PROBLEM STATEMENT

Women still lag behind men in holding senior management and executive positions.

Research explains why women struggle to achieve power due to stereotypes, obstacles, and lack of opportunities. However, there is little research examining how people arrive to power.

PATHS TO POWER

**Question:** How do men and women arrive to positions of power?

**Goal:** Use this knowledge to help more women achieve power in the workplace.

FINDINGS

Power is influence and decision-making ability.

Male and female students describe achieving power similarly in general, but use gender stereotypes when describing power for the opposite sex.

Analysis of expectations vs. realities of power highlighted minor similarities and differences and provided new insights.

RESEARCH PROJECT

We focused on how people arrive to power within the current constraints and the characteristics and actions required to achieve power.

We examined differences by gender and expectations vs. realities.

The methodology included an online survey of MBA students and interviews with people in power.

Next steps focused on two areas: application and research.

Training and mentorship programs increasing awareness of gender stereotypes and perception management are necessary.

New research is needed to analyze if men and women exhibit the characteristics and actions identified in this study and the impact on their careers.
Our research looked at the problem of women and power in the workplace. Women still do not hold as many positions of power as men, and there is already much research explaining why women struggle to achieve power.

Source: Catalyst Research, February 2009
We explored *how* people arrive to positions of power

**CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION**

How do people, both men and women, achieve positions of power within the current paradigm of obstacles and constraints?

**Objective 1**
Identify characteristics, actions, and tools for achieving power

**Objective 2**
Examine differences along the path to power by gender

**Objective 3**
Determine differences between expectations and realities of power

**Hypothesis 1**
Men and women arrive to power differently, using dissimilar characteristics and actions

**Hypothesis 2**
Expectations and realities differ regardless of gender

Our research focused on identifying how people arrive to power, the characteristics and actions required, and any differences by gender and between expectations and realities.
Two paths to understanding expectations and realities of power

We used 2 different research methodology components: an online survey taken by MBA students on expectations of achieving power and qualitative interviews with people in senior level positions about experiences.
### SURVEY
- Sample size: 116 current MBA students
- 62.8% Male, 37.2% Female
- 77.9% Full-time, 22.1% Part-time
- 45.1% 1st-years, 51.3% 2nd- years, 3.6% 3rd-years (part-time only)
- 92.9% are less than 35 years old and 60.3% are between 26-30 years old
- 94.7% with less than 10 years of full-time work experience and 54.3% with 2-5 years of experience

### INTERVIEWS
- Sample size: 6 current professionals
- 53-year-old African American female in consulting
- 45 year-old Caucasian male in consulting
- 36 year-old Caucasian female in finance
- 62 year-old Caucasian female in non-profit
- 52 year-old Caucasian male in marketing
- 60 year-old Caucasian male in sports management

These demographics illustrate that our survey sample was representative of the MBA student population, allowing us to explore our research objectives. The interview sample provided varying perspectives of the reality of power.
MBA Students define power as influence and decision-making

Influence and decision-making ability stand out as the most often sited definitions of power in the workplace, coupled with authority, respect, title/position, ability to get things done and change.
MBA Students agree on the general characteristics and actions for power

**CHARACTERISTICS**

- Good Communicator
- Influential/Persuasive
- Self-confident

**ACTIONS**

- Demonstrate the ability to make important decisions
- Seek allies/build a network

All respondents, regardless of gender or other segmentation, consistently identified these three characteristics and two actions as the most important for a person in a position of power.
Gender stereotypes emerge when describing power for the opposite sex.

Men and women tended to characterize themselves more like the general “person in power” while the opposite gender was often given characteristics or attributes that highlighted typical gender stereotypes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic/Action</th>
<th>General Ranking</th>
<th>Ranking for Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek allies/build network</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outperform co-workers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic/Action</th>
<th>General Ranking</th>
<th>Ranking for men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Communicator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for self</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women believe men and women arrive to power differently

We stated, “Men and women arrive to a position of power in the exact same way”

| Percentage of MBA students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| TOTAL                          | MEN             | WOMEN           |
| 53.1%                          | 42.5%           | 72.1%           |

Students who disagreed mostly believed that differences were due to gender stereotypes, while the rest listed personality differences.

Although more women than men believe there is a difference, they are still no less likely than men to use gender stereotypes when describing power for the opposite sex.

72.1% of women disagree that men and women arrive to power in the same way, but women still persist in using gender stereotypes about men.
Realities and expectations converge, diverge, and bring new insights

**SIMILARITIES**
- Achieving a position of power in 5 years
- Definition of power
- Most believed there is a difference in path for men and women, but obstacles are decreasing

**DIFFERENCES**
- Importance of luck beyond characteristics and actions
- Interview participants used gender-biased characteristics and actions to describe self.
- Reality emphasized actively seeking out opportunities and others to learn from.

**NEW PERSPECTIVES**
- Viewpoints of Generation Y varied greatly among interview participants
- Role of personality in different paths to power beyond gender

Interview subjects provided insight into the realities of power in the workplace. There were equal amounts of similarities and differences between expectations and reality and new perspectives on the issue of power.
Next steps focus on immediate application and continued research. The most critical next step is to analyze how men and women exhibit these 5 key characteristics/actions in the workplace and determine if that is the reason why there are fewer women in positions of power.

Gender-based stereotypes of power are declining in the workplace, but still persist

**Applications**
- Increase awareness of gender stereotypes and path to power differences through training and mentorship programs
- Emphasize importance and provide training on perception management for MBA students and employees

**Research**
- Expand research by increasing sample size, exploring other power components (personality), and focusing on a broader definition of power
- Conduct new research on how women and men exhibit these characteristics and actions in the workplace and how that impacts their power
# Appendix I - Sample Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample Size (Survey Respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>256</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>549</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>805</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We are interested in how people define and view power in various work contexts. We would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Please note, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions; we are just interested in your opinions and beliefs. All completed survey respondents will have the opportunity to participate in a drawing for several $25 iTunes gift cards.

1. How would you define power in the workplace?
   [Blank]
2. Based upon your definition of power, do you plan to achieve a position of power within the span of your career?
   Yes
   No
3. How long do you anticipate it will take after business school to achieve a position of power as you have defined it?
   Less than 2
   2-5 years
   5-10 years
   11-15 years
   16-20 years
   More than 20 years
4. Please choose 5 of the characteristics below that you think are the 5 most important characteristics of a person in a position of power in the workplace. Next, rank these 5 characteristics in order from 1 to 5 by choosing a button below, where 1 is "most important" and 5 is "least important," characteristic of a person in a position of power in the workplace.

If you do not believe a characteristic is one of the top five characteristics, please leave the buttons next to it blank.

- Adapt to changing situations
- Aggressive
- Assertive
- Charismatic
- Cool/calm under pressure
- Fair
- Forward-thinking
- Good communicator, conveyor of information
- Hardworking
- Influential/persuasive
- Intelligent
5. Please choose 5 of the actions below that you think are the 5 most important actions a person needs to take to achieve a position of power in the workplace. Next, rank these 5 actions in order from 1 to 5 by choosing a button below, where 1 is "most important" and 5 is "least important," action a person needs to take to achieve a position of power in the workplace.

If you do not believe an action is one of the top five actions, please leave the buttons next to it blank.

- Ability to guide/advise/mentor
- Actively seek out new career and development opportunities and be willing to take many approaches/try new things
- Advocate for themselves, making sure successes & ideas are recognized
- Consider/solicit different perspectives
PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

Demonstrate ability to make important decisions
Find mentors, particularly people in positions of power
Outperform co-workers
Participate in firm activities with co-workers, both external (drinks/dinner, outside entertainment) and internal (community service projects, committees)
Seek allies/build a network

6. If you had 100 points that represented the characteristics, actions and other things that help someone to achieve a position of power, how would you allocate these points among each of these factors?

Characteristics (ex: self confident, risk-taker, etc) = ____
Actions (ex: seek allies, find a mentor, etc) = ____
Other (if you believe there is no other factor, enter 0) = ____

If you allocated points to "Other" factor(s) above that help someone to achieve a position of power, please describe what those other factors are. If you did not allocate any points to "Other" please enter N/A.________________
PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

7. Which kind of professional network do you think is more effective?
   - Small and deep, composed of a few people you know very well
   - Wide and shallow, composed of many people that you know as acquaintances
   - Other (please specify) __________________

8. When you look for a mentor, would you prefer (select only one):
   - Someone who can support and guide you
   - Someone who is in a position of power
   - Other (please specify) __________________

9. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement: “Men and women arrive at the same position of power in the exact same way.”
   [choose from “strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree”]

10. If you selected “strongly disagree” or “disagree” in the previous question, please specify why. Otherwise, please enter N/A.
    [Blank]

11. Of the characteristics below, which three (3) characteristics, in no particular order, would you most identify with a man in a position of power?
    [See response options to Question 4]

12. Of the characteristics below, which three (3) characteristics, in no particular order, would you most identify with a woman in a position of power?
    [See response options to Question 4]
PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

13. Of these actions below, which three (3) actions, in no particular order, would you most identify with a man in a position of power?
   [See response options to Question 5]

14. Of these actions below, which three (3) actions, in no particular order, would you most identify with a woman in a position of power?
   [See response options to Question 5]

15. What kind of MBA program are you in?
   - Full-time
   - Part-time

16. What year are you in your MBA program?
   - First year
   - Second year
   - Third year (part-time students only)

17. How many years of full-time work experience do you have?
   - Less than 2
   - 2-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-15 years
   - 16-20 years
   - More than 20 years
18. What business area were you in prior to business school?
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Consulting
   - Non-profit
   - Other (please specify) _______________

19. What business area are you pursuing after business school?
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Consulting
   - Non-profit
   - Other (please specify) _______________

20. Please indicate your age:
   - 20-25
   - 26-30
   - 31-35
   - 36-40
   - 41-45
   - 46-50
21. Please indicate your gender:
   Male
   Female
22. Please indicate your race:
   White, non-Hispanic
   African American
   Hispanic
   Asian
   Native American

23. Thank you for taking this survey. If you would like a chance to win a $25 iTunes gift card, please fill in your email information below. Note that your email address will be kept confidential and will not be distributed to outside parties in any way, nor will it be associated with your survey answers.
PATHS TO POWER INTERVIEW

Description:
We are conducting a research study about how people arrive to positions of power, called paths to power. Our study explores many aspects of this topic including the characteristics and actions that help someone get to a position of power, differences between realities and expectations of paths to power, and variances in paths to power by gender.

Procedure:
• This interview will take approximately 45 minutes.
• Before beginning the interview, I will ask you to sign a simple waiver form that indicates you agreed to this interview.
• You have the option of viewing the questions ahead of time if you so prefer.
• At the end of the interview, I will ask about your preferences for anonymity. This decision is entirely up to your discretion.

Questions:
1. How do you define power in the workplace?
2. Please describe your path to power.
3. Please describe your education-undergraduate degree and graduate level.
4. How long after completing your latest education did you achieve a position of power as you define it?
5. Thinking back on your experience, were your expectations of how you would arrive to a position of power different than the reality? What were the main differences? Can you think of a story or example from your professional experience that exemplifies this?

6. What are the major challenges you encountered along your path to power?

7. What are the characteristics that you think helped you arrive to a position of power? Please describe at least 5. (*Encourage the respondent to come up with their own characteristics. If they are confused or need examples, mention characteristics such as self-confidence, fair, risk-taker, passionate, intelligent, charismatic, hard-working, etc... There is no maximum number, but please encourage the respondent to mention at least 5 characteristics.*)

8. What are the different actions that you think helped you arrive to a position of power? Please describe at least 5. (*Encourage the respondent to come up with their own characteristics. If they are confused or need examples, action such as building a network, finding mentors, advocating for yourself, outperforming co-workers, mentoring others, being open to opportunities, etc.. There is no maximum number, but please encourage the respondent to mention at least 5 characteristics.*)

9. If you had a pie that represented how you arrived to power, would it be composed of actions and characteristics or any other factors? What other factors, specifically? If you had to allocate a percentage of this pie to all of these factors, what percentage would you allocate to characteristics, actions, and the other factors you mentioned?
10. Based on your experience, do you think there is a difference in the paths to power for men and women? What has led you to believe this? Please include an example or story.

11. Do you think that the path to power for members of Generation Y will be significantly different from your path to power? How so?

12. Can you describe the impact of networking on your path to power? What kind of networking you have used and what do you think is the most effective use of networking?

13. Can you describe the impact of mentorship on your path to power? What kind of mentorship do you think is most effective?

Demographic Info:
• Graduate Degree: take from question 3
• Age: Do you mind sharing your age?
• Gender:
• The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder.
• Race
• Current business area:

Years of experience in this area:

Position title:

Company:
Appendix IV-Power, in their own words (Interview Quotes)

--- Generation Y ---

“What they’ve (Generation Y) come to understand is as a result of technology, social marketing, and social media, is they can have power at very early ages. They know that they ultimately have the power; the question is how they choose to channel it. Power (to us) was something that came later and was assumed after years of experience. That’s a real shift in the power balance.”

--- Obstacles for Women ---

“The women I grew up with who were successful were not the cliché where they basically acted like men, but they had a tougher time. Women did not support each other in the workplace, and there weren’t as many of them, so the math was against them. They had fewer mentors, and it was higher beta. There was no critical mass.”

--- Luck ---

“A good part of it (achieving power) is luck, which is why the networking is so important. If you figure that luck is nothing but a numbers game, than you got to keep throwing the dice. And throwing the dice is interacting with people, because every person either brings to you a different competency or skill that you need.”
## Appendix V – Research Team Bios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Bio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Rose Carrasco</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ler36@georgetown.edu">ler36@georgetown.edu</a></td>
<td>Lauren worked in the nonprofit and education fields before business school. Upon graduation, she will join Deloitte as a Sr. Consultant in the human capital practice, also where she interned last summer working on training improvement with a large discount retailer. Lauren has her BA in International Affairs from George Washington University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Nyberg Sisley</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ans39@georgetown.edu">ans39@georgetown.edu</a></td>
<td>Amanda has worked for the past five years in a marketing capacity, on both the client and agency sides, with various packaged goods companies. After interning at Nike this past summer, she is excited to be starting as an Associate Brand Manager at MillerCoors on the Miller Lite brand. Amanda holds a BA in American Studies from Yale University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica Zwick Zeitlin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mlz3@georgetown.edu">mlz3@georgetown.edu</a></td>
<td>Monica worked in marketing capacities at E! Entertainment Television and The Associated Press prior to business school. Upon graduation she will be an Associate Product Director for the McNeil Consumer Healthcare Division of Johnson &amp; Johnson, where she interned this past summer. Monica graduated with a BA in French and Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis.</td>
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