

THE EVALUATION OF RECEIVED DOCTRINES: THE CASE OF SEX STEREOTYPES AND WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION¹

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Introduction

There is a long history of received doctrines in the social and behavioral sciences where a concept is accepted as true without any empirical support (Barrett, 1972; Means, 1965). Margaret Mead's (1928) *Coming of Age in Samoa* is an early example (see Freeman, 1983, 1999). Following their acceptance, received doctrines usually then pass into the popular culture as a "folk theory" (e.g. self-actualization, emotional intelligence). This is typical of received doctrines from the professional literature. They are eagerly adopted by the popular culture without any consideration of their empirical evidence. Even when a concept is no longer considered a received doctrine in the professional literature (e.g., Maslow), it is often accepted as a viable scientific concept in the popular media and among laypeople.

In the present paper we discuss eight received doctrines in the field of Industrial/Organizational (I/O) psychology. From these we identified seven basic indicators of received doctrines. We then discuss how the received doctrine that sex stereotypes cause workplace discrimination is perpetuated in professional workshops.

Received Doctrines in Industrial/Organizational Psychology

1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory are no longer received doctrines in the professional literature, but they have reached folk theory status and possess historic value (e.g., Landy & Conte, 2004).
2. Groupthink is still a received doctrine and is also now a folk theory (Hart, 1991; Surowiecki, 2004).
3. Competencies first appeared in McClelland's technical report (Barrett & Depinet, 1993; McClelland, 1973; McClelland & Dailey, 1973) on Foreign-Service Information Officers, summarized in Barrett (1994). Competencies were also popularized in books by Boyatzis (1982) and Spencer and Spencer (1993).
4. Meta-analysis is presumed to be the best method of conducting a literature review (Schmidt & Hunter, 1977). In addition, inferences drawn from the application of meta-analysis are often overstated (Barrett, Miguel, Hurd, Lueke, & Tan, 2003).

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5. The relationship between diversity and performance was introduced to the courts in the case of *Regents of the University of California. v. Bakke* (1978). More recently, the American Psychological Association (APA) issued an amicus brief (APA, 2003) in support of Gurin (1999) in the University of Michigan cases. Additionally, this relationship has been perpetuated in trade books (e.g., Crosby, 2004).
6. The idea that sex stereotypes cause discrimination was popularized by Dr. Fiske in her expert testimony before the District Court (*Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse*, 1985) and the subsequent Supreme Court APA amicus brief (APA, 1991).
7. Emotional Intelligence probably originated from Gardner's books (e.g., 1983), although Goleman (1995, 1998) and his colleagues (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002) are its current, and most vocal, advocates.

Factors Common to Received Doctrines

1. They usually first appear in a book, amicus brief, expert report, trial testimony, technical report, or other publication that is not subject to peer review (e.g., Goleman, 1995, 1998).
2. They are often cited favorably by the media (e.g., Welch, 2004); "Dr. Goleman says anyone can learn to increase his or her emotional intelligence at any point" (Maher, 2004, p. B8).
3. They are often "politically correct" (e.g., the idea that cognitive ability tests are discriminatory, while competencies and emotional intelligence predict better with no discriminatory effect). "Unfortunately the adversary process has often intersected with social scientists' concern with current social issues and has given them carte blanche to 'discover'...and I think that the word is aptly put in quotes...that the research literature in fact confirms what they have been advocating all along" (Horowitz et al., 1980, p. 152).
4. The originator or defender of the received doctrine makes exaggerated statements concerning the potency of the doctrine. "We now have twenty-five years worth of empirical studies that tell us with a previously unknown precision just how much emotional intelligence matters for success" (Goleman, 1998, p. 6). They often cloak themselves as concerned only with bettering humanity while charging \$800 dollars per hour for deposition and court testimony.
5. Received doctrines contain concepts that cannot be operationalized or scientifically measured (e.g., resonate, self-actualized, diversity, sex stereotype, emotional intelligence, groupthink). These are then later modified from an armchair (e.g., emotional intelligence factors were modified by Goleman et al., 2002).
6. There is extrapolation from an armchair or case studies to the real world (e.g., Goleman, 1995; Janis, 1971).
7. Persistent advocacy of the received doctrine exists until it reaches "folk theory status" (e.g., Surowiecki, 2004, discussing groupthink in the *New Yorker*; Goleman, 2002, discussing emotional intelligence and leadership in *Parade Magazine*).

Illustration of Received Doctrine of Sex Stereotypes Causes Discrimination in Drs. Baker and Fitzgerald Forensic Workshop For Mandatory Continuing Education Credit For Psychology (September 2003)

Assertion: Sex stereotypes cause discrimination in the workplace as demonstrated empirically by Kanter (1977).

Fact: Kanter (1977) was a case study involving at most 20 women newly hired in a sales division, and discrimination was never discussed.

Illustration: Advocates of received doctrines often cite books that do not provide scientific support for their ideas.

Assertion: Fiske (1998) reviewed hundreds of articles that showed sex stereotypes cause workplace discrimination.

Fact: Not one of the hundreds of studies reviewed by Dr. Fiske show that sex stereotypes cause discrimination in any organization. In fact, she stated, "Documenting discriminatory behavior has not been social psychology's strong suit. Like the attitude-behavior debacle that almost destroyed the foundation of persuasive research, a debacle threatens stereotyping research if it does not soon address behavior..." (Fiske, 1998, p. 374). The earliest stereotype study cited (Katz & Braly, 1933) found no link between stereotypes and behaviors: "The greatest agreement was shown on the artistic qualities of the Italians with 53 percent of the students concurring in this belief...This characterization scarcely accounts for the degree of prejudice frequently exhibited toward the Italians" (p. 285). We reviewed almost 250 articles cited in a recent expert report by Fiske (2003). Not one of these articles demonstrated sex stereotypes cause discrimination in any organization.

Illustration: Actual cites often contradict the assertions of the received doctrine.

Assertion: Sex stereotyping framework expert testimony is common and has always been accepted by the courts.

Fact: Four months before the workshop, an appellate court in Minnesota (Ray v. Miller Meester Advertising, Inc, 2003) ruled that Dr. Borgida's testimony on sex stereotypes did not qualify for admission as expert testimony, and concluded that the trial court abused its discretion in allowing his testimony. In addition, there are very few published court cases involving sex stereotype testimony (Barrett, Lueke, & Kramen, 2002).

Illustration: Advocates of received doctrines often ignore or fail to cite evidence that contradicts their positions.

- Assertion: The APA (1991) submitted an amicus brief that supported the science behind sex stereotypes and discrimination (Fiske et al., 1991).
- Fact: The accuracy of the APA brief has been questioned (e.g., Barrett & Morris, 1993), particularly since Dr. Fiske was the testifying plaintiff's expert and also an author of the APA brief. This is analogous to writing your own letter of reference (Saks, 1993).
- Illustration: Like "public intellectuals," advocates of received doctrines in I/O psychology do not cite sources critical of the doctrine (Posner, 2001).
- Assertion: There is a court case (no cite) where conduct that involved handcuffing a female to a toilet, and inserting a cattle prod between her legs, was described as 'horseplay' by the court and not sexual harassment. This illustrates the abuse women face in the workplace with no legal redress.
- Fact: This case was *Reed v. Shepard* (1991) in which the judge stated, "The record confirms these and a number of other bizarre activities in the jail office. By any objective standard, the behavior of the male deputies and jailers toward Reed revealed at trial was, to say the least repulsive. But apparently not to Reed. The Seventh Circuit confirmed the district court decision that the ... incident charged by her did not affect her job performance ... was a willing and welcome participant until other incidences not related at all to any harassment, cost her job." Judge Posner stated it is an oxymoron to label conduct sexual harassment when it is welcome (see Feldman-Schorrig, 1995,1996).
- Illustration: Exaggeration of politically correct statements occurs to make a point. In this example, the advocates suggest that there is no judicial remedy for harassing behaviors.
- Assertion: There is a court case (no cite) where a female was cleaning a tank in a factory and the males urinated on her. Judge Posner ruled this was not sexual harassment.
- Fact: In *Carr v. Alison* (1994) it was alleged that "male co-workers urinated from the roof of the shop in her presence." The district court rejected GM's argument that the words and conduct were mere vulgar pleasantries or "shop talk," but ruled that the conduct was welcome. Judge Posner instructed the District Court to enter judgment on liability for the plaintiff. Judge Posner clearly ruled the conduct was unwelcome and was sexual harassment.
- Illustration: The facts are bent to demonstrate that even a prominent Federal Appellate judge cannot recognize behaviors that are degrading and harassing to women.

- Assertion: Structured interviews and surveys are methods of choice in social framework expert testimony.
- Fact: Dr. Fiske used none of these methods. Dr. Fiske based her testimony on a review of the various comments made by partners. She stated that, "it was commonly accepted practice for social psychologists to reach this kind of conclusion without having met any of the people involved in the decision making process" (Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins, 1989, p. 236). We have not been able to find any professional publications that support this method. Regrettably, other courts rely upon this testimony as if this was an accepted scientific method in psychology (e.g., Montana Rail Link v. Byard, 1993).
- Illustration: Received doctrines usually depend upon methods far removed from scientific or professional practice. Based on our review, we predict that twenty years from now sex stereotypes and their relationship with workplace discrimination will be seen as a "popular delusion" (e.g. Mackay, 1841).

Conclusion

- Received doctrines undercut the credibility of the profession of I/O psychology and create the perception that I/O psychology is based on junk science.
- Court testimony and workshops on received doctrines are presented that have no scientific basis, and assert that social framework testimony is always accepted (e.g., Ray v. Miller Meester Advertising, 2003).
- Federal judges are not familiar with I/O psychology; therefore, junk science can damage our credibility (Wingate & Thornton, 2004).
- The case of *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals* (1993) established a judicial gatekeeping function that monitors the integrity of scientific evidence and attempts to eliminate junk science from the courts. The standards set forth in this case now make it possible to have the testimony of an opposing expert, who may in some cases endorse a received doctrine, ruled inadmissible (e.g., Perry v. Orange County, 2003).
- Psychology in general promotes workshops on topics such as Enneagrams (Mandatory Continuing Education, 2004), which have no scientific basis, but do teach participants how to "identify and support the 'soul child.'" Even SIOP supports, and implicitly endorses, workshops on emotional intelligence and leadership that have no scientific basis (e.g., Boyatzis, 2004).
- The naming fallacy (Brigham, 1930) is common in received doctrines, and results in the continual coining of new terms such as "resonate," the modification of constructs such as emotional intelligence (e.g., Goleman et al., 2002), and the development of new theories like ambivalent sexism (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 2001).

- The lack of any scientific support for the term "resonate" as it is presented in *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, which, by the way, teaches you to resonate, reminds me of *The Skylark of Space* in which the hero is told by an alien, "You're a very inferior race of animals -- don't even understand telepathy" (Smith, E. E., 1940, p. 158). Both resonate and telepathy represent science fiction at its best and worst.
- The term "resonate" appears to have originated from a mystery novel entitled "'H' is for Homicide" (Grafton, 1991). In this book it is defined as Californian jargon. The detective's ability to 'resonate' with crooks, she believed, was the secret of her success.
- Received doctrines reinforce the perception that consultants do not have to worry about scientific issues, "... the worries about the construct and content validity of the various measures of EI should be left to the academics, whereas the practical usefulness of using multiple measures can be enjoyed by consultants and their clients" (Robins, 2002, p. 179).
- Sex stereotype researchers delight in giving examples of the negative stereotypes associated with women (businesswomen are bitchy; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1999). However, the empirical literature does not support this point of view (e.g., Barrett et al., 1998; Deaux et al., 1985, Miller et al., 2000). We suggest that sex stereotype advocates might be more successful in supporting their contention that career women are seen as bitches (Glick & Fiske, 1999) if they consult the fictional work of Parker (2000), who describes a detective that is called a "bitch", the movie "The Client" where the female attorney is called a bitch, and the song "Bitch, Bitch, Bitch" from the musical *Jekyll & Hyde: The Gothic Musical Thriller* (Bricusse, 1994).
- Advocates of received doctrines never acknowledge, nor cite, any research, reviews, or commentary that casts doubt on their constructs. For example, readers of Goleman et al.'s (2002) most recent publication, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, would believe that the concepts emotional intelligence, competencies, and resonate are accepted within the I/O literature because there are absolutely no citations to any literature that questions the validity of these constructs. The APA (2003) amicus brief cites four articles by Dovidio but never cites Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson and Gaertner (1996) who stated "...our review of the literature raises questions about the usefulness of individual differences in stereotyping as a predictor of interracial behavior" (p. 307). The brief does cite Fiske (1998), but not her conclusion concerning Dovidio et al.'s review: "...individual differences in racial stereotyping correlated little (.16) with discrimination ..." (p. 372). The above is repeated in Fiske (2004, p. 400).
- Unpublished sources are cited as great "success stories" that presumably demonstrate the efficacy of the received doctrine, despite the fact that the results of these studies actually indicate the reverse. McClelland and Dailey's (1973) technical report is often cited as a competency success story, but as Barrett (1994) indicated, a job knowledge test had the highest validity coefficient ($r = .32$), whereas "empathy" had a validity of $r = .11$ and a reliability of .20.

- Too many of our received doctrines have been based on observations and story telling. It is no different than stories of travelers from the 19th century. Hobhouse (1817), for example, described the Albanians as "... warriors, and equally capable of using the sword and long gun" (p. 132). This is no different from the ethnographic stories told by Fiske, Goleman, Herzberg, Janis, Kanter, Maslow, and Mead with the exception that their stories are based on wandering through corporations.
- In a recent paper (Rynes et al., 2003), it is stated that MBA students have no respect for the behavioral sciences or its jargon. Yet, these authors also support their arguments for the value of behavioral science courses based on tradebooks (e.g., Goleman, 1995, 1998). It is not surprising, then, that these students have a negative perception of the behavioral sciences when their only exposure to our discipline is through "unscientific" tradebooks that are peppered with "Madison Avenue" jargon (Barrett, Miguel, Tan, & Hurd, 2001).
- Do we want the field of I/O psychology to continue to move in this direction?

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