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Gender Differences in Leadership Style: A Literature Analysis

Mary Clisbee

This analysis of literature explores gender differences in leadership style. As greater numbers of women enter the ranks of leadership and more research is conducted, contradictory findings emerged. Using the qualitative software program NVivo version 1.2, 36 pieces of qualitative, quantitative, and popular culture literature were summarized, coded, and the coded information analyzed. The analysis revealed that (a) the characteristics of the rater have significant impact on the findings, (b) the research instrument and methodology used effect the findings, and (c) there are many varying and often contradictory explanations for gender differences in leadership.

Introduction

For more than 30 years, researchers have been studying gender differences in leadership style. As women have broken through the glass ceiling into top leadership positions there has been increased research interest in this area. Using qualitative research analysis techniques, I examined the research and writing on the topic of gender-based differences in leadership style.

This literature review and analysis revealed that the findings of presence or absence of gender-based differences in leadership style were influenced by (a) characteristics of the rater, (b) research instrument and methodology used, and (c) position of the leader within the management hierarchy.

The bulk of materials reviewed were drawn from studies and issues specific to educational settings. In addition, I included studies conducted in various work domains and the laboratory. Studies and issues peculiar to education leadership are isolated and discussed. Research specifically studying leadership style of educational leaders was limited, with a distinct narrowness for attention to the leadership style of women superintendents. Schmuck (1999) explained that since schools are gender-bound institutions, and since women experienced a different reality than men, “we need to understand women’s experience; what has been written about men superintendents does not necessarily apply to women” (p. xi).

About the Author

Mary Clisbee, Ed.D., is the Deputy Executive Director of the Merrimack Education Center in Chelmsford, Massachusetts. She has extensive experience in K-12 administration. She also directs the Merrimack Leadership Academy, training educators to become school principals and superintendents. Her primary area of research focuses on women in education administration.

First, I will begin by describing the methodology used in this study. Second, the characteristics of the literature will be presented. Third, a discussion of the three major findings formed from the analysis of the coded information will follow. The paper will conclude with a summary and analysis of the interpretations.

Method

Computer based information searches were conducted in addition to a second-generation review of reference lists from articles and books found in the computer-based search. Keyword “leadership style” was paired with keywords “gender differences,” “sex differences,” and “female.” These keywords were searched in the following databases: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC: 1982–2002), Psychologic Abstracts (PsychInfo), and Ingenta. Searches using the same keywords were conducted in the following websites: <findarticles.com>, <google.com>, <amazon.com>, <bookfinder.com>, and <excite.com>. I also searched Barnes and Noble and Border Books for popular culture books. In total, the search produced 132 pieces of literature, out of which 36 were selected for use in this study.

Sample selection used the following criteria: (a) they were specifically related to gender differences in leadership style or contained sections strictly discussing this area, and (b) I was able to gain access to the work within 2 ½ months, since this was a time limited study. All forms of literature that fit these categories were included. The final sample consisted of 36 works of literature.

First, using the software program *Endnotes* 1, I developed a database of references from the literature search. I recorded all documents found, including those that I did not analyze in this study. Second, using the *NVivo* 2 software program for analysis of qualitative research and data, I created a project entitled *Gender-Based Differences in Leadership Style*. Third, from the *Endnotes* database, I created a bibliography and saved it as a word

document. Next, I converted the word document to *rich text format*, which allowed me to directly import it into the NVivo software program. Finally, I read and wrote a summary of each work. Three of the 36 works were available in digital format so, for those, rather than just summarizing; I converted them in their entirety to rich text format and imported the document into the NVivo program. The documents that I accessed from websites had to be saved in *text only* format initially to remove pictures and unreadable tables and figures, then converted to rich text format and imported into the NVivo program.

NVivo is organized around two databases: (a) documents, and (b) codes (or nodes) and the user may cross-reference information within the two databases. A special feature that was particularly valuable for this study was the *document link* feature that allows a user to set up a hyperlink from a place in one document to another document.

I then created a document link from the individual documents to the corresponding citation in the reference list. I also made reverse document links, from the reference list to the document. This facilitated easy movement back and forth from the document to the reference list. It also provided a check and balances thereby ensuring that all documents had been duly included.

Both pre-determined and emergent codes were utilized in the coding scheme. The following codes were pre-determined: (a) does the document identify a difference in leadership style, (b) research instrument used, (c) leadership style differences (by gender), (d) why are styles different, and (e) positions on difference (is a difference, no difference, androgynous). The following codes emerged as summaries were analyzed: (a) when is female style advantageous, (b) who rated style, (c) research question, and (d) leadership position of subject. This combination of pre-defining coding categories drawn from existing theory and developing codes that emerge as the data are analyzed is one accepted coding strategy (Maxwell, 1996, p. 79). Many of the coding *nodes* included *sibling nodes*, which were subsets of the coding node, itself.

An *attributes list* was created in the NVivo project for ease of data organization. I chose to use this function of NVivo because it arranges, in spreadsheet format, a report of all designated variables. The attributes used were (a) sex of researcher/author, (b) publication date, (c) methodology used, (d) general leadership study, (e) education leadership study, (f) presence or absence of difference, and (g) popular culture book.

I coded all summaries and full text articles. As codes emerged and were added to the coding scheme, I returned to documents that had already been coded and searched for evidence of the newly added coding categories. The

coded information was then analyzed. These data were then interpreted and served as evidence for this paper's discussion.

Characteristics of Literature Analyzed

This study was based on the review of a sample of 36 research studies and books (studies = 8, books = 28). Of the total documents reviewed, 22 were research based, 12 were popular culture books, and two were books that were neither research-based nor popular culture. Included in the sample is the meta-analysis of 161 studies (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Of the 22 documents that were research based, 12 used qualitative methodology, 4 used quantitative methodology, 2 used meta-analysis, and 4 used mixed methodologies.

Of the 36 documents reviewed, 34 had at least one female author, and 3 at least one male author. Thirty-two had exclusively female authors, and 2 had exclusively male authors. Two documents were authored by a male/female combination.

Table 1
Publication Dates

Publication Year	Number Published	12 Popular Culture Books	Research Based Articles and Books
1981	1	1	0
1988	1	0	1
1989	1	0	1
1990	2	1	1
1993	4	1	4
1995	5	1	4
1996	3	2	1
1997	1	1	0
1998	3	0	3
1999	3	0	3
2000	6	3	3
2001	2	2	0
2002	1	0	2
No Publication Date	3	0	3

Of the 36 studies and books that were summarized in this review, 14 were based on research conducted in educational settings, and 10 were conducted in other work settings or in the laboratory, and 12 were not based on research.

Thirty-three documents identified a difference in leadership style and one document reported no difference in leadership style, the meta-analyses reported on studies that identified findings in both categories, and one document reported that difference was dependent on who rated the leadership style.

Research instruments used to rate leadership style across the 36 documents included:

1. Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Albright, Haines, Savarese, Wasserman, Yoshida, and Benson, n.d.).
2. Least Preferred Coworker Scale (Albright et al., n.d.; Eagly & Johnson, 1990).
3. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Albright et al., n.d.).
4. Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Lewis, 1998).
5. Leadership Style Inventory (LSI) (Reardon, 1995).
6. Leadership Orientation Survey (Thompson, 2000).
7. Quinn's Competing Values Leadership Instrument (Thompson, 2000).
8. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Carless, 1998).

Qualitative methodology included interview, case study, diary study, participant observation, and artifact analysis techniques.

Three gendered leadership styles were identified across both quantitative and qualitative documents: (a) male, (b) female, and (c) androgynous. Four documents reported findings of androgynous styles of leadership. References to specific male styles of leadership were found in 13 documents and to specific female styles in 26 documents.

The popular culture books summarized in this study tended to focus more on strategies women could use to be successful in the male dominated world of leadership, and less on explaining or understanding the actual differences in leadership style. These books often used humor to frame a structure to understand the demands and expectations of leadership. The most blatantly comical (and perhaps offensive to some), *How to Succeed in Business Without a Penis: Secrets and Strategies for the Working Woman* (Salmansohn, 1996) uses humor and sexual metaphor to describe male and female leadership traits, their advantages and disadvantages. *Play Like a*

Man; Win Like a Woman (Evans, 2000), and *How Men Think: The Seven Essential Rules for Making it in a Man's World* (Mendell, 1996) described scenarios in which women do not understand how to behave in the leadership world because they were not socialized as children in the same way as men through sports and competitive games. These books differed in their focus on the issues of gender-based differences in leadership style, however I elected to add the dimension of popular culture since it is through popular culture books that a segment of the population of readers are gaining information on this subject.

Male leadership was most often described as hierarchical, top-down, and task oriented. Lewis (1998) described male leaders as high in self-confidence and low in emotionality. Men used power as a tool to control subordinates through domination (Grogan, 1996; Rosener, 1990). Male leadership approach was often depicted as managerial, with strict adherence to bureaucratic systems; using male-exclusive networks to gain access to social or interpersonal power (Carli, 1999; Ozga, 1993).

Female leadership style was described as collaborative and caring and less hierarchical than their male counterparts. Blackmore (1999) stated that:

The ethics of care has provided a powerful discourse for women collectively and individually because it offers an alternative image of organization and leadership premised upon the ethical and moral positions for educational administrators, which revalues women's experiences. It recognizes that schools should serve the public and private needs of all individuals; it recognizes the moral aspect of education in terms of relationships and civic responsibility and not just the public needs of men; it fosters caring attitudes in children and administrators by prizing kindness, compassion and commitment; and it seeks to organize schooling around long term social relationships, not differentiating disciplinary boundaries that serve the economy or the elite. (p. 56)

The literature also revealed that women spent less time on paperwork, spent more time visiting classrooms, ran more closely-knit schools, used different, less dominating body language, used different language and procedures, were nurturing, kept up-to-date with curricular issues, spent more time with their peers, were better change agents, and sponsored other women (Brunner, 1999, Ozga, 1993, Reynolds, 2002). Female leadership traits were described as emotional, collaborative, flexible, facilitative, nurturing, sensitive, and cooperative.

There was a clear pattern of reporting that women tended to be more collegial and men more hierarchical. This pattern occurred across research and popular culture material, among quantitative and qualitative studies, and

throughout documents regardless of publication date. Embedded in the reporting is the way that power was perceived as either power over (male) versus power with or to (female). Women were reported to perceive power as a resource to share rather than as a use over subordinates, and that they perceived no limit to the amount of power within an organization (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 1998; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Rosener, 1990). Some studies mentioned that the research must be carefully analyzed to ascertain the relevance of these findings. Studies differed in the ways they controlled for several critical variables, including sex of the rater, positional relationship of rater to leader, and management level occupied by the leader, making comparison of results difficult.

The studies revealed that a transactional/transformational leadership style scale or continuum was most often used to measure male and female leadership traits. Transactional leadership style (task centered) was described as top down and hierarchical. Transactional leadership is a series of transactions between the leaders and his/her followers. Transformational leadership (follower centered), was based on the relationships among leaders and their followers, was more collegial and collaborative, and often synonymous with "servant leadership" style. Transformational leadership facilitated change in an organization through the commitment, loyalty and respect leaders and followers shared.

Findings

Three major deductions were drawn from the analysis of the literature. First, there was a distinct relationship between the findings (of absence or presence of gender-based difference in leadership style) and the rater in the study. Second, the rating instrument and the methodology used appeared to affect results. Third, there were many complex and often intertwined explanations for gender-based differences in leadership style

Rater Effect on Findings

There was evidence suggesting that the presence or absence of gender-based leadership style difference can be linked directly to the positional relationship of the rater to the leader (self, subordinate, and superior) (Carless, 1998, p. 10). This was quite consistent throughout the studies. The greatest report of difference in gendered leadership style invariably appeared through self-evaluation. These studies include those conducted by Ozga (1993), Grogan (1996), Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000), and Adler, Laney, and Packer (1993). However, superiors, subordinates, and others reported absence or limited presence of gender-based difference in leadership

style. Eagly and Johnson (1990) stated that “the identity of the raters who provided the data for the style measure did have some impact on sex differences . . . self-ratings were significantly more stereotypic than subordinate ratings for interpersonal skills and task style” (p. 16). Eagly and Johnson were referring to quantitative data in this statement, and there were no available figures to suggest that this finding can be generalized to qualitative data.

Self-reports were used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. Qualitative studies using interview methodology with female leaders reported the greatest finding of gender-based differences in leadership style. This was very important in educational research since the majority of research on gender-based differences in leadership style in the education milieu relied on self-reports of female administrators. Thus, the differences found were seen through the eyes and in the voice of a female administrator, only. Research did not include the examination of the perceptions of those in the position of superior or subordinate to the female administrator. Male superintendents were not included in qualitative studies.

The gender-role perceptions of the rater also impacted findings. Albright et al., (n.d.) discussed:

Due to gender-role perceptions, the leadership roles of the sexes have been called into question. This is due to the increasing number of women attaining leadership positions within organizations and the new emphasis toward teamwork, cooperation and employee empowerment (Lee, 1994). The leadership strategies that promote these concepts of teamwork are traditionally associated with more female styles . . . that have not been associated with effective management. As a result, the concepts of masculinity and femininity do not necessarily correlate with the persons biological sex (Kent, Russel, & Moss, 1994), and thus not with a person’s leadership capabilities. Perhaps . . . the most effective leader is a person who is able to incorporate both styles. Such an individual is labeled androgynous. (p. 3)

Albright et al. (n.d.) asserted that it is not the biological sex of the individual that determined leadership style, but rather their gendered qualities. A man can exhibit qualities associated with feminine leadership style, or a woman, male leadership style. This theoretic framework placed collaborative, transformational feminine leadership style on one end of the spectrum, and hierarchical, transactional, masculine leadership style on the other, with a mixed, androgynous style in the middle. The rater may have included in his or her response, ratings partially or fully influenced by personal gender-role perceptions.

The sex of the rater was also a variable for which there was control and/or recognition. Many of the studies did not report on the biologic sex of the rater, therefore there was no way to discern if sex was considered at all. The sex of the rater must be examined as a variable in the interpretation of data in the area of gender differences in leadership style.

Some instruments include a rating instrument for *others* to use (e.g., Leadership Practices Inventory, Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire). Others included friends, family members, or anyone who was not a direct superior or subordinate. Some instruments used the others report form for subordinates and superiors, as well. Once again, there was little consistency between rating instruments in the language identifying the raters' positional relationship to the leader. In some instances, the information about leadership style held by the other was obtained through the eyes of the leader. There was a second-generation self-report affect from these other raters.

The age of the rater may also have affected findings. The *new* preferred style of educational leadership looks much more transformational than transactional. Younger direct subordinates, or those with recent higher education experiences, may have had a different and perhaps clearer understanding of these leadership style differences. Sergiovanni (1996), Senge (2000), and Bolman and Deal (2003) are but a few of the current theorists writing about this new style of leadership. Raters with recent exposure to these kinds of theories may rate in a different way than those with little or no exposure to this new leadership way of thinking. Although the presence of this experience is not limited to the younger educators, there may have been greater likelihood that the younger raters would have more of this sort of exposure, and should therefore have been examined for impact on outcomes. Likewise, the age of the leaders being rated must be noted. Newer leaders would have more exposure to and training in the new leadership style.

Rating Instrument/Methodology

Eagly and Johnson (1990) asserted that the divergence in findings on the topic of gender-based differences in leadership style was partially explained by the basis of their conclusions on different kinds of data from different rating instruments (p. 6). It appeared that the instrument used to rate leadership style affected the results of the study. Eagly and Johnson (1990) stated, "the diversity of the methods that have been used to assess style complicates the task of integrating research in this area" (p. 6). The variance in qualities that the different instruments rate partially explains discrepancy in findings. It was important that the instrument used targeted the scale of

behaviors associated with male and female leadership style. There were many leadership-rating instruments available, and care should have been used to choose a rating instrument that measured traits associated with male and female leadership style.

Qualitative studies used a variety of techniques, but resulted in findings that were more similar in nature than those studies that used quantitative methodology. This can, in part, be explained by the fact that in all but one study (Sherman, 2001), the rater was the female leader, herself. Qualitative studies were broader in scope and varied in their description of the focus of their study than the quantitative studies. Qualitative studies typically sought to understand the meaning, identify unanticipated related phenomenon, understand the process, and develop causal explanations (Maxwell, 1996, pp. 17-20). The scope tended not to be specific, but rather an open process seeking rich description and deep understanding. Like feminist research, these qualitative studies sought to give a voice to those being studied. The findings of the qualitative studies were derived from the analyses of collective stories and experiences obtained through in-depth interview, observation, participant observation, case study and diary study. These studies most often sought to explore the experience of the leader, herself.

When designing methodology, the hierarchical position of the leader within the organization should have been contemplated. Varying findings were reported among studies of low, mid and upper level management leaders. Eagly and Johnson (1990) argued that management level had little impact on effect sizes (p. 16). Duerhst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) found that "gender neutral traits were valued most in top level positions by both men and women" (p. 27). Additionally, they found that masculine traits were more likely to distinguish those at the top of organizations from those in middle management positions rather than distinguishing male leaders from female leaders, suggesting gendered executive management status. (Duerhst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995, pp. 79, 80). Carless (1998, p. 9) outlined a structural model of gender differences and found that men and women who occupied the same position and performed similar tasks behaved similarly. Therefore, methodological design should have been sensitive to the management position of the leader, and not have included, within one study, a mixture of management positions.

The use of multiple rating instruments would increase the validity of the research, and enable the researcher to develop a more comprehensive picture of gender differences in leadership style.

Explanations for Differences

Multiple explanations for gender-based differences in leadership style emerged from the data in this study. The first and most pervasive explanation was that men and women are socialized differently, and that this difference in socialization resulted in gender specific personality traits that were exhibited in leadership behavior. In this framework, men were socialized to be competitive and authoritarian, and women to be caring and collaborative. Brunner (1999) claimed that males and females exist in realities that are not the same, society is gendered, and that men and women behaved in different ways as defined as appropriate by society. Collay and LaMar (1995) found in their study that “different societal expectations of men and women and their parallels in administrative practice were a powerful theme in the interviews” (p. 148). They found that superintendents carried out socially constructed gender appropriate roles, such as male superintendents acting as head of household and female teaching principals acting more nurturing and maternal (p. 161).

A second theoretic explanation of gender-based differences in leadership style involved “gender-role spillover, which was a carryover into the workplace of gender based expectations for behavior” (Guttek, 1982, p. 58, as cited in Eagly and Johnson, 1990). This theory suggested that followers’ expectations are developed from accepted societal gender roles, and that followers’ expectations dictate leaders acceptable behavior based on what society determined was appropriate gender behavior. Hart (1995) further described this phenomenon in *Women Leading in Education* (p. 105) as *organizational socialization*. She asserted that a leader ascended to her position of leadership through adaptations and adjustments she made in her leadership style in response to the collective expectations of her subordinates. It is through the organizational socialization framework that one saw new leaders shape their leadership in a manner that is socially acceptable, therefore resulting in a gendered leadership style.

A third explanation of gender-based differences in leadership style was a result of the manner in which the definition of leadership was constructed. Gosetti and Rusch (1995) asserted that women work in an environment “dominated by a culture of privileged, white, male, leadership which sets the standards and norms” (pp. 15, 16) of leadership behavior. They asserted that when you looked at the development of leadership theory, you found that women were invisible. Therefore, individuals who participated in rating leadership style understood leadership through the lens of white, male leadership behavior, and thought of leaders as male only. Henceforth, leadership behavior (female leadership behavior) that differed from the standard under which they understood leadership was not understood.

Therefore, the difference found may not be as substantial as reported, and merely a result of perceptual, rather than actual, difference due to the biologic sex of the leader.

A fourth and final common explanation of gender-based difference in leadership style was due to the perception that women possessed less organizational power and/or status. Eagly and Johnson (1990) pointed out that women “differed systematically in seniority, salary, the availability of mentoring and informal collegial support, and other characteristics that conveyed some of the subtleties of organizational status” (p. 5). It has also been determined that men and women defined and used power differently. Women defined power as shared with others or as collaborative, whereas men tended to think of power in terms of dominance, control and authority over others (Brunner, 2000, p. 148). Since the discourse of leadership was based on predominantly white male experience, and the use of power was embedded in this discourse, women’s use of power can be confused with having no power. The perception that women held less status and power within an organization could impact the way in which an individual rates leadership style.

Other interesting conclusions have been drawn about why gender-based differences in leadership style existed. Although not found repeatedly in the literature, I suggest that they needed to be included in this discussion. Eagly and Johnson (1990) maintained that leadership studies that did not examine organizational leaders in the field, such as laboratory studies conducted with college students, were likely to show greater gender-based differences in leadership style since there was no long term relational impact for their behavior (p. 3). Helgesen (1990) believed that since there were fewer women at the top, they were of higher quality than the men, thus explaining differences in their leadership style.

Limitations

The original study that led to this paper was time limited. Many studies and books, although seemingly important as they were frequently referenced in many other studies, were not included due to lack of quick access.

This study is not a comprehensive meta-analysis nor a limited literature search. Data interpretation and analysis of the coded information drawn from the summarizing of literature was conducted in a qualitative manner, rather than calculating effect sizes as performed in meta-analysis. Furthermore, although qualitative data analysis techniques were used, this study should not be categorized as phenomenological in nature.

This study did not include a search of literature on male superintendents, leaders, or educational leaders, so no comparison can be drawn between the literature on how men and women describe their leadership style. The literature did include many qualitative studies describing the leadership style of women and their opinions about the difference in how men and women lead, as self-reported by the women leaders. Therefore, the cumulative sample of self-reporters was not balanced for sex, perhaps threatening the cumulative validity of the studies.

I question the generalizability of the cumulative findings of the population, female leaders, to a smaller, sub-population that is discipline-specific, such as female educational leaders. I wonder if there were discipline specific phenomena that would have influenced leadership style. Perhaps the discourse of female leadership needs to be deconstructed, and theory developed specific to female leaders from particular work settings. Since the methodology and structure of many of these studies have not been reproduced in the educational milieu, the findings and their resulting theoretic framework should not be blindly applied.

Summary and Conclusions

On the surface, it appears that studies do, generally, find gender-based differences in leadership style. However, since this is still a young field of study, over time as research matures in this area and more robust knowledge emerges, researchers will find that there is more complexity to this issue. Csikszentmihalyi's (1994) description of complexity serves as a way to understand the development of this body of knowledge as influenced by research. Csikszentmihalyi explained that complexity occurs when something is both differentiated and integrated. Therefore, as the research on gender-based differences in leadership styles becomes integrated into other research disciplines and gains increased differentiation as a field of research, the body of knowledge created will naturally become more complex.

As opportunity for women to enter the superintendency expands, the elevated numbers of women in the superintendency will influence an increased occurrence of research in the field of gender-based differences in leadership style specific to the educational setting. Brunner (1999) noted that Bell and Chase (1995) have suggested that the issue of gender in leadership had been either oversimplified or denied. In time, we can hope, however, that this body of knowledge will then become more sophisticated and robust as it is interwoven with theory from other disciplines. Clearly there is more to learn about the leadership style of women, as it becomes the subject of further studies in the K-12, public school arena.

My personal experience from over 20 years in the field of education in informal conversations with both men and women who work for female administrators yields contradictory information to the general thinking on gender-based differences in leadership style. I have heard subordinates, peers, and others describe female leaders as more difficult to work with, less collaborative and more dictatorial, more unpredictable and actually meaner than their male counterparts. There may have been other factors at play in these discussions and interpretations, such as the gender role expectations of the follower. The observer (subordinate, peer or other person) may have entered their relationship with the female leader having expected them to behave in gender stereotypical ways, and when the leader behaved in ways contradictory to this discourse, it was confusing and unnerving for the observer. Also at play could have been the discourse of leadership based on white male standards of behavior, and consequently the behavior of the woman leader was not understood, therefore it appeared confusing to the observer.

The group of researchers studying gender-based differences in leadership style in the educational setting was still relatively small. Almost exclusively, women have conducted the research in this field. I found only two examples of men conducting research on this topic. This lack of sex diversity among researchers could have led to or be interpreted as, a problem of research bias where women researchers sought specific results in their research that would have promoted women leaders. For the field to gain more credibility and be recognized as an important area of research there needs to be a broader, more diverse group of researchers. One can also make the interpretation that since the field of researchers interested in this area is narrowly limited by sex, it is not a field of research found by a more diverse group to be worthy of study or have status.

It appeared that as more women enter leadership positions, a greater divergence emerges within female leadership style that has gone somewhat overlooked in the design of studies. Strachan (2002) defined a difference between feminist leadership and female leadership. Strachan asserted that feminist leadership has a different focus than that of neo-liberal managerialism.

The “underpinning philosophies” of feminist leadership included emancipatory practice that was committed to working for social justice and equity, contesting and resisting injustices, shared power, and the emotional and ethic care in leadership practice, with a particular emphasis on delivering quality education to students. (p. 115)

Feminist leadership style differed from female leadership style in its focus on, identification of, and emphasis toward emancipation from and reparation for social injustice. The qualities of shared power, emphasis on quality education, and leading with an ethic of care are conjoint practice behaviors between the two sub-categories of women leaders. The operation of two subcategories of leadership styles of women needs to be recognized as an important variable in future research. Findings can vary depending on the representation of subcategory members within the research sample.

If, indeed, the behavior of feminist leaders and leaders who are female can be disaggregated, then there may be need for adjustment to the transactional/transformational continuum usually used in the rating of gender-based difference in leadership style. I would see this new paradigm as parallel to the transactional/transformational continuum. Since *activism* would be a separately rated behavior, it could hypothetically occur anywhere along the transactional/transformational continuum. A two-dimensional model would be constructed. For instance, one could rate high in transformational style, but low in activism, or vice versa. Poststructuralism could serve as the grounding point for the development of this new model, with discursive theory central to the new, emerging model.

It appeared that as more women achieve top leadership positions in organizations and more research is done on this topic, there was an emerging new way of thinking about leadership style differences. Future research can look at the impact that time and increased numbers of women in top leadership positions has had on gender-based differences in leadership style theory. Additionally, future research can examine if organizational culture and discipline-specific leadership are variables in gender-based differences in leadership style worth considering, and if there are qualities within organizations that promote or encourage particular gender-based leadership style.

Notes

- 1 Endnotes is a software program for organizing bibliographic information. Endnotes 4.0 was used in this study.
- 2 NVivo is a software program for qualitative research and data analysis. NVivo 1.2 was used in this study.

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