

TO DELEGATE OR NOT TO DELEGATE: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN AFFECTIVE ASSOCIATIONS AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES TO DELEGATION

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Effectively delegating work to others is considered critical to managerial success, as it frees up managers' time and develops subordinates' skills. We propose that female leaders are less likely than male leaders to capitalize on these benefits of delegating. Although delegation has communal (e.g., relational) and agentic (e.g., assertive) properties, we argue that female leaders, as compared to male leaders, find it more difficult to delegate tasks due to gender-role incongruence. In five studies, we draw upon social role and backlash theories to show that women imbue delegation with more agentic traits, have more negative associations with delegating, and feel greater guilt about delegating than men. These associations result in women delegating less than men and, when they do delegate, having lower-quality interactions with subordinates. We further show that reframing delegation as communal attenuates women's negative associations with delegation. These findings reveal that even when a given behavior has both agentic and communal elements, perceptions of agency can undermine women's engagement in them. However, emphasizing the communal nature of seemingly agentic acts may encourage women's engagement in such critical leadership behaviors. These findings have theoretical and practical implications for research on gender differences and leadership behavior in the workplace.

Delegation, defined as the assignment of responsibilities to subordinates and conferral of authority to carry out assigned tasks, is considered an important and effective leadership behavior. For leaders, delegation can reduce work overload and improve the speed and quality of decisions, while simultaneously enabling subordinates to view leaders as participative (De Pater, Van Vianen, & Bechtoldt, 2010). For subordinates, delegation can increase intrinsic motivation and provide opportunities for professional development, as it empowers

subordinates, enables efficacy, and strengthens relationship building between leaders and subordinates (Chen & Aryee, 2007; Leana, 1986, 1987; Yukl & Fu, 1999). For organizations, delegation enhances task coordination, productivity, and performance by drawing upon the specializations and skills of different employees (Becker & Murphy, 1992; Miles, Snow, Meyer, & Coleman, 1978).

Definitions of delegation in much of the management literature have painted this leadership behavior as one that is primarily communal in nature, as it is relational and can help leaders develop employees. Since communality is a prescriptive gender stereotype that is rewarded when exhibited by women (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), one might argue that women leaders should benefit from engaging in delegation (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). Yet the act of delegating can also be considered agentic, as it requires assertiveness and

The first two authors contributed equally to this work.

We thank Sarah Anolik, Hayley Blunden, Zach Bucknoff, Ashley Culver, Zach Heinemann, Yael Warach, Laura Fitzelle, and Lucie Yang for their research assistance. We also thank Daniel Ames, Adam Galinsky, Astrid Homan, Jessica Kennedy, Michael Slepian, and the Social Interactions in Groups and Organizations Lab at Columbia Business School for their thoughtful comments and suggestions regarding this research.

intentionality. Evidence has suggested that prescriptive gender stereotypes that reward agentic behavior for men can sanction this same behavior for women (Eagly, 2007; Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Thus, delegation can be considered a *gender-role-paradoxical* behavior for women: in some respects, delegation is aligned with female role stereotypes, thus presumably helping women; in other respects, delegation is misaligned with female role stereotypes, thus potentially hurting women when they engage in this behavior. In this paper, we propose that women will associate beneficial leadership behaviors that are simultaneously construed as *both* agentic and communal with more negative attributes, and will engage in these behaviors less frequently than men.

Specifically, we examine whether women view delegation with more negative affect than men do, and if so, why. Research on social role and backlash theories has demonstrated that women leaders face a double bind, as the same qualities that make them “good leaders” (e.g., agency) also make them “bad women” (e.g., not communal) (Tannen, 1990: 244). In contrast, male leaders are often free to exercise their agency without the constraint of simultaneously needing to engender communality (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Rudman, 1998). Drawing on these theories, we argue that when leadership behaviors can be viewed as both agentic and communal, the agentic nature of the behavior will be more salient for women than the communal nature. Thus, engaging in such behaviors will be *more* difficult for women than for men.

When applied to the context of delegation, we theorize that women are more likely to associate delegation with agency than men are, as women are penalized more for showing agency than they are rewarded for showing communality (Heilman & Chen, 2005). Since women often see themselves as, and are expected to be, less agentic (i.e., assertive, aggressive) than men (Bem, 1981; Rudman & Phelan, 2008), we propose that they will be more sensitive to the act of delegating, ascribing it with more agentic characteristics compared to men. In turn, women’s affective associations (i.e., emotions and feelings associated with a behavior) with delegation will be more negative, affecting their propensity to delegate. Accordingly, we argue that the gender-role-paradoxical nature of delegation will lead women, compared to men, to associate delegation with more negative emotions, being more sensitive to punishment that can ensue from engaging in gender-role incongruent behavior (Brescoll, 2012; Moss-Racusin

& Rudman, 2010). Since affective associations with a given behavior are powerful predictors of engagement in such behavior, we expect that women’s more negative associations with delegation will decrease their likelihood of delegating and will negatively affect the quality of their interactions with subordinates. We also identify ways to mitigate gender differences in delegation. We argue that for women, emphasizing the communal aspects of delegation may allow its communal properties to outweigh its agentic ones. Thus, we propose that framing delegation as communal, by highlighting its benefits for subordinates, has the potential to change women’s negative associations with delegation.

The current research contributes to management theory in four key ways. First, to our knowledge, we offer the first empirical evidence demonstrating that women and men differ in their delegation behavior. Gender researchers have largely examined how differing gender-role stereotypes shape how women experience and perceive leadership behaviors that are construed as *either* agentic or communal, such as self-promotion and negotiating on behalf of others (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Instead, we offer insight into how women experience and perceive gender-role-paradoxical leadership behaviors, such as delegation, that could be simultaneously construed as *both* agentic and communal.

Second, we provide the first empirical evidence of the processes through which gender differences may influence delegation behavior. We propose that affective associations are an important predictor of delegation behavior for women. Men’s and women’s differing affective associations with delegation may make women less likely to delegate and can affect performance. Based on social role and backlash theories (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Phelan, 2008), we advance the theoretical argument that for tasks that are both agentic and communal, agentic qualities loom larger than communal ones for women, dominating their perceptions and generating greater negative affect as compared to men.

Third, effective delegation entails having a productive relationship with subordinates, yet little is known about the quality of managers’ interactions with subordinates in the context of delegation. We propose that women’s negative associations with delegation can influence the quality of their interactions with subordinates. Additionally, we examine delegation in a controlled laboratory experiment. In doing so, we experimentally test

whether there are gender differences in delegation when position, task, and employees are held constant.

Fourth, by clarifying *why* women differentially delegate, we offer insight into potential interventions that may help address gender disparities in leadership behaviors. Specifically, our research suggests that when leadership behaviors that have both agentic and communal properties are reframed as communal in nature, women may view them more favorably. Thus, this research not only offers insight into the challenges women may face as they continue to ascend to top leadership positions in organizations, particularly in engaging in behaviors that are both agentic and communal, but also provides potential remedies to these challenges.

In what follows, we draw upon literature on social role (Eagly, 1987, 2007) and backlash (Rudman, 1998) theory to describe the theoretical rationale for why women may have more negative associations with delegation relative to men, and for how these negative associations may influence women's delegation behavior. We build a theoretical case for how reframing delegation to be more gender-role congruent may change women's negative associations with delegation. We then describe five studies that test our hypotheses that women and men differ in their perceptions of, and behavior during, delegation, and that women's affective associations can be changed by reframing how they perceive delegation.

SOCIAL ROLE THEORY: GENDER STEREOTYPES AND ROLE INCONGRUENCE

Gender stereotypes pervade society and influence how men and women are perceived and experience their lives (Eagly, 2007; Heilman, 2001). According to social role theory, the roles occupied by, and division of labor between, men and women create expectancies about what women are like and how they are expected to behave. As such, women are expected to be communal, enacting behaviors that are cooperative and other-oriented, whereas men are expected to demonstrate agency, enacting behaviors that are independent and action-oriented.

Both men and women internalize gender roles at a very young age through a variety of means. Media, parents, and peers teach children to behave in gender-normative ways, rewarding girls for being communal and boys for being agentic (Bem, 1983; Bryant & Check, 2000). For example, parents encourage and reward gender-congruent behaviors in play

and household chores (Weisner & Wilson-Mitchell, 1990), and teachers encourage agency in boys by calling on them more often and giving them more talking time than girls (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). By adulthood, men and women tend to self-identify with these gender stereotypes, with women often rating themselves as more communal and behaving more communally than men, and men rating themselves as more agentic and behaving more agentically (Bem, 1981; Valian, 1998).

Those who violate these gender norms are often socially and economically penalized (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). For example, agentic women are evaluated less favorably, receive lower salaries, and are less likely to be hired for the same position compared to agentic men (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). As a result, both women and men are sensitive to situations that elicit social sanctions for counter-stereotypical behavior (Brescoll, 2012; Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010). This social sensitivity to gender-role incongruence may have implications for how women perceive delegation, as the social penalties for stereotype-incongruent behavior may loom larger in their minds than the rewards for congruency (Heilman & Chen, 2005; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Thus, although delegation has qualities of both agency (stereotype incongruence for women) and communality (stereotype congruence for women), we argue women will be especially sensitive to the agentic nature of delegation, as compared to men, due to social costs outweighing gains (i.e., communality does not help women as much as agency hurts them [Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004]). With regard to the communal nature of delegation, communality is often perceived more positively than agency (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014), and people describe themselves with more communal than agentic traits (Bruckmüller & Abele, 2013); thus, we do not expect to see gender differences in perceptions of delegation as communal. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1. Women will associate the act of delegating (in general) with more agentic traits (e.g., aggressiveness, power) compared to men.

GENDER-ROLE STEREOTYPES AND AFFECTIVE ASSOCIATIONS WITH DELEGATION

Both men and women are sensitive to situations that evoke penalties for gender-role incongruent

behavior (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). Awareness of these repercussions creates negative associations with engaging in gender-role incongruent behaviors, where women are more likely to associate agency with negative emotions compared to men. These negative associations can take many forms, including feeling heightened anxiety in anticipation of engaging in agentic behavior (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999), feeling guilt for exhibiting agentic behavior (Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2005), and fearing backlash from engaging in agentic behavior (Brescoll, 2012).

One specific emotion related to gender-role violation is guilt. Guilt, an unpleasant emotion associated with the recognition that one has violated a personal or social standard (Kugler & Jones, 1992), can arise from a sense of responsibility to uphold cultural norms for social behavior (Izard, 1977). Women who engage in gender-role-paradoxical behaviors that they perceive as agentic (e.g., delegating) are likely to recognize that their actions run counter to the female gender norm of behaving communally. Consequently, they may experience feelings of guilt, as engaging in situations that are incongruent with one's gender role can influence the emergence of guilt (Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2005). Thus, if women associate delegation with agentic traits more than men do (as proposed in Hypothesis 1), they may have greater negative associations with delegation compared to men.

A second negative association that has been found to co-occur with agentic behavior for women is fear of backlash. Fear of backlash, or trepidation about potentially incurring social and economic penalties from others (Rudman 1998; Rudman & Phelan, 2008), has been shown to be prevalent for women in a variety of contexts. For example, women experience a fear of backlash for self-promoting, as they view this behavior as more assertive and gender-role incongruent than men do (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010). Likewise, women avoid behaving aggressively in negotiations (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010) and minimize power displays in political and organizational settings (Brescoll, 2012) for fear of backlash. This research suggests that because women may have negative associations with engaging in agentic behaviors, they may feel guilty for violating communality expectations and may also fear backlash. We propose that these negative associations extend to

the domain of delegation through the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a. Women, as compared to men, will have more negative affective associations when anticipating or engaging in the act of delegation.

Hypothesis 2b. Women, as compared to men, will have the specific negative affective association of guilt when anticipating or engaging in the act of delegation.

Hypothesis 2c. Women, as compared to men, will have the specific negative affective association of fear (of backlash) when anticipating or engaging in the act of delegation.

GENDER-ROLE STEREOTYPES AND DELEGATION BEHAVIOR

We argue that perceiving delegation as agentic and having negative associations with delegation can impact whether women choose to delegate when given the opportunity, and influence women's behavior when delegating. Previous models of decision making have assumed that individuals engage in a rational process of weighing the costs and benefits of behavioral choices and selecting the course of action with the most favorable ratio of costs to benefits (Weinstein, 1993). However, significant support has emerged for the idea that the emotions, or affect, associated with a behavior play an important role in decision making (Crites, Fabrigar, & Petty, 1994; Kiviniemi, Voss-Humke, & Seifert, 2007; Simons & Carey, 1998). Specifically, behavioral choices are influenced by the anticipation of feeling particular emotions (such as regret, guilt, pride, or happiness) as a result of engaging in a specific behavior (Richard, van der Pligt, & de Vries, 1996).

Emotions associated with a particular behavioral practice are powerful predictors of one's likelihood of participating in specific behaviors, with more positive affective associations leading to a greater likelihood of engaging in a behavior (Kiviniemi & Bevins, 2008). For example, more positive and less negative associations with exercise are related to increased motivation to engage in physical activity (Laverie, 1998). Having a less negative association with medical testing is related to having a greater likelihood of partaking in preventive medical tests (Kiviniemi, Jandorf, & Erwin, 2014). And holding more negative associations with marijuana, nicotine, and alcohol is related to reduced smoking and drinking (Simons & Carey, 1998; Trafimow &

Sheeran, 1998). Together, these results suggest that if women have negative associations with delegation, including guilt and fear of backlash, then these negative affective associations should deter women from delegating. In contrast, since for men agency is prescribed and rewarded, they should not experience these same negative affective associations and will be free to engage in delegating. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a. Women will be less likely to delegate as compared to men.

Hypothesis 3b. Men's and women's differential affective associations with delegation will mediate their likelihood of delegating.

Outside the realm of health psychology, social-psychological research has shown that affective associations influence behavior toward others. For example, individuals who have more negative associations with a particular social group are less likely to interact with individuals in that category (Rooth, 2010) and to have more negative interactions when they do interact with those individuals (McConnell & Leibold, 2001). Negative associations can increase anxiety and avoidant behavior (Plant, Devine, & Brazy, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1985), depleting cognitive capacity and heightening self-regulation in social interactions (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008). These forces can divert attention away from the social interaction itself, resulting in poorer-quality interactions (Eysenck, 1992) and impaired performance (Richeson & Shelton, 2003). Thus, if women have negative associations with delegation then when they do delegate, the quality of their interactions with subordinates should be lower than those of male delegators, who are less likely to have negative associations with delegation due to its gender-role congruent nature for men. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3c. Women's interactions with subordinates when delegating will be perceived by both subordinates and independent observers as being poorer in quality compared to men's behavior when delegating.

Further, given that delegation has been found to provide critical performance benefits for managers (Leana, 1987; Yukl & Fu, 1999), we more broadly hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3d. Delegators will outperform non-delegators in the tasks they have been given to complete.

ATTENUATING NEGATIVE ASSOCIATIONS WITH DELEGATION

It is possible that women's affective associations with regard to gender-role-paradoxical behaviors may be influenced by how these behaviors are framed. A large body of research in judgment and decision making (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1984) has highlighted that using language that changes how information is framed can influence individuals' behavior in numerous domains. For instance, framing risks in terms of losses versus gains changes individuals' decision-making processes. Specifically, because losses feel more painful than gains feel pleasurable, framing risks in terms of losses fosters risk acceptance, while framing risks as gains fosters risk avoidance (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Rothman & Salovey, 1997). These framing effects have been attributed to the feelings and construals evoked by differing descriptions of the same information (Lieberman, Samuels, & Ross, 2004; McFarland & Miller, 1994;).

Gender researchers have capitalized on framing effects in an effort to reduce gender differences in behavior, particularly in the domain of negotiation (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman, 2007). Since negotiation is seen as an agentic behavior, women are often more reluctant to negotiate when "given the opportunity to negotiate" compared to men (Small et al., 2007); however, when the same situations are described more communally (e.g., "an opportunity to ask") or communal properties are highlighted (e.g., negotiating on behalf of others) gender differences are reduced (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Small et al., 2007). Highlighting the communal properties of agentic acts aligns female behavior with their communal prescriptions and reduces the (fear of) social repercussions involved in violating gender roles (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). Taken together, this research suggests that framing gender-role-paradoxical behaviors as communal by emphasizing how these behaviors benefit others has the potential to change women's negative associations with behaviors that are both communal and agentic. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4. Framing delegation in a manner that emphasizes its communal properties will attenuate women's negative associations with delegation.

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

We conducted five studies to test our hypotheses. In Study 1, using a survey of Master of Business

Administration (MBA) students, we tested whether women perceive delegation to be more agentic than men do (Hypothesis 1). In Study 2, a scenario study, we instructed men and women to either delegate or not delegate a set of tasks, then examined whether men and women have differential associations with delegation using text analysis (Hypothesis 2a). In Study 3, a correlational study, we again used text analysis to examine whether men and women differ in their associations with delegation (Hypotheses 2a and 2b) among a sample of participants with managerial experience. In Study 4, we examined the degree to which men's and women's associations with delegation differentially predict their *actual* delegation behavior in an experimental setting involving a face-to-face interaction with an ostensible subordinate (Hypotheses 3a–3d). Finally, in Study 5, we tested whether framing delegation as communal in nature will attenuate women's negative associations with delegation (Hypothesis 4).

STUDY 1

Through a survey administered to MBA students at a large, private university, we tested the hypothesis that women perceive delegation to be more agentic than men and that these asymmetrical perceptions do not extend to perceptions of delegation as communal.

Method

Participants. We recruited 104 participants from the MBA program of an East Coast University, as their recent work experience likely entailed delegating. Seven participants with no delegation experience were excluded, leaving a sample of 97 participants (63 men; 34 women) with an average age of 28.05 years ($SD = 2.81$). Fifty students were in managerial positions prior to pursuing their MBAs, and participants had 13.78 ($SD = 39.82$) subordinates on average. The racial composition of the sample was 46% White, 33% Asian, 7% Hispanic, and 13% other.

Procedure. Participants were asked questions regarding delegation embedded in a decision-making survey administered during a leadership course. Specifically, they completed demographic questions and were asked, "How much do you associate the following adjectives with delegating?" on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Based on Koenig and Eagly (2014) and Diekmann and Eagly (2000), we selected four adjectives reflecting

agency—powerful, confident, aggressive, and controlling ($\alpha = .51$)¹—and four adjectives reflecting communality—other-oriented, supportive, developmental, and considerate ($\alpha = .79$).

Results

Supporting Hypothesis 1, we found that women associated delegation with agency ($M = 4.57$, $SD = .84$) more than men did ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.03$), $F(1, 95) = 3.86$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .039$. With regard to associations of communality with delegation, there was no difference between women ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.18$) and men ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.18$), $F(1, 95) = .07$, $p = .80$, $\eta_p^2 < .00$.

Discussion

In support of Hypothesis 1, female participants viewed delegation as more agentic than male participants did. Since both men and women perceive communality more positively than agency (Bruckmüller & Abele, 2013), we did not expect and did not find gender differences in communality. Importantly, both men and women perceived delegation as more communal than agentic overall; however, both communality and agency ratings for delegation were above the midpoint, offering evidence that delegation is indeed considered both agentic and communal in nature. Further, these findings support our theoretical argument that women may be more sensitive to the gender-role incongruence of delegation, perceiving it as more agentic than men do. We argue that this sensitivity to the agentic nature of delegation may lead women to view delegation more negatively than men do, a hypothesis we tested in Study 2.

STUDY 2

Study 2 was designed to understand women's and men's differential affective responses when told either to delegate or not delegate. Using a 2 (participant gender: male vs. female) \times 2 (condition: delegate vs. do not delegate) \times 2 (subordinate gender: male vs. female) design, we examined men's and women's

¹ Low alphas have been found in samples with significant international diversity (Zou, Tam, Morris, Lee, Lau, & Chiu, 2009). Given the low reliability, we examined the α values separately for U.S. and international students and found higher values for U.S. students ($n = 31$; $\alpha = .69$) relative to international students ($n = 66$; $\alpha = .35$).

free-response affective associations with delegation. We manipulated the gender of the subordinate, but did not expect effects of subordinate gender on affective associations with delegation. We tested Hypothesis 2a, that women would have more negative associations relative to men in the delegate condition as compared to the do-not-delegate condition. Further, we explored the tenor of women's negative affective associations by examining whether men and women differentially associate delegation with guilt (Hypothesis 2b). To explore the possibility that women's negative associations with delegation are due to concerns that others will view them as less competent (i.e., unable to handle their workload) or their subordinates as less competent, we included competence measures as control variables.

Method

Participants. Two hundred participants (93 women; M_{age} : 36.42 years) were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The sample was 77% Caucasian, 10% Black, 6% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 3% other, with an average of 15.06 ($SD = 8.09$) years of work experience. Participants resided in the United States and 90% had post-secondary education.

Procedure. The study was described as an examination of workplace experiences. Participants were told to imagine that they were an employee at a marketing company specializing in telecommunications, and that their position involved managing, coordinating, and executing the company's strategic vision. Participants were told that they personally had a busy week ahead as they were launching a new marketing campaign, and that a junior employee who worked under them (Michael or Michelle) could help them complete their tasks.

Measures. Participants first wrote about their affective associations with delegating or not delegating and responded to measures capturing guilt and competence on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

After reading the scenario, participants were asked to write about how they felt about delegating or not delegating to their employee, and to list any thoughts, feelings, or adjectives associated with their behavior (delegating or not delegating).

To capture guilt that may be associated with overburdening an employee through delegation (or the relief of not delegating and not overburdening an employee), participants in the delegate condition were asked to what extent they felt. . . "bad delegating

because your subordinate has other things to do," "some guilt delegating because you think your subordinate might be overburdened," and "concerned that your subordinate will have to stay at work late because they are working on your tasks." Participants in the do-not-delegate condition were asked about the extent to which they felt. . . "good not delegating because your subordinate has other things to do," "some relief not delegating because you think your subordinate might be overburdened," and "happy that your subordinate will not have to stay at work late because they are working on your tasks" ($\alpha = .93$).

To capture whether women's negative associations with delegation were influenced by the concern that others would perceive them as less competent for delegating or not delegating, participants were asked, when deciding whether to delegate, the extent to which they would. . . "think that others might see you as less competent?" "feel like you cannot manage your time effectively at work?" "feel like it seems like you can't handle the job on your own?" "worry that your employees might view you less favorably?" "think that you might not get the credit you deserve from others at work?" and "think that you won't get respect you want from others at work?" ($\alpha = .95$). This scale was used as a control variable in all analyses.

We also asked three questions to capture whether women's negative associations with delegation might be influenced by concerns about the competence of their subordinate: in deciding whether to delegate, to what extent would the participant. . . "think you could accomplish the tasks much faster on your own?" "think you could accomplish the tasks much better yourself?" and "worry about the tasks getting done quickly and effectively?" ($\alpha = .71$). This scale was used as a control variable in all analyses.

Participants were asked to identify the name of their junior employee, their department, and their role from a number of options.

Data-analysis strategy. Written responses were analyzed using Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) software (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001). LIWC computes percentages of words in a text within specified categories. Given our interest in affective associations with delegation, we analyzed negative and positive emotions. We analyzed each participant's response separately to yield the percentage of words pertaining to negative emotions and positive emotions. Due to the skewness of the distribution of the LIWC output, data were

transformed with a square-root function to attain a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Results

Participant attrition. Overall, participants accurately reported the name of their junior employee, their department, and their role; 86% passed the attention checks. The final sample therefore included 171 participants (83 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.0$ years).

Affective associations with delegation. On average, participants used 19.5 ($SD = 14.18$) words in their free-response text, 95% of which were recognized by the LIWC program.² We first examined the three-way interaction of participant gender, delegation condition, and subordinate gender on negative and positive affect; as expected, we found no significant effects.³ We therefore collapsed across subordinate gender for all subsequent analyses. Next, we examined the effects of gender, delegation condition, and their interaction on negative affect. There were no main effects of gender, $F(1, 170) = .49, p = .49, \eta_p^2 = .003$, or delegation condition, $F(1, 170) = .19, p = .66, \eta_p^2 = .001$, on negative affect. However, consistent with our prediction, we observed a significant gender \times delegation condition interaction, $F(1, 170) = 4.67, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .03$. As shown in Figure 1a, women who were told to delegate associated delegation with greater negative affect ($M = 1.36, SD = 1.91$) relative to men who were told to delegate ($M = .66, SD = 1.38$), $F(1, 170) = 4.47, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$. There was no difference in negative affect between men ($M = 1.41, SD = 1.70$) and women ($M = .84, SD = 1.54$) told not to delegate, $F(1, 170) = 0.86, p = .35, \eta_p^2 = .005$. Nor were there significant differences between the delegate and do-not-delegate conditions for women ($p = .23$) or for men ($p = .07$).

We had intended to examine the negative affect experienced by women with greater granularity by analyzing the LIWC negative emotion subscales of anger, sadness, and anxiety. However, because only 5%, 8%, and 20% of the sample listed words associated with anger, sadness, and anxiety, respectively, we did not have sufficient statistical power to analyze these subscales.

We next examined the effects of gender, delegation condition, and their interaction on positive affect.

We observed no significant effects of gender, $F(1, 170) = 0.24, p = .62, \eta_p^2 < .01$, delegation condition, $F(1, 170) = 3.25, p = .07, \eta_p^2 = .02$, or gender \times delegation condition interaction on positive affect, $F(1, 170) = 0.30, p = .58, \eta_p^2 < .001$. (Figure 1b).

Guilt of overburdening subordinates.⁴ Our examination of guilt associated with delegating (or relief associated with not delegating) revealed a main effect of delegation condition, $F(1, 170) = 34.86, p < .0001, \eta_p^2 = .16$, such that those in the do-not-delegate condition felt more relief from not having to delegate ($M = 5.10, SD = 1.54$) relative to the guilt felt by those in the delegate condition ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.59$). We observed no effects of gender on feelings of guilt or relief, $F(1, 170) = 0.15, p = .70, \eta_p^2 = .001$, nor was there a significant gender \times delegation condition interaction on guilt or relief, $F(1, 170) = 0.05, p = .82, \eta_p^2 = .0002$.

Discussion

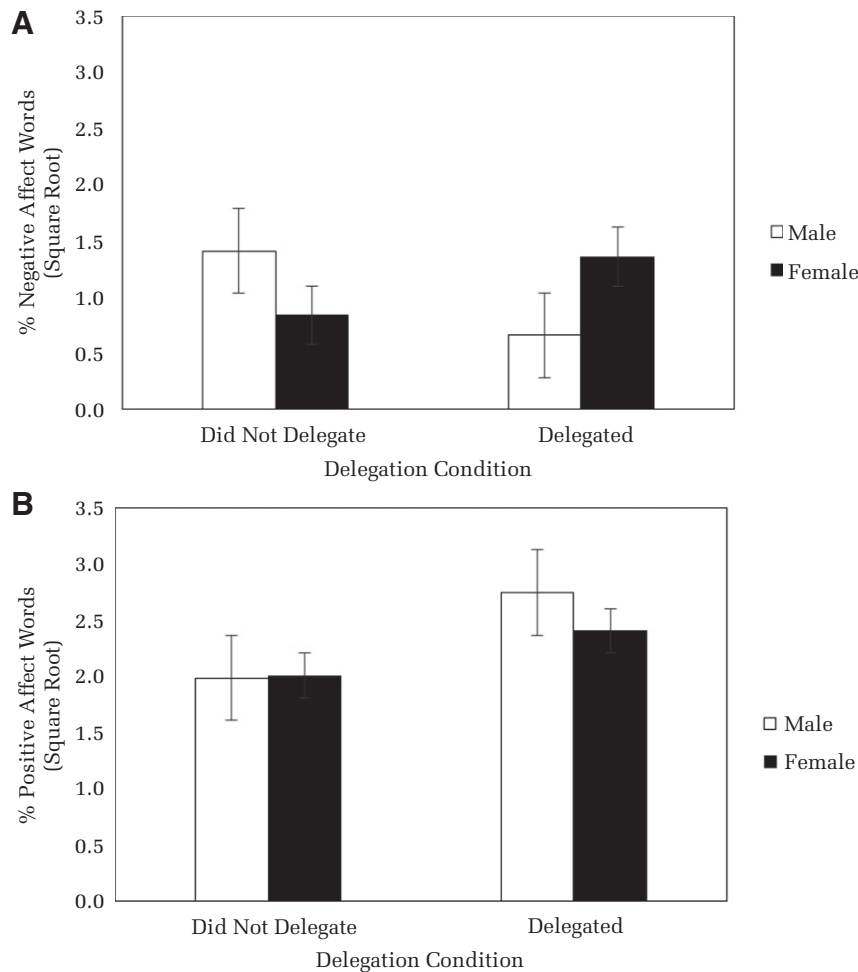
Supporting Hypothesis 2a, Study 2 showed that women have different affective associations with delegation compared to men, such that women associate delegation with more negative affect compared to men. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that engaging in counter-stereotypical

⁴ We thank two anonymous reviewers for raising the point that gender differences in delegation may be attributed to concerns about being perceived as less competent for delegating. To rule out this alternative explanation, in Study 2 we tested whether women were more concerned about their own competence and their subordinate's competence compared to men. Counter to prevailing hypotheses, men were more concerned about how their competence would be perceived ($M = 2.68; SD = 1.47$) than were women ($M = 1.82; SD = 1.09$), $F(1, 170) = 18.71, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$, collapsing across conditions. Men were also more concerned about their subordinate's competence ($M = 4.03; SD = 1.30$) than were women ($M = 3.57; SD = 1.56$), $F(1, 170) = 4.45, p < .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$, collapsing across conditions. Further, we included competence concerns (both self and subordinate) as control variables in our analysis and saw no changes in our results. Third, in a separate study we asked 46 female managers ($M_{\text{age}} = 44.76; SD = 8.07$) to rate the extent to which their concerns about their competence, their subordinate's competence, and guilt of overburdening subordinates prevented them from delegating. We found self-competence concerns to be the lowest-rated reason for not delegating ($M = 2.01; SD = 1.45$), relative to guilt ($M = 3.43; SD = 1.49$) and subordinate competence ($M = 4.32; SD = 1.40$). These findings suggest that competence is not an alternative explanation for our effects.

² We did not include word count as a covariate, but results do not change when including word count in the analysis.

³ Correlations across all study variables are available upon request from the first author.

FIGURE 1
Study 2: Percentage of (A) Negative Affect and (B) Positive Affect Words Used by Men and Women by Delegation Condition



Note: Error bars show standard errors.

(e.g., agentic) behavior can result in women feeling concerned about appearing too agentic (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010). Importantly, controlling for competence perceptions allowed us to rule out the alternative explanation that women's negative associations with delegation are influenced by concerns about being perceived as less competent for delegating or by concerns regarding their subordinates' competence.

STUDY 3

In Study 3, we sought to test whether our findings in Study 2 would replicate in a sample of managers based on their daily delegation experiences. We predicted that women delegators would have more

negative associations with delegation compared to male delegators (Hypothesis 2a) and that women would feel more guilt for overburdening their subordinates compared to men (Hypothesis 2b).

Method

Participants. We recruited 164 participants (79 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.90$) from MTurk. Since holding a managerial role was a requirement for participation, participants were asked to indicate whether they were in a managerial role, list their job description, and report the kinds of tasks they tended to delegate. The sample consisted of 77% Caucasian, 8% Asian, 7% Black, and 5% Hispanic participants, with an average of 14.33 years of work experience.

Participants resided in the United States and 51% had at least some post-secondary education. Participants on average had worked at their organization for 5.76 ($SD = 4.80$) years, had 14.23 ($SD = 39.17$) people working under them, and worked 42.15 ($SD = 9.93$) hours per week.

Procedure. The study was described as examining day-to-day experiences and behaviors at work. Participants were first asked about their job description and tasks that they had authority to delegate. Those with the authority to delegate (our key exclusion criterion) were allowed to proceed and were asked a number of questions about their self-reported delegation behavior, as well as their associations with delegation.

Measures. Participants were asked to respond to self-report measures on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). To test participants' unprimed associations with delegation, we asked them to list any thoughts, feelings, and emotions they associated with delegation in an open-ended format. We asked two questions designed to capture guilt that may be associated with delegation and overburdening an employee: "I sometimes feel bad delegating because my employee has other things to do" and "I feel some guilt delegating because my employee might be overburdened" ($r = .81$). We also asked two questions on how much participants delegate ($r = .59$): "Compared to other people in your position, how much do you delegate to your employees?" and "How effective do you think you are at delegating?" As an attention check during the study, participants received a question, embedded within our scales, asking them to click "strongly disagree" to show that they were paying attention.

Data-analysis strategy. As in Study 2, we analyzed written responses using LIWC. We tabulated the overall number of positive and negative emotion words for each response and examined three

subscales of negative emotions: anger, sadness, and anxiety. Due to skewness, data were transformed with a square-root function. Additionally, we conducted analyses of variance on each of the measures listed above to examine gender differences on each variable.

Results

Participant attrition. Nineteen participants (12%) were removed for lacking authority to delegate. Of the remaining participants, 14 (10%) did not report their work experience or failed the attention check. The final sample was 130 participants (66 women; $M_{age} = 34.02$ years).

Affective associations with delegation. To test whether men and women had different associations with delegation, we examined participants' free-response texts. On average, participants used 9.78 ($SD = 13.97$) words, and LIWC captured 90% of the words used. An examination of the captured negative and positive affect words associated with delegation revealed that, consistent with Hypothesis 2a, there was a significant main effect of gender on negative affect, $F(1, 128) = 6.99, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .05$, such that women listed significantly more negative-affect-based words ($M = 3.31, SD = 3.57$) than did men ($M = 1.87, SD = 2.55$). Means by gender for all key variables are presented in Table 1.

An examination of the three subscales of negative affect revealed that only one participant (< 1% of sample) used "sad" or "angry" affect-based words; as such, we did not analyze these subscales. A larger proportion of participants (40%) used anxiety-related words, which allowed us to analyze the LIWC anxiety subscale. We observed a significant main effect of gender on anxiety, $F(1, 128) = 10.26, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .07$, with women listing significantly more anxiety-based words ($M = 2.93, SD = 3.58$) compared to men ($M = 1.26, SD = 2.16$).

TABLE 1
Study 3: Means by Gender and Analysis of Variance Results for Key Dependent Variables

	Men		Women		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Self-Reported Delegation	4.64	1.18	4.78	1.08	0.50	0.480	0.00
Negative Affect (Sqrt)	1.87	2.55	3.31	3.57	6.99	0.009	0.05
Anxiety (Sqrt)	1.26	2.16	2.93	3.58	10.26	0.002	0.07
Positive Affect (Sqrt)	3.82	3.27	2.77	3.02	3.63	0.059	0.03
Guilt	4.02	1.53	4.55	1.42	4.07	0.046	0.03

Note: $n = 130$.

Finally, there was a marginally significant effect of gender on positive affect, $F(1, 128) = 3.63, p < .06, \eta_p^2 = .03$, such that women listed marginally fewer positive-affect-based words ($M = 2.77, SD = 3.02$) compared to men ($M = 3.82, SD = 3.27$).

Guilt of overburdening subordinates. There was a significant main effect of gender on guilt, $F(1,129) = 4.07, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$, such that women expressed greater guilt about their employee being overburdened ($M = 4.55, SD = 1.42$) compared to men ($M = 4.02, SD = 1.53$), supporting Hypothesis 2b.

Self-reported delegation. We examined whether self-reported delegation behavior differed between men and women. Interestingly, we observed no gender differences in participants' reporting of how much they delegated, $F(1, 128) = .50, p = .48, \eta_p^2 < .00$, with men ($M = 4.64, SD = 1.18$) reporting similar levels of delegation as women ($M = 4.78, SD = 1.08$). We examined the two measures (i.e., how much participants delegated and how effective they were at delegating) independently and observed no significant effects (p values $> .19$).

Discussion

Consistent with Study 2, the results of Study 3 offer support for Hypothesis 2a and demonstrate that women associate delegation with more negative affect, namely anxiety, as well as with less positive affect, than do men. Further, we extended these findings to show that women associate delegation with greater guilt compared to men with regard to overburdening subordinates, supporting Hypothesis 2b. Although Study 3 offers preliminary evidence of gender differences in delegation, we found that women's self-reports of delegation indicated that they *did not* delegate any less than men. Despite the lack of gender

differences in our self-reported measure, we did find that negative affect was negatively correlated with self-reported delegation (see Table 2); those who had stronger negative associations with delegation self-reported less delegation behavior. Since women have more negative associations relative to men, this finding suggests an indirect relationship between gender and self-reported delegation through negative associations. Given the limitations of self-report behavioral measures (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007) and the subjective nature of our measures, which allowed participants to qualify the quality and quantity of their delegation, it is possible that the items we selected to capture delegation were not sufficient to capture differential delegation behavior between women and men. Further, the job characteristics of the sample (i.e., industry, tenure, occupation, position) varied significantly; thus, a variety of important employment circumstances may have affected men's and women's self-reported delegation. Therefore, in Study 4, we examined gender differences in *actual* delegation behavior and controlled for potential confounds present in Study 3.

STUDY 4

In Study 4, we turned our attention to the impact of negative associations with delegation on women's propensity to delegate. In addition, we examined how these negative associations affected men's and women's interactions with their subordinates and influenced their performance on a set of tasks. To this end, we studied delegation in a controlled laboratory experiment employing a confederate as a subordinate. We sought to replicate and extend Hypothesis 2a by testing whether women feel more

TABLE 2
Study 3: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1.51	0.50	–					
2. Negative Affect (Sqrt)	2.60	3.18	.23**	–				
3. Anxiety (Sqrt)	2.11	3.07	.27**	.91**	–			
4. Positive Affect (Sqrt)	3.28	3.18	–.17 [†]	–.36**	–.29**	–		
5. Guilt	4.29	1.49	.18*	.17 [†]	.18*	.07	(0.81)	
6. Self-Report Delegation	4.71	1.13	.06	–.21*	–.12	.11	–.17*	(0.59)

Notes: $n = 130$. Gender is coded such that 1 = Male and 2 = Female. Reliabilities appear on the diagonal in parentheses (where applicable).

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

negative affect while delegating, and to provide richness to our measures by collecting emotions before and after the opportunity to delegate (rather than through affective associations devoid of context). Specifically, we measured anxiety before and guilt after delegation, and included a fear-of-backlash scale to test our argument that the anxiety associated with delegation is due to a fear of being perceived as too agentic. Finally, we examined the downstream consequences of having negative associations with delegation, testing our predictions that women will be less likely to delegate than men (Hypothesis 3a), that women will fear backlash for delegating more than men will (Hypothesis 2c), and that women's interactions with their subordinates when delegating will be perceived as being of lower quality than men's (Hypothesis 3c). We further explored whether women's and men's differential negative associations with delegation will mediate their likelihood of delegating (Hypothesis 3b), and the implications of delegation on actual performance in this context (Hypothesis 3d).

Method

Participants. We recruited 148 participants (81 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 22.77$) from a behavioral research lab at a large, private university. Participants were scheduled for a 90-minute session and paid \$20 plus a \$4 performance bonus. The majority (62%) of participants were undergraduate students, while the remaining 38% were graduate students or community members. The sample was 77% Caucasian and 11% Asian, while 3% identified with more than one race.

Procedure. The study, described as being about identity and performance, had three phases. In Phase 1, participants first answered personality questionnaires. In Phase 2, they engaged in an activity with a partner (a trained confederate).⁵ In Phase 3, participants completed a questionnaire about their interactions and experience with their partner during Phase 2.

Phase 1: Participants entered the lab with a person who was ostensibly another participant (confederate); the two were escorted into separate rooms. After providing consent, participants were asked to complete an "Activity Role Assessment" and told that

this assessment would be used to determine their roles in an upcoming leadership activity.⁶

Participants were then told that, based on their assessments, they would be put into the *senior role* of "Sponsorship Coordinator" for a "University Goes Green" campus campaign and that their partner (confederate) would be put into the *junior role* of "Committee Member." This paradigm has been found to create status and power differences in experimental settings (Akinola & Mendes, 2013). Participants were told that both they and the "Committee Member" had six tasks to complete, but that their tasks and compensation would differ based on their leadership roles, and as the leader, they could delegate to their partner if they would like to. The confederate then went to a separate workspace and participants completed questionnaires assessing their associations with delegation, and their intentions to delegate in the upcoming activity.

Phase 2: Participants were given 35 minutes to complete an activity consisting of six tasks in their role of sponsorship coordinator: (1) draft an email to the student body about the campaign, (2) enter data into an Excel spreadsheet, (3) redact or interpret the data entered into the Excel spreadsheet, (4) proofread a PowerPoint presentation, (5) format a newsletter, and (6) design a logo for the campaign (see Appendix A for details on each task). Each participant was videotaped during the session in an effort to capture his or her delegation behavior. After 35 minutes had elapsed, participants were informed that the activity was over.

Phase 3: Participants then filled out a final questionnaire and were debriefed, thanked, and paid.

Dependent measures prior to the delegation activity (Phase 1). Prior to engaging in the delegation activity, participants completed the role assessment questionnaire as well as questionnaires assessing their affective associations with, and likelihood of, delegating.

This questionnaire served as a cover story for assigning participants to the senior role of "Sponsorship Coordinator." The questionnaire included the Ten Item Personality Inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003) and three Rorschach Inkblot Tests

⁵ We manipulated and controlled for confederate gender in all analyses.

⁶ While participants waited for their assessments to be scored, they answered questions about themselves for eight minutes either alone or with the confederate. We were interested in whether forming a relationship with an employee would affect women's propensity to delegate. We observed no effect of this manipulation on our key dependent variables. In all analyses, we controlled for self-reflection condition and confederate gender.

(Karson, 2007), in which participants viewed ambiguous pictures and described what they saw.

To assess the changes in emotions that may accompany delegation, we assessed participants' self-reported emotions using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson & Clark, 1994) at two points: (1) upon arrival at the lab in the activity role assessment questionnaire (Time 1) and (2) after learning about the delegation activity and their leadership role (Time 2). Participants rated themselves on 15 negative and 19 positive items. However, we were particularly interested in the anxiety subscale of the PANAS given our findings that women had more negative associations, namely anxiety, with delegation in Study 3. Participants rated how nervous, afraid, and scared they were on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*), resulting in an anxiety index (alphas ranged from .71 to .85). We also examined three positive emotions (confident, proud, and strong), as these words were most relevant based on the open-ended content of Studies 2 and 3, resulting in a positive affect subscale indexing agentic emotions (alphas ranged from .78 to .82). We calculated changes in emotions by subtracting participants' emotion ratings just prior to the delegation task (Time 2) from those collected upon arrival at the lab (Time 1).

Dependent measures during delegation activity (Phase 2). We assessed whether participants delegated, examined their behavior toward their subordinate when they did delegate, and measured their performance. We assessed delegation by having confederates indicate whether the participant delegated any tasks to them and how many tasks they delegated. Additionally, independent coders examined each videotape to confirm whether the participant delegated. For each task that was delegated, we measured the number of seconds that elapsed between the time the participant entered the confederate's room to delegate a task and the time the participant exited the room.

We assessed the quality of participants' interactions with the confederate⁷ in two ways, using items

based on the "showing concern" dimension of the empowering leadership questionnaire (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000). First, immediately following each interaction, we asked each confederate to rate the participant on six questions: (1) "the participant seemed to consider how their delegation would affect me," (2) "the participant kept me motivated throughout the task," (3) "I felt like the participant had confidence in me to complete the tasks," (4) "I felt like the participant trusted me to complete the tasks," (5) "the participant followed up with me to make sure I was completing my tasks," and (6) "the participant checked in on me to make sure I was completing my tasks." Ratings were on scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) ($\alpha = .68$).

Second, five research assistants watched each participant's video and rated participants on the following four questions: To what extent did the participant in the video... (1) "ask about the confederate's to-do list to see if they had the capacity to take on the task," (2) "compliment the confederate on his or her ability to accomplish the task," (3) "express gratitude for taking on or finishing the task," and (4) "offer to help, if there was extra time." Coders rated these items, which capture how considerate the participant appeared, on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Reliability between the coders was high ($\alpha = .88$), as was the reliability between the items ($\alpha = .90$). Further, confederate ratings of their interactions and coder ratings were strongly correlated, $r = .57$, $p < .001$, indicating consistency in their perceptions of interaction quality.

Each of the six tasks was scored by two research assistants on several dimensions (see Appendix A). We created an average performance score by standardizing the different metrics of performance across our tasks (using a z-score). Participants who delegated a task to the confederate received full points for that task.

Dependent measures following the delegation activity (Phase 3).⁸ To understand the theoretical drivers of negative associations found in previous studies, we asked participants who had delegated to complete a questionnaire assessing guilt and fear of backlash.

We measured guilt associated with overburdening with the same two items adapted from Study 3 ("I felt bad delegating because the Committee Member had

⁷ To ensure gender-role stereotyping did not explain the ratings of interaction quality, we transcribed participants' interactions and had two research assistants, blind to participant gender, rate each transcript on the same dimensions on which participants were rated by confederates and video coders. Blind transcript coders' ratings were significantly correlated with those of confederates ($r = .39$, $p < .001$) and with those of video coders ($r = .46$, $p < .001$), suggesting that ratings of consideration were not unduly influenced by gender-role stereotypes.

⁸ Since we were interested in men's and women's affective responses to delegation, these items were only asked of participants who delegated.

other things to do” and “I felt some guilt delegating because I thought the Committee Member might be overburdened”) using scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We also added a third item, “I was concerned that the Committee Member may not receive their full payment because they were working on my tasks” ($\alpha = .82$).

To assess participants’ concerns about backlash, they were told to imagine that a group of people was watching a tape of their interaction with the confederate and asked to what extent they would be concerned that . . . “[they] might be disliked?” “people would think [they] dominated the interaction?” “others would perceive [them] as too controlling?” and “[they] might be judged for being too assertive?” ($\alpha = .83$). These items were anchored at 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) (see Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010).

Results

Participant attrition. Eleven participants were removed from the analysis due to their suspicions about their interaction with the confederate, as discovered in participant debriefing and in confederate notes. The final sample included 137 participants (75 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 21.97$). Additionally, three videos were not coded due to technical malfunctions, and one participant did not complete the PANAS correctly. Varying degrees of freedom reflect this data loss.

Our primary prediction was that women would feel greater increases in anxiety relative to men when anticipating delegation. In line with our hypothesis, there was no main effect of gender on changes in anxiety, nor was there a main effect of delegation on changes in anxiety ($ps > .54$). However, we did observe a significant gender \times delegation interaction, $F(1, 130) = 4.04, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$. See Figure 2a.

Planned contrasts revealed that women who delegated had greater increases in anxiety prior to being given the opportunity to delegate ($M = .64, SD = .88$) than women who did not ($M = .31, SD = .68$), $F(1, 130) = 3.57, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .03$. For men, there were no differences in anticipatory anxiety based on whether they chose ($M = .28, SD = .71$) or chose not ($M = .51, SD = .90$) to delegate, $F(1, 130) = 1.07, p = .30, \eta_p^2 = .01$.

We conducted a similar analysis for our positive emotions subscale. We found no main effect of gender, $F(1, 130) = .83, p = .36, \eta_p^2 = .01$. However, there was a main effect of delegation on positive affect, $F(1, 130) = 4.67, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .04$, such that

those who delegated felt more positive emotions prior to being given the opportunity to delegate ($M = .11, SD = .67$) than did those who did not delegate ($M = -.10, SD = .67$). This main effect was qualified by a gender \times delegation interaction, $F(1, 130) = 3.90, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$. As shown in Figure 2b, planned contrasts reveal that for women there was no difference in positive affect prior to being given the opportunity to delegate, regardless of whether they chose ($M = .04, SD = .64$) or chose not ($M = .02, SD = .65$) to delegate, $F(1, 130) = .02, p = .88, \eta_p^2 < .01$. In contrast, men who did not delegate experienced significantly greater decreases in positive affect prior to being given the opportunity to delegate ($M = -.32, SD = .67$), and men who did delegate experienced increases in positive affect prior to being given the opportunity to delegate ($M = .17, SD = .70$), $F(1, 130) = 7.28, p = .01, \eta_p^2 < .05$.

We used a binary logistic regression to test whether men and women differentially delegated and observed a significant main effect of gender, such that women (51%) delegated less than did men (68%), $B = -.72, SE = .36, p < .05$, Wald $z = 4.01$. Interestingly, for those who delegated, there was no difference between men and women in the amount of items delegated, $F(1, 76) = .42, p = .52, \eta_p^2 < .01$.

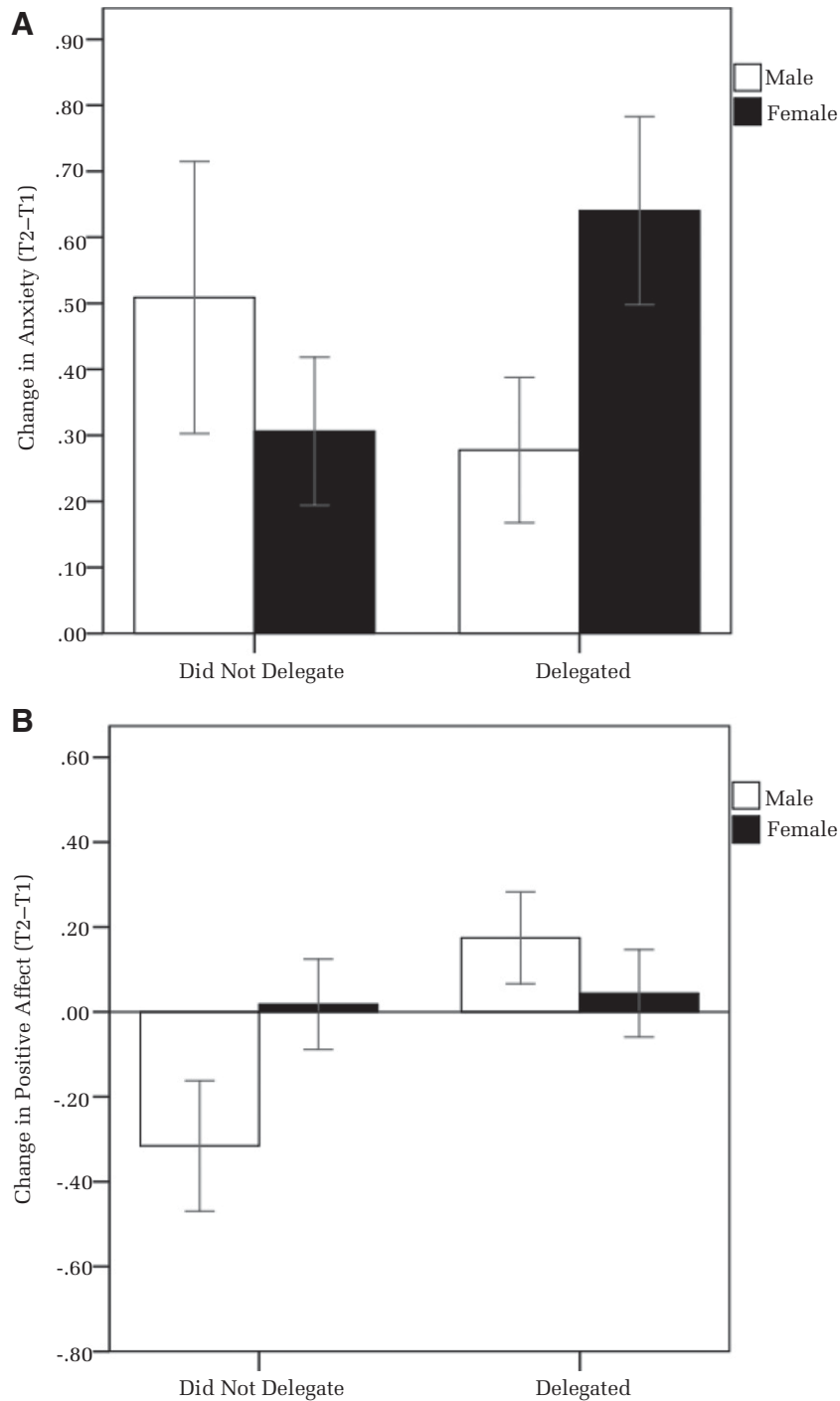
There was a significant main effect of gender on the time spent interacting with the confederate while delegating, $F(1, 70) = 4.85, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .07$,⁹ with women spending fewer seconds with the confederate when they delegated ($M = 33.28, SD = 25.98$) compared to men ($M = 54.20, SD = 59.68$).

There was also a significant main effect of gender on confederates’ ratings of their interactions with participants, $F(1, 75) = 11.07, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .13$. Confederates rated female participants as being less considerate, trustworthy, motivating, and supportive ($M = 3.25, SD = 1.01$) compared to male participants ($M = 3.96, SD = 1.15$). Additionally, independent coder ratings yielded a marginally significant effect of gender with regard to how considerate the participant appeared, $F(1, 73) = 3.48, p < .07, \eta_p^2 = .05$. Namely, the coders rated female participants as less considerate ($M = 2.94, SD = 1.22$), compared to male participants ($M = 3.44, SD = 1.16$) in their interactions.

While we observed no effect of gender on total performance score, $F(1, 129) = .02, p = .89, \eta_p^2 < .00$, there was a significant main effect of delegation on

⁹ We controlled for number of items delegated to the confederate, which could have affected the amount of time spent interacting with the confederate.

FIGURE 2
Study 4: Change in (A) Anxiety and (B) Positive Affect for Men and Women by Delegation



Note: Error bars show standard errors.

performance, $F(1, 129) = 10.44, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .08$. Participants who chose to delegate performed significantly better ($M = .11, SD = .45$) than those who did not delegate ($M = -.15, SD = .44$).

In sum, we found that women delegated less than men when given the opportunity to do so. Further, women spent less time and showed less consideration toward their subordinate when they did

delegate. Finally, we found that delegation influenced performance, as those who delegated completed more tasks.

Dependent measures following the delegation activity were only given to those who delegated, as the questions were specific to their interaction and how they felt about delegating. There was a significant main effect of gender for those participants who delegated in the amount of guilt they felt about overburdening their subordinate, $F(1, 76) = 5.24$, $p < .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, such that women who delegated felt more guilt ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.41$) compared to men who delegated ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.49$). There was also a significant main effect of gender for participants who delegated in terms of how much they feared others viewing them negatively, $F(1, 75) = 4.26$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, such that women who delegated felt more fear of backlash ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.38$) than did men who delegated ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.10$).

Given that we found significant differences in men's and women's positive and negative affective responses to delegation, as well as their likelihood to delegate, and delegation behavior, it is possible that men's and women's differential affective responses mediated their likelihood of delegating (Hypothesis 3b) and associated behaviors. We tested for the presence of an indirect effect of gender on delegation and interaction quality by calculating 95% confidence intervals (CIs) using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. We specifically examined negative and positive affect as mediators predicting delegation and interaction quality, as both of these measures were assessed prior to participants deciding whether to delegate. We were unable to examine guilt and fear of backlash as mediators, as they were assessed after delegation and only for those who delegated.

Results from mediation analyses examining negative and positive affective responses to delegation, using binary logistic regression, indicated that negative affective responses did not mediate the effects of gender on delegation ($CI_{95} = -.02, .23$); nor did positive affective responses ($CI_{95} = -.12, .18$), as both confidence intervals contained zero. Negative affective responses also did not mediate the effects of gender on the quality of women's interactions with subordinates when delegating ($CI_{95} = -.007, .28$), nor did positive affective responses ($CI_{95} = -.21, .03$). Despite our nonsignificant mediations, we found a marginal relationship between gender and interaction quality through anxiety (indirect

effect = .07, $SE = .07$, $CI_{90} = .002, .24$). Though inconclusive, this finding suggests that greater anxiety may influence women's delegation behavior with subordinates, even if it does not influence their decision to do so.

Discussion

The goal of Study 4 was to replicate our previous findings that women have more negative associations with delegation, and to expand on these findings to show that these negative associations have implications for actual (and not just self-reported) delegation behavior. In a controlled experiment we found that women delegated less than did men, consistent with Hypothesis 3a, and that when women did delegate, they spent less time with their subordinates and had lower-quality interactions, a finding aligned with Hypothesis 3c. Further, we offer evidence of the different types of negative associations women have with gender-role-paradoxical behaviors by showing that women experience relational guilt and fear of backlash about delegating, supporting Hypotheses 2b and 2c. Notably, keeping performance of the confederate constant, we found that participants who did delegate performed better on the task than those who did not, as they had more time to accomplish their tasks. Specifically, women delegators outperformed women who chose not to delegate. These findings replicate prior research showing the adaptive nature of delegation (Leana, 1987) and offer evidence that women's negative associations with delegation may have negative repercussions for workplace performance when they choose not to delegate.

The fact that we did not observe a gender effect or a significant gender \times delegation interaction on performance suggests that women did not perform worse than men on the task, even though they delegated less; instead, they essentially outperformed men through their own contributions. However, it is unclear whether women could sustain this out-performance across multiple tasks or days. Because the benefits of delegating may be cumulative, easing the superior's workload over time, the potential negative performance implications for women of not delegating might be difficult to capture based on a single point in time.

In addition, Study 4 provides insight into the role affect plays in delegation decisions. We found that women who delegated self-reported more anxiety prior to delegating than did men. This finding suggests that prospective anxiety does not necessarily hinder women from delegating. On one hand, it is

possible that the negative associations women have with delegation prevent them from delegating, such that women who associate delegation with anxiety do not delegate. On the other hand, it is possible that some women press ahead and delegate despite feeling anxious about doing so. Our results in Study 4 suggest that prospective anxiety may not only influence the decision to delegate, but also has implications for the quality and quantity of women's interactions with their subordinates when they do delegate. Nonetheless, we did not find conclusive—though we did find suggestive—evidence that prospective anxiety (i.e., negative affect) mediated the effects of gender on delegation behavior.

Given our findings in Study 1 demonstrating that women perceive delegation as more agentic than men, our findings in Study 4 suggest that women internalize these social role perceptions, as evident in their emotions before, their behavior during, and their reflections after delegating. Women's concerns about violating their social role may degrade their interactions with subordinates, leading them to rush through delegating (evidenced by shorter interaction times) and to become more self-focused (evidenced by being rated as less considerate) as compared to men. Interestingly, men who did not delegate experienced less positive affect relative to those who did delegate. These male nondelegators violated gender roles by not acting agentially, which influenced their emotions. This finding supports the concept that gender roles play an important part in responses to delegation behavior for both men and women.

STUDY 5

In Study 5, we sought to explore one possible factor that might attenuate gendered responses to delegation behavior, particularly for women. Because we theorized that women have negative associations with delegation due to its gender-role-paradoxical nature of being communal yet agentic, we tested whether framing delegation as more communal would attenuate women's negative associations with delegation. We examined whether highlighting how delegation can empower and help subordinates would reduce women's negative associations with delegation.

Method

Participants. One hundred and thirty-five MBA students (47 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 28.11$), enrolled in an

introductory organizational behavior course at a large private university on the East Coast, participated in the study. Fifty-nine students were in a managerial position prior to pursuing their MBA, and participants on average had 14.35 ($SD = 43.84$) subordinates. The sample was 46% White, 27% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 3% Black, and 13% other.

Procedure. We told participants that they would engage in an in-class feedback-giving and -receiving role play between a manager and subordinate, and randomly assigned them to either be the manager (feedback giver) or the subordinate (feedback receiver). Participants first read their role materials, which provided context for the role play. Subordinates all read the exact same role materials, in which they were informed that they would meet with their manager to receive performance feedback and that some tasks might be delegated to them. Managers were told that they would give their subordinate performance feedback and that there were three tasks that could be delegated to subordinates. After reading the role materials, but prior to engaging in the role play, both managers and subordinates answered questions about their emotions.

We manipulated whether managers were told that delegating tasks can help subordinates develop, learn, and grow (delegation-as-communal condition) or were told nothing about the communal benefits that could accrue to the subordinate from performing delegated tasks (control condition). We chose a manipulation that emphasized the communal properties of delegation, and not one that emphasized the benefits of engaging in agentic behaviors, for two reasons. First, much research has shown that highlighting communal properties of agentic behaviors can attenuate fear and increase the likelihood of engaging in such behaviors (see Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002; Small et al., 2007). Thus, we expected highlighting communality to be beneficial here in the domain of delegation, just as it has been shown to be beneficial for negotiations. Second, agency is generally perceived to be adaptive in leadership roles. Thus, it is not that women do not know the benefits of engaging in agentic behavior; it is more likely that gender-role prescriptions and backlash prevent women from engaging in agentic behaviors (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). We were not able to include other control conditions but see this initial test of intervention as a first step toward potentially mitigating gendered concerns about delegation.

Materials and measures. Participants were asked to read the role play (with the embedded

manipulation for managers) and respond to measures capturing their affective responses, guilt from overburdening their subordinate (for managers), and evaluations of their manager (for subordinates).

Participants in the role of manager were randomly assigned to either a control condition or a delegation-as-communal condition prior to engaging in the feedback role play. These conditions differed only in the instructions participants were given at the end of the exercise. All managers were told the following:

You are planning to delegate a few tasks on your plate to your subordinate. Among these are: (1) preparing materials for a client meeting, (2) reconciling expenses, and (3) running a training session. You recognize that [your subordinate] has been working hard and is very busy, but you need help.

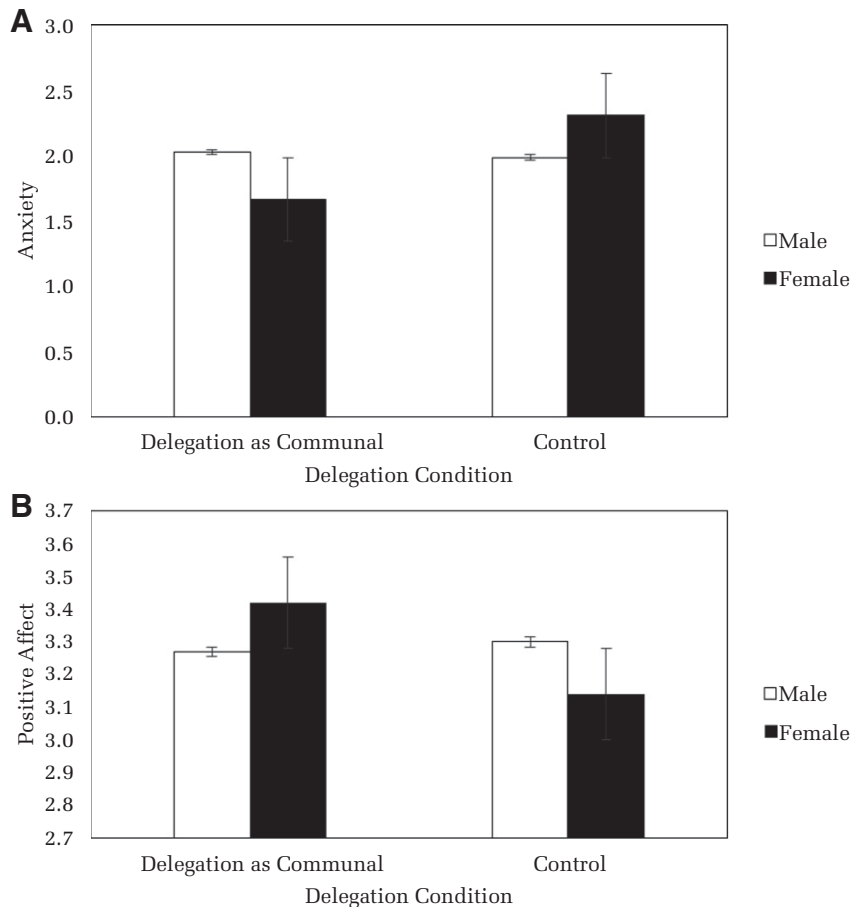
In the delegation-as-communal condition, this statement was followed by:

Further, you know that by assigning these tasks, you are being a good mentor, helping [your subordinate] to develop, and teaching your subordinate critical skills that are needed for the senior management position.

As in Study 4, participants rated how nervous, afraid, and scared they were on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*), resulting in an anxiety index ($\alpha = .76$). We also examined three positive emotions (confident, proud, and strong), resulting in a positive affect scale ($\alpha = .67$).

To capture guilt associated with overburdening an employee, we asked those in the manager role the three questions used in Study 4 ($\alpha = .77$) on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

FIGURE 3
Study 5: (A) Anxiety and (B) Positive Affect for Men and Women by Delegation Condition



Note: Error bars show standard errors.

To ensure that the manager and the subordinate were both acclimated to their respective roles, we asked those in the subordinate role about their desire to take on their managers' tasks using two questions, "I am motivated to take on my manager's tasks" and "I am happy to take on my manager's work" ($r = .71$), on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Since there was no manipulation in the subordinate role, we did not expect any gender differences in these measures.

Results

Affective responses to delegation. Our primary prediction was that women managers in the control condition would feel greater anxiety than those in the delegation-as-communal condition when anticipating delegating to the subordinate. We did not expect any differences in anxiety by delegation condition for male managers. In line with our prediction, there was no main effect of gender on anxiety, $F(1, 68) = 0.01$, $p = .90$, $\eta_p^2 < .00$, nor was there a main effect of delegation condition on anxiety, $F(1, 68) = 2.68$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 < .04$. However, as can be seen in Figure 3, we did observe a marginally significant gender \times delegation condition interaction, $F(1, 68) = 3.55$, $p = .06$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$.

Planned contrasts revealed that women in the control condition had greater anxiety prior to delegating ($M = 2.31$, $SD = .76$) than women in the delegation-as-communal condition ($M = 1.67$, $SD = .55$), $F(1, 23) = 4.75$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. For men, there were no differences in anxiety by delegation condition, $F(1, 44) = 0.04$, $p = .84$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

We conducted a similar analysis for our positive emotions subscale and found no main effects or significant interactions ($ps > .29$). We also conducted this analysis for subordinates' ratings of anxiety and positive emotions. As expected, because there was no manipulation in the subordinate role, we found no differences between men and women ($ps > .57$).

Guilt of overburdening subordinate (managers only). There was a significant main effect of delegation condition in the amount of guilt managers felt about overburdening their subordinate in anticipation of delegating, $F(1, 68) = 7.04$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, such that managers in the control condition felt more guilt ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.13$) than did managers in the delegation-as-communal condition ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.27$). However, there was no main effect of gender, $F(1, 68) = 1.46$, $p = .23$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, nor was there

a significant gender \times delegation condition effect for guilt of overburdening one's subordinate, $F(1, 68) = 1.99$, $p = .16$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.

Desire to take on manager's tasks (subordinates only). Since there was no manipulation in the subordinate role, we did not expect there to be differences between men and women in their desire to take on their manager's tasks. Consistent with our expectations, we found no gender differences in this variable ($p = .48$).

Discussion

The goal of Study 5 was to demonstrate that a simple manipulation emphasizing the communal aspects of delegation can attenuate women's negative affective responses to delegation. We found that women who were told delegation could help their subordinate develop, learn, and grow felt less anxiety and less guilt about overburdening their subordinate prior to delegating, compared to women who were not given these instructions and compared to male managers. Taken with Study 4, in which we found that women's negative associations had implications for their actual delegation behavior and performance, our findings in Study 5 suggest that reducing women's negative associations with delegation may increase their likelihood of delegating, improving interactions with subordinates and potentially positively affecting their performance.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The goal of the current research was to examine whether men and women have different associations with delegation, and to explore how these associations may differentially affect their propensity to delegate, behavior during delegation, and ultimately performance. To this end, in Study 1 we find that women perceive delegation as more agentic than men do. In Studies 2 and 3, we find that women associate delegation with more negative affect compared to men. Although women's self-reports of delegation indicated that they did *not* delegate any less than men, our behavioral examination of delegation in Study 4 demonstrated that women *did indeed* delegate less than men. Further, when women did delegate, they spent less time with their subordinates and had lower-quality interactions compared to men. Confederate ratings highlighted the nature of these interactions by demonstrating that women who delegated were less likely to check

in and follow up than were men, leading to lower-quality interactions in which the subordinate felt unsupported, less trusted, and less motivated. Moreover, women felt greater guilt after delegating than men did and were more likely to fear backlash for being perceived as too agentic in their delegation behavior. Importantly, women who did delegate outperformed those who did not. Finally, in Study 5, we show that reframing delegation as communal attenuates women's negative affective associations with delegation.

Theoretical Contributions

Collectively, our findings contribute to the literature on gender and leadership in several key ways. First, our findings suggest that even when a leadership behavior, such as delegation, could potentially be seen as both communal and agentic in nature, women seem to focus more on the agentic characteristics than on the communal characteristics. Although delegation can be considered communal, as it can give subordinates opportunities to engage in higher-level activities (De Pater et al., 2010), the agentic nature of delegation, in which one exhibits dominance and power, looms larger for women than for men. This perspective may help to explain why women experience greater fear of backlash and guilt when delegating. Building on the body of research that touts the advantages of women's more communal, transformational style of leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002), our findings demonstrate that, in certain contexts, even when a behavior *could be* construed and enacted in a communal manner, traditional notions of agency associated with certain behaviors have a powerful effect on women's ability to enact a communal style of leadership, ironically resulting in them leading with a less transformational and communal style. As women continue to ascend to higher levels in organizations, it will be important to further develop our understanding of the role of gender-role incongruence in women's propensity to engage in behaviors that are both agentic and communal in nature. Beyond delegation, research on managerial behaviors such as negotiation, and even the act of leadership itself, offer convergent support that women experience behaviors that are considered both agentic and communal differently than men do, in part due to gender-role incongruence. Further research is needed to enhance our understanding of other crucial leadership behaviors that fall under this category of being gender-role paradoxical.

Second, our findings offer insight into how engaging in gender-role-paradoxical behaviors may influence women's relationships with their subordinates and subsequent performance. Because effective delegation requires a productive relationship with subordinates, our finding that men and women treat their subordinates differently when delegating has implications for the development of effective and productive long-term work relationships. Ironically, rather than exhibiting gender-role-congruent behaviors, such as showing warmth and sensitivity when delegating, women appeared less considerate and spent less time with their subordinates as compared to men. Given that employees are affected by the mood and behaviors of their leaders (Sy, Cote, & Saavedra, 2005), the behavioral spillover effects of having more negative and fewer positive emotions associated with delegating have important implications for work-related outcomes, including performance, coordination, and relationship development among employees. Moreover, our finding that delegators performed better on the task than did nondelegators further emphasizes the importance of overcoming these negative emotions associated with delegation.

Interestingly, although our focus was on the implications of gender-role-paradoxical behaviors for women's experiences in organizations, we found that men who did not delegate, presumably violating their expected social role (e.g., being agentic and self-assertive), experienced less positive affect. Given that research on gender and leadership has mostly examined the repercussions of gender-role conflict for women (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), our findings among males highlight a need to further examine how gender-role expectations negatively influence both women and men, potentially preventing men from enacting more communal and less hierarchical styles of leadership.

Finally, and critically, our research uncovers an important remedy that can help encourage women to engage in gender-role-paradoxical behaviors. Consistent with research demonstrating the powerful effects of framing in shaping behavior (Kray et al., 2002; Small et al., 2007), we show that women's affective associations with gender-role-paradoxical behaviors can be changed by emphasizing the communal properties of these behaviors.

Limitations and Future Directions

While the present studies offer implications for our understanding of gender and delegation, it does so with several limitations, many of which offer

promising avenues for future research. First, the fact that we did not observe differences in self-reported delegation behavior between male and female managers in Study 3, but did observe differences in actual behavior in Study 4 with a student sample, makes it important for future research to test delegation behaviorally across men and women in organizations with varied work experience and across hierarchical levels within organizations. Given that we did observe differential associations with delegation across men and women in Studies 1 and 3, which were both studies of managers, it is possible that these associations only affect behavior among younger and less experienced managers.

Additionally, delegation is typically predicated on having an ongoing relationship with one's subordinate. Given that our participants in Study 4 had no history with one another, it is possible that any delegation behavior we observed might have been suppressed or exaggerated relative to the behavioral responses that would occur in actual work situations (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). We tried to address this concern by including a "fast friends" manipulation (shown to create close, intimate, and continued friendships inside and outside the laboratory [Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008]). Although this manipulation did affect how close participants felt to their subordinates, it did not affect how much or whether participants delegated, suggesting that these results may extend to close relationships outside of the laboratory. Future research could benefit from exploring this phenomenon longitudinally, inducing familiarity and observing delegation behavior over time. More importantly, delegation research in organizations should examine the degree to which familiarity and the length of the relationship may influence the likelihood of and comfort with delegation among women.

We did not find conclusive evidence that anxiety (i.e., negative affect) mediated the effects of gender on delegation or delegation behavior. One reason why we did not find the expected mediation may be driven by the way in which we measured the emotions associated with delegation in Study 4. In Studies 2 and 3, participants were asked to list any thoughts, feelings, and emotions they associated with delegation in an open-ended format. This measure captures *associated* anxiety with delegation more broadly, whereas in Study 4 participants completed a PANAS, which instead captures *felt or prospective* anxiety. That is, anxiety in the case of Study 4 more accurately reflects the anxiety around *prospective delegation* in the moment by those who do indeed delegate (as shown by the greater anxiety

of women who chose to delegate versus those who chose not to delegate), and does not necessarily prevent women from delegating. Instead, we would expect that general anxiety associated with delegation might prevent women from delegating. From these results, it is clear that distinguishing between these different measures of affect and examining the effects of associated, prospective, and even retrospective anxiety on the decision to delegate and on delegation behavior is an important direction for future research. Additionally, future research should test a broader range of negative affective associations, including anticipatory guilt, to gain greater insight into the mediating mechanisms underlying gender differences in delegation.

Finally, we operationalized delegation, particularly in Studies 2 and 4, in a more agentic manner by placing emphasis on time scarcity, as both the employee and subordinate were told they had a very busy week ahead and many tasks to complete. Although we chose this manipulation because managers who are busy and have many tasks to complete have been shown to delegate (Yukl & Fu, 1999), this setup may have minimized the more communal aspects of delegation in participants' minds. Our results in Study 5 highlight the benefits of framing delegation as communal for women. Future studies should not only operationalize delegation in a manner that emphasizes its communal nature, but also explore different manipulations intended to change how women perceive delegation. It is possible that a noncommunal, and less prosocial, framing of delegation could also attenuate its negative effects. Women might respond well to a manipulation that emphasizes the importance of delegation for getting their own work done and for signaling who is in charge. This framing could also legitimize women behaving agentically, giving them confidence to do so, and thus rescripting gender role expectations. Drawing from negotiation research demonstrating that when situational ambiguity is reduced, women are more likely to follow nongender-specific scripts and achieve better negotiation outcomes (Bowles et al., 2005), we would expect that emphasizing the communal aspects of any gender-role-paradoxical leadership behavior, or sanctioning enactment of the agentic aspects, would reduce ambiguity about whether it is appropriate to engage in the behavior, constraining the potential for gender to influence its enactment.

CONCLUSIONS

Delegation is a critical managerial skill that can enhance performance and allow leaders to effectively

manage their time. Our findings suggest that if women have more negative associations with the gender-role-paradoxical behavior of delegating, they may delegate less than men, a choice that can hinder their ability to complete tasks effectively and engage in adaptive and symbiotic relationships with their subordinates. Because gender roles are evolving (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000), it is possible that, over time, the gender-role incongruence evoked through delegation may become less pronounced. However, our research implies that a more promising avenue for increasing women's propensity to delegate may be to reframe their associations with delegation, such that they perceive it as a more communal and selfless behavior rather than as an agentic and self-serving one.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1
Study 4 Tasks

Task Name	Description	Scoring
1. Influencing Email	Write an email to the school to influence students to donate to the organization. Six relevant points had to be included in the body of the text.	This task was scored by two different raters ($\alpha = .75$) on four dimensions: length, completion, writing quality, following instructions.
2. Organizing Donations (Pt. 1)	Copy a list of student names, majors, school years, and donation amounts into a spreadsheet. Participants were given a computer and Excel file in which to enter this information.	This task was scored based on completion (% of list completed) and accuracy (number of spelling errors).
3. Organizing Donations (Pt. 2)	Participants were asked three questions about the information accumulated from the donation list: (1) what was the average amount donated? (2) which major donated the most money? and (3) which year was most represented in new memberships?	This task required the participant to have completed the first part of the task accurately and have calculated these numbers correctly. This metric was scored from 0–3 based on how many of these questions they answered correctly.
4. Proofreading PowerPoint	Participants were told to proofread an eight-page PowerPoint presentation. The presentation was printed on 8" × 11" paper, with each slide on a separate page, and contained 38 errors in total.	This task was scored based on how many of the 38 errors the participant found, with scores ranging from 0–38.
5. Formatting Newsletter	Participants were given a printed copy of a newsletter, which contained a variety of fonts, colors, and sizing. Their goal was to format a document in Microsoft Word, which included the unformatted raw materials, to look like the newsletter they were given.	Performance on this task was scored based on the 34 changes that needed to be made to the document. Scores ranged from 0–32.
6. ATTA (Creativity Task)	This task was based on the Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults (ATTA; Goff & Torrance, 2002). Participants were given a sheet with nine triangles and were told to create creative and novel logos for the environmental campaign.	This task was scored by two research assistants, blind to the hypothesis, on (1) overall creativity, (2) fluency, (3) flexibility, and (4) flexibility. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved by the two research assistants.