We offer a theoretical account of how gender and emotion combine to influence the development of power in work relationships. We document the profound impact gender has on the display, perception and evaluation of emotion in the workplace. We illustrate the reciprocal relationship between emotion and power, and identify cycles of powerlessness that prevent women from developing and leveraging power in their work relationships. By exploring the nexus of gender, emotion and power in work relationships, we offer new insights into how the gendering of emotion creates and perpetuates gender differences in power in organizations. Implications for research and practice are offered.

"If you get too emotional, that undercuts you. A man can cry; we know that. Lots of our leaders have cried. But a woman, it's a different kind of dynamic."
Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (Dowd, 2008)

Despite women's increasing workforce participation, the gender gap in power in organizations has not changed appreciably over the past twenty years (Catalyst, 2010; Eagly & Carli, 2007a; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2009; Foust-Cummings & Pomeroy, 2008; Goings, 2008), and even those who reach the executive suite are less likely than their male counterparts to realize the power associated with their position (Catalyst, 2007; Lyness & Thompson, 1997). As illustrated by Eagly and Carli (2007a,b) it is not simply glass ceilings that keep women from developing power in organizations, but rather a complex labyrinth of daily interpersonal challenges that women face at all levels of the organization. Their work suggests that overt barriers may have been replaced with subtle, insidious and pervasive processes that create and sustain gender differences in power in work relationships. Although gender differences in the ability to influence others have been well documented (cf., reviews by Carli, 2001; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Sagrestano, 1992) the processes underlying these differences are not fully understood (see also Ely & Padavic, 2007).

Emotion represents a critical factor that can explain why gender differences in power in work relationships exist and how they are sustained over time. As we will illustrate, while the effective display of emotion is critical for developing power in work relationships (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Hareli & Raafaeli, 2008; Tiedens, Ellsworth, & Mesquita, 2000), gender influences expectations, perceptions, and reactions to emotional displays in ways that prevent women from developing and leveraging power in their work relationships (cf., Fischer, 2000; Johnson & Shulman, 1988; Shields, 2000). As one example of these processes, women and men are expected to display different types of emotions (cf., Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2005; Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 1999; LaFrance, 1998), but the emotions expected of women (e.g., compassion, warmth, nurturance) offer less interpersonal
power than the emotions expected of men (e.g., confidence, pride) (Conroy, Elliot, & Pincus, 2009; Overbeck, Neale, & Govan, 2010; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). Even negative emotions, such as anger, can be a source of influence for men (Overbeck et al., 2010; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Tiedens, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2004), but lead to negative evaluations for women (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). Moreover, as we will discover, those who have power are able to express emotions that further increase their power in work relationships (cf., Gibson & Schroeder, 2002), and this creates a cycle that further perpetuates gender differences in power in the workplace.

Although emotion and gender are inextricably linked within the context of power, the intricate relationship between gender, power and emotion in the workplace is not fully understood. One reason for this is that these three areas of scholarship have not fully informed one another. Emotion researchers have documented the relationship between emotion and power (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Kemper, 1978; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996; Tiedens, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2004), gender researchers have explored the role of gender in emotions (e.g., Fischer, 2000; LaFrance, Hecht, & Paluck, 2003; Livingston & Judge, 2008; Shields, 2002), and management scholars have examined the role gender plays in the glass ceiling and the development of power in organizations (e.g., Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Ridgeway, 2001; Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994). However, these three areas of scholarship have not informed one another or been adequately bridged within the context of the workplace (cf., Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Daus, 2002). By examining the nexus of these literatures, we offer a pivotal perspective on how and why gender differences in power are created and sustained in work relationships. We contend that emotion offers an important, but under-utilized lens for viewing and understanding gender differences in power in the workplace.

Accordingly, the primary purpose of this article is to present a theoretical account of the emotional mechanisms underlying gender differences in power in work relationships. To meet this objective, we integrate and synthesize research and theory on emotions, gender and power and apply it to the workplace. Drawing on the social psychology and sociological literatures, we explore the relationship between gender and emotion, and examine how emotion and power combine to create cycles of powerlessness that create and perpetuate gender differences in power in the workplace.

In accomplishing this objective, we contribute to the field of gender in organizations by elucidating the relational processes underlying gender differences in power in the workplace. Although gender differences in power have been well documented (cf., Carli, 1999, 2001; Carli & Eagly, 1999; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989), the underlying processes creating these differences are not fully understood. On the surface it is clear that gender role stereotypes influence women’s ability to develop power in organizations (cf., Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001), but we argue that there are deeper, more complex processes at work. In particular, gender role stereotypes do not operate in a vacuum, but are enacted in social relationships in complex and often unacknowledged ways. As we discover, gender role stereotypes impact the development of power through the gendering of emotion in work relationships, and these processes in turn create cycles of powerlessness that fuel and sustain gender differences in power in the workplace. The term “gendering of emotion” refers to the role gender plays in perceptions, expectations and attributions about emotion (Brody, 1997; Fischer, 2000; Shields, 2005), and as we discover, also plays a key role in the perception and evaluation of emotion in work relationships.

There are a few boundary conditions that should be noted before proceeding. First, we are primarily concerned with explaining challenges faced by women in male-dominated work settings in the U.S. The gendering of emotion may differ in other cultures (e.g., Kitayama & Markus, 1994; LaFrance et al., 2003) and may have different implications and outcomes in female-dominated organizations (e.g., Guy & Newman, 2004). Second, while our discussion will illuminate some of the processes encountered by men, the primary focus of this article is to offer a theoretical account of how the gendering of emotion influences women’s ability to develop power and effective relationships in the workplace.

This article unfolds as follows. We first present an overview of emotion, gender and power. We briefly review the literature on gender differences in the display of emotions, gender differences in power, and the reciprocal relationship between emotion and power. Next, we examine how these processes unfold within the context of work relationships. Drawing on the psychology and sociology literatures, we explore how gender and emotion combine to influence interactions and the development of interpersonal power in the workplace. Specifically, by synthesizing Hochschild’s (1983) and Shields (2005) seminal works (which examine the interface between gender and emotion) with Biernat’s model of shifting standards (Biernat & Manis, 1994; Biernat, Manis, & Nelson, 1991) (which explains how gender-role stereotypes influence the evaluation of behaviors), we offer a theoretical account of how the gendering of emotion influences women’s ability to develop power in their work relationships. Extending Shields’s (2005) work to the workplace, we argue that because women are expected to display different emotions than their male counterparts, they encounter a treacherous emotional terrain of double standards, double binds and emotional minefields that deplete their ability to develop and leverage power within their work relationships. We then present a model of an emotional episode that identifies how cycles of powerlessness prevent women from developing and leveraging power in their work relationships, and present contextual factors that influence these relationships. We conclude with a discussion of implications for research and practice.

1. An overview of gender, emotion and power in work relationships

1.1. Emotion and gender

Emotions can be classified as either experienced or expressed, and can be experienced without being expressed (Geer & Shields, 1996; Hochschild, 1983; Russell & Barrett, 1999). Expressed emotions are influenced by display rules, which are the social rules that dictate when, how much, and which emotions should be expressed (Ekman, 1973; Geer & Shields, 1996). In the
workplace, display rules are determined by situational constraints, the desire to influence others, and the nature of the work itself (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989).

Men and women differ in both the experience and expression of emotion, although differences are more likely to be found in expression than in experience (Geer & Shields, 1996; LaFrance & Banaji, 1992). Researchers have found that women generally experience more intense and frequent emotions than men (Brody & Hall, 2000; Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991; Kelly & Hutson- Comeaux, 1999), and are more likely than men to report experiencing emotions associated with lack of power, such as fear, sadness, shame and guilt (Brody & Hall, 2000; Fischer, Rodriguez Mosquera, van Vianen, & Manstead, 2004). In contrast, men are more likely to report experiencing emotions associated with power, such as anger and pride (Fischer & Jansz, 1995; Tiedens, 2001). In terms of expression, women are more likely than men to display all experienced emotions with the exception of anger (e.g., Brody & Hall, 2000). However, it is important to note that emotional expression is influenced by the social context (Brody, 1997; Kemper, 1978); men may express less emotion because they are socialized not to display feelings other than anger (Brody & Hall, 2000; Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972). As discussed later, gender differences in the display of emotion influence the development of power and the ultimate effectiveness of work relationships.

1.3. Emotion and power

Power is traditionally defined as one’s ability, or perceived ability, to influence others (Dahl, 1957; Etzioni, 1961; Fiol, O’Connor, & Aguinis, 2001). Although there are many ways to approach power in organizational settings (cf., Fiol et al., 2001; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Ravlin & Thomas, 2005), French and Raven’s (1959) classic taxonomy of social power has been identified as one of the most prevalent approaches to the study of interpersonal power in work relationships (Podsakoff & Schreiber, 1985), and has been used extensively in the study of gender and power in work relationships (cf., Carli, 1999; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; see also Elias, 2008; Johnson, 1976; Keshet, Kark, Pomerantz-Zorin, Koslowsky, & Schwarzwalz, 2006; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Accordingly, it offers a useful platform for examining how the gendering of emotion influences the development of power in work relationships.

According to the most recent French and Raven typology (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1993), individuals can develop six types of social power in their work relationships: legitimate, reward, coercive, referent, information and expert. Specifically, individuals may be perceived as having influence based on their positional authority in the organization (legitimate power), their ability to give rewards or punishments (reward and coercive power), because the target identifies with them and seeks their approval (referred power), because of their control of information needed by others to reach an important goal (information power), and because of their perceived competence or expertise (expert power).

Overall, women are less likely than men to be perceived as having social power in their work relationships (Carli, 1999, 2001; Kanter, 1977; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Sagrestano, 1992). Perceptions of power are influenced by gender role stereotypes (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989), which hold that women are less competent than men (Broverman et al., 1972), and that men by nature are more agentive and influential than women (Eagly, 1983). These perceptions have important implications for the workplace (Heilman, 2001). For example, even when holding positional power constant, female leaders are perceived as having less interpersonal power than their male counterparts (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Mankjiani, & Klonsky, 1992). As we see next, stereotypes not only influence perceptions of power, they also influence perceptions of emotion, and the subsequent interplay between emotion and power in social relationships (Tiedens et al., 2000).

1.3.1. The impact of emotion on power

The display of emotion affects perceptions of power, status, and dominance in interpersonal relationships (Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008; Parkinson, Fischer, & Manstead, 2005; Shields, 2000). For example, in a series of laboratory studies, Tiedens (2001) found that people confer more status to those who express anger than to those who express sadness. Other researchers have found that the expression of fear is associated with diminished power and dominance in social relationships (Hess, Blairy, & Kleck, 2000; Knutson, 1996).

In general, the display of positive emotions, such as confidence and assurance, builds influence, status and social support in relationships (Isen, 1987; Kopelman, Rosette, & Thompson, 2006; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987, 1991; Tiedens et al., 2000). Some researchers have found that displays of happiness are associated with influence (Deutsch, 1990) and explain this as a function of

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2 There are many ways to conceptualize power and influence in organizations (cf., Keltner et al., 2003; Kipnis, 1976; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Koslowsky & Schwarzwalz, 2001). Our choice of the French and Raven typology does not preclude future applications of the gendering of emotion effect to these other frameworks. Since gender-role stereotypes incorporate the constructs of both power and influence, the use of other frameworks should offer comparable results.
the social contagion effect (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994); the logic here is that happiness is a contagious emotion that is passed from influencer to target, and that happy targets are more likely than unhappy targets to comply with requests (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Hatfield et al., 1994; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991). Some research on transformational leadership supports this emotional contagion effect (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2009), while other researchers have found that people are less likely to concede to demands made by happy partners (Van Kleef et al., 2004), and that happiness is not necessarily associated with greater status or ability to influence others in social relationships (cf., Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2004; Overbeck et al., 2010).

A key factor that may account for these divergent findings is that displays of happiness often involve smiling, and smiles have different meanings and effects depending on the context (Ekman & Friesen, 1969; LaFrance et al., 2003). A smile may reflect the spontaneous emotion of happiness, a response to social expectations, or a strategy for impression management (see review by Turner & Stets, 2006; see also LaFrance et al., 2003). In some contexts, a smile reflects confidence and power while in others it may indicate embarrassment or submission, deference, or appeasement (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Henley, 1977). To add to this complexity, smiles are often confounded by gender (Hess et al., 2005). For example, angry faces have been found to be visualized as male and happy faces as female (Becker, Kenrick, Neuberg, Blackwell, & Smith, 2007); however when faces are equated for physical dominance and affiliation cues, these attributions diminish or even reverse (Hess et al., 2004). Overall, women smile more than men (LaFrance et al., 2003) and anticipate more negative outcomes if they do not smile in social relationships (LaFrance, 1998). These studies also found that those with power report less pressure to smile (LaFrance, 1998), and have more latitude to smile (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998) and express happiness in their relationships (Kemper, 1991; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996; Tiedens et al., 2000). In short, emotions influence power. But as we see next, power also plays a key role in the experience, display and perception of emotions.

1.3.2. The role of power in emotion

Power influences emotion in two ways. First, power shapes people’s emotional experiences and displays (Kemper, 1978). Power increases the experience and expression of positive emotions (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Langner & Keltner, 2008), gives people greater latitude in the type, intensity and range of emotions they can display in their social relationships (Kemper, 1991; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996; Tiedens et al., 2000), and gives people more discretion about responding to the emotions of others (cf., De Dreu & Van Kleef, 2004; Fiske, 1993; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Those with power have more freedom to express and leverage negative emotions, such as anger (Overbeck et al., 2010; Ridgeway & Johnson, 1990), and may be better equipped to strategically use their emotions to gain compliance and influence in their work relationships (Côté & Hideg, 2011; George, 2000; Gibson & Schroeder, 2002).

The second way that power influences emotion is that power shapes how people perceive and react to the emotional displays of others (Conway, DiFazio, & Mayman, 1999; Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996; Tiedens et al., 2000). Status is a social cue that influences perceptions, attributions and expectations about emotions (Kemper, 1978; Thamm, 2004). For example, Conway and colleagues found that status influenced the attributions people made about the causes of emotional displays (Conway et al., 1999). Low status individuals were viewed as more likely to be exposed to negative conditions, such as unfair treatment and social rejection, that elicit fear and sadness. People perceive low-status individuals as having cause for displaying powerless emotions, and these perceptions in turn affect their expectations about emotional displays.

Expectation states and status characteristics theory are used to explain why status influences expectations about emotions (Kemper, 1978; Tiedens et al., 2000). These closely aligned theories hold that an individual’s status influences the expectations and behavioral reactions of others (Berger, Fiske, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977; Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980). Some status characteristics, like gender, race and age are diffuse in that they are culturally defined and differentially evaluated in society (Berger et al., 1977). The status associated with group memberships are generalized or imported to the individual (Webster & Rosch, 1980). A female manager, for example, may be viewed as having less status than her male counterpart simply because of her group membership (Lockheed & Hall, 1976; Ridgeway, 2001). As we see later, as a diffuse status characteristic, gender gives women less power in their work relationships, and this power in turn influences the experience, perception and evaluation of emotion in workplace interactions.

Emotion scholars point out that status creates expectation states that involve expectations about emotions (Conway et al., 1999; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996; Tiedens et al., 2000). In support of this idea, Tiedens and colleagues found that those who were perceived as having status were more likely to be viewed as displaying emotions that are congruent with perceptions of power (e.g., confidence and pride) (Tiedens et al., 2000). They observe that a key mechanism underlying this relationship is a stereotype that associates status with competency (see also Foschi, 2000). Those with more status are viewed as more competent, and are more likely to be viewed and expected to display emotions associated with competency (e.g., confidence and pride).

These processes create a cycle of powerlessness in work relationships; those with low status may be expected to display emotions that further deplete their power in relationships. Expectations may also create filters that distort the very perception of emotion. For example, Plant and colleagues found that when presented with ambiguous facial expressions, participants rated women as sadder and less angry than men (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). As we see later, this has significant implications for women as anger is associated with influence while sadness is associated with lack of self-confidence and less power in social relationships (Fischer et al., 2004; Tiedens et al., 2000; Van Kleef et al., 2004).

In sum, the display of emotions influences perceptions of power, but power also influences the experience and display of emotions, as well as the expectations and reactions to emotional displays in work relationships. Emotion and power interact in cyclical ways that can build or deplete power in work relationships. Those who have power may experience, and be able to express, emotions that increase their power in work relationships. Their status also affects the attributions, perceptions and
evaluations of their emotional displays in ways that further build their power in work relationships. As we see next, gender is infused into the very constructs of power and emotion, and this cycle of emotional power is gendered in ways that creates advantages for men, but barriers for women. The gendering of emotion impedes women’s ability to develop and leverage power in their work relationships.

2. Navigating the emotional terrain of work relationships

In this section we present and examine the emotional terrain faced by women in their work relationships. As described below, this terrain is treacherous; it is grounded in the gendering of emotion and the processes it evokes: gendered display rules, emotional double standards, and emotional double binds. We identify emotional processes that are derived from and build on gender differences in power in work relationships. We draw on and synthesize related work from the psychology and sociology literatures to define these processes. We then offer propositions and principles that explain how these processes create various cycles that influence the perception and evaluation of emotion and the ultimate ability of women to develop power in their work relationships.

2.1. The gendering of emotion effect

The gendering of emotion effect refers to the role gender plays in the social construction of emotion in relationships (see: Brody, 1997; Fischer, 2000; Shields, 2005). A central aspect of this effect is the belief that emotions represent a controllable state for men, but an ongoing trait for women; “he has emotions, but she is emotional” concisely captures this idea (Shields, 2005: 10; italics added). Men control their emotions while women are a product of their emotions and are viewed as “merely emotional” (Shields, 2005: 10). According to Shields, the gendering of emotion springs from societal power relationships that allow men to harness emotions’ power in relationships, but relegate women to chronic states of powerlessness fueled by emotionality that is viewed as “out of control or threatening to become so” (Shields, 2005: 10). The concept of control is key in the gendering of emotion effect; as Shields points out, the ability to control emotions reflects a state of power and influence. In this way, the very construct of emotion becomes gendered in ways that favor men in social relationships.

While psychologists have made significant inroads in exploring the gendering of emotion effect in laboratory settings (cf., Brody & Hall, 2010; Öhman, Juth, & Lundqvist, 2010), we know relatively little about how these processes play out in the workplace. Drawing on the psychological and sociological literatures, the gendering of emotion effect may yield three processes that influence women’s ability to develop power in their work relationships: gendered display rules, emotional double standards and emotional double binds. We first describe these processes and then apply them to the workplace.

2.1.1. Gendered display rules

Gendered display rules are stereotype-based expectations that dictate the type and range of emotional expression appropriate for men and women in social relationships (cf., Brody, 1997; Ekman & Friesen, 1969). A significant amount of research has examined gender differences in the expected display of positive and negative emotions. As shown in Table 1, these studies have found that men and women are expected to show different emotions in their social interactions in order to be seen as gender-appropriate (e.g., Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 1999; Plant et al., 2000; Tiedens, 2001; Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 2003). For positive emotions, women are expected to display such emotions as cheerfulness, nurturance, and compassion, and men are expected to display confidence and pride. For negative emotions, women are expected to express fear, sadness, insecurity, vulnerability and bewilderment, but men are restricted to anger, resolve and stubbornness.

Gendered display rules emerge from gender role stereotypes and cultural expectations about the status associated with gender. As discussed earlier, gender is a diffuse status characteristic that influences perceptions of power (Berger et al., 1977; Webster & Foschi, 1988), and perceptions of power influence expectations about emotional displays (Kemper, 1978; Tiedens et al., 2000). As we discover next, gendered display rules manifest in ways that impede women’s ability to develop and leverage power in their work relationships.

Table 1  Gendered display rules.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDERED DISPLAY RULES</th>
<th>Emotions expected</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Positive emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurturance</td>
<td>Warmth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheerfulness</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy/Elation</td>
<td>Admiration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pride</td>
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</table>

As we discover next, gendered display rules manifest in ways that impede women’s ability to develop and leverage power in their work relationships.
2.1.2. Emotional double standards and double binds

Gendered display rules lead to emotional double standards and emotional double binds. Emotional double standards involve the use of different expectations and standards for evaluating men’s and women’s emotional displays in the workplace. For example, Hochschild (1983) observes that a man expressing anger is seen as rationally expressing a passionate emotion, whereas a woman expressing an equivalent degree of anger is viewed as emotionally unstable. As applied to the workplace, emotional double standards involve gender-based expectations about the type, range, and intensity of emotion that should be displayed in work relationships.

The leadership literature offers insight into the negative outcomes associated with emotional double standards. In a simulation study using undergraduates watching videotaped performances, Lewis (2000) examined the impact of anger, sadness and no emotion on perceptions of leader effectiveness. Both male and female leaders who displayed sadness received lower evaluations than those who did not display emotions, as sadness is associated with lack of self-confidence and power (cf., Madera & Smith, 2009). However, Lewis found a significant interaction between leader gender and the expression of anger in predicting subordinate evaluations of leader effectiveness. Male leaders were not penalized for expressing anger in that they received equivalent evaluations when expressing either anger or no emotion. In contrast, female leaders who expressed either anger or sadness received lower evaluations than those who displayed no emotions. This finding is aligned with other research indicating that the expression of anger is associated with negative evaluations for female, but not male leaders (Eagly et al., 1992; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008).

Emotional double standards lead to emotional double binds, which are competing expectations about emotional displays that lead to situations in which individuals can display emotions that satisfy either gender or work role expectations, but not both (cf., Geer & Shields, 1996; Shields, 2005). Emotional double binds parallel what other gender scholars call the “double bind of the female manager”, in which managerial work-role expectations conflict with gender-role expectations, resulting in lower performance evaluations (Eagly & Carli, 2007a; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002; Schein, 1975, 2001; see also Catalyst, 2007). One consequence of the double bind is that a woman can be a good manager or a good woman, but not both. Applying this principle to the emotional arena allows us to examine how the gendering of emotion creates competing role expectations which, as we see later, attenuate women’s ability to develop power in their work relationships.

Before we apply these psychological processes to the study of power in work relationships, we need to examine one last gendered process that influences the perception and evaluation of emotion in work relationships.

2.2. The evaluation of emotion: the shifting standards effect

The gendering of emotion in the workplace has consequences for the quality and effectiveness of work relationships. Emotion is perceived and evaluated within the context of work relationships, but this context is also influenced by gender-role expectations. Here we draw on Biernat’s model of shifting standards (e.g., Biernat, 1995; Biernat et al., 1991; Biernat & Manis, 1994) to examine how gender-role expectations influence the sanctions levied against individuals perceived as violating gendered display rules. This model holds that different standards are used to evaluate dominant and non-dominant group members’ behaviors, and this effect is amplified when the behaviors reflect group stereotypes (Biernat et al., 1991; Biernat & Fuegen, 2001; Biernat & Manis, 1994). Biernat and Fuegen explain that “when we judge individual members of stereotyped groups on stereotyped dimensions, we compare them to within-category judgment standards” (2001: 708, italics in original). For example, because men are expected to be more aggressive than women, men’s expected range of aggressiveness begins and ends at higher values, and thus a man and a woman engaging in the same level of aggressive behavior will be viewed and evaluated quite differently (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1999; Biernat & Manis, 1994). The value of the shifting standards effect is that it acknowledges that it is not just a behavior, but the level or intensity of that behavior, which evokes gender-role expectations and evaluative processes.

Applying the shifting standards effect to the emotional arena offers the critical idea that the standards used to evaluate an emotion may shift depending on the gender of the individual displaying the emotion, the degree to which the emotion is gendered, and the level or intensity of the emotional display (cf., Deaux, 2000; Hess et al., 2004). For example, a female employee may display a comparable degree of anger as her male counterpart, but because she is evaluated relative to her gender, she may be perceived as displaying an inappropriately extreme form of anger. The shifting standard effect may also influence perceptions of female-typed emotions. For example, even if she displays the same degree of nurturance and compassion as her male counterpart, because she is expected to display higher levels of compassion, she may be perceived as being more emotionally cold and aloof in her work interactions.

Compared to male counterparts, women may therefore need to display relatively low levels of male-typed emotions to receive negative evaluations, and may need to display significantly higher levels of female-typed emotions to meet gendered emotional display rules. Gendered display rules and the shifting standard effect also operate for men, who may receive negative sanctions for displaying relatively low levels of female-typed emotions (e.g., fear, vulnerability) and may be expected to display higher levels of male-typed emotion (e.g., pride, confidence) to receive positive evaluations in their work relationships.

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3 This is aligned with a tradition of research that has documented the effects of gender stereotyping on perceptions and evaluations of workplace behaviors. For example, female leaders receive more positive evaluations for engaging in female-type behaviors (Bartol & Butterfield, 1976; Bartol, Martin, & Kromkowski, 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1992) and women are generally seen as more likeable when engaging in communal behaviors (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007).
This suggests that gender-role stereotypes influence both the perception and evaluation of emotional displays in work relationships. Accordingly, we propose the following proposition:

**Proposition #1.** *Evaluations of emotional displays in work relationships are influenced by shifting standards that reflect gendered display rules.*

Although gendered display rules and the shifting standards effect operate for both men and women, there are differences in the ways these processes operate for men and women that have important implications for the evaluation of emotion in the workplace. As discussed earlier, the gendering of emotion effect influences a core attribution of emotional displays in that men are viewed as having emotions but women are seen as being emotional (Shields, 2005). As applied to the workplace, a male manager may be seen as displaying a realistic and rational degree of anger, whereas a female manager may be viewed as being angry by nature. Because she is viewed as emotional by nature, her anger is not seen as a righteous reaction to the situation, but instead may be perceived as an internal emotional state that is out of control. These attributions may lead to gender differences in evaluations of emotional displays and perceptions of power in work relationships.

In support of this idea, Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) investigated the relationship between gender, emotional display rules, perceptions of status, and behavior attributions. Using videotapes of professionals portraying emotions, these authors found that both male and female evaluators viewed angry female professionals as having less status, power and competence, and accorded them lower wages than their angry male counterparts. Men's anger was attributed to external circumstances (e.g., "his colleague's behavior caused his anger"), but women's anger was attributed to her personality (e.g., "she is an angry person"). In fact, the attribution that angry women were "out of control" fully mediated the relationship between expression of anger and negative outcomes. Finally, while men's occupational rank influenced outcomes, angry women received lower evaluations irrespective of whether they were portrayed as a CEO or a trainee in the study.

These gender differences are amplified by the emotional double standards and the shifting standards effect described earlier. For example, by displaying anger, women violate gender role prescriptions and, because of the shifting standards effect, they need to exhibit relatively low levels of anger to produce a negative outcome. Finally, as discussed later, because men are the dominant group in the workplace and therefore establish the norms for displaying emotions, they may be less likely than women to display emotions that violate situational norms for emotional displays.

Synthesizing this work yields the idea that while the gendering of emotion effect influences expectations and evaluations of emotions for both men and women, these relationships are not the same for men and women. As we see next, the gendering of emotion effect has a more adverse effect on women's ability to develop power in their work relationship.

### 2.3. Emotional double binds and power

Emotional double binds restrict women's ability to develop interpersonal power in work relationships in ways that create various cycles of powerlessness. Whereas displaying male-typed emotions can build interpersonal power through positive and
negative means, most female-typed emotions are associated with a lack of power and may even contribute to the depletion of various forms of social power in work relationships (Brody & Hall, 2000; Fischer et al., 2004; Timmers et al., 2003). Fig. 1 presents a summary of the relationship between gender-typed emotions and French and Raven’s (1959) taxonomy of social power described earlier. As reviewed earlier, research indicates that women are socialized to express emotions such as fear and worry that communicate uncertainty and a lack of self-confidence that can attenuate expert, referent and information forms of social power (cf., Brody, 1997; Conway et al., 1999). In contrast, the male-typed emotion of competence is associated with social influence that can build expert, reward, information and referent power in relationships (Isen, 1987; Kopelman et al., 2006; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987, 1989; Tiedens et al., 2000). While anger is a negative emotion, it can be used to gain coercive power (Shields, 2002; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Tiedens, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2004). As reviewed earlier, anger is a male-typed emotion (Brody & Hall, 2000; Plant et al., 2000) and women who display anger are viewed as having less power, status and competence than their male counterparts (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008).

In addition, women are expected to display emotions that enhance and celebrate others’ well being and status, which, as pointed out by Hochschild (1983), depletes their power base while building the influence of others. As a consequence, displaying negative female-typed emotions (e.g., fear, worry) depletes a woman’s interpersonal power, but displaying positive female-typed emotions (e.g., admiration, nurturance) builds the power of others in work relationships.

One important consequence of this is that men can leverage emotion into power in work relationships in ways that are unavailable to women. While male-typed emotions offer an array of interpersonal power (e.g., Tiedens et al., 2000), female-typed emotions do not offer comparable sources of power, and may in fact decrease the power women can use in their work interactions. Consequently, we offer the following proposition:

**Proposition #2.** Emotions women are expected to display in work relationships are associated with less interpersonal power than emotions expected of men.

Emotional double binds not only lessen women’s interpersonal power but may also perpetuate cycles of powerlessness in work relationships. As described earlier, power shapes expectations about emotional displays in ways that ultimately increase future perceptions of power and influence (Conway et al., 1999; Kemper, 1978; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996). Powerful people are perceived as being competent, and competent people are expected to display emotions that further enhance their power (Tiedens et al., 2000). The feedback loop between perceptions of power and emotions is examined more closely later in this article. However, it is important to note here that because of gender role stereotypes, women are viewed as less competent and powerful than men (Broverman et al., 1972; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Ridgeway, 2001). If they display emotions that reflect power and status (e.g., confidence, anger), they are likely to experience the double bind of backlash for being too agentic and masculine in their work relationships (Heilman, 2001; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

In contrast, the emotions expected of men in the workplace are congruent with the emotions expected of powerful and competent individuals, and their display of powerful emotions confirms and builds social power in their work relationships. Their emotional displays create an upwardly spiraling cycle of power in work relationships. This spiral is further facilitated by gendered work roles. Kangas and Meyerson (2008) point out that men’s work roles are associated with masculinity and power, which may evoke feelings of confidence, whereas women’s work roles are devalued and associated with powerlessness, which may evoke feelings of insecurity, fear and anxiety. Gendered work roles may therefore facilitate emotions that reinforce and ultimately perpetuate gender differences in power in work relationships. This self-generating cycle of powerlessness stems from the gendering of work and emotion in the workplace.

As this discussion reveals, emotion and gender are inextricably linked within the context of power. A firm understanding of the role of emotion in the development of power in work relationships requires an acknowledgement of gender differences in power within the broader societal context (cf., Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Ridgeway, 1997, 2001). Emotions are a social construction that rest within the nexus of gender and power in societal relationships. The display of emotion both reflects and embellishes societal power relations (Shields, 2005). Emotions that men are allowed to display will, de facto, be viewed as “powerful emotions” because they are displayed by men (cf., Shields, 2000). Other gender scholars concur that power is a male phenomenon; what is powerful is male and vice versa (Eagly, 1983; Ely & Padavic, 2007; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Ridgeway, 2001).

One interesting outcome of this is that men who display gender-incongruent emotions may not be sanctioned in the same way as their female counterparts. In fact, in a series of studies that examined changing norms about gender and emotion, Timmers et al. (2003) found that although women are still expected to display powerless emotions, increasingly men are allowed to display more emotional sensitivity in their social interactions. These authors explain that: “In thinking about men who express emotions at work, respondents may have imagined men who have an open and empathetic style of communication, whereas in thinking about women who express their emotions, they may have imagined women who burst into tears in the middle of a meeting.... For men, emotions still seem to be associated more with ability, with good social and emotional skills, whereas for women emotions remain linked to stereotypical femininity, that is, to their vulnerability, and thus to their loss of control and power.” (2003: 58; italics added). This research suggests that men who display positive female-typed emotions (e.g., nurturance, compassion and warmth) may be viewed as sensitive “renaissance men”, and may not receive the same level of negative sanctions as women who display male-typed emotions (e.g., confidence and pride) (e.g., Johnson et al., 2008). This line of thinking is also aligned with the finding that powerful individuals are given greater latitude in the type and intensity of their emotional displays (Kemper, 1991; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996; Tiedens et al., 2000). Men are allowed greater latitude in the type and intensity of their emotional displays because of their status, and the emotions they display take on a different meaning because of their status; a tear in a man’s eye may reflect...
masculine sensitivity and a compassionate reaction to a valid event, but in a woman’s eye a tear remains a sign of feminine weakness and emotional instability.

In sum, women encounter emotional double binds that lead to decreased power and effectiveness in their work relationships. However, there are additional aspects of the emotional terrain that need to be explored. Women must walk a narrow and treacherous path, not only in displaying the right type of emotion but also in their careful calibration of the degree and intensity of their emotional display.

2.4. Emotional borderlands and minefields

Two additional factors may exacerbate the relationship between the gendering of emotion and the development of power in work relationships: the intensity of the emotional display and the perceived appropriateness of an emotion for a given social context. Shields (2005) refers to these phenomena as “emotional borderlands” and “emotional minefields” respectively. In this section we integrate these concepts with related research and theory and apply them to the workplace.

2.4.1. Emotional borderlands

Emotional borderlands involve the degree and intensity of emotional display; Shields describes it as “a sometimes murky territory between ‘the right amount’ of emotion and ‘too much’ (or ‘too little’) of it’ (2005: 7–8). She observes that either extreme leads to negative evaluations: those who display too much emotion may be viewed as emotional by nature, while those who are perceived as “not emotional enough” may be seen as emotionally detached and disingenuous in their relationships.

Emotional borderlands create unique challenges for women in the workplace. To start, because they are characterized as emotional by nature, they need to display relatively little emotion to be viewed as emotional (Shields, 2005), but suppressing emotion may lead to the negative sanctions described earlier (Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 2000). Compared to men, women are allowed a much smaller standard deviation in what is viewed as an acceptable display of emotion, in both type and intensity. Second, because of the shifting standards effect, women may receive negative sanctions when displaying even relatively low levels of male-typed emotions (cf. Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 2000). Consequently, women who display anger may be viewed as angry, those who display a modest degree of con

4 As discussed later, context is a critical factor, as this series of events would play out much differently if she was in a group that valued her input and did not discount her on the basis of her gender.
emotions (Shields, 2005), his emotional display is more likely to be seen as a substantive response to real events, rather than a reflection of an out-of-control emotional state. However, according to the doctrine of feelings principle (Hochschild, 1983), he is less likely to experience an escalation of emotions because his emotions are less likely to be discounted in the first place.

As this example and the preceding discussion illustrates, the escalation of emotional intensity in response to devaluation may create an escalating emotional spiral that further perpetuates and reinforces gender differences in power in work relationships. We therefore offer the following proposition:

**Proposition #3.** Women are more likely than their male counterparts to experience an escalating spiral of emotional intensity that attenuates their power in their work relationships.

Now that we have examined emotional double binds and emotional borderlands, let us turn to the final component of the emotional battlefield: emotional landmines.

2.4.2. Emotional minefields

According to Shields (2005), emotional minefields are mismatches between an individual’s experience of emotion and a given situation’s emotional display rules. Drawing on earlier work by Hochschild (1983), Shields (2005) observes that women may experience a “wrong” emotion (i.e., one that violates display rules dictating the norms or accepted range of emotions for the situation) and may face negative consequences if they display that emotion in a given setting. A workplace example involves a situation in which an employee may experience sadness or anger, but displaying tears or lashing out may violate the display rules for the work environment. As discussed earlier, female leaders who display anger or sadness may receive particularly harsh penalties from their subordinates for displaying emotions that are viewed as inappropriate for the leadership role (cf., Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Eagly et al., 1992; Lewis, 2000). Drawing on Hochschild’s (1983) concept of misfitting feelings, Shields (2005) observes that what is viewed as “normal” or “appropriate” is determined by the dominant group in a given context. Individuals experiencing an atypical or inappropriate emotion become “emotional outlaws” (Jaggar, 1992), and may question the validity of their feelings or mask their emotions to conform to display rules. The concept of emotional labor in the workplace is well established (Groth, Hennig-Thurau, & Walsh, 2009; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Wharton, 2009); Shields adds to this discussion by elaborating on how display rules create unique challenges for women. We extend this further by examining how emotional minefields contribute to the attenuation of women’s power in their work relationships.

Although both men and women encounter emotional minefields in the workplace, Shields (2005) observes that because the dominant group determines what is appropriate for a given context, women are more likely to encounter emotional minefields and become emotional outlaws than men. Hochschild (1983) concurs that women’s marginal and/or token status increases the likelihood they will experience emotions that do not fit the situation’s display rules, which, in the workplace, are established by the dominant male group (e.g., Brass, 1985; Ferris, Frink, Bhawuk, Zhou, & Gilmore, 1996). Because men generally define the display rules for a workplace interaction, and, as displayed in Table 1, the range of male-typed emotions is much narrower than female-typed emotions (e.g., Grossman & Wood, 1993), women may be more likely than men to violate norms for emotional display. Women are more likely to both experience and express a broader range of emotions than men (e.g., Brody & Hall, 2000; Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 1999), so this adds to the dilemma by increasing the opportunity for them to display an emotion that could be viewed as inappropriate in a given social context.

Since the display of inappropriate emotions is associated with decreased influence in social relationships (e.g., Van Kleef & Côté, 2007), the emotional minefield further attenuates the ability of women to develop power in their work relationships. This attenuation of power is amplified by some of the processes discussed earlier. For example, women are expected to be the
emotional caregivers in their work relationships, and display such emotions as cheerfulness, admiration, nurturance, and compassion (cf., Pierce, 1995; Wharton, 2004). While these emotions can build the quality of connection in their work relationships (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Miller & Stiver, 1997) they serve to build the power of others while decreasing the ability of women to establish their own bases of power in relationships (cf., Hochschild, 1983; Shields, 2002, 2005). The broad range of emotions afforded to women therefore attenuates their power directly as a function of type of emotion, and also indirectly by increasing the probability of violating emotional displays in male-dominated contexts. Accordingly, we offer:

**Proposition #4.** Women are more likely than their male counterparts to experience emotions that are viewed as inappropriate and, if enacted, attenuate their power in their work relationships.

In sum, the gendering of emotion creates gender differences in the display, perception and evaluation of emotions in work relationships in ways that create and sustain gender differences in power. However, as discussed earlier, power has a pervasive effect on emotional processes. Using the concept of an emotional episode, let us now examine how perceptions of social power influence the experience, display and evaluation of women’s emotions in their work relationships.

2.5. The cycle of powerlessness

In this section, we summarize how the emotional terrain unfolds within an emotional episode and we examine the feedback loop between power and emotion in work relationships. The concept of an emotional episode (cf., Russell & Barrett, 1999; Weiss, Ashkansy, & Beal, 2005) offers a useful platform for summarizing and illustrating how the gender-related challenges described in this article unfold in a given interaction. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the emotional episode includes the agent’s experience of emotion, his or her display of emotion, the target’s perception and reaction to the emotional display, and the target’s perception of the agent’s power. As described earlier in this article, emotion influences perceptions of power, and power in turn affects the experience, display and evaluation of emotion in relationships. Gender has a pervasive influence on each component of the emotional episode through gendered display rules, emotional minefields, double binds and double standards. These processes are exacerbated by gender role stereotypes and the shifting standards effect. Overlaying these processes are gender differences in societal power; as a diffuse status characteristic, gender offers less power for women, and this in turn influences experiences, displays, attributions, perceptions and evaluations of emotion in work relationships. Status expectations serve as a perceptual filter through which emotions are viewed and evaluated in work relationships.

As illustrated in Fig. 2, there is a feedback loop from power to emotions. As reviewed in the beginning of this article, power influences the experience, display, perception and evaluation of emotion in relationships. Specifically, those with power experience more positive emotions, which engenders feelings of competence that further enhance their power in social relationships (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Keltner et al., 2003; Tiedens et al., 2000). Those with power also have different display rules; they have greater latitude in the type, intensity and range of emotions they are allowed to display in their work relationships (Kemper, 1991; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996; Tiedens et al., 2000). Gibson and Schroeder (2002) observe that those with power are better able to leverage their emotions to gain more power in their work relationships; in essence, they can strategically use their emotions to build more power. Those with power are viewed as more competent by others, and are more likely to be seen as displaying powerful emotions in social interactions (Kemper, 1978; Tiedens et al., 2000). The emotions displayed by powerful people are more likely to be accepted and are evaluated more positively (Kemper, 1978), which further builds and reinforces their power. Powerful people are expected to display emotions that reflect their power (Conway et al., 1999), and their emotional displays are viewed through perceptual filters that may distort perceptions to fit with expectations (Tiedens et al., 2000). Even when powerful people display emotions that are not reflective of their power, they may still be perceived as displaying powerful emotions, and attributions about their emotional displays will still be positive (Tiedens et al., 2000). In the emotional episode, power begets power.

Now let us examine how this process unfolds for women in the emotional episode. Overall, female employees have less power than their male counterparts (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989); gender role stereotypes (Eagly, 1983, 1987), societal status differences based on gender (Ridgeway, 2001; Webster & Foschi, 1988), and a host of organizational practices (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) combine to create gender differences in power in the workplace. Women who lack power are unlikely to experience the emotions associated with power (confidence, pride), and because of their lack of power, they are also more likely to experience and display vulnerability and fear, emotions that reflect and perpetuate powerlessness in their work relationships. Even if they are able to display emotions associated with power (e.g., confidence, anger), the display of anger and confidence are likely to be misperceived or evaluated negatively by others (e.g., Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Rudman, 1998; Timmers et al., 2003), which further attenuates their power. This creates a situation in which women are more likely than men to encounter cycles of powerlessness in their emotional episodes and work relationships.

Let us consider two examples that further illustrate this point: the display of anger (male-typed) and vulnerability (female-typed). Following Fig. 2, the display of anger violates emotional display rules for women but vulnerability does not (cf. Brody, 2000). As reviewed earlier, research has found that targets are likely to have a negative reaction to women displaying anger (e.g., Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008), and due to shifting standards effects, even a small amount of anger will meet with a negative reaction. On the other hand, displaying vulnerability does not violate emotional display rules for women, but vulnerability does not build social power in work relationships (cf. Brody, 1997; Shields, Garner, Di Leone, & Hadley, 2006; Timmers et al., 2003). This reflects an emotional double bind, as she is engaging in gender-appropriate emotions that ultimately lead to the attrition of her power.
Whether displaying anger (violating display rules) or vulnerability (not violating display rules), a woman would generally realize less power and influence than a man. This suggests the following proposition:

**Proposition 5.** Women are more likely than their male counterparts to experience a cycle of powerlessness in which a lack of power creates and fuels emotional processes that further attenuates their power in work relationships.

In essence, what we are suggesting here is that gender differences in power in work relationships are maintained and fueled by the emotional processes described in this article. Power influences emotional processes in workplace relationships, and these processes have unique implications for women because of their lack of power, which creates a cycle of powerlessness. Of course there are other status characteristics that are associated with inequality and lack of power in organizations (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status; cf., Webster & Foschi, 1988). Since these status characteristics are associated with group difference in power, they should elicit similar effects, and as discussed next, may interact with gender in creating even more challenging emotional terrains in work relationships.

2.6. Contextual factors

In this final section, we review core individual, interpersonal and organizational factors that may amplify or attenuate the cycle of powerlessness and gender-related challenges women face in the workplace.

2.6.1. Individual

Like men, women hold multiple demographic group memberships which may influence their ability to develop and leverage power through emotions. For example, expectations for emotional displays may vary for Asian-American, African-American and European-American women in the U.S., and these expectations may be further nuanced when considering differences in age, socioeconomic status, and physical appearance (cf., Matsumoto, 2009). While gender is a status characteristic that yields less power in most societies (cf., Webster & Foschi, 1988), race, ethnicity, age, physical appearance, and religion can be a source of status, or stigma, in certain societies, cultures, and regions (Goffman, 1963). Disability, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status are group memberships that are associated with stigma in many, if not most, contexts (Goffman, 1963; Jones et al., 1984).

2.6.2. Interpersonal

Power is a property of the individual, but also a property of the relationship (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). From a dyadic perspective, the ability to leverage power in a relationship is partially a function of the formal positions of the members of the relationship (e.g., manager/subordinate) (Kipnis, 1976; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Women who have status from their positional power, their expertise, or from their relative status in the relationship should have an advantage over those lacking these forms of power.

Another interpersonal moderator is the extent to which the partner adheres to traditional gender role stereotypes. Partners who hold traditional gender role expectations are less likely to view women as having competence, power and influence (Carli, 2001; Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001), and therefore may be more susceptible to the gendering of emotion effects than partners who do not adhere to traditional role stereotypes. While the gendering of emotion and cycles of powerlessness may be less likely to occur in female dyads (cf., Carli, 2001, 2010; LaFrance et al., 2003), both women and men hold traditional gender-role stereotypes that may influence expectations about emotional displays in work relationships.

2.6.3. Organizational

The processes described here should be amplified in organizations that support gender inequity in power. For example, the presence of inequitable performance appraisal systems, systemic bias in promotions, and differential access to training can create gender differences in power (Heilman, 2001; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Tharenou et al., 1994) that can spillover to work relationships (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). The gendering of emotion effect may also be more evident in organizations and occupations that are male-typed, and in workplaces that create and maintain gender imbalance, both in terms of work group composition as well as glass ceiling effects (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). Women who are in the gender minority may be more likely to be viewed in terms of gender role stereotypes and may have less power than those who work in more gender-balanced settings (cf., Kanter, 1977; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). The gender typing of the job also plays a role in these relationships. The competence and power of women who hold male-typed jobs is more likely to be called into question than those holding female-typed jobs (Carli, 2001; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007), and the gender typing of the job may also affect the influence strategies used by women in the workplace (cf., Carli, 2001; Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson, & Keating, 1988). Women in male-typed positions and organizations may need to use forms of influence that are female-typed (e.g., friendliness, warmth cf., Carli, 1999, 2001), which further attenuates their ability to develop the resources for power necessary to leverage emotion in their work relationships.

2.7. Summary of the emotional terrain of work relationships

In this article we draw on existing research and theory in order to offer a theoretical account of how and why gender and emotion combine to influence women’s ability to develop power in their work relationships. We present the proposition that gendered display rules create emotional double standards and double binds that restrict women’s ability to develop power in their
work relationships. Integrating related theory and research we document that women are more likely than men to encounter emotional minefields that involve a mismatch between their emotional experience and the emotional display rules of the situation. They face sanctions for displaying male-typed emotions, but the display of female-typed emotions depletes their interpersonal power in work relationships. Our analysis reveals that male-typed emotions reflect the emotions associated with interpersonal power, giving men the ability to leverage their emotions into power in ways that are simply inaccessible to women. These processes are exacerbated by the shifting standards and the gendering of emotion effects, in which the perception and evaluation of displays are influenced by stereotypes that characterize emotion as a situational state for men but an uncontrollable and internal trait for women. As a consequence, women need to walk an emotional tightrope for both the type and intensity of emotional displays in their work interactions. In many ways this treacherous emotional terrain can be likened to an emotional battlefield. Unsuccessful navigation of the emotional battlefield creates cycles of powerlessness that ultimately impede women’s ability to develop and leverage power in their work relationships.

3. Implications and conclusion

Our theoretical account of the relationship between gender, emotion and power in work relationships has implications for the study of gender in organizations and has practical implications for achieving gender equity in the workplace.

3.1. Implications for research

The ideas generated in this article offer new directions for examining the underlying processes that create and sustain gender differences in advancement and the development of power in organizations. The path to the top has been likened to an “obstacle course” (Ragins et al., 1998), but its components are not fully understood. The gendering of emotion may be a critical component that creates, sustains and amplifies the barriers faced by women seeking to break through the glass ceiling, as well as by those at lower ranks who struggle with the everyday labyrinth of organizational life (cf., Eagly & Carli, 2007a,b). Future research could examine how women at the top manage the emotional terrain of their work relationships, and compare their experiences and strategies with those who are still struggling to break through the glass ceiling.

Future research could also examine how the gendering of emotion is enacted in different work relationships (e.g., managerial, leadership, mentoring, peer) and the extent to which changing gender role expectations influence the cycle of powerlessness. For example, some scholars point to a shift in gender-role expectations (e.g., Duehr & Bono, 2006; Twenge, 1997) and observe that expectations of effective leadership have also shifted to incorporate more female-typed attributes, such as warmth and compassion (e.g., Catalyst, 2006; Eagly, 2007; Sczesny, Bosak, Neff, & Schyns, 2004). Although there is debate about the extent of these changes and whether female leaders who display these newly valued attributes would receive the same positive evaluations as their male counterparts (cf., Anderson, Lievens, van Dam, & Born, 2006; Catalyst, 2007; Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Johnson et al., 2008; Scott & Brown, 2006), future research could examine how shifts in gender expectations impact the evaluation of emotion in relationships with leaders, managers, supervisors, mentors and peers.

Future research could also move beyond gender to examine how culture and other aspects of diversity influence the processes and outcomes of emotional episodes. Diversity does not just reflect demographic differences; it also reflects societal power relationships among groups that are imported to the workplace (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Ragins, 1997). Since emotion and power are intricately connected, research on emotion in the workplace needs to acknowledge that group differences in power may combine to create very different emotional processes and outcomes for those who have less power at work by virtue of their group membership. For example, it would be instructive to understand how different dimensions of diversity combine to influence the display, perception, and evaluation of emotion in work relationships. Future research could also uncover the impact of stereotypes and attributions on these relationships; we focused on gender, but stereotypes about race, ethnicity, age, religion, disability, appearance, sexual orientation and other group memberships may influence expectations, perceptions and reactions to emotion in the workplace. Using a power perspective, emotion scholars could examine whether, when and how different dimensions of diversity combine to influence the emotional episode.

3.2. Implications for practice

In this article we uncovered the treacherous emotional terrain women may face in the workplace and the pervasive ways in which gender, emotion and power combine to influence their effectiveness in work relationships. Both men and women need to understand how gender role stereotypes influence the display and evaluation of emotion in the workplace and the role of power in these relationships. Raising consciousness and awareness is an important first step, but more direct action can be taken by incorporating this information into diversity training, mentoring and leadership programs. This information may also be useful for coaches and mentors who help women advance in organizations. Practitioners and researchers recognize that the strategies that work for men often backfire for women (Ragins, 1999; Ragins et al., 1998; Valero, 2009). The research reviewed here supports this view and suggests that effective coaching requires an understanding of the emotional terrain of work relationships.

The processes and relationships uncovered in this article could also be used to equip our students for the workplace. Education is in fact our best hope for changing the attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes that underlie the core problems identified in this paper. Both male and female students need to be aware of how gender and emotion combine to influence work relationships, and our curriculum should help them learn about the role emotion and diversity play in work relationships. In sum, through education
and training we can help our current and future workers recognize the power of emotion, the impact of emotion on power, and the overarching influence gender has on these relationships.

3.3. Conclusion

In this article we document the profound impact gender has on the display, perception and evaluation of emotion in work relationships. By synthesizing related theory and research, we offer a fresh theoretical lens for understanding how gender, emotion and power combine to influence work relationships and how this process contributes to gender differences in power in the workplace. We recognize that it may take years to create a level playing field in the emotional terrain of work relationships. In the meantime, by increasing awareness and understanding, we can help women and men navigate the emotional landmines that litter the landscape of their work relationships.

References


