Men and Women in Leadership Positions in the Public Sector: Who are the Best-Qualified Candidates?

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This exploratory study will compare various competencies and behaviors of male and female public sector managers to determine if there are any significant differences that may hinder or enhance their ability to be effective and/or successful in their duties. The participants for this survey were chosen by a random sample experimental design from employees of public sector agencies. All were in management positions in state and local government. This study used archival data of 696 respondents from public-sector organizations, by use of the MVP survey from 2006 through 2010.

INTRODUCTION

In today's business environment there still remains the belief that women are not as capable as men when it comes to handle the duties and pressures of top management positions. There is that common idea that women are not suitable for a seat at the table with other C-level executives, and they lack characteristics fitting for those type positions. The main factor that should determine whether anyone, men or women, should be considered management material should be the characteristics and behaviors they display as leaders. This study will not focus on gender differences and inequality as much as it will focus on the abilities that define successful leaders and managers.

In this present day, women in the U.S. workforce have a greater and more significant presence than in the past. Nevertheless, according to Adler (1994) men still hold more positions of higher authority and higher supervisory than women. The fact is women have far less access to power, authority, and in many cases not a part of the policy-making committees. In a study done by Avolio (2009), the results showed significant difference during leadership interventions based on the size and the makeup of the groups. When the interventions were conducted with a majority of male participants or all males, the results sided more so with the male perspective; likewise, the results favored the female perspective when the groups were majority or all female. In another study by Bosak (2008), the results have shown that in a significant number of instances; female manager's even perceived themselves as less fitting than men when it comes to positions of upper management with a higher level of authority.

In this modern-day world, disparity between males and females in the workplace is still a serious issue in private and public-sector organizations. Many have thought of this as a problem of the past, and this study will show men and women are holding managerial positions in equal numbers in some industries; nevertheless, women still face gender discrimination even though they have been proven to be just as qualified, if not more qualified than their male counterparts. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge in this field of study (public sector management) and identify why women are just as capable of being effective/successful in executive leadership positions in the public sector. The

goal of this study is to identify the competencies and behavioral differences between men and women managers in the public-sector, and to determine if women are just as suited for leadership roles for the public sector as their male counter parts.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

There are many factors that play a part in the differentiation in treatment, appointment to leadership positions, and misunderstandings between genders in the workplace. When one understands the opinions of society and place more focus on the perception of women in the workplace, this may help increase the comprehension of the ongoing gap between genders at work. In a study by Trentham and Larwood (1998), after examining the effects of power and willingness to discriminate in the workplace, the results show that many people have been predisposed to discriminate against women. This study also found that people in top level management positions of organizations had a greater tendency to discriminate against women than people with lower positions of power. Upper management or individuals in power often affect the character of a person of lower level positions to act in a discriminating manner; which often times means even going against their own personal beliefs. The importance takeaway here is that prejudices, partiality and unfairness exist against women due to perceived influences of power demands in the workplace.

THE PERCEPTION OF LEADERSHIP

A study by Prime, Jonsen, Cater and Maznevski (2008), takes a look at the managers perception of leadership qualities based on gender. The results of their study show that women respondents perceived women as more effective than men in competencies such as planning and role modeling, providing intellectual stimulation, and problem solving. On the other hand men respondents ascribed that men were better at delegating than female leaders. This study also found that both men and women largely perceive and stereotype women leaders as being more proficient in supporting. All-in-all, the study indicated that both genders view their own gender in a positive way than the opposing gender. This would indicate that self perceptions or self confidence affects the beliefs of self and others abilities in the work place. As Northouse stated:

> Self-confidence is another trait that helps one be a leader. Self-confidence is the ability to be certain about one's competencies and skills. It includes a sense of self-esteem and self-assurance and the belief that one can make a difference. Leadership involves influencing others, and self-confidence allows the leader to feel assured that his or her attempts to influence are appropriate and right (Northouse, 2007, pp. 19 and 20).

While many public sector agencies seem to be experiencing greater representation of women in management, inequities continue. While you may find a greater number of women in the field of public education and social services, deficiencies continue in areas of leadership other initiates such as police departments, fire departments, and many county and local districts. Even in those keynoted field dominated by women, men still hold a majority of the top positions.

Compared to the private sector, the public sector is prone to unique differences that may propose a threat to leadership opportunities for women. According to a study by Kanungo (1998), bureaucracy of public sector organizations is typically substantial and may cause greater challenges for women than men. Even though there has been research conducted concerning interventions to increase the talent pool, and inevitably the promoting women (Mattis, 2001; Wellington, 1998; however, anyone interested in leadership in the public sector who relies on internal programs to increase their chances of prosperity must understand that those limitations may reduce those endeavors. Likewise, the opportunities for positions for promotion are few and come about typically more frequent through death and retirement. Many managers and other level employees tend to stay with their agency many years (20, 30, 40 years)

because of the stability of such agencies. Sadly, many public sector agencies do manage to offer opportunities, but they often do a poor job of aligning opportunities leadership with the agencies current and/or future needs.

MANAGERIAL BEHAVIORS AND VALUES

An individual's values whether they are male or female, are the fiber that defines who that individual is. According to Connolly (2006), a manager's values have a direct impact on his or her style of management. If one listens to a manager describe his style of leadership, one will find a direct connection to that manager's values. At times, however, public-sector managers encounter situations in which they may have to choose between compassion for the needs of their staff and their duty to the public, thus causing conflict with their core values. An individual's place or level of authority in an organization can affect one's values (Rokeach, 1973). A manager's effectiveness, and that of the organization, will be damaged if the manager does not respect basic human, social, cultural, and professional values (Jeavons, 1992).

Kohlberg (1969, 1984) stated that ethical thinking is required when working in and leading an environment of numerous diverse groups. Verschoor (2001), one of the leading researchers in ethics and values in business, placed considerable importance on establishing an ethical atmosphere of fairness and trust among employees. According to Paulson (2001), line employees as well as managers who feel respected are less likely to violate codes of ethics and are more likely to report others who commit violations.

Tenure affects values in the public sector more than in any other entity. Often, managers with many years of experience and time with the organization in the public sector hold important and influential positions. The values held by the organization and the employees have an effect on one another; and this is the primary reason that tenure managers have more success. Over a period of time, they have proven themselves trustworthy. On the other hand, numerous studies (Becker & Connor, 2005; Bigel, 2000; Dunkelberg & Robin, 1998; Elm & Nicols, 1990, 1993; and Kelly, Ferrell, & Skinner, 1990) have shown varied results. In the public sector it has been found that managers who maintain high values for themselves as well as the organization; however, a few isolated studies show result of a different conclusion. The level of motivation is frequently based on the manager's success within the organization and the level of management in a given department. Specifically, higher-level managers are usually more motivated and maintain higher values than do lower-level employees and middle managers in the public sector. This can be difficult for many, particularly female managers that lack tenure mentors and coaches within their perspective agencies.

According to Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001), those who excel in the same role typically create the same outcomes, though often using different behaviors and exhibiting a wide range of traits and leadership styles. These two authors also believe that with training and mentoring, managers can be taught a number of techniques and skills to be successful at their various duties and tasks. In many cases, however, not all needed behaviors and competencies can be learned; many are often too complicated.

MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES

Research has shown that recruiting; training, and an effective evaluation process are key to accomplishing a high level of managerial competency (Parry, 1998). Competency has been defined in several ways. Two of the more common terms that are synonymous with competency are traits and skills. Traits are consistent with personality identifiers and behaviors that are formed early in one's life and hence may prove challenging to change. Parry also alleged that competencies are a collection of interconnected information, along with attitudes and skills that affect the way an individual manages and leads.

Heinen and O'Neil stated, "Competencies are a critical lever for aligning and integrating processes and practices. They translate business and human capital requirements into specific behavioral

requirements of high performance." (Heinen & O'Neill, 2004, p. 69). When leadership speaks the same language, this helps the process of building competency within an organization and encourages unity throughout (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006). After polling over 5,000 executives, Wolfe (2003) concluded that executive choices of critical management talents were quite varied. However, the most frequently listed competencies according to Gupta-Sunderji (2004) were integrity, ethics, accountability and motivation, persistence and building of effective teams. During this study, the men and women were tested for the same competencies and values. Here is a list of the categories tested:

Competency Profile
- High Performers
- Problem Solvers
- Team Oriented (Team Player)
- Role Experts
- Socially Skilled (Advanced Social Skills)
- Learning Oriented (Trainer and Developer)
- Success Focused (Value Maker)

Behavior Profiles
- Assertive (Sociability)
- Ambitious (Extroversion/Ambition)
- Skilled Communicator (Agreeableness/Congeniality)
- Principled (Conscientiousness)
- Creator of Value (Value)
- Explorers (Openness)

RESULTS

This study explores the competencies and behaviors that may lead to successful and effective public-sector managers. The data analysis where provided for the following research question:

> *Are there any significant differences in the competencies and behaviors of public sector managers when comparing various demographics that may hinder or enhance their ability to be effective and/or successful in their duties?*

This study uses the MVP survey to identify the particular leadership competencies and behaviors profiles as outlined under the MVP profile. The participants for this survey were chosen by a random sample experimental design from employees of civil agencies. All were in management positions in state and local government. The category gender was used as demographic data for public-sector managers, as well as independent variable for the data analysis. The dependent variables are the seven competences and six behavior categories tested by the Most Valuable Performer (MVP) survey as noted earlier.

Gender
Approximately 50% of the participants were male and 50 % female, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

		Number	Percentage
Valid	Male	349	50.1
	Female	347	49.9
	Total	696	100.0

Based on the data analysis ran by using ANOVA under the independent variable "gender" (see Appendix A), three dependent variables seem statistically significant: high performer (pPer), trainer and developer (pDev), and value maker (pVal). Under the independent variable "gender" (see Appendix B), two dependent variables seem statistically significant: conscientiousness (bCon) and openness (bOpe), and under the independent variable "gender" (see Appendix B), two independent variables seem statistically significant: conscientiousness (bCon) and openness (bOpe).

The Tukey test does not work with "gender" per se; however, extra tests were performed under "gender" to determine whether males or females scored higher. Appendix C (Gender Competencies) shows that females scored significantly higher than the males under "means." Based on results from the ANOVA post hoc Tukey test, under the independent variable "gender," a statistically significant difference was detected under the dependent variables high performer (pPer) $[F(1, 694) = 5.530, p = 0.019]$, trainer and developer (pDev) $[F(1, 694) = 5.600, p = 0.018]$, and value maker (pVal) $[F(1, 694) = 4.990, p = 0.026]$ (see Appendix C).

Appendix D (Gender Behaviors) shows that females also scored significantly higher than males under "means." Based on results from the ANOVA post hoc Tukey test, under the independent variable "gender," a statistically significant difference was detected under dependent variables conscientiousness (bCon) $[F(1, 694) = 14.700, p = 0.000]$ and openness (bOpe) $[F(1, 694) = 12.850, p = 0.000]$. In fact, the female participants outscored their male counterparts in every category. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the data results discussed above.

TABLE 2
F-RATIO AND SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER EFFECTS ON PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Measure	F Ratio	p-value
pPer	5.529	.019*
pPro	1.711	.191
pTea	1.151	.284
pRol	.294	.588
pSoc	.355	.551
pDev	5.600	.018*
pVal	4.986	.026*

TABLE 3
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF MALES AND FEMALES ON THE
PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Measure	Gender	Mean	SD
pPer	Male	8.31	1.10
	Female	8.51	1.15
pDev	Male	6.89	1.28
	Female	7.12	1.36
pVal	Male	7.01	1.14
	Female	7.21	1.28

DISCUSSION

Gender Disparity

Gender numbers were relatively even, at 50.1% males and 49.9% females as noted in table 1. However, other statistically significant findings are evident. In fact, the female participants scored higher than the males in every category regardless of demographics. Here are the five main areas.
In the category of competencies, three of seven areas are considered statistically significant:

- High Performer – high performers regularly exceed expectations and build new ones. They also understand that they cannot rely on yesterday and must perform each day. High performers take on leadership when needed and relinquish it as necessary.
- Trainer and Developer – knowledge builders are quick to gain understanding and knowledge and just as quick to share their information with others. This characteristic is directly connected to their drive to constantly improve work processes and results. Knowledge builders learn to promote and develop others without being perceived as know-it-alls.
- Value Maker – Value makers can readily create value at all levels by connecting their personal success to organizational goals. They share success easily and may not feel successful if the team is not successful.

In the category of behaviors, two of six areas are considered statistically significant: These are the two areas that fall under behavior:

- Conscientiousness – principled people have well-formed beliefs of right and wrong and values of good and bad which are based on accessible criteria. They do not commit until they believe that they can succeed. Therefore, they are able to succeed anywhere they choose within an organization.
- Openness – Explorers tend to be both curious and creative. They are eager to explore ideas and to learn from others and from experience. They create original ideas and apply them successfully. They are intolerant of poor performance and of being behind the competition. They manage this intolerance by challenging the problems as they see them.

No simple explanation is evident for the fact that females outscored males in these five areas. According Stringer (2002), however, the future of leadership may require we all pay closer attention to the gifts female managers bring to organizations. As more and more women move into leadership positions, ongoing research is showing that they bring new sets of competencies to the task of leadership. Business Week ("As Leaders, Women Rule," 2000), on the basis of performance evaluation of senior managers, identified four skill areas in which women outperform their male counterparts: motivating others, fostering communication, producing high-quality work, and listening to others. Only in two areas did men sometimes earn higher marks: strategic planning and analyzing issues.

This information will play a big difference in how organizations will be managed in the future. If these identifiers are correct, both men and women still have areas to address before they fully meet the needs of their staff.

Stringer (2002) also listed details from a study he led in which the subordinates of managers rated men and women equally strong as leaders but rated women as having two distinct strengths:

- They are more open and candid, and they confront conflict more directly.
- They are viewed as being stronger coaches and better at giving feedback regardless of whether it is good or bad.

Women, according to their subordinates, also have clear weaknesses:

- The goals women set are not as challenging as the goals set by men.
- Females are less analytical and less informed about marketplace realities than are their male counterparts.
- Women have more trouble letting go and encouraging innovation.

Stringer states: "Peers rate their women colleagues as more "outspoken" and more willing to "stick to their guns" but weaker in communicating an exciting vision and knowing the industry, the market, and business in general (Stringer, 2002, p. 221). Nevertheless, the scores achieved by the female participants in the MVP survey seem to address many of the same reasons women are rising as leaders according to Stringer's study.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Regardless of the efforts and strides diversity and inclusion departments have made in recent years, it is clear that biases of gender still exist, and in many cases so does discrimination against women in the workplace especially in male dominated workforce's such as certain public-sector agencies. Much of this may be due to the preconceived notion that men make better leaders and managers than women. Nevertheless, there are studies that have shown how disparity has been sustained for women managers. According to a study by Brenner, Tomkiewicz and Schein (1989), men perceive successful and effective management as having the characteristics often and more commonly associated with traits associated with men than women. Even though other studies have shown behaviors necessary to be successful leaders have changed in recent years, many male managers still hold onto the same beliefs of what types of characteristics and attitudes are necessary for effective leadership and what qualifies them to be the best candidate for management positions.

According to Cann and Siegfried (1990), there is an indication that the behaviors people recognized as a decisive gauge of a successful leader which are included in those characteristics that are viewed as feminine. Effective and successful leaders/managers must have the ability to be flexible and adapt to the situation; which means exhibit the characteristics that are indicative to both male and females. Those with the capacity to handle a variety of challenges must possess these qualities, but society continues to refer to the female characteristics as less desirable traits; thus, denying potential female managers the respect they deserve. Many of these perceived notions of gender differences and gender superiority in leadership characteristics has been discovered through many studies concerning common community and societal thinking over the years.

This study opens up many exciting research implications. One could look at additional measures to give more conclusive findings to the findings. The obvious next step, for example, would be to test the conceptual quantitative findings with qualitative data, to determine how success, influence, and effectiveness of a manager can be measured. A qualitative research collection methodology that could be employed is action research. This type of research, introduced by Kurt Lewin (1946), involves active participation, including interviews of current public-sector managers, their subordinates, peers, and superiors. Moreover, it seeks to present questions that would allow the respondents to elaborate on their experiences.

There might be additional information to be learned by examining educational differences as well as years in the industry differences between men and women.

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ANOVA ANALYSIS OF THE COMPETENCIES BETWEEN GENDERS

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
pPer	Between Groups	7.003	1	7.003	5.529	.019
	Within Groups	878.927	694	1.266		
	Total	885.930	695			
pPro	Between Groups	2.383	1	2.383	1.711	.191
	Within Groups	966.284	694	1.392		
	Total	968.667	695			
pTea	Between Groups	1.727	1	1.727	1.151	.284
	Within Groups	1041.600	694	1.501		
	Total	1043.328	695			
pRol	Between Groups	.697	1	.697	.294	.588
	Within Groups	1645.737	694	2.371		
	Total	1646.435	695			
pSoc	Between Groups	.325	1	.325	.355	.551
	Within Groups	635.026	694	.915		
	Total	635.351	695			
pDev	Between Groups	9.774	1	9.774	5.600	.018
	Within Groups	1211.383	694	1.746		
	Total	1221.157	695			
pVal	Between Groups	7.348	1	7.348	4.986	.026
	Within Groups	1022.767	694	1.474		
	Total	1030.115	695			

APPENDIX B
ANOVA ANALYSIS OF THE BEHAVIORS BETWEEN GENDERS

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
bSoc	Between Groups	3.143	1	3.143	2.793	.095
	Within Groups	780.931	694	1.125		
	Total	784.073	695			
bExt	Between Groups	1.427	1	1.427	1.562	.212
	Within Groups	633.794	694	.913		
	Total	635.221	695			
bAgr	Between Groups	2.104	1	2.104	2.976	.085
	Within Groups	490.700	694	.707		
	Total	492.805	695			
bCon	Between Groups	15.912	1	15.912	14.696	.000
	Within Groups	751.427	694	1.083		
	Total	767.339	695			
bVal	Between Groups	2.473	1	2.473	2.279	.132
	Within Groups	752.976	694	1.085		
	Total	755.449	695			
bOpe	Between Groups	8.670	1	8.670	12.850	.000
	Within Groups	468.286	694	.675		
	Total	476.957	695			

APPENDIX C

ANOVA POST HOC TUKEY ANALYSIS OF THE COMPETENCIES BETWEEN GENDERS

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
pPer	Between Groups	7.003	1	7.003	5.529	.019
	Within Groups	878.927	694	1.266		
	Total	885.930	695			
pPro	Between Groups	2.383	1	2.383	1.711	.191
	Within Groups	966.284	694	1.392		
	Total	968.667	695			
pTea	Between Groups	1.727	1	1.727	1.151	.284
	Within Groups	1041.600	694	1.501		
	Total	1043.328	695			
pRol	Between Groups	.697	1	.697	.294	.588
	Within Groups	1645.737	694	2.371		
	Total	1646.435	695			
pSoc	Between Groups	.325	1	.325	.355	.551
	Within Groups	635.026	694	.915		
	Total	635.351	695			
pDev	Between Groups	9.774	1	9.774	5.600	.018
	Within Groups	1211.383	694	1.746		
	Total	1221.157	695			
pVal	Between Groups	7.348	1	7.348	4.986	.026
	Within Groups	1022.767	694	1.474		
	Total	1030.115	695			

APPENDIX D
ANOVA POST HOC TUKEY ANALYSIS OF THE BEHAVIORS BETWEEN GENDERS

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
bSoc	Between Groups	3.143	1	3.143	2.793	.095
	Within Groups	780.931	694	1.125		
	Total	784.073	695			
bExt	Between Groups	1.427	1	1.427	1.562	.212
	Within Groups	633.794	694	.913		
	Total	635.221	695			
bAgr	Between Groups	2.104	1	2.104	2.976	.085
	Within Groups	490.700	694	.707		
	Total	492.805	695			
bCon	Between Groups	15.912	1	15.912	14.696	.000
	Within Groups	751.427	694	1.083		
	Total	767.339	695			
bVal	Between Groups	2.473	1	2.473	2.279	.132
	Within Groups	752.976	694	1.085		
	Total	755.449	695			
bOpe	Between Groups	8.670	1	8.670	12.850	.000
	Within Groups	468.286	694	.675		
	Total	476.957	695			