status mismatch*. We test and find support for this mechanism by measuring three types of status and analyzing the level of trust in information among 3,842 dyads from communication networks in a UK railway construction project from 2014 to 2015.

This study contributes to existing literatures on gender-status beliefs and effective networks. First, it extends gender-status beliefs theory by examining "second-generation" effects of such beliefs (Ridgeway 2011). Unlike most research on the direct impact of such beliefs on women's progression to higher ranks (Duguid 2011; Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb 2013; Ridgeway 1997), our study on women's high status provides new avenues for future research on the (in)congruity between women's work-related status and gender-status beliefs. Second, it makes methodological contributions by offering novel measures of conferred status, such as

organizational and network status, in addition to the conventional measure of achieved status (Ridgeway 2001; Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010). In doing so, we provide further support for the theory. Lastly, our research advances scholarship on effective networks by identifying a gendered mechanism of trust as a barrier to developing effective professional networks. It helps explain why women who are in leadership positions and well-connected with central contacts are nonetheless less trusted by their contacts and are therefore thwarted in developing effective networks. In addition, this study considers practical implications for organizations aiming to reduce gender-status beliefs and mitigate the effects of the gender-status mismatch.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Gender as Status System

Although existing scholarship has improved our understanding of the gendered distribution of social ties (Brands and Kilduff 2014; Ibarra 1992; Smith-Lovin and McPherson 1993) and gender differences in trust (Gabriel and Gardner 1999; Maddux and Brewer 2005), it tends to focus on gender as an individual attribute. This limitation has hindered our ability to observe gender as a form of social status, based on widely-held beliefs about men's superior competence (Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Thébaud 2015b); people tend to expect men to be more capable than women in both professional and non-professional settings, independently of the task at hand or the qualities of individuals (Foschi 2000) and often judge male leaders as more competent than female ones (Foschi 1996). These expectations not only reproduce gendered beliefs about competence, but also lead to status differences between genders, as men are more likely to be promoted to higher ranks.

Existing studies on status have shown positive relationships between high status and perceived competence, quality, and worth across a variety of settings (Gould 2002; Kovács and Sharkey 2014; Podolny and Lynn 2009; Sauder, Lynn, and Podolny 2012). People positively evaluate task performance of individuals from highly-esteemed groups (Berger et al. 1977; Ridgeway et al. 1998). Differentiation in assessments of individuals is often unrelated to the actual attributes of individuals and is instead related to their social standing (e.g., prestigious education and high-ranking jobs). Since people often evaluate quality based on an individual's social status, however, high-status actors can attract more resources, which enable them to create higher-quality outputs (Merton 1968). As a result, social judgments involving high status are self-fulfilling, validating assumptions about men's superior worth.

Gender-status beliefs that constrain expectations and interpersonal reactions condition who is trusted in networks. Such beliefs penalize female leaders for violating the expected status order (Ridgeway 2001). Without support to dismantle such beliefs, women are likely to behave in a more trustworthy manner toward high-status individuals – men – rather than women (Glaeser et al. 2000). These beliefs also bias individual evaluations of competence and suitability for authority (Wynn and Correll 2018). Thus, members of networks are less likely to invest in women. Men move toward positions of resources and power while holding back women, leading to less trust in women and reinforcing beliefs about men's competence and status (Ridgeway 2014).

Gender-Status Mismatch

A mismatch between gender-status beliefs and women's achieved status

Status characteristics of gender perpetuate the assumption that men are more competent than women and more capable of independently achieving organizational goals (Thébaud 2015b; Song 2018). When women occupy senior positions, their high-status positions manifest their competence and contradicts widely-held beliefs about men's superior competence (Fisk and Ridgeway 2018). Moreover, senior positions are often attached to shared beliefs in one's autonomy, competence and leadership abilities, characteristics that are more strongly associated with men (Reskin and Roos 1990; Lenski 1954; Schneider and Cook 1995). Such perceived inconsistency threatens people whose professional status is lower than that of these women, who aspire to a higher status, and who conform to prevalent gender-status beliefs and thereby endorse the existing status hierarchy (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015). Feeling threatened is likely to lead to unconsciously redress the perceived inconsistency.

Mistrust in high-status women could be an unconscious disposition toward the perceived mismatch between gender-status beliefs and women's professional status, due to the failure to believe in women's competence. Mistrust is especially pronounced in settings where male gender is salient (Berger et al. 1998; Ridgeway 2001), such as engineering and construction (Tak, Correll, and Soule 2019). By expressing mistrust in information from high-status women, men would self-present their higher status. In addition, women who conform to prevalent "feminine" values and behavioral expectations (Srivastava and Sherman 2015) would unconsciously restore threatened feminine values by showing little trust in high-status women. Thus, women in senior positions would overall be less trusted than lower-rank women whose professional status confirms the gender-status beliefs.

Hypothesis 1. A member of a professional network is likely to report less trust in information from a woman who is senior to them.

A mismatch between gender-status beliefs and women's organizational status

Organization theory on status (Jensen, Kim, and Kim 2011; Sauder, Lynn, and Podolny 2012; Podolny and Lynn 2009) recognizes that high-status organizations receive "accumulated acts of deference" and occupy higher positions in a social structure based on esteem bestowed by others (Podolny and Lynn 2009, 547-548). High-status organizations are expected to have more capabilities and autonomy, regardless of their actual abilities and autonomous decisions. Thus, these organizations are given more opportunities, have more influence over others, and are evaluated more positively than low-status organizations (Bitektine 2011).

Given that lower-status organizations usually show their deference toward higher-status organizations, one can assume that positive evaluations of a high-status organization also benefit its employees: employees of higher-status organizations are perceived to be more competent and perform better. Because of gender-status beliefs (Thébaud 2015b, a), however, when women represent a high-status organization, others may perceive that their gender does not match the status of their organization. Hence, we can expect that members of lower-status organizations are less likely to trust information from women employed by higher-status organizations than information from women employed by lower-status organizations. Particularly when the information is believed to be relevant to the task at hand (Ridgeway 2011), a woman's association with higher organizational status generates a mismatch between her gender and performance expectations based on this status.

Hypothesis 2. A member of a professional network is likely to report less trust in information from a woman employed by an organization whose status is higher than that of their organization.

A mismatch between gender-status beliefs and women's network status

Understanding gender-status beliefs in networks is particularly important because successful information transfer is uniquely contingent upon evaluative social interactions. Gender-status beliefs generally accord men a greater ability to strategically build and use networks to gather information and support from others (Song 2018; Thébaud 2015a). Network members often find women unfeminine (e.g., lacking warmth) when these women are perceived as agentic brokers in networks (Brands and Kilduff 2014). Such reactions reflect society's gender-status beliefs about men's greater abilities, autonomy, and agency. These beliefs discourage women from making professional connections with others, and disadvantage them in their interactions with colleagues, employees, and representatives of other organizations.

Individuals who are well-connected with central contacts have high network status (Bonacich 1972) but their network status is not always correlated with their formal rank in an organization. People in senior management positions may be well-connected with others, but they are not approachable by rank-and-file employees due to interactional and bureaucratic barriers (Merton 1940; Napier and Ferris 1993). Instead, members of a network reach out to those who are better connected than themselves *and* who are approachable when they need information, assistance, and resources. In particular, those who lack power have more accurate views of their networks because they engage in more systematic observation of their surrounding (Brands 2013; Simpson, Markovsky, and Steketee, 2011).

Women's higher network status signals their competence in developing and maintaining professional relationships. It defies beliefs that women are not well-connected and that excluding women from professional networks is essential for success (Ibarra 1997; Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010). If most people perceive women as marginal actors, they are likely to find women who behave in accordance with their high-network status illegitimate (Brands, 2013). In addition, their status contradicts gender expectations of dependent women, thus reducing trust in them (Wood, Boles, and Babin 2008). The mismatch between these gender-status beliefs and women's higher network status is likely to cause reactions from contacts counteracting the perceived mismatch.

Mistrust can be a response from network members to redress a mismatch between gender-status beliefs and women's network status, based on their competency in mobilizing and maintaining ties with well-connected contacts (Ridgeway et al. 1998). Network members mistrust high-status women not because these women lack social capital or are connected with the wrong people (Lin 2001), but rather because these women's valuable connections defy gender-status beliefs, and this mismatch distorts the perceived value of information from these higher-status women. Women who have few connections with others, however, would not experience mistrust from contacts.

Hypothesis 3. A member of a professional network is likely to report less trust in information from a woman whose network status is higher than theirs.

DATA AND METHODS

We study a railway construction project in the United Kingdom, initially launched in 2003 to upgrade the capacity of a station, at an estimated cost of £563 million. Through a tender process in 2012, the client chose a tier 1 contractor, Workwright. The project had a hierarchical structure, with the client at the top and three tiers of contractors. The conceptual design was completed in May 2014 and construction began in Spring 2016 (Pryke et al. 2017).

We conducted two online surveys between November 2014 and January 2015 (T1 survey), and between March 2015 and May 2015 (T2 survey). The roster of survey respondents was developed from our pilot survey based on the directory of people working for organizations in the project. Respondents chose people from the roster, but could also add contacts when the names they sought did not appear. The number of individuals a respondent communicated with varied from 0 to 77, with an average of 33. Our survey covered everyone formally enrolled in the project, in addition to individuals who might have been involved without formal roles.

The T1 survey had 227 respondents, and 49 new respondents were added for T2. The response rate for the T1 survey was 73% and all T1 respondents responded to the T2 surveys. Of the 276 total respondents, 42 were women and 234 were men. Of these 42 women, 40 were in supervisory positions (e.g., Plans & Order Delivery Manager). Our surveys covered 21 organizations for T1 and 24 organizations for T2. The unit of analysis is a dyad of one respondent (henceforth "an ego") and one individual with whom the respondent communicated (henceforth "an alter"). The final sample was reduced to 3,842 ego-alter dyads between 92 egos and 150 alters, after excluding isolates who did not communicate with anyone and respondents for whom we lacked key information (e.g., employment status). Appendix 1 reports the survey questions.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is an ego's level of trust in information from a focal alter: the square root of (the score of trust in information from a particular alter subtracted from the average score of an ego's trust in information from all alters the ego communicated with)^2. Rather than using the raw trust scores, our operationalization captures within-individual variance as much as possible. Respondents were asked to move a slider from 0 to 6; the default setting was the neutral score of 3 in this 7-point Likert scale. 81 out of 92 egos left the default score as it was. The subtraction of neutral answers from the individual average score of trust contributes to some random error and does not change the distribution of responses, as respondents show indifference characterized by choosing neither positive nor negative answers to the survey question (Nowlis, Kahn, and Dhar 2002).

Control Variables

We included 16 control variables in the analysis. First, we included a T1 survey dummy to control for the sample size change from T1 to T2. Second, we added dummy variables for Workwright employees and M&E (Mechanical & Electrical) engineers, because both make up the majority of the sample.

We controlled for three ego-level characteristics. First, a woman ego was coded as 1 if a woman, and 0 otherwise. This dummy variable controls for gender differences in reporting trust: men exhibit greater levels of trust than women, especially when the decision to trust others can be interpreted as risky (Croson and Buchan 1999). Second, we controlled for dependency-based trust (Wells and Kipnis 2001): a person is likely to report trust in individuals on whom they are dependent in terms of promotions and task assignments. We included a

dummy for an ego whose position in the organizational hierarchy is lower than their alter's position, and a permanent job dummy, coded as 1 if an ego's position is permanent, assuming that reporting of trust is less dependency-based for permanent employees than for temporary ones.

Third, we included two network variables: the total number of alters and the ego's degree centrality. Because network measures depend on the size of an ego's communication network, we controlled for the network size or the total number of alters with whom ego communicates. We also included an ego's normalized degree centrality at T1 and T2 in order to control for potential popularity owing to the reporting structure. To avoid multicollinearity, we took the natural logarithm of the centrality measure (Hair et al. 2010).

We added four alter-level control variables. We calculated the total number of alters' functions within the project (e.g., if an ego talks to three design engineers and one quality manager, the total number of alters' functions is two). This variable controls for the economy-of-attention hypothesis (Gonçalves, Perra, and Vespignani 2011) on the effects of dealing with information from multiple sources on trust in each piece of information. We also counted the total number of alters' organizations, because the more organizations an ego communicates with, the more likely they are to meet an alter from a higher-status organization. In addition, we included two alter-level control variables of membership-based trust (Yamagishi and Kiyonari 2000; Maddux and Brewer 2005; Macy and Skvoretz 1998): a person is likely to report a higher level of trust toward in-group members. We added a same-function dummy for an ego whose function is the same as their alter's and a same-organization dummy for an ego who works for the same organization as their alter.

Lastly, we included four variables to create interaction terms to test our hypotheses. We first created a dummy variable for female alters, which is the moderator of all three hypotheses. We then added plain terms of three hypotheses. For the first hypothesis, we created a dummy for senior alters, coded as 1 when their job title contains "senior," "lead," "director," "principal," or" head of [function]" and their position is senior to the ego's position in the organizational hierarchy. For the second hypothesis, we included a dummy for alters employed by a high-status organization when one of the following conditions is met: (1) an ego works for a subcontractor and their alter works for Workwright, (2) an ego works for a subcontractor and their alter works for the client, or (3) an ego works for Workwright and their alter works for the client. For the third hypothesis, we included an alter's eigenvector centrality at T1 and T2 (Bonacich 1972): the higher an alter's centrality score, the more prominent their network position, because they are linked to well-connected others.

Independent Variables

We created three interaction terms to test our hypotheses. For the first hypothesis, we used an interaction between the female-alter dummy and the alter's senior position. For the second hypothesis, we used an interaction between the female-alter dummy and the alter's high-status organization. For the third hypothesis, we added an interaction between the female-alter dummy and the alter's network status. Based on gender-status beliefs theory (Tak, Correll, and Soule 2019; Thébaud 2015a), we ruled out possibilities of reverse causality. Table I shows the descriptive statistics and pair-wise correlations of the variables mentioned above.

INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE

Model

We chose OLS to test our hypotheses. Ego-alter pairs at T1 were different from pairs at T2, reflecting changes in the relationship as their work changed over the course of the project. Because our ego-alter pairs are not truly panel data, we chose OLS and controlled for the T1 survey.

RESULTS

INSERT TABLE II ABOUT HERE

Table II shows OLS results. In the baseline model with control variables only, respondents at T1 are less likely to report trust than respondents at T2. Workwright employees and M&E engineers show less trust than others. Women trust information from others more than men. It suggests that trusting information is not a risky decision in this context, given that women tend trust others more when their decisions involve low risk (Eckel and Grossman 2008).

Regarding dependency-based trust, an ego's dependency on alters has a minor effect on the level of trust. An ego in a junior position reports 0.04 points more and an ego in a

permanent job reports 0.06 points less trust in information from their alters. Regarding the network variables, the size of an ego's network has little negative effect on trust. By contrast, ego's degree centrality increases trust in information from alters.

In addition, four alter-level control variables are statistically significant. The number of information sources decreases the level of trust in information, whereas an ego places more trust in information from alters who work in the same function or in the same organization (0.13 points and 0.17 points more, respectively). An ego trusts information from women alters more than from men, suggesting that gender bias may not be the mechanism in this setting. If gender bias existed, female alters would have been trusted less than men, and women would be excluded from the male-dominated networks in the first place. Overall, the control-only model is consistent with other models.

INSERT FIGURE I ABOUT HERE

Our first and third hypotheses are supported. Model 1-1, Model 1-2, and Figure I show that an ego is less likely to trust information from women who are senior to them. Although respondents generally trust women alters, they place less trust in information from senior women. These women's status contradicts gender-status beliefs, and mistrust may therefore be an individual disposition toward such a contradiction.

INSERT FIGURE II ABOUT HERE

Second, Model 2-1, Model 2-2, and Figure II show that an ego is less likely to trust information from female employees of high-status organizations, but the effect is not significant. This result suggests that the negative effects of organizational status cancel out the positive effects of women alters on trust. The effect of the plain term in Model 2-1 shows that respondents do not trust information from the tier 1 contractor and the client, regardless of their alters' gender. Our findings indicate that the benefits of external status conferral, whereby women associated with high-status external entities are likely to receive more positive evaluations (Tak, Correll, and Soule 2019; Tinkler et al. 2015), might vary depending on the context.

INSERT FIGURE III ABOUT HERE

Lastly, Model 3-1, Model 3-2, and Figure III show that an ego is less likely to trust information from a woman who has high network status. While a man's high network status matches shared beliefs about men's competence, a woman's equivalent status contradicts these beliefs. Her social capital is also unlikely to be seen as resulting from agency and ability, due to expectations that women are dependent on men (Brines 1994). Moreover, network members' general perception of women's low network status conflicts with the high-status women's "dominant" behavior (Magee & Galinsky, 2008) although individuals may not be aware of

one's precise position in a network. Thus, network members' mistrust high-status women as a response to the perceived mismatch between gender-status beliefs and women's status in professional networks.

We considered alternative explanations for mistrust. First, mistrust could be a product of status-authority asymmetry, in which lower status individuals ascribed with functional authority encounter acts of resistance from higher status individuals (Huising 2015; Karunakaran 2021). Unfortunately, we do not have details about information content from senior women (Hypothesis 1) and cannot verify whether it reflects these women's authority, such as monitoring and sanctioning others (Karunakaran 2021). Moreover, female employees of higher-ranked organizations (Hypothesis 2) and well-connected women (Hypothesis 3) do not necessarily have authority. Second, we consider mistrust as an effect of gendered professions (i.e., high-ranked and high-paying jobs are male professions) (Williams 1992), but this is only relevant to our first hypothesis. Women working for higher-ranked organizations (Hypothesis 2) and with higher network status (Hypothesis 3) do not necessarily have high-paying jobs. We believe these alternative explanations are insufficient to account for mistrust in high-status women.

In a construction project, mistrust could be an informal sanction against breaches of interactional norms of cooperation, and subconscious disposition toward status threats in a male-dominated and male-type setting. Due to the temporary nature of projects, project participants have little time to develop alternative ways of social interactions, such as legitimating structures of female leadership (Lucas 2003). Instead, participants conform to established norms for gendered interactions. To deliver projects on time, informal sanctions are critical in sustaining cooperation and social order among participants (Stamkou, Homan, and

Van Kleef 2020). Women in supervisory positions or exercising strategic control in networks disrupt interactional expectations of their gender, and therefore jeopardize cooperation. This leads to mistrust in these women; expressions of mistrust from project participants are a type of informal sanction against norm violators (Eriksson et al. 2021).

In addition, women whose work-related status is higher than men's are likely to pose a status threat, especially in a male-dominated and male-type industry such as construction (Ridgeway and Berger 1986; Wagner 1988). Women working in this industry already violate cultural beliefs about appropriate behavior for women. Women who are senior to men and who are well connected demonstrate their high ability in the industry. In contrast, men whose status is lower than these women's experience status inconsistency (Schneider and Cook 1995). As these men have the burden of proving the relevance of any characteristic of their higher social status (Hughes 1945), their expressions of mistrust could be an unconscious way to self-present their expected higher status.

We conducted a set of robustness checks using raw scores and z-scores of trust as dependent variables (available upon request). These analyses yield similar results to Table II. We also conducted regressions using the raw scores with split samples: egos who are senior to their alters versus the opposite (available upon request). The results show that lower-status egos mistrust female alters who are senior to them, and whose network status is higher than theirs. Although we did not survey individual aspirations for higher status, the lower-status egos' mistrust in high-status women may be a reaction to status norm violation, as status aspirants feel threatened (Stamkou, Homan, and Van Kleef 2020).

All in all, our results show the negative effects of gender-status mismatch on trust in women in high-status positions, which limits the effectiveness of these women's networks. We

speculate that such effects will not wane unless there are society-wide efforts to institutionalize new beliefs about women's competence and high-status positions (Lucas 2003). Our empirical setting indicates difficulties in establishing a new set of beliefs beyond the life of a project. As participants in a project interact during a short period, they may not have enough time to challenge prevalent gender-status beliefs. Therefore, the effects of gender-status mismatch on trust are likely to continue.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical Contributions

Contributions to gender-status beliefs theory

This study advances gender-status beliefs theory and provides insights into the second-degree influence of such beliefs. Prior studies have documented the direct impact of such beliefs on women, namely, limited opportunities for women who aspire to leadership positions (Duguid 2011; Srivastava and Sherman 2015; Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010). Moving beyond research on the direct impact of these beliefs on women's progression, recent scholarship has increasingly focused on "second-generation" effects of the beliefs (Ridgeway 2011), such as women leaders facing a competence-likability tradeoff, whereas competence and likability are positively correlated for men (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb 2013). Our study expands this research focus by accounting for mistrust in high-status women as an unconscious disposition toward the perceived mismatch between women's professional status and prevalent gender-status beliefs.

Another contribution of this study is to identify different types of status and examine the effects of a status mismatch depending on status type. Prior studies on gender and status mostly used individuals' achieved status, such as high-ranking leadership positions in organizational hierarchies (Cohen and Huffman 2007), and agentic brokerage roles in networks (Brands and Kilduff 2014). Using individual status, however, may conflate people's beliefs regarding individuals' actual attributes (e.g., talent and skills to become a leader) and their beliefs regarding the individuals' social standing: for example, positively evaluating the performance of a leader because leaders belong to highly-esteemed groups (Berger et al. 1977; Ridgeway et al. 1998). To complement the existing measures of status, we develop additional measures of externally conferred status: affiliation with a higher-ranked organization, and being linked to well-connected individuals. Higher-ranked organizations in supply chains have power and resources. Similarly, well-connected people in a network reap returns from the network. Both have high status in the market and in networks, and we assume that status is transferred in part or whole to women holding these positions. By operationalizing these different types of status, we extend the gender-status beliefs theory.

Our approach to status as either achieved or implied by external associations provides further support for the theory, we find evidence of mistrust in high-status women regardless of status type. We suggests it is a reaction from network members to counteract the perceived threat to well-established status hierarchies (Wagner and Berger 1997) and interactional norms (Fisk and Ridgeway 2018). Women's high status defies shared beliefs about men's superior competence and therefore the existing system of gender-status hierarchy. Men in lower-status positions in a male-dominated setting face status threats, and their mistrust in high-status women could be an unconscious way of counteracting these perceived threats and restoring

their status. Additionally, aspects of high-status women's demeanor, such as confidence, are incompatible with stereotypically feminine characteristics (Schneider and Cook 1995) and the abilities associated with their high status breach gender expectations at the interactional level (Risman 2018). As women in high-status positions apparently breach the social norms of interactions, they jeopardize cooperation among network members. Thus, mistrust could be a subconscious disposition toward norm violation committed by these women. All in all, our study offers an extended application of the theory by measuring different types of status and identifying mistrust as a product of internalized gender-status beliefs.

Contributions to the literature on effective networks

Our study enriches existing literature on gender differences in building and maintaining effective networks, by investigating a mechanism through which women's professional status leads members of work-based networks to mistrust them, thereby making their networks ineffective. Trust is crucial to develop effective networks, and existing literature has identified structural and psychological reasons that women's networks are less effective than men's (Greguletz, Diehl, and Kreutzer 2019; Yu 2020). On one hand, men and women have different network structures or composition (Burt 1998; Faris and Felmlee 2011). Men are more likely to have diverse networks and high-status members in their networks, while women are often left out of male-dominated networks which exchange information, advice or help (Brass 1985; Ibarra 1992). Nevertheless, the structural approach implicitly assumes that women would have effective networks if the networks themselves were no longer segregated by gender. In fact, professional networks are increasingly mixed-gender, due to the promotion of women into management positions (Cohen and Huffman 2007) and narrowing gender gaps within

integrated or male-dominated managerial occupations (Cohen, Huffman, and Knauer 2009). Still, our study shows that increasing participation is unlikely to eliminate the difference in network effectiveness between men and women.

On the other hand, the literature suggests individuals' gender stereotypes as a reason for women's ineffective networks. Network members' gender stereotypes of social roles prevent women from being central in professional networks, which limits the effectiveness of their networks (Ibarra, Kilduff, and Tsai 2005; Brands and Kilduff 2014). The emphasis on individual stereotypes, however, often brings about individual-oriented solutions, such as teaching leadership skills in women-only groups (Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb 2011) or encouraging women leaders to respect their male subordinates (van Gils et al. 2018). Although such solutions may help women overcome the ineffectiveness of their networks, they ironically reinforce social expectations of how women should behave (e.g., a "fix-the-women" approach) (Ely and Meyerson 2000) and their social standing (e.g., women leaders respecting male subordinates). While psychological approaches are important in understanding the role of stereotypes in networks, little is known about why individuals continue to use gender to categorize and rank contacts despite myriad efforts to reduce gender stereotypes, such as programs of leadership development, networking, and coaching (Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb 2011). In fact, as women progress through organizational and network hierarchies, they still face challenges in making their networks effective.

Our study complements the existing literature by identifying the gender-status mismatch and exploring its effects on the effectiveness of women's professional networks. It reveals that gender bias is actually status bias, because the social system of gender as a status hierarchy is shaped by and reproduces gender-status beliefs (Ridgeway 2001). If members of a network

have a bias towards men, they should trust women less regardless of their professional status. Our results instead show that network members trust women in low-status positions, because these women's professional status does not conflict with common beliefs about women's lack of competence and thereby their low social status. Overall, our study offers important insights for the current scholarship on gender differences in professional networks (Brands and Kilduff 2014; Burt 1998). It makes a valuable contribution to the literature by identifying the mechanism that makes high-status women's networks ineffective.

Practical Implications

Our study suggests that governmental and organizational efforts to achieve gender equality by promoting more women to senior positions may exacerbate the problem, unless such efforts are coupled with systematic interventions in gender-status beliefs. Training sessions or educational programs to increase awareness of and counteract gender inequality (Morgenroth and Ryan 2018) can be ineffective, or their effects can be short-lived (Kim, Fitzsimons, and Kay 2018), because education and training can normalize bias (Duguid and Thomas-Hunt 2015) and because equality messages can feel threatening to men, leading to resistance (Wynn and Correll 2018, 515). Instead, there should be long-term efforts to change beliefs beyond the individual and organization levels.

To mitigate the effects of gender-status mismatch, we propose long-term interventions in gender-status beliefs: (1) educating women and men about gender-status beliefs by emphasizing the benefits of weakening these beliefs beyond the individual level, and (2) creating safe spaces to recognize, support and encourage efforts to tackle the beliefs. It is important to recognize that gender-status mismatch—as a product of gender-status beliefs—

will undermine efforts to reduce gender inequalities if such beliefs are not challenged at all levels (i.e., individual, organizational, and societal). Women cannot overcome the beliefs simply by engaging in leadership behaviors stereotypically associated with men, as this can result in a backlash (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb 2013). Instead, organizations should complement their mentoring and training programs with long-term education focusing on the benefits of weakening the shared beliefs, and commit to developing safe spaces for individual efforts to challenge such beliefs. In the long run, such additional interventions could be institutionalized to devalue the gender-status beliefs. In time, people would not see any mismatch when women ascend to high-status positions, resulting in trust in high-status women, and efficient networks.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study has limitations that future research could address. First, although we adjust an individual's raw score to their average score, our survey methodology cannot rule out the possibility of reporting trust in a socially desirable way. Future studies could also measure the extent to which (and conditions under which) people accurately perceive network status, particularly in future work that study how information trust relate to women's actual versus perceived network status.

Second, our study offers limited insights into changes in trust over time. Unless there are society-wide efforts to dismantle gender-status beliefs, the increasing number of high-status women alone may not lessen the effects of gender-status mismatch because such a deeply-rooted cultural schema does not disappear easily (Fisk and Ridgeway 2018). Nevertheless, the degree of trust may change over time and could be tested empirically (Schilke and Cook 2013). If change occurs, it would also be worthwhile to examine the short- and longer-term effects of

trust on individual-level outcomes (e.g., salary or promotion) and organizational outcomes (e.g., delay of projects) given that few studies have investigated the consequences of trust (Schilke, Reimann, and Cook 2021).

Third, our empirical setting in a typical male-type, male-dominated industry does not allow us to conduct a sensitivity analysis. In our sample there are only 42 women, 40 of whom are in lower-level supervisory positions, suggesting high levels of sex segregation in this industry (Stainback and Kwon 2012). We wonder whether female representation in an industry conditions gender-status mismatch, although gender-status beliefs are apparently consistent across contexts (Ridgeway 2001). Future studies comparing female-type and female-dominated industries (e.g., nursing and childcare) with other industries could examine whether our hypotheses are borne out across industries.

Lastly, future research could improve our understanding of gender-status mismatch by considering societal beliefs about female versus male tasks. Men are expected to be more capable at stereotypically masculine tasks (e.g., sports), whereas women are expected to be more capable at stereotypically feminine tasks (e.g., caretaking) (West and Zimmerman 1987; Doering and Thébaud 2017). Due to data limitations, we could not control for individual tasks. Future work could measure male and female tasks of individuals and compare their relative importance to understanding the gender-status mismatch.

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