Effects of Gender and Sex Type on Perceived Leadership Abilities

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ABSTRACT. The effects of gender and sex type on perceived leadership abilities were investigated. The participants consisted of 33 resident assistants at a state university. They completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory and a sociometric instrument that measured perceived leadership abilities. The researchers hypothesized that the men in the study would tend to be perceived as leaders and that those men would be androgynous, possessing a high number of both feminine and masculine characteristics. Further, the women in the study would be perceived as single faceted by their peers; if a woman emerged as a leader, she would be perceived as effective in either disciplinary situations or in interpersonal situations, but not effective in both areas. The researchers also hypothesized that female leaders would be sex typed as either androgynous or masculine. From the results of the study, the researchers concluded that instead of one single male leader emerging within each residence hall, a group of co-ed leaders emerged within each hall. The overall gender orientation of that leader group was predominantly masculine in all residence halls, with the exception of the all-female hall, for which the leader group was predominantly feminine. The participants' gender did not appear to affect their being viewed as single faceted in their leadership strengths by their peers. Even though the distribution of sex type among all the subjects studied was found not to differ from that of the general population, the participants were found to be more sex typed than the general population.

THE LEADERSHIP CATEGORIZATION THEORY proposes that a person's schematic conception of a leader strongly influences how that person will perceive a leader's effectiveness (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). If the leader possesses a high number of characteristics that match the observer's schematic conception, the leader will be perceived as effective; likewise, if the leader possesses few or none of the schematic characteristics, he or she will be perceived as ineffective.

Traditionally, characteristics that are associated with an effective leader have been stereotypically masculine, such as being task oriented, ambitious, and assertive; however, stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as being interpersonally oriented, compassionate, and sensitive, tend not to be associated with leader effectiveness (Bem, 1974; Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Thus, according to the leadership categorization theory, men more than women will tend to be viewed as effective leaders. Several studies have found this to be the case (Dobbins, Long, Dedrick, & Clemons, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 1991). When women do emerge as leaders, they are in groups that require complex social interaction, a stereotypical female task (Eagly & Karau, 1991). In other studies, researchers have found no significant differences in leadership emergence or effectiveness as a function of gender (Goktepe & Schneier, 1988, 1989; Ragins, 1991). The studies conducted by Goktepe and Schneier are divided, though, on the effects of psychological gender, or sex type, on leadership effectiveness and emergence. It was first found that those participants who were androgynous, or high in both feminine and masculine qualities, received higher ratings on measuring events of leadership effectiveness than did masculine or feminine sex-type participants (Goktepe & Schneier, 1988). In a subsequent study that measured leadership emergence, those participants who were sex typed as masculine emerged as leaders significantly more than did feminine or androgynous participants (Goktepe & Schneier, 1989).

Cann and Siegfried (1990) found that consideration behaviors are perceived as being feminine, whereas structuring behaviors are perceived as being masculine. Thus, both of these qualities should be present in one's leadership style in order to be effective. Researchers have also found that when women leaders are perceived as possessing a stereotypically masculine style, such as being authoritarian and potent, they tended to be less positively valued and viewed as more threatening than their male counterparts (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Morrison, Greene, & Tischler, 1985).

Because stereotypical gender characteristics are often associated with leadership effectiveness, it can be inferred that both physical gender and psychological gender can influence others' perceptions of the leader's abilities. If such stereotypes hold true, women would be expected to be perceived as more effective leaders in situations that involve social interaction and require strong interpersonal skills. Men would be perceived as more effective leaders in situations that require strong assertive and disciplinary skills

Resident assistants (RAs) on a college campus are required, as a part of their job description, to oversee the smooth running of the residence hall. These duties require resident assistants to work together in responding to both disciplinary situations and interpersonal situations, demanding the use of both types of stereotyped skills and abilities. We hypothesized that within each of

the co-ed groups, one leader would emerge who would be more likely to be male than female. Each one of these male leaders would be androgynous, possessing a high number of both masculine and feminine characteristics. If a female leader did emerge, we predicted that she too would be androgynous. We hypothesized, however, that female leaders would be viewed as single-faceted by their peers, being perceived as effective either in disciplinary situations or in interpersonal situations, but not effective in both areas. Gender stereotypical characteristics would predict that, overall, men, or masculine sex-typed women would be perceived as most effective in dealing with disciplinary problems and would tend to be chosen by others to lead in disciplinary situations. Women, or feminine sex-typed men, would be perceived as most effective in dealing with interpersonal problems and would tend to be chosen to lead in interpersonal situations.

Method

Participants

Our participant group consisted of resident assistants ($N = 33$) at a state university. Four residence halls were represented, with each hall having its own RA staff. Three of the halls were co-ed, with the staff including both men and women; all of the staff in the fourth hall were women.

Materials

Materials consisted of a sociometric instrument containing 14 questions designed to measure four aspects of perceived leadership: leadership qualities, leadership abilities, disciplinary leadership, and interpersonal receptiveness (Treadwell, Saxton, & Mulholland, 1995). Ten of these questions were later rejected when they were determined to be inadequate predictors of perceived leadership aspects either because of their vagueness or their irrelevant nature.

The sociometric questions (Table 1) used in the analysis measured four aspects of leadership: interpersonal, disciplinary, qualities of leadership, and perceived leadership abilities.

We also used the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) to identify sex-typed individuals according to their self-concepts or self-ratings of their personal attributes, such as instrumentality and expressiveness.

Procedure

The resident hall directors instructed the participants to complete the sociometric questions; the BSRI was administered to the participants 1 month later.

TABLE 1
Instrument Used to Measure Aspects of Perceived Leadership

Aspect of perceived leadership	Question
Interpersonal receptiveness	Which resident assistant (RA) would you select as a therapist?
Disciplinary leadership	Residents are drinking beer in their room. Which RA would you ask to back you up when you confront the residents?
Leadership qualities	Select an RA who exemplifies the leadership qualities you desire.
Leadership abilities	The RAs have a complaint about your resident director (RD). Which RA would you choose to represent the RAs and confront the RD?

Results

The staff of all of the residence halls examined were high in cohesiveness, as determined by the number of reciprocal choices among the group members on the sociometric instrument that were administered. Only a few participants among all the staff of the residence halls were found to be rejected, having received no reciprocated choices among the leadership dimensions examined. Figure 1 demonstrates that high degree of cohesiveness. Each participant in that residence hall received at least one reciprocal choice; no separate subgroups or "cliques" of mutual choices were formed nor was anyone rejected.

Our analysis of the sociograms also showed that no single leader emerged among any of the residence hall groups. Instead, a group of two or more individuals were chosen by the subjects as leaders on all of the four dimensions. These sets of group leaders always contained both men and women who had consistently chosen each other on the sociometric instrument, indicating strong mutual relationships. The coleader groups of each of the residence halls are represented in Table 2.

We used Bem's Stanford subject scores to calculate the normative data (1974). The results of the BSRI indicated that the distribution of sex type among all of the participants was no different from that of the general population, as shown in Table 3. The majority of all participants, 52%, were of a masculine gender orientation; 27% were androgynous; 21% were feminine. There was also no difference demonstrated in the distribution of sex type among the perceived leaders in the study. The only difference in the distribution of sex types among the participants and those of the expected norms was among the female perceived leaders, compared with women in the general

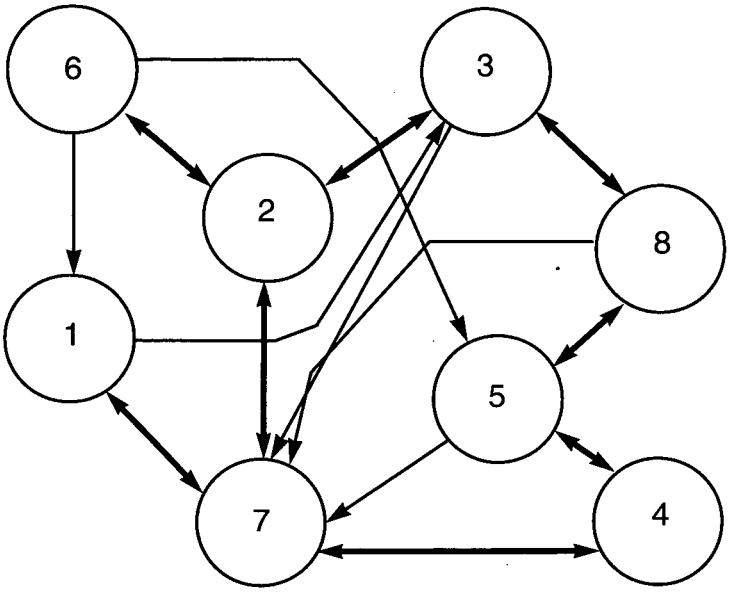

FIGURE 1. Sociogram generated from one subject group's responses to the question: Whom would you select as a therapist? The high number of reciprocal choices among these subjects, as well as the lack of any subgroups, demonstrates this group's high level of cohesiveness. Computerized sociogram created by *GraphPlot* (Saxton, 1996).

TABLE 2
Sex Type and Gender of Perceived Leader Groups in Four Residence Halls

Residence hall			
1	2	3	4 (all women)
Masculine man	Masculine man	Masculine man	Feminine woman
Masculine man	Androgynous man	Masculine woman	Feminine woman
Masculine woman	Masculine woman		Masculine woman
Androgynous woman			

population; the distribution of masculine and feminine sex types was almost the reverse of the expected female norm (subject group: 57% masculine, 21% feminine; expected norm: 20% masculine, 54% feminine).

Among all four of the leadership dimensions examined, masculine sex-typed participants, both men and women, received a greater proportion of the

TABLE 3
Results of the Bem Sex Role Inventory

Category	O[1]	Exp. prop.	E[2]	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$(O - E)^2/E$
Distribution of sex type among all participants						
Masculine	17	.413	13.63	3.37	11.36	0.834
Androgynous	9	.313	10.33	–1.33	1.77	0.171
Feminine	7	.274	9.04	–2.04	4.16	0.460
Sum	33	1.000	33.00		χ^2 =	1.465
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	5.990
Distribution of sex type among participants who are perceived leaders						
Masculine	8	.413	4.96	3.04	9.24	1.863
Androgynous	1	.313	3.76	–2.76	7.618	2.026
Feminine	3	.274	3.29	–0.29	0.084	0.026
Sum	12	1.000	12.00		χ^2 =	3.915
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	5.990
Distribution of sex type among female participants who are perceived leaders						
Masculine	4	.20	1.40	2.60	6.76	4.83
Androgynous	1	.27	1.89	–0.89	0.79	0.43
Feminine	2	.54	3.78	–1.78	3.17	0.84
Sum	7	1.00	7.00		χ^2 =	6.09
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	5.99
Distribution of choices received for all leadership dimensions (leadership abilities, leadership qualities, disciplinary situations, and interpersonal situations) according to participants' sex types						
Masculine	165	.52	126.36	38.64	1493.05	11.82
Androgynous	35	.27	65.61	–30.61	936.97	14.28
Feminine	43	.21	51.03	–8.03	64.48	1.26
Sum	243	1.00	243.00		χ^2 =	27.36
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	5.99
Distribution of choices received in interpersonal situations according to participants' sex types						
Masculine	34	.52	32.76	1.24	1.54	0.047
Androgynous	17	.27	17.01	–0.01	0.0001	0.000
Feminine	12	.21	13.23	–1.23	1.50	0.114
Sum	63	1.00	63.00		χ^2 =	0.161
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	5.99

(table continues)

TABLE 3—*continued*

Category	O^1	Exp. prop.	E^2	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$(O - E)^2/E$
Distribution of choices received for leadership qualities according to participants' sex types						
Masculine	38	.52	31.72	6.28	39.44	1.240
Androgynous	10	.27	16.47	–6.47	41.86	2.540
Feminine	13	.21	12.81	–0.19	0.04	0.003
Sum	61	1.00	67.00			$\chi^2 =$ 3.783
						$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)} =$ 5.99
Distribution of choices received for disciplinary situations according to participants' sex types						
Masculine	49	.52	34.84	14.16	200.51	5.76
Androgynous	9	.27	18.09	–9.09	82.63	4.57
Feminine	9	.21	14.07	–5.07	25.70	1.83
Sum	67	1.00	67.00			$\chi^2 = 12.16$
						$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)} =$ 5.99
Distribution of choices received for leadership abilities according to participants' sex types						
Masculine	44	.52	32.24	11.76	138.30	4.29
Androgynous	7	.27	16.74	–9.74	94.87	5.67
Feminine	11	.21	13.02	–2.02	4.08	0.31
Sum	62	1.00	62.00			$\chi^2 = 10.27$
						$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)} =$ 5.99
Distribution of choices received for leadership abilities according to participants' gender						
Males	21	.33	20.79	–.21	.044	0.002
Females	42	.67	42.21	.21	.044	0.001
Sum	63	1.00	63.00			$\chi^2 = 0.003$
						$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)} = 3.84$
Distribution of choices received for leadership qualities according to participants' gender						
Males	17	.33	20.13	–3.13	9.80	0.47
Females	44	.67	40.87	3.13	9.80	0.24
Sum	61	1.00	61.00			$\chi^2 = 0.71$
						$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)} = 3.84$

(table continues)

TABLE 3—*continued*

Category	O^1	Exp. prop.	E^2	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$(O - E)^2/E$
Distribution of choices received for leadership abilities according to participants' gender						
Males	24	.33	20.46	3.54	12.53	0.612
Females	38	.67	41.54	–3.54	12.53	0.302
Sum	62	1.00	62.00		χ^2 =	0.914
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	3.84
Distribution of choices received disciplinary situations according to participants' gender						
Males	35	.33	22.11	12.89	166	7.51
Females	32	.67	44.89	–12.89	166	3.70
Sum	67	1.00	67.00		χ^2 =	11.21
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	3.84
Distribution of all participants who are determined to be single faceted according to their gender						
Males	4	.33	2.31	1.69	2.87	1.24
Females	3	.67	4.69	–1.69	2.87	0.61
Sum	7	1.00	7.00		χ^2 =	1.85
					$\chi^2_{crit(.05, 2)}$ =	3.84

Note. O represents "observed frequencies." E represents "expected frequencies."

choices from other participants than what would normally be expected. Normative figures were calculated by assuming that the distribution of each sex-type in the sample would be equal to the distribution of choices received. There was no difference among the different sex types in the number of choices received from both the interpersonal situation and leadership qualities from what would be expected. However, we found significant differences for both the disciplinary situation and leadership abilities. In these areas, masculine sex-typed participants received a greater proportion of choices than what would be expected if the choices were distributed evenly, whereas the feminine sex-typed participants received a lesser proportion of choices in these same areas. Androgynous sex-typed participants received a slightly lesser proportion of choices in the disciplinary dimension, but they received the expected proportion of choices for the leadership abilities dimension.

TABLE 4
Mean Comparison Between Participant Groups and Normative Sample

Group	Men (n = 11)	Women (n = 22)
Masculine		
M	5.71	5.19
SD	0.313	0.662
t	23.125*	15.12*
Feminine		
M	4.95	5.17
SD	0.383	0.357
t	15.93*	5.16*
Androgynous		
M	–1.823	–0.099
SD	1.067	2.081
t	–0.426*	–8.76*

*$p < .05$.

Examining these same dimensions in terms of gender, we found no differences between male and female participants and their perceived interpersonal leadership abilities, their perceived leadership qualities, or their perceived leadership abilities. Men, however, were chosen more often than women in disciplinary abilities. There were instances in which men and women received a high number of choices on either the interpersonal dimension or the disciplinary dimension, but not on both dimensions simultaneously.

Participants were determined to be "single-faceted" if they received very many choices in either the interpersonal or disciplinary situation while receiving very few choices in the contrasting situation. Using these guidelines, we determined that 36% of all the men and 13% of all the women were single faceted. No significant difference was found between that gender distribution. There was, however, a significant gender difference among those single-faceted participants who were leaders. Fifty-two percent of all of the perceived leaders were single faceted. The distribution of sex type among all the single-faceted participants was not significant.

When we compared the means of the participant groups' sex-type scores and the normative figures, we found significant differences in almost all of the gender/sex type relationships, as summarized in Table 4. The only group that did not differ from the expected norm was the androgynous males; all other groups were more sex typed than one would expect in the general population.

Discussion

Although the small sample size of this study prevents us from making generalizations, we did find certain trends. The high number of mutual choices, as well as the emergence of a group of two or three leaders, supports our assertions about the strong cohesiveness within the halls' staffs. Perhaps this is because of the resident assistants' working and living arrangements; the resident assistants work and live in the residence halls.

Contrary to the hypothesis that a single leader would emerge among each of the residence hall staffs, we found that a small group of two or three individuals emerged as coleaders within each hall. This coleader group always consisted of at least one man and one woman, perhaps the result of a need to have complementing leadership abilities, which the two genders supposedly provide. Gender stereotypes and prejudices may continue to limit people's perceptions and expectations of the two sexes. A single gender may not be viewed as competent in handling situations that require both stereotypically masculine and feminine abilities. To compensate for this limitation, people may turn to a group of leaders who represent both genders, satisfying their preconceptions of certain genders being more suited for certain tasks.

Despite previous research that asserted that an effective leader should be androgynous (Cann & Siegfried, 1990), our findings have shown that the majority of the group leaders were of a masculine gender orientation. So despite the presence of a woman within each leader group, the overall gender orientation of the group was nonetheless predominantly masculine. This was not the case, of course, in the all-female hall. The overall orientation in that leader group was predominantly feminine, and it was the only hall to have feminine sex-typed leaders. Only one participant in the entire hall showed a masculine gender orientation, going against the masculine trend seen in the other halls (it is interesting to note that this lone "masculine" participant within the all-female hall was also the third member of the otherwise all-female leader group). The reason this group did not follow the masculine pattern seen in the other halls is unclear. Perhaps the dynamics of an all-female group differs from a co-ed group, providing an interesting premise for further study.

Although there were instances of female leaders being viewed as effective in either interpersonal or disciplinary situations, but not both, the frequency did not differ from that of male leaders. Thus, it appears that gender did not play a part in being perceived as being single faceted in leadership strengths. There was, however, a significant difference between the number of perceived leaders and nonleaders who were determined to be single faceted; 85% of those participants who were determined to be single faceted were also perceived leaders. It appears that possessing a strength in one of these areas, even if he or she is lacking in the other, causes the resident assistant to be seen still

as a leader. This may also help to explain the emergence of a group of coleaders rather than a single leader within each hall. Each resident assistant brings to the group his or her own strengths as well as weaknesses; by combining their abilities, the coleaders can compensate for each other's shortcomings.

Although women are just as likely as men to be viewed as possessing both leadership qualities and leadership abilities, this does not hold true for feminine sex-typed participants versus masculine sex-typed participants. It appears that a feminine sex-typed individual who has all the qualities and characteristics of an effective leader will still have difficulty in persuading other group members that he or she is indeed capable of being a leader. This may be the result of enduring beliefs that maintain that feminine qualities are not part of the recipe that makes up an effective leader.

Whereas the distribution of sex type among the resident assistants studied did not differ from the distribution of sex type among the general population, the degree to which the resident assistants were found to be sex typed was greater than what would be expected. Perhaps the very leadership characteristics that presumably secured the resident assistants' positions caused them also to score above average on the sex-type inventory. The characteristics of a strong and effective leader may inherently manifest themselves in a strong sex-typed personality, be it masculine, feminine, or androgynous.

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