

Gender differences and leadership styles

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



The makeup of our country's workforce is changing and with the upcoming Presidential election at the forefront of our nation's news, it appears that for the first time in our nation's history our great nation could possibly elect our first woman as President. In all my leadership study's this semester, I began asking myself if Hillary Clinton gets elected will the fact that she is a woman bring a different leadership style than President Bush's.

Gender Differences and Leadership

A number of studies focusing on gender and leadership style have been conducted in recent years. Their general conclusion is that males and females do use different styles. Specifically, women tend to adopt a more democratic or participative style with followers. Women are more likely to encourage participation, share power and information, and attempt to enhance follower's self-worth (Robbins & Coulter, 2005,). In putting this in an organizational behavior perspective this shows me that women might well be more in tune with their emotional intelligence.

A person with a high emotional intelligence level is in touch with their emotions and demonstrates self-management in their ability to control their moods and feelings productively and in staying motivated and focused even when facing leadership obstacles (Nahavandi, 2006). This type of leader leads through inclusion and relies on their charisma, expertise, contacts, and interpersonal skills to influence others. Women tend to use more of a transformational leadership style of motivating others by transforming their self interest into organizational goals (Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

What is the nature of a Transformational leadership style? Transformational Leadership Style A transformational leader involves anticipating future trends, inspiring followers to understand and embrace a new vision of possibilities, developing others to be leaders or better leaders, and building the organization or group into a community of challenged and rewarded followers. Transformational leaders are found at all levels of an organization: teams, departments, divisions, and the organization as a whole.

The key interrelated components of transformational leadership include inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration. This leader guide followers by providing them with a sense of meaning and challenge. Followers typically admire, respect, and trust such leaders. They identify with these leaders as people as well as with vision and values that they are advocating. Positive idealized influence allows followers to feel free to question what is being advocate (Hellriegel & Slocum, Jr. 2007). There are indications that a successful female leader is a different breed, providing sharp contrast Men are more likely to use a directive command-and-control style of leadership. They rely on formal position authority for their influence, meaning they let heir subordinates know what's expected of them, schedule work to be done, and provide specific guidance on how to accomplish tasks. Form men this translates to more of a transactional leadership style (Robbins & Coulter, 2005). What characteristics does this type leadership provide?

Transactional Style of Leadership Transactional leadership involves motivating and directing followers primarily through appealing to their own self-interest. The transactional leader tends to focus on a carrot (but

sometimes a stick) approach, set performance expectations and goals, and provide feedback to followers. The primary power of this leadership style comes from their formal authority and responsibilities in the organization. They focus on the basic management processes of controlling, organizing, and short-term planning.

Transactional leaders identify paths that link the achievement of goals to rewards, clarify expectations, exchange promises and resources for support. These leaders set and clarify detailed goals to obtain short-term and measurable results. They will intervene after unacceptable performance or deviations from accepted standards arise. The type of corrective measures associated with this leadership style could possibly result in punishment. Another aspect to consider in effective leadership is the importance of good communication skills. As we all know good communication skills are vital for your success on the job.

Leaders must be able to communicate their expectations, and innovative ideas, as this will have a lasting effect on how you're perceived by your followers. You don't have to read "Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus" to know that men and women communicate differently both verbally and non-verbally. Does our different communicating styles affect our ability to lead? Communication Styles Simma Lieberman is a diversity training expert and motivational speaker and is highly sought out by many American corporations for her knowledge on diversity issues, and has published several articles on this issue.

One article in particular that I believe sheds light on possible differences or perception is based on gender differences in our communication style. Being <https://assignbuster.com/gender-differences-and-leadership-styles/>

married for 19 years to my beautiful wife has shown me how different men and women communicate, but that's for another paper. Lieberman's article identifies some differences in our communication styles that I have witnessed during my years in the workplace. In non-verbal behavior women will nod their head to show that they are listening. Men leave the conversation thinking that a head nod means agreement and will be surprised to find out that the women didn't agree at all.

When a woman is speaking to a man and he does not say anything and stays in neutral body language to show that he is listening, a woman will interpret that is the man being bored or not understanding what she is saying. This can lead the woman to become very uncomfortable and repeat what she is saying or ask the man each time if he understands what she is saying. The man then interprets that as insecurity, or talking to much and which then lead him to think she is not assertive or confident to be a leader (Lieberman, 2007).

Women will actually use more eye contact in conversation to create relationship and connection while many men take that as a challenge to their power or position. Women will also approach a man from the front while men often approach from the side at an angle, which is how each of them tends to stand or sit when talking to others. Men interpret face to face as too personal or aggressive and women will interpret the talking side to side as though he is not being upfront or even hiding something from her. Lieberman makes it a point to write not to use this information to stereotype all men and women because not everyone will fit into these generalities (Lieberman, 2007). You might ask how this information on different

communication styles translates to effective leadership styles. Well, communication involves the understanding of meaning and for it to be successful the meaning must be understood. This is where I believe misperception begins and end on a person's overall ability to lead, regardless of gender. Everything Lieberman states basically adds up to common barriers to effective interpersonal communication.

When people feel uncomfortable and possibly threatened, they tend to react defensively in ways that reduce their ability to lead (Robbins & Coulter, 2005). Employees/followers can't train each other or work together if they can't communicate. Such communication problem may lead to misunderstandings regarding performance goals, work methods, safety measures, and other essential working relations (Hellriegel & Slocum, Jr. , 2007). This is where both men and women need to be aware of each others styles of communication both verbal and non-verbal in order to avoid miscommunication and work better together.

In a March 2000 interview Professor James O'Toole was interviewed by the managing editor of Training and Development Magazine. Professor O'Toole is a Research Professor in the Center for Effective Organizations at the University of Southern California and his research and writings are in the areas of leadership, ethic corporate culture, and philosophy, he is also the author of eighteen acclaimed books. He was being interviewed about his book titled " Leadership A to Z" and the question posed to him was " Do you think women lead differently? Professor O'Toole stated that women face different problems and challenges because social expectations tend to be different for them. He said that he thinks men and women start off from

different places in terms of socialization and social expectations. He goes on to say women have different obstacles than men do, but at least women don't have the John Wayne role model to overcome. The most damaging is the typical male role model, the commander that we subtly and constantly reinforce in our society (Allerton, 2000).

In reading Professor O'Toole's comment, I began to think of the importance our society is in determining a leadership style based gender roles within our society. Gender Roles According to the research while men and women are equally effective in some settings, more often effectiveness depends on the fit between the setting and management gender. For example, women's typically more mentoring, coaching style is more favorably received in female-dominated professions; men's more typically "command and control" style is well received in male dominated professions.

Thus, all things being equal, men and women are equally effective (American Psychological Association, 2006). A 2005 analysis of 46 meta-analyses that were conducted during the past two decades of the 20th century underscores that men and women are basically alike in terms of personality, cognitive ability and leadership. Psychologist Janet Shibley Hyde, PhD, of the University of Wisconsin, discovered that males and females from childhood to adulthood are more alike than different on most psychological variables, resulting in what she calls a gender similarities hypothesis.

Hyde found that gender differences seem to depend on the context in which they were measured. In studies designed to eliminate gender norms, researchers demonstrated that gender roles and social context strongly determine a person's actions. For example, after participants in one

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experiment were told that they would not be identified as male or female, nor did they wear any identification, none conformed to stereotypes about their sex when given the chance to be aggressive, In fact they did the opposite of what would be expected- women were more aggressive and men were more passive(American Psychological Association, 2005).

Studies published during the past decade underscore these gender roles. A 1995 review by Alice Eagly, PhD, Steven Karau, PhD and Mona Makhijani, PhD, of more than 80 different studies found that when aggregated over the organization and laboratory experimental studies in the sample, male and female leaders were equally effective. Even with this data Sandy Shullman, PhD, a psychologist and management consultant who helps major corporations retain women in leadership positions says that women still hold only about one out of 20 top management positions in high profile Fortune 500 corporations, only slightly higher than 20 years ago.

Eagly's advice is to mind the power perception. She says that even though the research found some differences in management style, " the sex differences are small because the leader role itself carries a lot of weight in determining people's behavior. " She advises that women aspiring to management may consider their sex and their behavioral style a light of where they work.

They may get a more positive appraisal in sectors typically populated by women, but if they work in areas dominated by men, adapting their style to the more command and control approach may serve them better. Similarly, men taking management jobs in women oriented industries may tap the interpersonal skills traditionally associated with women in order to see

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more effective(American Psychological Association, 2006). Conclusion In closing, I believe after reading all my research material it comes down to this belief on my part.

Regardless of gender, the fortunate corporations are the ones that adapt the best leadership style based on a company's culture and not the sex of their CEO. I firmly believe that 10 or 15 years from now if not sooner, with cultural diversity and globalization on the increase a leadership style that incorporates both sexes will become the norm. The more women and men work side by side with each other will foster a new working environment and from that, will come a new leadership style.