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ABSTRACT
              Psychological literature seemingly provides
contradictory answers to the question of whether women and men are
equally effective as leaders. There are generally two approaches used
to answer this question: assign males and females the role of leader,
keeping certain extraneous factors constant, and then compare leader
or group effectiveness: or examine the leader's or group's reactions
to actual male and female leaders. These approaches characterize the
two sets of conflicting research results, i.e., research supporting
gender differences in leadership behavior uses samples from the
general population of women, while studies finding no gender-related
differences uses samples from the population of actual female
leaders. An alternative approach for examining leadership
effectiveness in terms of gender differences is to assess how
leadership role, leadership style, and situational characteristics
influence leadership behavior. (Author/HLM)

TITLE   An Analysis of Findings Comparing Women and Men as Leaders

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SUMMARY Gender differences in leadership behavior are found when women are assigned to be the leader, but disappear when actual male and female leaders are studied. A review of the literature revealed that the leadership behavior of women and men is influenced by role perceptions, leadership style, and situational characteristics.

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An analysis of findings comparing women and men as leaders

Are women and men equally effective as leaders? The psychological litera-
ture seemingly provides us with contradictory answers to this question. Studies
show that women played a less dominant role when a task was unstructured than
when it was structured (Maier, 1970), male leaders exhibited more leader-like
behaviors than did their female counterparts (Eskilson & Wiley, 1976), and
field-dependent women were less active and influential than men (Lockheed,
1977). On the other hand, studies using self-ratings of leadership (Bartol
& Wortman, 1976) and subordinates' descriptions (Bartol, 1974; Day & Stogdill,
1972) indicate that there may be few job-related differences between female
and male leaders.

There appear to be two approaches to answering this question concerning
differences between men and women as leaders: (1) assign women and men the
role of leader, keeping various extraneous factors constant, and compare the
leader's and groups' effectiveness; or (2) examine the leader's and group's
reactions to actual leaders, such as male and female managers, teachers, mili-
tary cadets, and so on. The former procedure addresses the question of whether
women, in general, can be as effective as male leaders. The second method asks
if women who chose to be leaders are as effective as men who also chose leader-
ship roles.

The two approaches just described characterize the two sets of conflicting
research results previously discussed. Research supporting gender differences
in leadership behavior sampled the general population of women, while studies
finding no gender-related differences in leadership behaviors sampled the
population of actual female leaders.

What causes some women to choose to be leaders and to lead effectively
while other women are apparently less successful? We propose that leadership

role, style, and situational characteristics influence leadership behavior.
Let us examine each of these components for possible gender differences.

Leadership Role

A role is an expectation about what is appropriate for a person to do or
be in a given position. There is much research evidence that directly supports
or implies that people generally expect the leader role to be filled by a man.
Male middle managers rated women in general, men in general, or successful
middle managers on their general characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments.
On 60 of these 86 items, men and managers were similarly rated, while on only
eight items were women rated as being similar to successful middle managers
(Schein, 1973). Additionally, regardless of the dominance of the woman, she
is unlikely to become leader when a man is available (Megargee, 1969). Fin-
ally, Eskilson and Wiley (1976) found that female leaders were less likely to
choose themselves as the future leader of the group than were men. In sum,
both women and men more often expect a leader to be a man (Lockheed, 1977).

For women, a basic concern exists about whether or not the leadership
role itself is appropriate. Although an ineffectual male leader may have to
cope with a stronger sense of failure since he mismanaged his given role than
would a failing woman (Jacobson & Effertz, 1974), a successful female leader
must cope with the fact that societal attitudes do not favor her successes in
this role. Hence, women, unlike men, must cope with the fact that success
with the leadership role is not valued, both by others (Bass, Krusell, &
Alexander, 1971; Rosen, Jerdee, & Prestwich, 1975) and by themselves because
of possible role conflicts (O'Leary, 1974).

Leadership Style

Leadership style refers to the personality characteristics of the leader
which are most typical across situations. Observations of female leadership

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styles by Kanter (1977) lead her to conclude that individual differences are more noteworthy than gender differences. In a study described earlier, Megargee (1969) examined the effects of conflicting style and role. He factorially combined men and women who scored either high or low in dominance, and then asked each of the four pairs to select a leader. In the case of a high dominance woman paired with a low dominance man, a component of leadership style--dominance--predicts that the woman will become leader. In contrast, the leadership role demands a male leader. When this pair was actually asked to select a leader, the woman was most likely to make the decision, more frequently than in any other pair. Most notably, in 91% of the cases, she appointed the man as the leader. Thus, even when a woman's leadership style conforms to role prescriptions regarding leadership, she may defer to the role demands and avoid leadership behavior.

Situational Influences

It seems reasonable to suggest that there are situational factors that will still prevent women who have overcome role conflicts from exhibiting leadership behaviors and that will, under other conditions, compel women to overcome role conflicts and actually become leaders. A review of the literature seems to indicate that the sex composition of the group, the type of task employed, and how the leader attains his or her status are all important variables.

The sex composition of the group has been shown to influence disclosure (Kraft & Vraa, 1975) and risk-taking patterns (Bauer & Turner, 1974), two important components of group functioning. In addition, a mixed-sex group of two men and two women that was led by a female leader was most satisfied with the group while an all-male group led by a woman was least satisfied (Yerby, 1975). Groups with same-sex leaders reported having a better group atmosphere than groups led by opposite-sex leaders, but no differences were found in

productivity (Boullard & Cook, 1975).

A variable that seems to have been largely ignored in the literature on leadership is the sex-typing of the task. If a task is perceived to be either masculine or feminine, it may influence how men and women respond to it (Makosky, 1972). For example, women conformed more than did men on items viewed as stereotypically masculine, but conformed as much as or less than did men on neutral and stereotypically feminine items (Sistrunk & McDavid, 1971). Maier's (1970) role-playing paradigm in which women play Gus, the foreman, Jack, Walt, and Steve, working on a job assembling fuel pumps, is a case in point. It is unlikely that a woman would find it appealing to play Gus and to work on a task involving the assemblage of gas pumps. Still, this method was repeatedly used (Sashkin & Maier, 1971; Yerby, 1975). Future research should manipulate this variable by studying leaders' performance with favorably and unfavorably sex-typed tasks or, at least, neutralize the effects of this variable by employing tasks which are not sex-biased.

Finally, it is important to examine the effects of being appointed or emerging as a leader on the performance of female and male leaders. Women who thought that they had become the leader because they exhibited task-relevant skills demonstrated greater performance output and acted more leader-like than women who had been randomly appointed (Eskilson & Wiley, 1976). In contrast, male leaders were not affected by the apparent process that led to their attainment of leadership. Reinforcing a woman's perceptions of her leadership capabilities by pointing to her competency with the task may legitimize leadership behavior for her that otherwise violated her sex-typed stereotype of the leadership role.

Those factors that influence the leadership behavior expressed by or inhibited in women and men are clearly complex and highly interactive.

Personality characteristics that define leadership style need to be delineated. Situational variables and sex-role attitudes of leaders and followers must be considered by future researchers, and their effects on the leadership behaviors exhibited by all leaders, especially women, must be explored.

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