When Gender Stereotypes Prevent Women from Networking Efficiently

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Abstract. While women network as much as men, they seem to benefit less from their networking activities. One possible mechanism to explain this paradox is that women network less efficiently than men because they renounce some networking actions for fear of being misjudged. Since women are sometimes stereotyped as able and willing to use their power of attraction to manipulate men, certain networking strategies could appear risky to them. In particular, women may expect that actions aimed at deepening and strengthening relationships with their male supervisors will reflect negatively on their image. For this reason, they could be less likely to engage in those actions, at the cost of valuable relationships and potential career rewards. I test the two parts of this model (i.e., how women think they would be perceived, and how people would actually perceive them) in two pre-registered online experiments using vignettes. In the first study, I find partial support for the hypothesized model as well as unpredicted results. Women are not less likely than men to engage in network-deepening actions with supervisors of the opposite (rather than same) gender, even if they associate more image risk than men with those actions. However, men are less likely than women to engage in network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite (rather than same) gender because of the image risk they associate with those actions. In the second study, I find that individuals do not evaluate women engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather than same) gender more negatively than men doing the same, which suggests that women's fear for their image is unwarranted.

Keywords: networking behaviors, network-deepening actions, maintenance activities, gender stereotypes, image risk

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The materials, raw data and code can be found on the OSF: https://osf.io/hauxp/

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INTRODUCTION

Networking actions facilitate access to resources such as social support, strategic information, or career opportunities (Forret & Dougherty, 2001; Gould & Penley, 1984; Michael & Yukl, 1993; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Networking is not only associated with promotion, salary progression, and job satisfaction (Eddleston, Baldridge, & Veiga, 2004; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Hwang, Kessler, & Francesco, 2004; Michael & Yukl, 1993; Wolff & Moser, 2009), but it also allows people to reach better positions in their network (Bensaou, Galunic, & Jonczyk-Sédès, 2014; Shipilov, Labianca, Kalnysh, & Kalnysh, 2014), which in turn positively affects their level of influence (Bowler, Halbesleben, Stodnick, Seevers, & Little, 2009; Sparrowe & Liden, 2005), their performance (Fang et al., 2015; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998), and their chance to be promoted (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Brass, 1984; Burt, 1992; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001).

Networking refers to proactive and purposeful efforts made by individuals to create, maintain, or leverage relationships toward professional goals (Bensaou et al., 2014; Kuwabara, Hildebrand, & Zou, 2018; Wolff & Moser, 2009). Networking behaviors require people to analyze their existing social network in terms of available resources, and to develop relationships to access those resources (Van Buren & Hood, 2011). In other words, networking refers to conscious and deliberate actions people undertake to establish connections, as opposed to connections that would emerge from spontaneous, passive, forced or purely affective interactions (Bourdieu, 1985; Ingram & Zou, 2008; Kuwabara et al., 2018; Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988).

If networking may play a positive role in the professional success of any organizational member, it could be particularly important for women (Ibarra, 2017; Ibarra, Carter, & Silva,

2010; Khattab, van Knippenberg, Pieterse, & Hernandez, 2020; Wensil & Heath, 2018) for at least two reasons.

First, a robust pattern in the analysis of social networks is that individuals prefer interacting with similar others (Blau, 1977; Byrne, 1971; Carley, 1991; Davis, 1966; Granovetter, 1973; Homans, 1950; Ibarra, 1993; Laumann, 1966; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Because homophily facilitates communication and favors reciprocity and trust (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004), people have a natural tendency to primarily interact with people who share common attributes with them. In particular, past research has found evidence for gender homophily within organizations (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1992): Men prefer interacting with other men, and women with other women.

This preference for gender homophily may have important negative consequences on women's professional success. Since women are underrepresented all along the corporate ladder, partly because they are less likely than men to be hired or promoted at the first step up to manager (in 2019, men held 62% of manager-level positions against 38% for women, and this gap increases with the hierarchical level: Joshi, 2018; Lean In, McKinsey & Company, 2019), women tend to have access to fewer influential peers than their male counterparts (Brass, 1985; Carmichael, 2019; Ibarra, 1992, 1993, 2017; Ibarra et al., 2010; Khattab et al., 2020; Konrad, Seidel, Lo, Bhardwaj, & Qureshi, 2017; Mehra et al., 1998; Tinsley & Ely, 2018; Wensil & Heath, 2018). For example, women are more likely than men to keep their personal and professional networks separated, and therefore to have weaker social ties than men (Joshi, 2018), which in turn hinders the development of trust and camaraderie within their relationships, and ultimately prevents them from reaping the benefits of their networks (Ibarra, 1992, 2017). Women also lack access to strategic people (Brass, 1985) who are able and willing to provide them with vital information and support (Tinsley & Ely, 2018), to help them plan for

the future, sell their ideas, and obtain key resources (Ibarra, 2017), and to sponsor them at the upper level, reducing their chance of promotion (Carmichael, 2019; Ibarra et al., 2010).

A direct consequence of this situation is that if women want to overcome structural network constraints, build connections with key organizational members and gain access to strategic resources, they must forgo their preference for homophily and practice networking (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993; Brass et al., 2004) by connecting to key organizational members of the opposite gender.

Past research has shown that women network as much as men (Bensaou et al., 2014; Forret & Dougherty, 2004), but that their career benefit less from their networking efforts (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). In the present paper, I examine this paradox and offer one possible explanation for this gap: I propose that women network differently, and in fact less efficiently than men, because they renounce certain networking strategies for fear of being misjudged.

For people motivated to make a career and climb the corporate ladder, an effective networking strategy is to maintain relationships with organizational members having power and influence in order to gain visibility and access valuable resources (Bensaou et al., 2014; Brass, 1985; Eddleston et al., 2004; Ibarra et al., 2010; Knight, 2016). However, this strategy could trigger a specific stereotype about women in people's mind.

The literature on gender stereotypes has shown that women are perceived as having a unique ability to use their femininity to further their own interests and deceive men (Sheppard & Johnson, 2019), and can be stereotyped as "seductress" (Kanter, 1977) or "temptress" (DeWall, Altermatt, & Thompson, 2005). Women who are stereotyped as such face negative reactions from others who tend to feel discomfort (Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015), resentment, jealousy, hostility towards those women, and skepticism on the means through which they acquire resources (Baxter, 2012; Kanter, 1977). People then tend to perceive those women as immoral, dishonest, selfish, manipulative, devious and scheming (Ashmore,

Solomon, & Longo, 1996; Brewer & Archer, 2007; Dermer & Thiel, 1975; DeWall et al., 2005; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985; Singh, 2004).

Given the existence of this stereotype, certain networking behaviors could appear risky to women. In particular, women could fear that being friendly with supervisors of the opposite gender could increase the risk that others "form an undesirable impression of them because of their actions" (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998, p. 27), and associate them with the stereotype of the "temptress" or "seductress".

In this paper, I therefore propose that women view network-deepening actions as risky to their image, and that they avoid deepening relationships with their male supervisors for fear that their behavior will be misinterpreted and that they will be penalized for it. This reluctance to engage in network-deepening action would then explain why women benefit less from their networking efforts.

Since, on average, those who have control over resources within organizations are men (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1993; Joshi, 2018; Lean In, McKinsey & Company, 2019), women face a dilemma. They can either choose to undertake network-deepening actions with their supervisors, which will facilitate their access to resources, at the risk of being misjudged and stereotyped; or on the contrary forego such networking actions to protect themselves from negative stereotypes, at the cost of valuable relationships and potential career rewards. Ultimately, I argue that the range of networking behaviors that women feel comfortable with is narrower than that of men, which may explain why they benefit less from their networking actions.

A related and important question is whether women are right to fear for their image when engaged in network-deepening actions with their male supervisors. Depending on the answer to this question, the remedies to bring are not the same. If women are right, then it means that people indeed negatively evaluate women engaged in such actions, and that the range of

networking behaviors afforded to women is objectively narrower than that afforded to men. As a consequence, scholars and managers should try to act upon the demand-side factors (i.e., the gender stereotypical expectations of the organizational and social environment represented by colleagues, managers, employers) by educating people on this specific gender stereotype to increase awareness and debias them. If, on the contrary, women are wrong and needlessly fear for their image, scholars and managers should try to act upon the supply-side factors (i.e., the individuals' choices and behaviors) by informing women that their subjective experience is unwarranted, and that they can engage in network-deepening actions with their male supervisors without suffering from negative reputation.

The model I propose therefore investigates two sides of the same coin (Fernandez-Mateo & Kaplan, 2018): On the one hand, I examine the choices and behaviors of women who may decide to reduce their engagement in network-deepening directed towards male supervisors because they fear for their image. On the other hand, I examine the gender-stereotypical expectations the social environment may have about women's behaviors engaged in networking actions.

I test the two parts of this model in two pre-registered online experiments using vignettes. In Study 1, I try to capture the subjective experience of women engaged in network-deepening actions with their male supervisors. More precisely, I investigate the relative likelihood of women (vs. men) to engage in those networking actions with a supervisor (vs. a colleague) of the opposite (vs. same) gender, and test whether image risk plays a role in this difference. In Study 2, I investigate people's perception of women engaged in network-deepening actions with a male supervisor to check whether any concern women may have about their image is warranted.

THEORY

Key Networking Strategy for Women

Given the structural barriers women face within organizational networks, a key networking strategy to overcome those constraints could be to establish a strong connection to a powerful and well-connected organizational member through whom women can gain centrality and access to networks of power and influence (Brass et al., 2004). Maintaining relationships with powerful organizational members would allow women to establish personal connections with them, manage impression and gain visibility (Brass, 1985; Eddleston et al., 2004; Ibarra et al., 2010; Knight, 2016), which have been shown to be key components of career success (Kilduff & Day, 1994; Singh, Kumra, & Vinnicombe, 2002).

Maintenance activities, also called network-deepening actions, are a specific type of networking behaviors. They refer to efforts made to affirm, sustain, preserve, and strengthen ties (Kuwabara et al., 2018; Porter & Woo, 2015). The goal of those actions is to intensify selected relationships and strive for depth (Bensaou et al., 2014). They consist of deepening existing interpersonal ties by investing time and effort in the relationship, thereby overlaying friendships over purely professional relationships (Vissa, 2012). Calling and visiting people to keep in touch, attending lunches and parties, sending greeting cards or giving gifts, engaging in informal conversations about non-work-related topics such as sports, family, and recreational activity, or using forms of ingratiation such as praise and congratulations are examples of network-deepening actions (Forret & Dougherty, 2001; Michael & Yukl, 1993).

This networking strategy could be all the more important for women who, compared to men, have access to fewer individuals willing and able to help them in their career (Brass, 1985; Carmichael, 2019; Ibarra, 1992, 1993, 2017; Ibarra et al., 2010).

However, contrary to men, women are typically reluctant to play this “political game”: They are less likely to instrumentally approach their supervisors, to ingratiate themselves with

them, to self-promote and to establish personal connections with them, even when they acknowledge it could help them get ahead (Singh et al., 2002). For example, a recent poll on French employees revealed that only half of women (vs. 70% of men) use the familiar pronoun "*tu*", which is a way to get closer from someone, when addressing their boss (Coulmont, 2019). Another survey revealed that 50% of junior women hesitate to have one-on-one contacts with senior male colleagues for fear of being suspected of an "illicit sexual liaison" (i.e., a relationship between a subordinate and his or her boss: Hewlett, 2010). This reluctance to deepen relationships with male supervisors could stem from a specific stereotype about women.

Gender Stereotype of the "Seductress"

Multiple works of art and literature have depicted women as having a unique ability to manipulate men and get them to do their bidding, often with disastrous or even fatal consequences (Sheppard & Johnson, 2019). Tactics of influence such as charm, personal appearance, ingratiation, and compliments are thus perceived as mostly feminine (DuBrin, 1991). This representation of women corresponds to a gender stereotype that paints women as able and willing to use their power of attraction to influence men (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997). The archetypes of the "femme fatale", the "temptress" or the "seductress" embody this stereotype (DeWall et al., 2005; Kanter, 1977; Sheppard & Johnson, 2019). As a consequence, women who are compared to those archetypes are negatively perceived: They are typically viewed as promiscuous, flirtatious, seductive, manipulative, and scheming, and are judged as cold, immoral, and incompetent (DeWall et al., 2005).

This stereotype has been shown to have several negative consequences for women in organizations. First, this stereotype paints women as having an unfair advantage over men when it comes to interpersonal relationships: Women's femininity, attractiveness, and associated sexuality are perceived as currencies they can exchange with men against valuable resources (Watkins, Smith, & Aquino, 2013). Consequently, women's actions to obtain those resources

are scrutinized and appear suspicious. People are then tempted to attribute women's achievement to the use of unfair means, as opposed to work ethic and competence (Baxter, 2012; Gee, Migueis, & Parsa, 2017; Kanter, 1977). Their success is thus tainted by suspicions of favoritism and manipulation, which in turn lead people to perceive those women as lacking interpersonal integrity, and being selfish, manipulative, and devious (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985). Observers also tend to infer that those women are power-hungry (Infanger, Rudman, & Sczesny, 2016), which in turn elicits discomfort and feelings of threat (Netchaeva et al., 2015).

Networking as a Risk for Women's Image

Given the existence of this stereotype, I argue that women will view network-deepening actions with male supervisors as a risk to their image: They expect that others will form an unfavorable impression of them because of their networking actions (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino, 2002), that they will be associated with the stereotype of the "temptress" or "seductress", and will therefore be perceived as promiscuous, flirtatious, seductive, manipulative, and scheming, as well as cold, immoral, and incompetent (DeWall et al., 2005)

A positive public image is an important asset that allows people to achieve desirable social outcomes (e.g., friendship, approval, or influence: Leary & Kowalski, 1990) and to access resources controlled by others (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). People therefore feel the need to protect it (Ashford et al., 1998). As such, when individuals expect that a behavior could damage others' impression of them, they are unlikely to initiate this behavior (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992). Besides, since women tend to be scrutinized in the workplace (Fernando, Cohen, & Duberley, 2019; Meister, Sinclair, & Jehn, 2017), a negative public image can be an important factor of failure in their career (Morrison, White, White, & Van Velsor, 1987). For this reason, women tend to be particularly mindful of the risks associated with their image and are more

concerned about protecting it than enhancing it (Ibarra & Harrington, 1997; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2016).

Image risk typically results from labeling, inappropriate attribution, and stereotyping (Dutton et al., 2002). For example, a woman engaged in network-deepening actions with a male supervisor could be worried that her colleagues label her as interested in personal gain or motivated by power (Mead, 1934). Such labeling tendencies would be consistent with the fundamental attribution error, whereby people attribute others' actions to stable dispositions (e.g., "she is Machiavellian" or "she is a vamp") rather than to the situation (e.g., "this is good for her career"), particularly if very few women engage in those actions (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). She might also be worried that her colleagues stereotype her as warm rather than competent (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), or worse, neither warm nor competent but manipulative and immoral because willing to use her femininity to manipulate influential organizational members (DeWall et al., 2005; Sheppard & Johnson, 2019).

Finally, since men tend to overestimate women's sexual interest (Abbey, 1982; Abbey & Melby, 1986; Perilloux, Easton, & Buss, 2012; Shotland & Craig, 1988), women could be worried that their male supervisors interpret their network-deepening actions as sexually interested behaviors. Ultimately, this image risk could discourage women from undertaking network-deepening actions with their male supervisors.

Theoretical Models

Self-Perception of Women Engaged in Network-Deepening Actions

In a first step, I examine why women may be reluctant to engage in network-deepening actions with their male supervisors despite the benefits of such networking strategy. I posit that, because of the stereotype of women as potential "seductress" or "temptress", women are less likely than men to undertake network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender. However, this effect should dissipate when the target of such networking actions is a

colleague rather than a supervisor. I indeed expect that the stereotype of women using their femininity to manipulate men will be particularly salient when the target is a male supervisor, that is someone with formal authority and clear resources at his disposal, but absent when the target is a male colleague. Finally, I expect that women renounce undertaking network-deepening actions with their male supervisors because they see this behavior as posing a risk to their image. Those hypotheses are detailed below, and the model is described in Figure 1.

In a first hypothesis, I posit that the preference for gender homophily holds and that both men and women indeed prefer networking with someone of the same rather than opposite gender.

Hypothesis 1: *People will be more likely to undertake network-deepening actions with someone of the same rather than opposite gender.*

In a second hypothesis, I posit that this preference for gender homophily is stronger for women than for men when network-deepening actions are directed toward a supervisor. This difference between men and women would reflect women's aversion to undertake network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender, above and beyond their preference for gender homophily.

Hypothesis 2: *Women (compared to men) will be less likely to undertake network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather than same) gender.*

In a third hypothesis, I posit that this difference between men and women will be attenuated when the target of networking attempts is a colleague rather than a supervisor.

Hypothesis 3: *This difference between men and women will be attenuated when networking attempts are directed toward a colleague: Women will be as likely as men to undertake network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite (rather than same) gender.*

In a fourth hypothesis, I posit that the previous relationship will be mediated by an increase in image risk: I expect that women disengage from network-deepening actions with a male supervisor because of the perceived risk to be seen as a "seductress" they associate with those actions.

Hypothesis 4: *An increase in image risk will explain women's reduced willingness to engage in network-deepening actions with a male supervisor.*

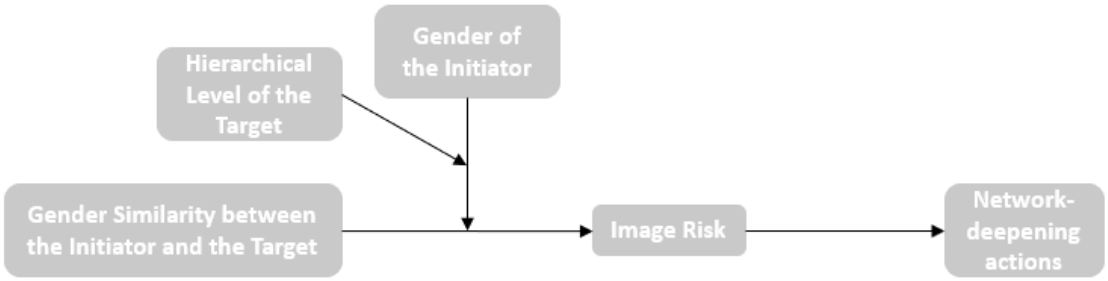

Figure 1. Theoretical Model: Self-Perception of Women Engaged in Network-Deepening Actions

Audience-Perception of Women Engaged in Network-Deepening Actions

In a second step, I examine whether women are right to fear for their image when they are engaged in network-deepening actions with their male supervisors. I investigate whether people indeed perceive those women according to the stereotype of the "seductress" and negatively judge them. In their typology of gender stereotypes, DeWall and colleagues (2005) have shown that women perceived as "temptress" are described as "seductive," "flirtatious," and "promiscuous," but also as "manipulative" and "scheming," and elicit negative reaction in terms of perceived competence, warmth, and morality.

I therefore expect that individuals will evaluate women engaged in network-deepening actions with supervisors of the opposite gender more negatively than men engaged in the same type of actions. More precisely, I expect this evaluation to capture the extent to which people perceive those women as competent, warm, moral and view them as "seductress". I then expect that this discrepancy in the perception of men and women engaged in network-deepening

actions will disappear when the target is a colleague. I test the two following hypotheses and represent the hypothesized model in Figure 2.

Hypothesis 5: *People will evaluate women engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather than same) gender more negatively than men engaged in the same type of activity.*

Hypothesis 6: *This difference of evaluation between men and women will be attenuated when networking attempts are directed toward a colleague: People will evaluate women engaged in network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite (rather than same) gender similarly as men engaged in the same type of activity.*

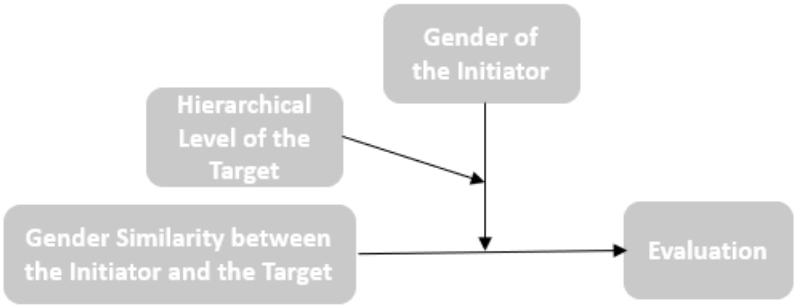

Figure 2. Theoretical Model: Audience-Perception of Women Engaged in Network-Deepening Actions
Note. Observers evaluate the extent to which they perceive the initiator of the network-deepening actions as competent, warm, moral, and seductive.

STUDY 1

Method

Design and Procedure

To investigate Hypotheses 1 to 4, I conducted a pre-registered[1] experiment based on vignettes: Participants put themselves in the situation of someone who had just joined the department of a large company, and played the role of the initiator of interactions with a

[1] http://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=6fw3zx

supervisor (or a colleague) of a different (or same) gender. Participants were first randomly assigned to one of four-cells of a 2 (gender of the target: male vs. female) by 2 (hierarchical level of the target: colleague vs. supervisor) between-subject design. They then read the vignette corresponding to their conditions, and finally answered a questionnaire containing the dependent measures (i.e., the likelihood they would engage in network-deepening actions, and the image risk they associate with those actions). The questionnaire also included two attention checks, two manipulation checks, and five demographic questions about the gender of the participant, their age, the country where they had spent the most of their time, their level of education, and the number of years of work experience. Only the gender of participants (hereafter initiator's gender) was relevant to the analysis.

Participants

To ensure the ecological validity of the sample, I applied selection criteria previously used in studies investigating networking behaviors (Forret & Dougherty, 2001), such that all participants were full-time employees (not part-time, not self-employed) in any type of organizations to the exclusion of family business. I collected responses from 1000 participants from an online platform called Prolific in exchange of payment, and got responses for 999 of them (53% from the UK, 28% from North America, and 17% from continental Europe; 48% female; mean age = 36, *SD* = 9.41; mean work experience = 16 years, *SD* = 9.84).

Experimental Manipulations

I manipulated two factors between-subjects: the gender of the target (male vs. female) and the hierarchical level of the target (same level vs. upper level). I manipulated the gender of the target by using the name "Paul" in the male condition and the name "Alice" in the female condition. I then manipulated the hierarchical level of this target by describing Paul or Alice either as a "colleague" or as the "head of the department".

Measures

Attention checks. I included an attention check in each of the scales measuring the dependent measures to be sure that participants carefully read each item of those scales. Participants who failed at least one of the two attention checks were systematically removed from the sample.

Manipulation checks. To assess whether participants correctly detected the conditions to which they were assigned, I asked participants whether the target was (1) a male or a female, (2) a colleague or a supervisor. Participants who failed at least one of the two manipulation checks were systematically removed from the sample.

In total, 85 participants were excluded from the sample. No analysis was conducted before removing the participants. All analyses and statistics reported are based on the final sample of 914 participants. This final sample had between 89 and 132 participants per condition. Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 1.

Willingness to engage in network-deepening actions[2]**.** This variable was measured with seven items combined and adapted from scales developed to capture maintenance activities (Forret & Dougherty, 2001; Shipilov et al., 2014; Vissa, 2012). Examples of items are: "inviting [the target] for a drink after work", "trying to be friends with [the target]", or "discussing personal topics with [the target]". Participants were asked the extent to which they would consider undertaking each of the seven network-deepening actions on a 7-point scale from (1) I would hardly see myself undertaking this action, to (7) I would easily see myself undertaking this action (Min = 1, M = 3.64, Max = 7, SD = 1.32, α = 0.89).

[2] The items were selected based on how well they fitted the social situation described.

***Image risk*[3].** This variable was measured with nine items asking participants the extent to which they associated an image risk with network-deepening actions in the situation described in the vignette. The measure was adapted from an ad-hoc measure (Ashford, 1986), initially created to measure the risk associated with feedback seeking and adapted in following papers as a measure of image risk for women (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 2002), and combined with some adjectives people use to describe women seen as "temptress" (e.g., those women are typically described as incompetent, immoral, manipulative, and promiscuous: DeWall et al., 2005). Examples of items are: "If I become close to [the target], I might be viewed as less trustworthy", "If I am too friendly with [the target], I might be perceived as seductive", "If I am spending time outside of work with [the target], I might be viewed as manipulative". All items were measured on a 7-point scale from (1) Strongly disagree to (7) Strongly agree (Min = 1, M = 3.17, Max = 7, SD = 1.45, $\alpha = 0.94$).

[3] Since no validated scale to measure image risk exists, previous papers have created and adapted ad-hoc measures (e.g., Ashford, 1986; Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 2002).

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics

Mean (SD) per condition	The target is a supervisor		The target is a colleague	
	The initiator is a woman	The initiator is a man	The initiator is a woman	The initiator is a man
Network-deepening actions				
Target and initiator have different gender	2.84 (1.24)	3.15 (1.18)	4.03 (1.18)	3.81 (1.1)
Target and initiator have same gender	3.14 (1.1)	3.55 (1.34)	4.3 (1.41)	4.26 (1.15)
Image risk				
Target and initiator have different gender	4.15 (1.38)	3.87 (1.39)	2.94 (1.33)	3.65 (1.13)
Target and initiator have same gender	3.03 (1.35)	3.18 (1.35)	2.08 (1.14)	2.33 (1.2)
Sample size				
Target and initiator have different gender	111	132	122	111
Target and initiator have same gender	89	126	115	108

Note. Correlation coefficient between Network-deepening actions and Image risk: -0.34, $p < .001$

Results

To test my hypotheses, I first created a gender similarity variable coding whether the gender of the target was similar or different to that of the initiator. This variable captures the tolerance for networking with someone of a different (vs. same) gender. I can then examine whether this tolerance is different between men and women (i.e., the interaction between gender similarity and the initiator's gender), or different when interacting with a supervisor (vs. a colleague). The full model therefore includes one independent variable (gender similarity between the initiator and the target), two moderators (the gender of the initiator and the hierarchical level of the target), one mediator (image risk) and one dependent variable (the likelihood to engage in network-deepening actions).

I then regressed the willingness to engage in network-deepening actions on the gender similarity of the target to that of the initiator (GS), the initiator's gender (IG), the target's hierarchical level (HL), and on all two and three-way interactions between those variables.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that both men and women would display a preference for gender homophily. The analysis indicates a significant main effect of gender similarity (β_{GS} = -0.35, t(906) = -4.35, p < .001) and therefore confirms people's preference for gender homophily: Both men and women were less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with someone of the opposite (vs. same) gender.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that women would be less likely than men to undertake network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather than same) gender. In other words, above and beyond gender homophily, I expect women to be particularly reluctant to engage in network-deepening actions with a male supervisor. Contrary to expectations, women were not significantly less likely than men to engage in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender (β_{GSxIG} = -0.10, t(906) = -0.46, p = .65). More precisely, women were marginally less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a male supervisor (M = 2.84, SD = 1.24) rather than a female supervisor (M = 3.14, SD = 1.10; β_{GS} = -0.30, t(906) = -1.71, p = .087); while men were significantly less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a female supervisor (M = 3.15, SD = 1.18) rather than a male supervisor (M = 3.55, SD = 1.34; β_{GS} = -0.40, t(906) = -2.65, p = .008). Hypothesis 2 is therefore not supported. Those results are described in Figure 3.

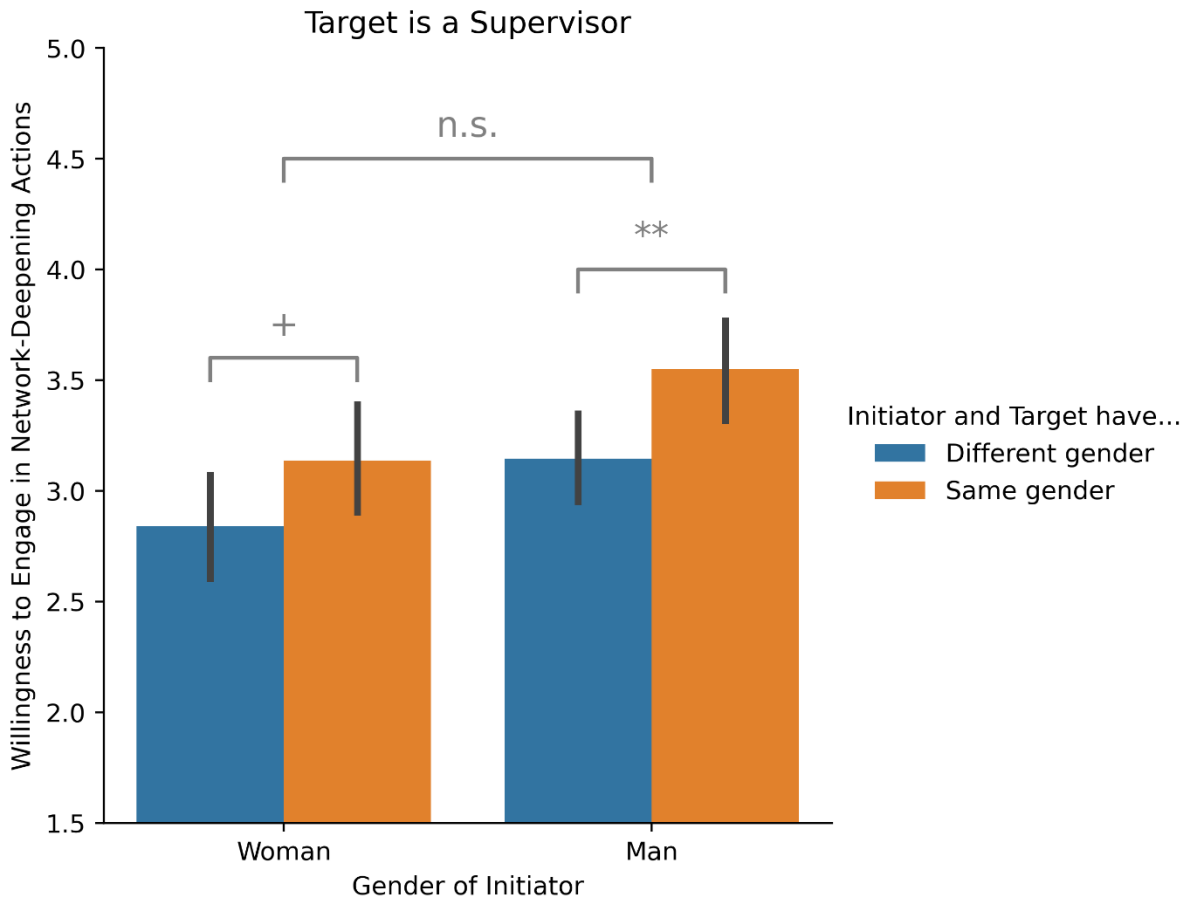

Figure 3. Interaction Plot of Gender Similarity and Initiator's Gender on Willingness to Engage in Network-Deepening Actions when the Target is a Supervisor

Note. + p < .1, ** p < .01

Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Despite the null finding for Hypothesis 2, I still analyze Hypothesis 3 to better understand men's behavior. Hypothesis 3 predicted an attenuation of the previous effect such that women would be as likely as men to undertake network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite (rather than same) gender. The three-way interaction was non-significant ($\beta_{GSxIGxHL}$ = -0.07, t(906) = -0.23, p = .82). Hypothesis 3 is therefore not supported. As previously, both men (β_{GS} = -0.45, t(906) = -2.71, p = .007) and women (β_{GS} = -0.27, t(906) = -1.68, p = .093) were less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite gender (β_{GSxIG} = -0.18, t(906) = -0.79, p = .43). Results are reported in Table 2 and depicted in Figure 4.

TABLE 2
Linear Regressions

	Dependent variable:	
	Network-deepening actions	Image risk
	(1)	(2)
Gender similarity (1 = different)	-0.45**	1.32***
	(0.17)	(0.17)
Initiator gender (1 = woman)	0.04	-0.25
	(0.16)	(0.17)
Hierarchical level (1 = upper level)	-0.71***	0.85***
	(0.16)	(0.17)
Gender similarity x Initiator gender	0.18	-0.46+
	(0.23)	(0.24)
Gender similarity x Hierarchical level	0.04	-0.63**
	(0.22)	(0.24)
Initiator gender x Hierarchical level	-0.45+	0.10
	(0.24)	(0.25)
Gender sim. x Init. gender x Hier. level	-0.08	0.89**
	(0.33)	(0.34)
Constant	4.26***	2.33***
	(0.12)	(0.12)
Observations	914	914
R^2	0.15	0.22
Adjusted R^2	0.14	0.21
Residual Std. Error (df = 906)	1.22	1.29
F Statistic (df = 7; 906)	23.04***	35.87***
Note:	+p < 0.1 ; *p < 0.05 ; **p < 0.01 ; ***p<0.001	

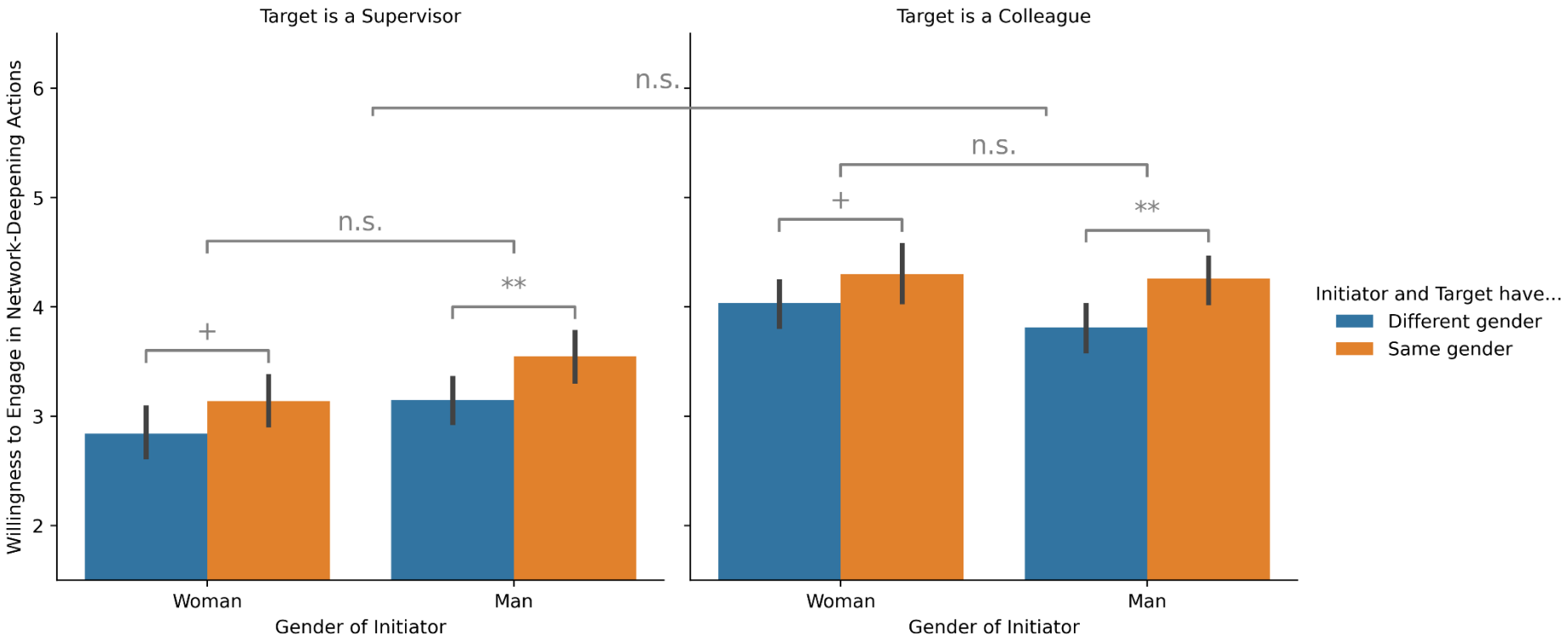

Figure 4. Interaction Plot of Gender Similarity, Initiator's Gender and Target's Hierarchical Level on Willingness to Engage in Network-Deepening Actions

Note. + p < .1, ** p < .01

Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that image risk would play a mediating role in women's aversion to deepen relationships with male supervisors. Since there is no significant three-way interaction, the significance of the moderated mediation model should be taken with caution though. Besides, the previous findings indicate that men, and not women, could be particularly reluctant to engage in network-deepening actions with organizational members of the opposite gender. The moderated mediation analysis could then help confirm those findings, but also verify whether women associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with male supervisors, even if this perceived risk does not translate into different behaviors.

To test this moderated mediation, I first explored the impact of the independent variables on image risk. I regressed image risk on the gender similarity of the target to that of the initiator, the initiator's gender, the target's hierarchical level and on all two and three-way interactions between those variables. The three-way interaction was significant ($\beta_{GSxIGxHL}$ = 0.89, t(906) = 2.58, p = .01). To better understand this effect, I decomposed this interaction into two conditional two-way interactions (depending on the hierarchical level of the target), and then each two-way interaction into two conditional main effects (depending on the gender of the initiator).

When the target was a supervisor, the hypothesized predictions were confirmed: Women were marginally more likely than men to associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather than same) gender. More precisely, women were more likely to associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with a male supervisor (M = 4.15, SD = 1.38) rather than with a female supervisor (M = 3.03, SD = 1.35; β_{GS} = 1.12, t(906) = 6.10, p < .001). This effect was also true for men (female supervisor: M = 3.87, SD = 1.39; male supervisor: M = 3.18, SD = 1.35; β_{GS} = 0.69, t(906) = 4.31, p < .001), but was marginally more pronounced for women (β_{GSxPG} = -0.43, t(906) = -1.75, p = .08).

When the target was a colleague, I found unexpected results: Men were marginally more likely than women to associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite (rather than same) gender. More precisely, men were significantly more likely to associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with a female colleague (M = 3.65, SD = 1.13) rather than with a male colleague (M = 2.33, SD = 1.2; β_{GS} = 1.32, $t(906) = 7.57$, $p < .001$). This effect was also true for women (male colleague: M = 2.94, SD = 1.33; female colleague: M = 2.08, SD = 1.14; β_{GS} = 0.86, $t(906) = 5.12$, $p < .001$), but was marginally more pronounced for men (β_{GSxPG} = 0.46, $t(906) = 1.90$, $p = .06$).

In other words, both men and women associated an image risk with their network-deepening actions when the target was of the opposite gender: They were worried that they would be perceived as seductive in their networking attempts, but this effect was stronger for women when the target was a supervisor, while it was stronger for men when the target was a colleague. Results are reported in Table 2 and depicted in Figure 5.

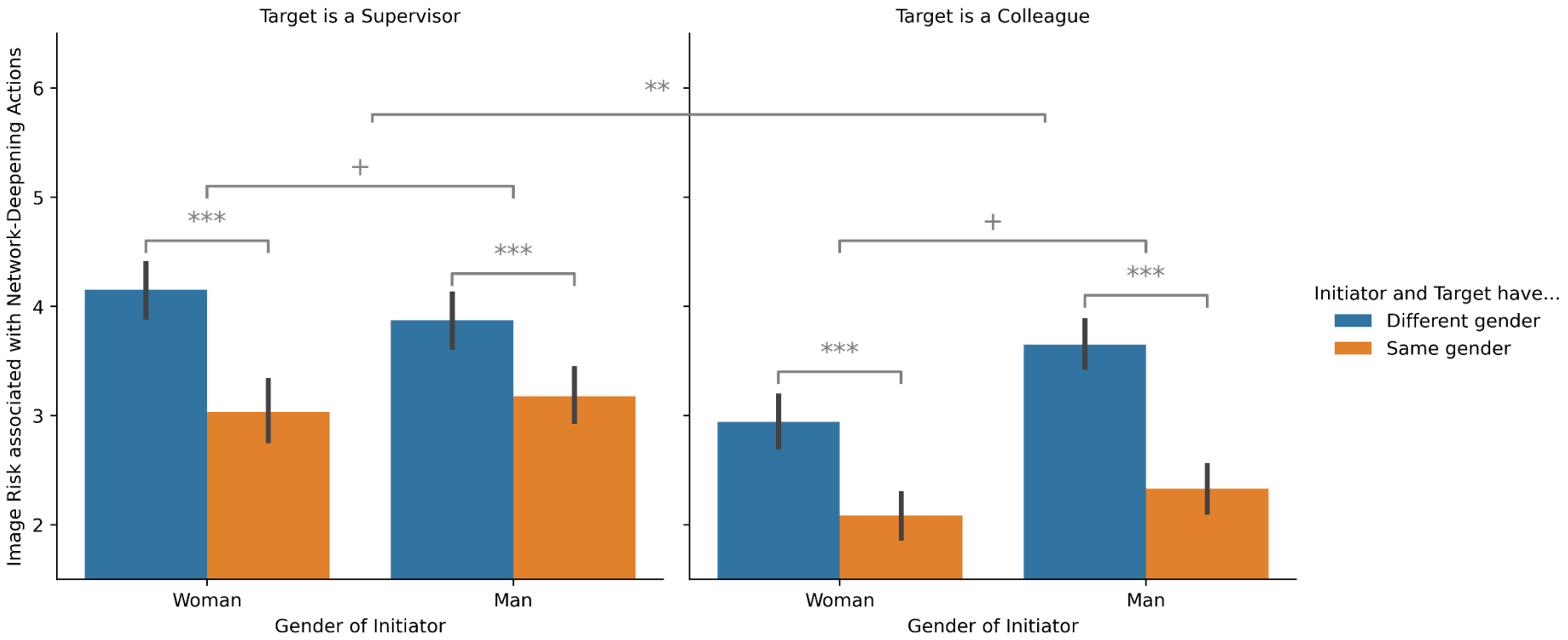

Figure 5. Interaction Plot of Gender Similarity, Initiator's Gender and Target's Hierarchical Level on Image Risk

*Note. + p < .1, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

To test the moderated mediation model, I ran model 12 in PyProcessMacro[4] (André, 2017) and used bootstrap mediation with 5000 random samples and percentile confidence intervals (Caron, 2019; Hayes, 2017; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011; Williams & MacKinnon, 2008; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). I defined gender similarity between the initiator and the target as the independent variable, initiator's gender as the first moderator, target's hierarchical level as the second moderator, image risk as the mediator, and willingness to engage in network-deepening actions as the dependent variable.

As expected, I found a negative, and significant, conditional indirect effect of gender similarity on the willingness to engage in network-deepening actions when women direct their efforts towards supervisors (β = -0.25, Confidence Interval (CI) at 95% = [-0.38, -0.15]): Women were less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a male rather than female supervisor because of an increased in the image risk they associate with those actions.

However, this effect was not specific to women. I indeed observed the same effect when the initiator was a man ($\Delta\beta$ = -0.09, CI at 95% = [-0.22, 0.01]): Men were also less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a female rather than male supervisor (β = -0.15, CI at 95% = [-0.26, -0.07]) because of an increase in their image risk. Women were therefore not significantly less likely than men to engage in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender because of an increase in their image risk.

This effect was also not specific to supervisors. I indeed observed the same effect when the target was a colleague ($\Delta\beta$ = -0.06, CI at 95% = [-0.18, 0.05]): Women were significantly less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a male rather than female colleague (β = -0.19, CI at 95% = [-0.30, -0.11]) because of an increase in their image risk. Women were

[4] The Python version (https://pypi.org/project/PyProcessMacro/) of PROCESS from Andrew F. Hayes (https://www.processmacro.org/index.html).

therefore not significantly less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a supervisor than with a colleague of the opposite gender because of an increase in their image risk. Hypothesis 4 is therefore not supported.

However, this analysis revealed unexpected, but interesting results about the way men experience network-deepening actions directed towards female organizational members. As previously mentioned, gender dissimilarity between the initiator and the target had a significant effect on the willingness to engage in network-deepening actions when men direct their efforts towards supervisors (β = -0.15, CI at 95% = [-0.26, -0.07]). Both men and women were thus less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with supervisors of the opposite (rather than same) gender because of an increase in the image risk they associate with those actions ($\Delta\beta$ = -0.09, CI at 95% = [-0.22, 0.01]). However, this effect was strengthened for men when the target was a colleague (β = -0.29, CI at 95% = [-0.43, -0.19]). Due to an increased image risk, men were indeed significantly less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a colleague than with a supervisor of the opposite gender ($\Delta\beta$ = 0.14, CI at 95% = [0.04, 0.26]); and men were significantly less likely than women to engage in network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite gender ($\Delta\beta$ = 0.10, CI at 95% = [0.01, 0.22]). In other words, if I did not find a specific mediating effect of image risk on women's willingness to engage in network-deepening actions with male supervisors, I did find this effect for men engaged in network-deepening actions with female colleagues. Results of the moderated mediation are reported in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Summary of Conditional Indirect and Direct Effects

Conditionally Mediated Paths		**Indirect Effect**	**Direct Effect**
[1] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Woman* and the Target is a *Supervisor*	Effect	-0.25	-0.05
	95% CI	[-0.38, -0.15]	[-0.39, 0.29]
[2] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Man* and the Target is a *Supervisor*	Effect	-0.15	-0.25
	95% CI	[-0.26, -0.07]	[-0.54, 0.04]
[3] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Woman* and the Target is a *Colleague*	Effect	-0.19	-0.07
	95% CI	[-0.30, -0.11]	[-0.38, 0.23]
[4] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Man* and the Target is a *Colleague*	Effect	-0.29	-0.15
	95% CI	[-0.43, -0.19]	[-0.48, 0.17]
Index of Conditional Moderated Mediation			
Difference between paths [1] and [2] when the Target is a *Supervisor*	Delta	-0.09	
	95% CI	[-0.22, 0.01]	
Difference between paths [1] and [3] when the Initiator is a *Woman*	Delta	-0.06	
	95% CI	[-0.18, 0.05]	
Difference between paths [3] and [4] when the Target is a *Colleague*	Delta	0.10	
	95% CI	[0.01, 0.22]	
Difference between paths [2] and [4] when the Initiator is a *Man*	Delta	0.14	
	95% CI	[0.04, 0.26]	

Exploratory Analyses

As specified in the pre-registration, I run the previous moderated mediation model on three specific items of image risk that explicitly refer to sexual intentions (i.e., "promiscuous", "flirtatious", "seductive"). This exploratory analysis revealed results supporting hypothesis 4, but also confirming previous observations about men. However, once again, since there is no significant three-way interaction on the total effect (i.e., willingness to engage in network-deepening actions), the significance of the moderated mediation model should be taken with caution.

I first regressed this reduced image risk on the gender similarity of the target to that of the initiator, the initiator's gender, the target's hierarchical level and on all two and three-way interactions between those variables. The three-way interaction was significant ($\beta_{GSxIGxHL}$ = 1.53, t(906) = 3.99, p < .001). I decomposed this interaction into two conditional two-way interactions (depending on the hierarchical level of the target), and then each two-way interaction into two conditional main effects (depending on the gender of the initiator).

When the target was a supervisor, women were more likely than men to associate a sexual image risk with their network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender. More precisely, women were more likely to associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with a male (M = 4.30, SD = 1.60) rather than with a female (M = 2.23, SD = 1.41) supervisor (β_{GS} = 2.07, t(906) = 10.08, p < .001). This effect was also true for men (female supervisor: M = 3.86, SD = 1.54; male supervisor: M = 2.58, SD = 1.52; β_{GS} = 1.28, t(906) = 7.12, p < .001), but was significantly more pronounced for women (β_{GSxIG} = -0.79, t(906) = -2.90, p = .004).

When the target was a colleague, the reverse situation emerged: Men were more likely than women to associate a sexual image risk with their network-deepening actions with a

colleague of the opposite gender. More precisely, men were more likely to associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with a female (M = 4.31, SD = 1.26) rather than with a male (M = 2.13, SD = 1.23) colleague (β_{GS} = 2.18, t(906) = 11.17, p < .001). This effect was also true for women (male colleague: M = 3.38, SD = 1.65; female colleague: M = 1.94, SD = 1.18; β_{GS} = 1.43, t(906) = 7.64, p < .001), but was significantly more pronounced for men (β_{GSxPG} = 0.74, t(906) = 2.75, p = .006). Those results are represented in Figure 6.

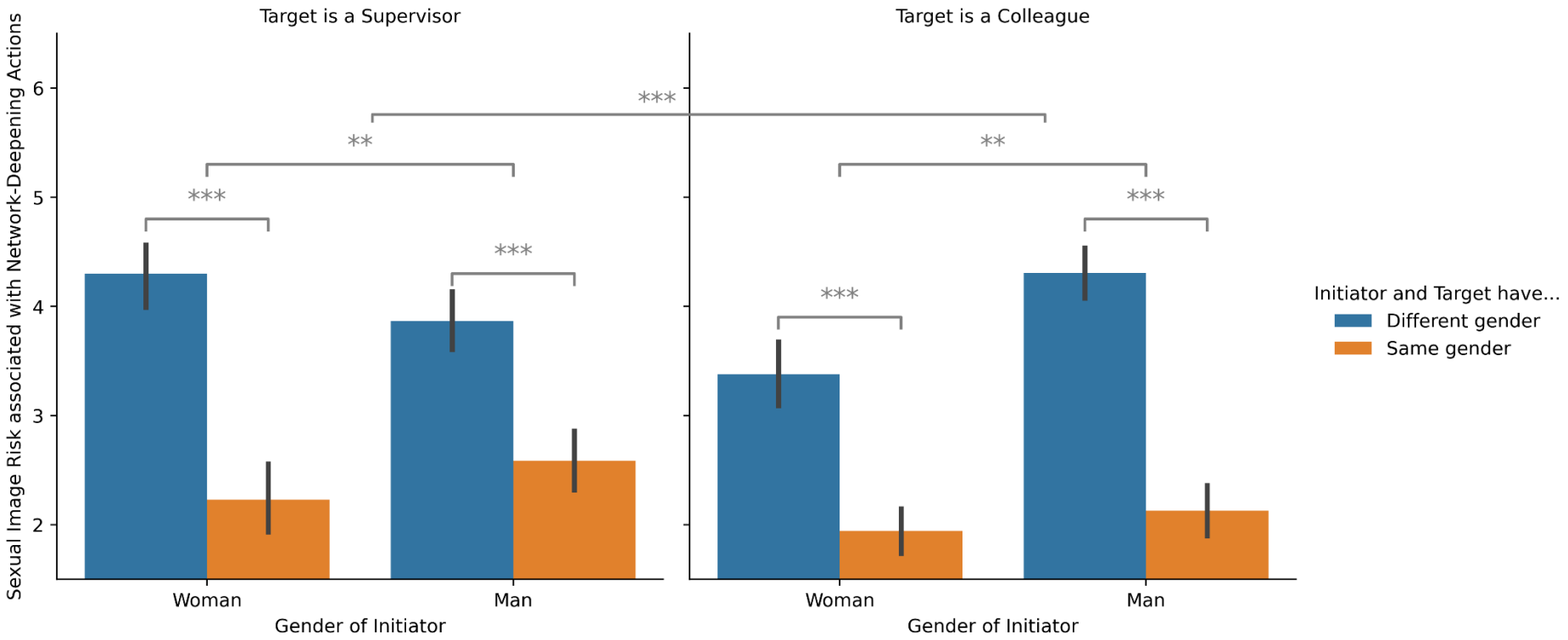

Figure 6. Interaction Plot of Gender Similarity, Initiator's Gender and Target's Hierarchical Level on Sexual Image Risk

Note. ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

I finally ran model 12 in PyProcessMacro (André, 2017) and used bootstrap mediation with 5000 random samples and percentile confidence intervals. I defined gender similarity between the initiator and the target as the independent variable, initiator's gender as the first moderator, target's hierarchical level as the second moderator, reduced image risk as the mediator, and willingness to engage in network-deepening actions as the dependent variable.

When the target was a supervisor, I found a negative indirect path both for men (β = -0.17, CI at 95% = [-0.28, -0.09]) and women (β = -0.28, CI at 95% = [-0.42, -0.16]) with a larger effect for women ($\Delta\beta$ = -0.11, CI at 95% = [-0.21, -0.04]). This suggests that both men and women are less likely to engage in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather than same) gender because of the image risk it poses, but that the effect is more severe for women.

I then found that this relationship was attenuated for women when the target was a colleague (β = -0.19, CI at 95% = [-0.30, -0.11]) rather than a supervisor ($\Delta\beta$ = -0.09, CI at 95% = [-0.19, -0.02]). On the contrary, this relationship was strengthened for men when the target was a colleague (β = -0.30, CI 95% = [-0.45, -0.17]) rather than a supervisor ($\Delta\beta$ = 0.12, CI at 95% = [0.05, 0.23]). Ultimately, the image risk associated with network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite gender was more severe for men than for women ($\Delta\beta$ = 0.10, CI at 95% = [0.04, 0.21]). The results of this moderated mediation analysis are reported in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Summary of Conditional Indirect and Direct Effects

Conditionally Mediated Paths		**Indirect Effect**	**Direct Effect**
[1] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Sexual Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Woman* and the Target is a *Supervisor*	Effect	-0.28	-0.01
	95% CI	[-0.42, -0.16]	[-0.37, 0.34]
[2] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Sexual Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Man* and the Target is a *Supervisor*	Effect	-0.17	-0.23
	95% CI	[-0.28, -0.09]	[-0.53, 0.07]
[3] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Sexual Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Woman* and the Target is a *Colleague*	Effect	-0.19	-0.07
	95% CI	[-0.30, -0.11]	[-0.39, 0.25]
[4] Gender Similarity to Network-Deepening Actions via Sexual Image Risk when the Initiator is a *Man* and the Target is a *Colleague*	Effect	-0.30	-0.15
	95% CI	[-0.45, -0.17]	[-0.49, 0.19]
Index of Conditional Moderated Mediation			
Difference between paths [1] and [2] when the Target is a *Supervisor*	Delta	-0.11	
	95% CI	[-0.21, -0.04]	
Difference between paths [1] and [3] when the Initiator is a *Woman*	Delta	-0.09	
	95% CI	[-0.19, -0.02]	
Difference between paths [3] and [4] when the Target is a *Colleague*	Delta	0.10	
	95% CI	[0.04, 0.21]	
Difference between paths [2] and [4] when the Initiator is a *Man*	Delta	0.12	
	95% CI	[0.05, 0.23]	

Finally, I noted two other interesting results. First, in addition to gender homophily, participants also had a preference to network with people from the same hierarchical level (β_{HL} = 0.93, t(906) = 11.48, p < .001). As such, both men and women preferred to network with a colleague rather than with a supervisor, and by extension with a colleague of the same gender rather than with a supervisor of the opposite gender (t(464) = -10.99, p < .001). Second, I found a significant interaction between the gender of the initiator and the hierarchical level of the target on the willingness to deepen relationships (β_{IGxHL} = -0.49, t(906) = -3.01, p = .003): Women (M = 4.17, SD = 1.30) were as likely as men (M = 4.03, SD = 1.14) to engage in network-deepening actions with a colleague (β_{IG} = 0.13, t(906) = 1.14, p = .25), but they (M = 2.97, SD = 1.18) were less likely than men (M = 3.34, SD = 1.27) to engage in network-deepening actions with a supervisor (β_{IG} = -0.36, t(906) = -3.11, p = .002). Those exploratory results indicate that both men and women were reluctant to network up, and that this reluctance could be higher for women.

Discussion of the Results

This first study does not fully support the hypothesized theoretical model. The main analysis indicates that women are not less likely than men to engage in network-deepening actions with supervisors of the opposite rather than same gender. However, as expected, women associate more image risk than men with those actions, and this image risk is attenuated when the supervisor is of the same gender, or when the target is a colleague. I then confirmed that the more image risk people associate with their network-deepening actions, the less willing to engage in those actions they are.

This study also revealed unexpected results about men's experience of network-deepening actions with women. Both the main and the exploratory analyses indicate that men associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with women, particularly when they are directed toward a colleague.

An ad hoc explanation might be that men have started to internalize that some of their behaviors towards women might be misinterpreted and trigger negative reactions from the audience. In October 2017, the #MeToo movement and Harvey Weinstein case gave women the opportunity to publicly denounce men's behaviors towards women in the workplace, and to report misconducts ranging from inappropriate remarks to sexual assaults. A survey conducted in February 2019 in the US on the consequences of the #MeToo movement on work relationships found that 60% of male managers feel uncomfortable mentoring a woman, working alone with her, or socializing together (an increase of 32% in a year). Senior-level men also reported to be far more hesitant to spend time with junior women (compared to junior men) across a range of work activities such as having one-to-one meetings, traveling together for work, or having work dinners. Finally, when interrogated on the reasons of their reluctance, 36% of men reported to avoid mentoring or socializing with women because they felt nervous about how others would perceive such behaviors (Lean In, 2018). Similarly, in a very recent paper, Atwater and colleagues (2019) interrogated men and women on the consequences of the #MeToo movement. In the first survey, collected soon after the peak of the #MeToo movement, 24% of men and 44% of women predicted that men would tend to exclude women more from social interactions, such as afterwork drinks; nearly a third of men declared they would feel reluctant to have a one-on-one meeting with a woman; and 58% of men declared they would fear more of being unfairly accused. In a follow-up survey conducted more than a year after the beginning of the #MeToo movement (early 2019), this backlash effect was still present: 19% of men declared to be reluctant to hire attractive women, 21% declared to be reluctant to hire women for jobs involving close relationships with men, such as jobs involving travel; and 27% of them declared to avoid one-on-one meetings with female colleagues. Above and beyond the consequences of the #MeToo movement, older surveys already revealed that 64% of men occupying high positions in the corporate ladder refrained from having one-one-one contacts

with junior women for fear of being suspected of having a liaison (Hewlett, 2010). The results found among men in Study 1 might then be explained by the fear that others might view their network-deepening actions towards women as inappropriate.

The exploratory analysis also helped refine the kind of image risk both men and women associate with their network-deepening actions with organizational members of the opposite gender. This image risk seems sexual in nature for both genders, but probably covers two different situations for each gender. Indeed, when image risk specifically refers to those sexual intentions, the analysis shows different reactions for men and women. If both men and women associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with people of the opposite gender, which subsequently prevent them from networking by fear of being misjudged, this risk is perceived as stronger by women when they direct their network-deepening actions towards male supervisors, while this risk is perceived as stronger by men when they direct their network-deepening actions towards female colleagues. In other words, while for women, this image risk might refer to the stereotype of the "seductress" willing and able to use her charm to manipulate men of power, for men, this image risk might refer to inappropriate and potentially predatory behaviors towards women.

In Study 1, I tried to understand what could prevent women from undertaking potentially rewarding networking actions and examined the impact of a specific gender stereotype on women's engagement in a specific networking action. More precisely, I tried to show that women could be reluctant to engage in network-deepening actions with their male supervisors for fear of being stereotyped as "temptress" or "seductress" and therefore misjudged. In Study 2, I examine whether people indeed negatively evaluate women engaged in those actions to determine whether women's fear for their image is warranted. More precisely, I test whether individuals seeing women engaged in network-deepening actions with male supervisors

evaluate them according to this stereotype, and therefore judge them as less competent, colder, less moral and more seductive.

STUDY 2

Method

Design and Procedure

To investigate Hypotheses 5 and 6, I conducted a pre-registered[5] experiment based on vignettes: Participants put themselves in the situation of someone working in the department of a large company and observing the behavior of one of his (or her) colleagues. Participants were first randomly assigned to one of eight cells of a 2 (gender of the person networking: male vs. female), by 2 (gender of the target: male vs. female), by 2 (hierarchical level of the target: colleague vs. supervisor) between-subject design. They then read the vignette corresponding to their conditions, and finally answered a questionnaire containing the dependent measures (i.e., perceived competence, perceived warmth, perceived morality, appropriateness of the "seductress" stereotype). The questionnaire also included three attention checks, three manipulation checks, and five demographic questions about the gender of the participants, their age, the country where they had spent the most of their time, their level of education, and the number of years of work experience. None of those demographic variables was included in the analysis, and only served to describe the sample.

Participants

To ensure the ecological validity of the sample, I applied selection criteria previously used in studies investigating networking behaviors (Forret & Dougherty, 2001), such that all participants were full-time employees (not part-time, not self-employed) in any type of organizations to the exclusion of family business. I collected responses from 1000 participants

[5] https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=324z8n

from an online platform called Prolific in exchange of payment (52% from the UK, 33% from North America, and 13% from continental Europe; 53% female; mean age = 37, *SD* = 9.98; mean work experience = 16 years, *SD* = 10.09).

Experimental Manipulations

I manipulated three factors between-subjects: The gender of the person networking (male vs. female), the gender of the target (male vs. female), and the hierarchical level of the target (colleague vs. supervisor). I manipulated the gender of the person networking by using the name "Paul" in the male condition and "Alice" in the female condition. I manipulated the gender of the target by using the name "Jack Myers" in the male condition and "Jennifer Myers" in the female condition. Finally, I manipulated the hierarchical level of the target by describing the so-called Myers either as a "colleague" or as the "head of the department".

Measures

Each dependent variable measured the extent to which people perceived individuals (men or women) engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor (vs. colleague) of the opposite (vs. same) gender as competent, warm, moral, and seductive.

Attention checks. I included three attention checks among the items measuring the four dependent measures to be sure that participants carefully read each item of the scale. Participants who failed at least one of the three attention checks were removed from the sample.

Manipulation checks. To assess whether participants rightfully detected the conditions in which they were assigned, I asked participants whether the person networking was a man or a woman, and whether the target of those networking attempts was a man or a woman, and a colleague or a supervisor. Participants who failed at least one of the three manipulation checks were removed from the sample.

In total, 78 participants were excluded from the sample. No analysis was conducted before removing those participants. All analyses and statistics reported are based on the final sample of 922 participants. This final sample had between 113 and 120 participants per condition. Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 5 and correlations between the dependent variables are reported in Table 6.

TABLE 5
Descriptive Statistics

Mean (SD) per condition	The target is a supervisor		The target is a colleague	
	The initiator is a woman	The initiator is a man	The initiator is a woman	The initiator is a man
Perceived competence				
Target and initiator have different gender	4.75 (0.93)	4.82 (0.61)	4.68 (0.79)	4.63 (0.66)
Target and initiator have same gender	4.88 (0.91)	4.83 (0.76)	4.65 (0.8)	4.63 (0.7)
Perceived warmth				
Target and initiator have different gender	4.71 (1.1)	4.78 (0.94)	5.23 (0.91)	5.25 (0.8)
Target and initiator have same gender	4.84 (1.17)	4.85 (1.06)	5.48 (0.91)	5.47 (0.87)
Perceived morality				
Target and initiator have different gender	3.93 (1.08)	4 (0.94)	4.55 (0.89)	4.51 (0.88)
Target and initiator have same gender	4.08 (1.14)	4.06 (1.12)	4.85 (0.93)	4.77 (0.86)
Appropriateness of the "seductress" stereotype				
Target and initiator have different gender	4.45 (1.26)	4.52 (1.04)	3.52 (1.24)	3.84 (1)
Target and initiator have same gender	3.56 (1.32)	3.62 (1.27)	2.81 (1.28)	2.87 (1.09)
Sample size				
Target and initiator have different gender	120	113	115	115
Target and initiator have same gender	116	114	116	113

Perceived competence. This variable was measured on a 7-point scale from (1) Not at all to (7) Extremely with seven items asking participants the extent to which they perceived the initiator of the networking actions as "competent," "confident," "capable," "independent," "intelligent," "skillful," and "competitive" (Brands & Kilduff, 2014; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007) (Min = 1.43, *M* = 4.73, Max = 7, *SD* = 0.78, α = 0.81).

Perceived warmth. This variable was measured on a 7-point scale from (1) Not at all to (7) Extremely with four items asking participants the extent to which they perceived the initiator of the networking actions as "friendly," "warm," "good natured," and "likeable" (Brands & Kilduff, 2014; Fiske et al., 2007, 2002; Leach et al., 2007) (Min = 1, *M* = 5.07, Max = 7, *SD* = 1.02, α = 0.89).

Perceived morality. This variable was measured on a 7-point scale from (1) Not at all to (7) Extremely with four items asking participants the extent to which they perceived the initiator of the networking actions as "well intentioned," "trustworthy," "sincere," and "honest" (Leach et al., 2007; Wojciszke, 1994, 2005; Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998) (Min = 1, *M* = 4.34, Max = 7, *SD* = 1.04, α = 0.89).

Appropriateness of "seductress" stereotype. Finally, I measured the extent to which people viewed the initiator of the network-deepening actions according to the stereotype of the "seductress" using six items. Participants reported the extent to which they perceived the initiator as "flirtatious," "seductive," "promiscuous," "manipulative," "devious," and "scheming" (DeWall et al., 2005; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985) on 7-point scales anchored between (1) Not at all and (7) Extremely (Min = 1, *M* = 3.65, Max = 7, *SD* = 1.33, α = 0.88).

TABLE 6
Correlation Coefficients between Dependent Variables

	1	2	3
1. Perceived Competence	-		
2. Perceived Warmth	0.44 ***	-	
3. Perceived Morality	0.45 ***	0.8 ***	-
4. Appropriateness of the "Seductress" Stereotype	0.03	-0.44 ***	-0.51 ***

Note. *** p < .001

Results

For the same reasons as in Study 1, I first created a gender similarity variable coding whether the gender of the target was similar or different to that of the initiator. I then regressed perception of competence, warmth, morality, and appropriateness of the stereotype on the gender similarity of the target to that of the initiator, the initiator's gender, and the target's hierarchical level, and on all two and three-way interactions between those variables.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that women would be judged more harshly than men when they are engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather than same) gender. The results show that people did not evaluate women engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender more negatively than men engaged in the same activity (all *p*s > .39 for perceived competence, perceived warmth, perceived morality, and appropriateness of stereotype[6]). Hypothesis 5 is therefore not supported. More precisely, women engaged in network-deepening actions with a male (vs. female) supervisor were perceived as equally competent (β_{GS} = -0.13, *t*(914) = -1.24, *p* = .22), warm (β_{GS} = -0.13, *t*(914) = -1.03, *p* = .30), and moral (β_{GS} = -0.14, *t*(914) = -1.11, *p* = .27), but more seductive (β_{GS} = 0.89, *t*(914) = 5.72, *p* < .001). The same pattern of results was observed for men engaged in network-deepening actions with a female (vs. male) supervisor: People perceived them as

[6] **H5:** perceived competence: β_{GSxIG} = 0.12, *t*(914) = 0.86, *p* = .39; perceived warmth: β_{GSxIG} = 0.06, *t*(914) = 0.30, *p* = .76; perceived morality: β_{GSxIG} = 0.08, *t*(914) = 0.44, *p* = .66; appropriateness of stereotype: β_{GSxIG} = 0.01, *t*(914) = 0.03, *p* = .98

equally competent (β_{GS} = -0.001, *t*(914) = -0.01, *p* = .99), warm (β_{GS} = -0.08, *t*(914) = -0.59, *p* = .56), and moral (β_{GS} = -0.06, *t*(914) = -0.47, *p* = .64), but more seductive (β_{GS} = 0.90, *t*(914) = 5.65, *p* < .001).

Hypothesis 6 predicted that the previous relationship would be attenuated when the target of these network-deepening actions was a colleague. The three-way interaction for each dependent variable was non-significant (all *p*s > .40 for perceived competence, perceived warmth, perceived morality, and appropriateness of stereotype[7]). Hypothesis 6 is therefore not supported. Results are reported in Table 7.

I also did not find evidence that men are judged more harshly than women when they are engaged in network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite (rather than same) gender (all *p*s > .23 for perceived competence, perceived warmth, perceived morality, and appropriateness of stereotype[8]). Indeed, while men were perceived as equally competent (β_{GS} = -0.003, *t*(914) = -0.03, *p* = .97), marginally less warm (β_{GS} = -0.23, *t*(914) = -1.74, *p* = .08), less moral (β_{GS} = -0.26, *t*(914) = -2.01, *p* = .04), and more seductive (β_{GS} = 0.97, *t*(914) = 6.16, *p* < .001) when they deepened relationship with a female (rather than male) colleague, a similar pattern of results was observed for women. Women were also perceived as equally competent (β_{GS} = 0.03, *t*(914) = 0.31, *p* = .76), marginally less warm (β_{GS} = -0.25, *t*(914) = -1.91, *p* = .06), less moral (β_{GS} = -0.30, *t*(914) = -2.34, *p* = .02), and more seductive (β_{GS} = 0.71, *t*(914) = 4.49, *p* < .001) when they deepened relationship with a male (rather than female) colleague.

[7] **H6:** perceived competence: $\beta_{GSxIGxHL}$ = -0.16, *t*(914) = -0.78, *p* = .44; perceived warmth: $\beta_{GSxIGxHL}$ = -0.03, *t*(914) = -0.14, *p* = .89; perceived morality: $\beta_{GSxIGxHL}$ = -0.04, *t*(914) = -0.16, *p* = .88; appropriateness of stereotype: $\beta_{GSxIGxHL}$ = 0.26, *t*(914) = 0.83, *p* = .40

[8] Conditional two-way interaction (the target is a colleague): Perceived competence: β_{GSxIG} = -0.03, *t*(914) = -0.24, *p* = .81; Perceived warmth: β_{GSxIG} = 0.02, *t*(914) = 0.11, *p* = .91; perceived morality: β_{GSxIG} = 0.04, *t*(914) = 0.22, *p* = .83; appropriateness of stereotype: β_{GSxIG} = 0.27, *t*(914) = 1.21, *p* = .23

TABLE 7
Linear Regressions

	Dependent variable:			
	Competence	Warmth	Morality	Stereotype
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gender similarity (1 = different)	-0.004	-0.23^{+}	-0.26*	0.97***
	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Initiator gender (1 = woman)	0.02	0.003	0.07	-0.05
	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Hierarchical level (1 = upper level)	0.19^{+}	-0.62***	-0.72***	0.76***
	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Gender similarity x Initiator gender	0.04	-0.02	-0.04	-0.27
	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.22)
Gender similarity x Hierarchical level	0.002	0.15	0.20	-0.08
	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.22)
Initiator gender x Hierarchical level	0.04	-0.02	-0.06	-0.01
	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.22)
Gender sim. x Init. gender x Hier. level	-0.16	-0.04	-0.04	0.26
	(0.21)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.31)
Constant	4.63***	5.47***	4.77***	2.87***
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.11)
Observations	922	922	922	922
R^2	0.01	0.08	0.11	0.20
Adjusted R^2	0.01	0.08	0.10	0.19
Residual Std. Error (df = 914)	0.78	0.98	0.99	1.19
F Statistic (df = 7; 914)	1.89^{+}	12.05***	16.05***	32.07***
Note:	$^{+}$p < 0.1 ; *p < 0.05 ; **p < 0.01 ; ***p<0.001			

Exploratory Analyses

As specified in the pre-registration, I re-ran the previous analysis on three items of the "seductress" stereotype that explicitly refer to sexual intentions (i.e., "promiscuous", "flirtatious", "seductive"). When the target was a supervisor, the analysis indicates that people did not evaluate women differently than men (β_{GSxIG} = -0.01, t(914) = -0.02, p = .98): Both men and women engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite (rather

than same) gender were perceived as sexually manipulative (men: β_{GS} = 1.55, t(914) = 9.02, p < .001; women: β_{GS} = 1.56, t(914) = 9.23, p < .001). When the target was a colleague, both men and women engaged in network-deepening actions with a colleague of the opposite (rather than same) gender were perceived as sexually manipulative as well (men: β_{GS} = 1.52, t(914) = 8.88, p < .001; women: β_{GS} = 1.10, t(914) = 6.48, p < .001), but this effect was marginally larger for men than for women (β_{GSxIG} = 0.42, t(914) = 1.73, p = .08).

In addition, exploratory analyses revealed a main effect of gender similarity between the initiator and the target on perceived warmth, perceived morality and the appropriateness of the seductress or seducer stereotype: When the network-deepening actions were directed toward a target of the opposite (rather than same) gender, people perceived the initiator of such actions as less warm (β_{GS} = -0.17, t(914) = -2.63, p = .009), less moral (β_{GS} = -0.19, t(914) = -2.96, p = .003) and more seductive (β_{GS} = 0.87, t(914) = 11.02, p < .001). Similarly, I found a main effect of the target's hierarchical level on each of the dependent variables: When the network-deepening actions were directed toward a supervisor (rather than a colleague), people perceived the initiator of such actions as more competent (β_{HL} = 0.17, t(914) = 3.39, p < .001), but less warm (β_{HL} = -0.56, t(914) = -8.71, p < .001), less moral (β_{HL} = -0.65, t(914) = -10.04, p < .001) and more seductive (β_{HL} = 0.78, t(914) = 9.90, p < .001).

Discussion of the Results

In this second study, I did not find evidence for a specific gender stereotype targeting women in situations of network-deepening actions with their male supervisors. Those women do not trigger negative evaluation from the audience, that do not seem to interpret those behaviors as attempts to manipulate men to get access to valuable resources. These preliminary results therefore suggest that the image risk women associate with network-deepening actions with male supervisors might not be warranted.

In fact, men and women were perceived as equally competent, and were both perceived as more competent when engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor rather than with a colleague. They were also perceived as equally warm and moral, and were both perceived to be warmer and more moral when engaged in network-deepening actions with a colleague rather than with a supervisor; or with someone of the same rather than opposite gender. Finally, they were perceived as equally manipulative and promiscuous, and were both perceived as more manipulative and promiscuous when engaged in network-deepening actions with a supervisor rather than a colleague; or with someone of the opposite rather than same gender.

On the other hand, I partially confirmed the results found in Study 1 for men: Men's behaviors are indeed more likely to be seen as sexually ambiguous when engaged in network-deepening actions with colleagues of the opposite rather than same gender compared to women engaged in the same type of behavior. However, other differences were not significant. In other words, even if men seem to have internalized that network-deepening actions with women within the organization, particularly when they are colleagues, might be misinterpreted, it is not clear that people attach a particular stereotype to those behaviors when they observe them.

DISCUSSION

Summary

In this paper, I proposed a theoretical explanation as to why women benefit less than men from equivalent investments in networking actions. I argued that the existence of a specific gender stereotype against women (that of the "temptress", "seductress") might prevent women from undertaking potentially rewarding networking actions, such as deepening relationships with their supervisors. Given that, in organizations, the typical supervisor is a man (Joshi, 2018; Lean In, McKinsey & Company, 2019), woman might be reluctant to deepen relationships with them because they fear for their image.

The first study provided partial support for the theoretical model. While I do find evidence that women are reluctant to engage in network-deepening actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender, and that this reduced willingness is mediated by an increase in their image risk, I do not find that this pattern is specific to women. Indeed, men are also reluctant to engage in this type of networking actions with a supervisor of the opposite gender. I also do not find that the effect is specific to supervisors, since women are reluctant to engage in these networking actions with male colleagues as well.

The moderated mediation analysis provided an unexpected but interesting result: It appears that men are as reluctant as women to engage in network-deepening actions with organizational members of the opposite gender, and are even more likely than women to disengage from network-deepening activities with a colleague of the opposite gender, because they perceive a greater risk for their image to engage in such actions.

In exploratory analyses, I observed a significant difference between gender when considering the items in image risk that are specific to sexual intentions: "promiscuous", "flirtatious", and "seductive". When image risk specifically refers to sexual intentions, both men and women are reluctant to engage in network-deepening actions with organizational members of the opposite gender because they fear for their image. However, I observe a diverging pattern between gender: Whereas women associate a greater image risk with network-deepening actions directed towards their male supervisors (rather than their male colleagues), men associate a greater image risk with network-deepening actions directed towards their female colleagues (rather than their female supervisors).

It therefore seems that both men and women view themselves at risk of negative reactions likely to damage their image when deepening relationship with organizational members of the opposite gender. For women on the one hand, the stereotype of the "temptress" or "seductress" may discourage them from establishing deeper relationships with their male

supervisors. For men on the other hand, the recent #MeToo movement and the subsequent downfall of many men of power (Almukhtar, Gold, & Buchanan, 2017) might have led men to worry that being close to their female colleagues might be viewed as inappropriate. In both cases, even if the nature of the stereotype internalized by each gender differs, the outcome is the same: Men and women alike are reluctant to engage in network-deepening actions with other organizational members of the opposite gender.

In Study 2, I tested how people evaluate women engaged in network-deepening actions with their male supervisors. Contrary to what the literature suggests, I did not find evidence that people judge women engaged in this type of activity more harshly than men engaged in the same type of activity with a female supervisor. This piece of evidence might then suggest that the image risk women associate with their network-deepening actions towards male supervisors is in fact not justified. However, based on this single study, it would be premature to conclude that the gender stereotype of the 'temptress" or "seductress" does not exist. This null finding might also reflect a countervailing force in the experiment: Past research has indeed suggested that being connected to a prominent organizational member has positive reputational effect for a person, regardless of one's gender (Brass, 1984, 1985; Kilduff & Krackhardt, 1994). Participants in the experiment might then have perceived women's networking attempts toward their male supervisors as positive. The main effect of the target's hierarchical level on the perceived competence of the initiator indeed suggests this idea: Both men and women engaged in networking-deepening actions with their supervisors were seen as more competent than when those networking attempts were directed toward a colleague.

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, I confirm that homophily is a strong driver of social interactions (Brass et al., 2004): People are more likely to approach organizational members who share the same gender, or the same hierarchical level, which makes networking efforts

towards supervisors harder for women and risk to penalize them more since men are in average overrepresented at each level of the corporate ladder (Joshi, 2018; Lean In, McKinsey & Company, 2019).

In addition, this paper contributes to a better understanding of the kind of organizational network women build. Past research has shown that women are by default embedded in organizational network structures that are more constrained than that of men (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1992, 1993). Those network constraints make networking a particularly important strategy for women to overcome hurdles (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993; Khattab et al., 2020). The present research shows a complementary explanation that resonates with past research: Beyond structural factors, psychological factors can make it harder for women to deepen relationships with key organizational members.

By theorizing that women may renounce some networking activities because they anticipate being stereotyped and fear for their image, the present research complements past research showing that women may steer away from participating in certain activities. For example, because of gendered-family roles, biased self-assessment, and anticipation of discrimination, female candidates may decide not to interview for top management jobs (Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016). Women are also less likely than men to consider a job with an employer who has rejected them in the past because they put a stronger weight on the rejection that they previously received (Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017). Similarly, a recent theoretical work on the way minorities use their organizational networks suggests that minority actors engage less than majority actors in networking because they do not perceive their network useful for their career, question their legitimacy at engaging in networking, fear of confirming stereotypical expectations and expect rejection (Khattab et al., 2020).

By theorizing that the subjective experience and the evaluation by others of some networking actions may differ between men and women, the present paper echoes past research

showing that men and women occupying a same network position may not only experience this position differently but may also be perceived differently. For example, women occupying brokerage positions seem to experience stereotype threat, which subsequently undermine their performance (Brands & Mehra, 2019)[9], and people who perceive women as occupying such position judge them cold and unfriendly because they violate the gender stereotype according to which brokers are supposed to be men, and not women (Brands & Kilduff, 2014).

By theorizing that women, compared to men, may renounce some networking actions for fear of being misjudged, the present paper also mirrors recent research suggesting that women may engage in additional networking actions (called "scouting") aimed at gathering specific information from other women about how they are treated in a firm or an industry (Obukhova & Kleinbaum, 2020). In other words, while gender stereotypes might prevent women from undertaking some networking actions directed towards men, gender inequality might simultaneously push women to undertake specific networking actions directed towards other women.

Finally, the present paper is situated within the framework according to which both supply-side and demand-side factors can play against women's careers (Fernandez-Mateo & Kaplan, 2018). On the one hand, the choices and behaviors of women (i.e., the supply-side factors), who for example renounce engaging in some networking activities, may play against their access to resources. On the other hand, the expectations people have of women's behaviors (i.e., the demand-side factors) may play against women's evaluation.

This paper also refines the kind of image risk women associate with network-deepening actions with male supervisors. I have shown that what might prevent women from undertaking

[9] This paper should be considered with caution since several large scale pre-registered replications failed to replicate stereotype threat, and questions have been raised about the existence of the concept (Finnigan & Corker, 2016; Flore, Mulder, & Wicherts, 2018; Lewis & Michalak, 2019; Stricker & Ward, 2006; Zigerell, 2017).

those actions is the fear that their behavior will be perceived as sexually ambiguous: Women are worried to be viewed as willing to exchange promiscuity for resources. I have also documented that men, contrary to expectations, are not exempt from negative gender stereotypes. They might be tempted to avoid maintaining relationships with female colleagues by fear their behaviors to be perceived as sexually ambiguous as well: Men seem worried that others interpret their behaviors as sexual intentions.

Lastly, a significant proportion of the literature on gender stereotypes relies on non-pre-registered studies testing two- or three-way interactions on relatively small samples, making it difficult to assess the strength of the evidence presented (Simmons, 2013; Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011). In Study 2, I pre-registered the analysis and collected more than 100 data points per condition, and contrary to what the theory suggests, I found no evidence that in a specific situation of networking, women were more negatively judged than men and judged stereotypically. At this stage no definitive conclusion can be made, but more pre-registered studies with large samples should be run on the topic. The present work represents a step in this direction and contributes to an effort to build more reliable evidence in the domain of gender stereotypes.

Practical Implications

The present findings have shown that, although network-deepening actions might be particularly useful to help women overcome the network constraints they face and boost their career, women might be reluctant to undertake such actions with male supervisors. One of the solutions to help women overcome this aversion might be to hire and promote more women in positions of power at each hierarchical level of the organization. As such, women might find other women at every step to sponsor them at a higher level and might therefore be able to compete with men for top organizational positions. However, if gender diversity consists of bringing more women within organizations, without putting those women in position of

authority (Joshi, 2018; Lean In, McKinsey & Company, 2019), or only consists of increasing gender parity at the top (e.g., on the board of directors) to polish company's public image (Chang, Milkman, Chugh, & Akinola, 2018), women might continue having a harder time climbing the corporate ladder.

The findings also highlight a new phenomenon that might have positive consequences for the safety and well-being of women within organizations, but negative consequences for their professional success. On the one hand, it seems that men have internalized that their behaviors towards women are under greater scrutiny: They are maybe more aware that some behaviors will no longer be tolerated. On the other hand, the response of men to women's demands of respect might backfire on women: Rather than avoiding unwanted contacts, it seems that men would avoid contact with their female colleagues altogether. Given the network constraints women are already facing within organizations, such reaction to the #MeToo movement might hinder women's ability to succeed.

The reluctance of both men and women to deepen relationships with organizational members of the opposite gender might have more severe consequences for women than for men (Hewlett, 2010; Smith & Johnson, 2016). On one side, women's discomfort to deepen relationships with male supervisors might prevent them from gaining visibility, making favorable impressions, and getting access to resources. On the other side, men's discomfort at deepening relationships with female organizational members might prevent women from accessing valuable resources.

Indeed, if men are reluctant to deepen relationships with female supervisors, and even more so with female colleagues, it might be reasonable to expect that this reluctance would strengthen as the hierarchical level of the woman decreases. Given the formal power asymmetry in favor of the manager characterizing a manager – subordinate relationship, men might perceive even riskier for their image any attempts aiming at deepening relationships with their

female subordinates. Recent findings have for example shown that men report being reluctant to mentor or spend time with junior women since the #MeToo movement (Lean In, 2018). Given that women may have difficulty to find people able and willing to mentor (Noe, 1988) and sponsor (Anderson & Smith, 2019) them at the higher level, which subsequently reduces their chance of being promoted (Ibarra et al., 2010), the reluctance of men to build stronger relationships with women at a junior level might be particularly impactful for women's career.

Finally, the present research indicates that advising men and women to become friends with their supervisors or "get to know their boss" (Knight, 2016) to boost their career, without considering that this action may be experienced very differently by men and women, might not be very helpful to women. On the contrary, acknowledging the psychological hurdles women may face while trying to deepen relationships with their supervisors might help women overcome those hurdles. As such, increasing people's awareness within organizations that a same networking strategy might require more efforts from women because of structural factors standing in their path is important. For example, networking programs could focus on the unique constraints women experience when engaging in such action. In addition, male managers should acknowledge that their judgement of both male and female subordinates might be biased in opposite directions. On the one hand, their preference for gender homophily might push them towards their male subordinates, and lead them to favor men when distributing resources and promotions. On the other hand, the image risk they associate with getting close to women in an organizational context might pull them away from their female subordinates, and reduce the likelihood that women will be distributed valuable resources. Encouraging managers to engage in thoughtful consideration and evaluation of all their subordinates when distributing resources (e.g., pay raise, promotion, budget increase, assignment to developmental projects) might disrupt the automaticity of their judgement based on preference for homophily, and image risk associated with the proximity with women. Finally, the organization itself might

help women by avoiding promoting and rewarding behaviors that are more accessible to men than to women.

Limitations

Several limitations might have contributed to the null finding that I have reported. First, the specific vignettes that I have used could have failed to trigger the expected reactions, and other vignettes should be tested to replicate the lack of effect. Second, I predicted and tested a three-way interaction. However, three-way interactions are difficult to capture because they require large samples (Simonsohn, 2014a), and sample sizes of 914 and 922 participants might still be insufficient to detect an attenuation effect (Simmons, 2013; Simonsohn, 2014b). Third, it is noteworthy that there is no established scale for measuring image risk. Future research would benefit from scale development efforts, aimed at defining the boundaries of the construct and establishing its validity in the context of networking activities, and whether this image risk differs for men and women. Fourth, it is possible that the stereotype of the "seductress" is triggered in specific conditions, narrower that those tested. For example, only young, single women or women working in a male-dominated industry (Fernando, Cohen, & Duberley, 2018, 2019; Kanter, 1977) might associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with male supervisors. It is also possible that the stereotype of the "temptress" only comes to people's mind when the person observed is perceived as physically attractive (DeWall et al., 2005; Sheppard & Johnson, 2019), or in more vivid circumstances that in text-based stimuli. The stereotype of the "temptress" might also be more salient in people's mind when women's networking attempts are successful (for example, when those networking attempts are followed with a promotion), or when women circumvent the hierarchy and network with male senior managers that wield more power and influence, thereby triggering jealousy and hostility. Finally, past research (DeWall et al., 2005) has shown that people tend to categorize women in different stereotypical groups (e.g., "professional", "feminist", "athlete", "homemaker",

"beauty" or "temptress"). Some of those stereotypes might be more prevalent than others in some social circumstances (e.g., the "temptress" or "beauty" in male-dominated types of industry), over time (e.g., the "feminist" and "professional" stereotype might be more prevalent in Western culture today than fifty years ago), or in some cultural contexts (e.g., the "beauty", "temptress" or "homemaker" might be more prevalent in countries characterized by high power distance and masculinity).

Directions for Future Research

This research opens the path to future investigations on the link between gender and networking behaviors. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study providing experimental evidence that men associate an image risk with their network-deepening actions with female organizational members, particularly when they are colleagues. Future research should first try to confirm those findings. Then, it should examine the nature of the stereotype men anticipate: If the image risk for women appears to be linked to the stereotype of the "temptress" or "seductress", it is not clear which stereotype would apply to men. Finally, it should investigate whether the previous relationship is stronger when the hierarchical level of the targeted woman decreases. Indeed, if men are reluctant to maintain relationships with female supervisors because of an increase in their image risk, and that this effect is more pronounced when the target is a colleague, it might then be even stronger when the target is a subordinate. If this is the case, network inequality between men and women in terms of access to resources might then be explained not only by the difficulty and reluctance of women to integrate the "dominant coalition" (Brass, 1985), but also by the reluctance of powerful and influential organizational members (i.e., men) to build strong relationships with women in an attempt to protect their image.

Second, the present findings show that both men and women are reluctant to deepen relationships with supervisors whatever their gender, which suggests that people might be

reluctant to network up, that is to build personal relationships with people higher up in the corporate ladder. Given the benefits attached to such relationships, it might be interesting to investigate the reasons of this aversion by examining the way people perceive and makes sense of such actions.

In addition, this reluctance to network up appears stronger for women. This pattern of behaviors fits the gender biases people have about typically masculine and feminine behaviors (Eagly, 1987). While men are expected to be agentic (i.e., ambitious, independent, masterful, assertive, instrumental, aggressive, forceful, and decisive), women are expected to be communal (i.e., kind, helpful, sympathetic, concerned about others, friendly, unselfish, and emotionally expressive) (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 2009; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). A consequence of those gender stereotypes is that women are likely to experience social sanctions for behaving inconsistently with them (Burt, 1997, 1998; Heilman, 2001; Khattab et al., 2020; Parks-Stamm, Heilman, & Hearns, 2008; Rudman, 1998), which in turn prevent women from acting in a way that would help them rise in the social hierarchy. For example, women are not expected to show confidence and assertiveness (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975; Powers & Zuroff, 1988) particularly about themselves (e.g., their qualifications, experience, skills, or success: Rudman & Phelan, 2008). They are not expected to self-promote (Rudman, 1998), negotiate (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Bowles, Thomason, & Bear, 2019), and are not supposed to ask what they think they deserve such as higher pay, more responsibility, or greater recognition (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Babcock, Laschever, Gelfand, & Small, 2003; Bowles et al., 2007). To get access to valuable resources without eliciting social sanctions, women generally need to associate agentic behaviors with communal behaviors (Heilman, 2012; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). For example, to increase their influence in organizations, women need not only to appear as self-confident but also to be perceived as prosocial, warm and caring (Guillén,

2018; Guillén, Mayo, & Karelaia, 2018). In this framework, it might be interesting to examine whether women downplay the agentic aspect of networking to avoid social sanctions. Women might indeed be tempted to socialize (rather than network) to avoid triggering negative evaluation from both the target and the observer. If this is the case, it might explain why women benefit less from their networking actions than men: Socializing might be more effective at mitigating negative evaluation, but might also reduce their access to valuable resources.

Finally, the lack of support for my general framework might indicate the need to take a step back, and to provide a more detailed understanding of the implicit networking theories people use when networking. Indeed, it is likely that people avoid networking in certain circumstances because of socially acquired beliefs, or implicit theories, that those behaviors would be risky. Such implicit theories, also called "naïve," "lay," or "commonsense" theories (Heider, 1958; Kelly, 1955), have be shown to drive various social behaviors (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997). For example, they allow individuals to choose responses adapted to social situations (Abelson, 1976; Ross, 1989) by helping them process social cues and make predictions about cause and effect (Anderson & Lindsay, 1998; Levy, Chiu, & Hong, 2006). They can therefore have a self-protective goal by linking an action to a risk (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Studying implicit networking theories might not only help us understand according to which principles people decide to network, but also whether men and women use different theories to guide their networking actions.

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APPENDIX

Vignettes Study 1

- Target's gender: Man or Woman
- Target's hierarchical level: Supervisor or Colleague

Male target x Supervisor:

You have just landed your dream job: You have been hired in a large department of a global company. *Paul* Ekman is *the head of your department*: *He* is *your supervisor*.

Male target x Colleague:

You have just landed your dream job: You have been hired in a large department of a global company. *Paul* Ekman is *one of your colleagues in the department*: *He* is *at the same hierarchical level as you*.

Female target x Supervisor:

You have just landed your dream job: You have been hired in a large department of a global company. *Alice* Ekman is *the head of your department*: *She* is *your supervisor*.

Female target x Colleague:

You have just landed your dream job: You have been hired in a large department of a global company. *Alice* Ekman is *one of your colleagues in the department*: *She* is *at the same hierarchical level as you*.

Measures Study 1

Willingness to undertake network-deepening actions

Adapted from Forret and Dougherty (2001), Vissa (2012), and Shipilov, Labianca, Kalnysh, and Kalnysh (2014).

Please consider each of the following actions in the context you have just read about. To which extent would you consider undertaking each of the following actions?

Measured on a 7-point scale from (1) I would hardly see myself undertaking this action, to (7) I would easily see myself undertaking this action.

1. Invite [Paul][Alice] Ekman for a drink after work.
2. Stop by [Paul][Alice] Ekman's office to small talk (e.g., about [his] [her] weekend, the latest Netflix show, …).
3. Try to be friends with [Paul][Alice] Ekman.
4. Invite [Paul][Alice] Ekman out for some recreational activity (e.g., tennis, yoga, walking, jogging, concert, barbecue, weekend in the countryside…).
5. Invite [Paul][Alice] Ekman for dinner.
6. Invite [Paul][Alice] Ekman for lunch.
7. Discuss personal topics with [Paul][Alice] Ekman (e.g., tastes in music or films, family anecdotes, life history,…).

Image risk associated with network-deepening actions

Adapted from Ashford (1986) and combined with DeWall, Altermatt, and Thompson (2005).

In the context of the work situation that you have just read, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Measured on a 7-point scale from (1) Strongly disagree to (7) Strongly agree.

1. If I am too friendly with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman, I might be seen as less competent.
2. My behavior might be misinterpreted if I try to become friend with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman.
3. If I become close to [Paul] [Alice] Ekman, I might be viewed as less trustworthy.
4. If I interact with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman outside of work, I might be seen as flirtatious.
5. If I am too friendly with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman, I might be perceived as seductive.
6. If I have a close relationship with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman, I might be seen as promiscuous.
7. If I am spending time outside of work with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman, I might be viewed as manipulative.
8. If I have a personal relationship with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman, I might be perceived as devious.
9. If I try to be friends with [Paul] [Alice] Ekman, I might be seen as scheming.

Vignettes Study 2

- Initiator: Paul or Alice
- Target: Jack or Jennifer Myers
- Target's hierarchical level: Supervisor or Colleague

You are working in a large department of an international company.

[*Initiator:* Paul][*Initiator:* Alice] is one of your colleagues. [He][She] is 30 years old, has a bachelor's degree from a local university, and has recently joined the department in which you are working.

Since [Paul][Alice] has joined the department, [he][she] has been interacting a lot with [*Target:* Jack][*Target:* Jennifer] Myers, [the Head of the department][another colleague from the department].

For example, you have noticed that [Paul][Alice] regularly stops by [Jack][Jennifer]'s office to make small talk or discuss personal topics. You often see [Paul][Alice] sharing anecdotes and laughing with [Jack][Jennifer]. [Paul][Alice] often invites [Jack][Jennifer] for lunch, or for a drink after work. When [Paul][Alice] is staying late at the office and orders dinner, [he][she] generally passes by [Jack][Jennifer]'s office and offers [him][her] to eat together. [Paul][Alice] has also started training with [Jack][Jennifer] for the marathon on Sundays, and from time to time, [he][she] invites [Jack][Jennifer] over the weekend for a social activity (a barbecue, a show, a dinner in a new restaurant that has just opened in town…).