

Gender bias in communal leadership: examining servant leadership

Mary Hogue

*Department of Management and Information Systems,
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA*

Gender bias in
communal
leadership

837

Received 5 October 2014
Revised 21 February 2015
24 June 2015
Accepted 30 November 2015

Abstract

Purpose – Theory suggests gender bias in leadership occurs through a cognitive mismatch between thoughts of women and leaders. As leadership incorporates more feminine qualities, gender bias disadvantaging women should be reduced. The purpose of this paper is to present an empirical investigation of that argument by examining gender bias in servant leadership. Predictions made by role congruity theory were investigated with principles from leader categorization theory.

Design/methodology/approach – In a survey design, 201 working college students from the Midwest USA were presented with either a female or male leader, each with identical servant leader attributes. Participants reported their expectations for the leader's future behavior.

Findings – Expectations for servant leader behavior were greater for the woman than man leader, and expectations for authoritarian behavior were greater for the man than woman leader. Expectations for servant leader behavior were greater from the woman than man participants, and expectations for authoritarian behavior were greater from the man than woman participants, a difference that was enhanced by men's hostile sexism.

Research limitations/implications – Although limited by the sample of working students, important implications are the importance of using theoretical integration to examine contemporary forms of leadership for changing gender bias, considerations of self-concept in bias and examining perceiver characteristics when investigating gender bias.

Practical implications – Awareness of the reduction of gender bias in communal leadership may allow an increase of leadership opportunities for women and leadership attempts by women.

Originality/value – This is the first empirical examination of gender bias in communal leadership through theoretical integration.

Keywords Women, Leadership, Stereotypes, Social roles, Gender differences

Paper type Research paper

Gender bias in leadership typically places women at a disadvantage relative to men (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Hogue and Lord, 2007) so that around the world, men continue to hold more powerful positions than women hold in both business and government (Hausman *et al.*, 2012). Such bias often is explained as a mismatch between the cognitive categories of woman and leader with general conceptions of leaders being more masculine than feminine (e.g. Eagly and Karau, 2002; Ely *et al.*, 2011; Hogue and Lord, 2007). To be masculine or feminine is to be agentic or communal, respectively. Agency involves displays of assertiveness, dominance, self-confidence, and control, while communality involves displays of supportiveness, nurturance, relationship-building, and modesty (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly and Carli, 2007).

Gender bias in leadership has changed over time from first-generation, overt bias and discrimination to second-generation, covert bias (Ely *et al.*, 2011). Second-generation bias arises from the agentic and communal aspects of beliefs about leaders and women.

The author thanks Justin Colon for his valuable help in data collection.



It affects workplace practices and interactions so that fewer leadership opportunities are available for women relative to men, a circumstance that does not provide women the experiences necessary to build the leader identity required for someone to attempt to lead (Ely *et al.*, 2011; Lord and Hall, 2005). However, scholars have argued that cultural definitions of leadership change continually (Bass and Bass, 2008) and that the contemporary definition of leadership is shifting from the traditional, authoritarian conception toward one that places greater emphasis on relationships and follower development (Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Eagly and Carli, 2007; van Dierendonck, 2011). In other words, leadership is becoming more communal. This should reduce the mismatch between the cognitive categories of woman and leader, thereby reducing gender bias in leadership (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly and Carli, 2003).

The purpose of the present paper is to explore this argument empirically. Shifts in cultural ideas of leadership take time (Bass and Bass, 2008; Eagly and Karau, 2002), but some new, more communal forms of leadership are emerging. Examining bias within an inherently communal form of leadership may provide insight into how gender bias in leadership will be impacted as overall notions of leadership make the proposed shift toward increased communality. Therefore, the focus of this paper is servant leadership.

Servant leadership is a contemporary form of leadership that is increasingly prominent in both business and research (Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Bass and Bass, 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). Its focus is nurturing followers, so it is a form of leadership involving stereotypically feminine behaviors (Barbuto and Gifford, 2010). When Robert Greenleaf (1977) first introduced the concept of servant leadership, he suggested that the primary role of a leader should be to help followers grow to be wiser, more autonomous individuals. Thus, service is not about performing menial tasks but about serving followers by nurturing their personal and professional growth, which in turn contributes to the achievement of organizational goals (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Because theoretical integration provides important psychological insights (Gigerenzer, 2010), in the present research, gender bias is explored through an integration of role congruity theory (RCT; Eagly and Karau, 2002) and leader categorization theory (LCT; Lord *et al.*, 1984, 2001). Both theories discuss the importance of behavioral expectations in bias, acknowledging that general expectations can be shared across people in a group or culture while particular expectations can differ between people. The primary focus of RCT is shared expectations, and the primary focus of LCT is cognitive processes. RCT claims that leader gender bias is impacted by the target leader's gender, the perceiver's gender and the perceiver's sexist attitudes. LCT claims that leader gender bias can be understood through an examination of the composition of the leader prototype. In the present research, the composition of a communal leader prototype is examined for effects of leader gender, target gender, and target sexist attitudes.

The methodology for this project follows the commonly used practice of assessing gender bias by presenting participants with identical information about a target individual who has either a female- or male-typical name (e.g. Moss-Racusin *et al.*, 2012). In this approach, researchers ask participants to report judgments about the target with any observed differences attributed to bias stemming from the target's gender, and they also explore individual difference factors that might help explain biased judgments. We begin with a discussion of the theories.

RCT

In RCT (Eagly and Karau, 2002) gender roles are defined as socially shared expectations about the behaviors in which women and men should and do engage.

Gender roles are normative in that they designate behaviors consensually believed desirable for members of each category (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Thus, they describe how women and men do behave and also prescribe how each group should behave. The communal behaviors normatively expected of women are not congruent with the agentic behaviors normatively expected of leaders, while the agentic behaviors normatively expected of men are (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

The promise of RCT (Eagly and Karau, 2002) is the understanding that with leader gender bias defined as a discrepancy in roles, if the leader role is redefined culturally to include more communal behaviors, then bias against women leaders should be reduced. While the primary focus of RCT is shared expectations that result in bias across people within a culture, the theory also acknowledges that bias can vary among individuals within the group. RCT specifies various factors that can impact leader gender bias. This paper examines three. Specifically, RCT proposes that leader gender bias is affected by: first, gender of the target leader, with bias across people proposed to disadvantage women leaders; second, perceiver's gender, with men proposed to be generally more biased than women; and third, perceiver's personal endorsement of gender norms, with sexist ideology proposed to strengthen bias. To explain how these factors impact bias, we turn to LCT.

LCT

LCT (Lord *et al.*, 1984) provides an explanation of the cognitive processes involved in leader perception. According to LCT, individuals learn about leaders through experience, which can be similar across people in a culture and unique to individuals. Through these experiences, people build cognitive knowledge structures about leaders containing information that is both shared across people and unique to each individual. The complexity of the knowledge structures reduces efficiency in person perception, so from category knowledge, people generate prototypes. Prototypes are ideal images of category members used as a comparison standard to determine whether a target belongs in a category (Lord *et al.*, 1984). When a target and leader prototype are compared and sufficient match is found, the target is categorized a leader (Lord and Brown, 2004). Gender bias occurs when sufficient match is not found for women.

LCT has been expanded to incorporate connectionist principles. Specifically, prototype development involves activation and inhibition of information within a connectionist network (Lord *et al.*, 2001). Information in the network is held in units, which loosely correspond to neurons or groups of neurons (Conrey and Smith, 2007) that are connected together through learned associations (Lord and Brown, 2004). Connected units can be activated so their information is made accessible for use or inhibited so their information is made inaccessible. Further, information held in units can be objective (i.e. information about the properties of the target) or evaluative (i.e. information about personal positive or negative feelings about the target), such as an attitude (Conrey and Smith, 2007). Overall meaning resides in the pattern of activation and inhibition among all units within the network.

Methodologically, prototype content is explored in LCT through an examination of ratings of the target's observed or expected behavior (Johnson and Lord, 2004). Expectations that a target will behave as a leader suggest that the target was categorized as such. Expectations for particular behaviors suggest the composition of the category and its prototype, with communal expectations indicating feminine composition and agentic expectations indicating masculine. Understanding gender bias requires an exploration of both feminine and masculine prototype content.

The present study

Many types of leadership exist, each utilizing different behaviors (Bass and Bass, 2008). The previous descriptions of agency and communion correspond respectively with the traditional form of authoritarian leadership and the more contemporary form of servant leadership. The present research examines masculine and feminine prototype content by examining authoritarian and servant behaviors.

Authoritarian leader behavior entails control, but according to Bass and Bass (2008), this is not necessarily negative. Authoritarian leaders are focussed on accomplishing the task. They reward and punish to gain compliance, initiate structure, provide information, issue rules, and determine independently what needs to be done (Bass and Bass, 2008). These behaviors are agentic.

Servant leader behavior occurs when a leader is strongly influenced by followers' needs (Bass and Bass, 2008). Servant leaders show value for people by empowering and developing their followers; they practice interpersonal acceptance and empathy, and act with humility by putting their own talents and accomplishments into the proper perspective (van Dierendonck, 2011). These behaviors are communal.

Impact of target gender

Gender is a primary category system used for social understanding (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Research shows that people more quickly recognize fit between a target person and dimensions of leadership that are consistent rather than inconsistent with the target's gender, indicating that activation of a target's gender category occurs very early in the person perception process (Scott and Brown, 2006). Activation of a social category both activates category consistent information and inhibits category inconsistent information (Hogue and Lord, 2007) so that the former becomes available for use in a leader prototype while the latter is made unavailable and cannot be used.

Further, the effect of target gender on prototype composition should be similar across people because gender category information is learned through experience (Lord and Brown, 2004) and gender-related experiences tend to be similar for people within a culture (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Lord *et al.*, 2001). Thus, a target's gender category is predicted to impact prototype composition similarly across participants such that behavioral expectations are consistent with the target's gender:

- H1. Expectations for servant leader behavior are higher when the target leader is female than when the target leader is a male.
- H2. Expectations for authoritarian leader behavior are higher when the target leader is a male than when the target leader is female.

Impact of perceiver gender

Because people assign meaning to others in a self-relevant way (van Quaquebeke *et al.*, 2011), leader prototypes involve the activation of self-relevant information. (Hogue and Lord, 2007; van Quaquebeke *et al.*, 2011). Self-relevant information is part of the self-concept. Self-concept is a mental representation of one's understanding of oneself that guides attention to and processing of information about others (Leary and Tangney, 2003). People use self-knowledge automatically to make inferences about others so that neuroscientists suggest that self- and other-processing are so closely related that they seem to be "two sides of the same coin" (Uddin *et al.*, 2007, p. 153).

The effect of individual's self-concept, including group-related self-concept, has been argued to impact leader prototypes (Lord *et al.*, 2001). Both work group (Hogg *et al.*, 1998) and cultural group (Gerstner and Day, 1994) self-concepts can impact leader prototype development. The same is true for gender. Relative to masculine individuals, feminine individuals expect leaders are more sensitive, and relative to feminine individuals, masculine individuals expect leaders are more masculine, strong, and tyrannical (Johnson *et al.*, 2008). Such expectations are the outcome of categorization (Johnson and Lord, 2004). Thus, the effect of an individual's own gender category is predicted to inform the leader prototype so that leader prototypes show consistency with the perceiver's gender:

- H3. Expectations for future servant leader behavior are greater for women participants than for men participants.
- H4. Expectations for future authoritarian leader behavior are greater for men participants than for women participants.

Impact of perceiver's sexist ideology

Strongly held attitudes facilitate activation and inhibition within the prototype (Lord and Brown, 2004) becoming part of the overall meaning that arises (Conrey and Smith, 2007). One such attitude might be sexist ideology. Sexist ideology is the endorsement of gender norms that prescribe differences for women and men. When the attitude involves harsh or antagonistic views of women as challenging men's legitimate power and authority, it is called hostile sexism (Glick *et al.*, 2000). Research shows men are generally higher than women in hostile sexism in cultures around the world (Glick and Fiske, 1996; Glick *et al.*, 2000). Hostile sexism is negatively linked with evaluations of career women (Glick and Fiske, 1996), and it is tied to prejudice against female authority (Rudman and Kilianski, 2000).

Because hostile sexism involves the devaluation of feminine attributes relative to masculine (Glick and Fiske, 1996), it is likely that this attitude would facilitate the inhibition of female attributes within the leader prototype and the activation of masculine. Thus, for an individual already predisposed to form expectations for authoritarian behavior from a servant leader (as is predicted for men), hostile sexism should enhance that effect:

- H5. The effect of perceiver gender on expectations for authoritarian behavior from a servant leader is moderated by hostile sexism such that the difference in expectations formed by female and male perceivers is augmented as the hostile sexism of men increases.

Method

Procedure and participants

Procedure. In total, 218 employed business students from undergraduate business information systems classes in a large Midwest US university were recruited to take part in a survey said to assess business decision making. Students were offered course credit for completing the survey or an alternate assignment. All students chose to complete the survey. This occurred outside of author's office during designated hours. Surveys contained instructions informing students of the anonymity of their responses, assuring them there were no right or wrong responses, and asking them to respond honestly.

They were told to imagine themselves an employee who had worked in a certain company for five years and that they had been sent an e-mail from the company explaining they would be assigned a new boss. The e-mail contained the following information:

Dear Worker,

We thank you for your commitment to this organization. Your work over the past five years is valued, and you are recognized as an asset to the company. This message is to inform you that we are making a personnel change, and you will be reporting to a new boss.

Your new boss is Brian [Jennifer] Morris, who comes to us with an MBA from Harvard University and 15 years of related business experience. Brian [Jennifer] will be supervising your department.

Previous subordinates suggest Brian [Jennifer] is exceptionally helpful in meeting the demands of the organization through a particular focus toward the individuals within the company and their personal growth. They describe him [her] as having empathy and genuine concern for the wellbeing of others, listening receptively, and being aware of them and their needs.

In particular, Brian [Jennifer] is said to rarely exercise personal authority, choosing instead to persuade subordinates in a way that makes them feel they are being given freedom rather than being controlled.

Brian [Jennifer] will arrive in your department next week. We thank you for the excellent work you are providing and look forward to the continued improvements of our team.

Sincerely, Chris Watts, VP of HR.

The letter was followed by three questions designed to assess how closely student had read the e-mail. Questions asked how many years experience the new leader had (10, 15, 20 years), sex of the new leader (woman, man, not clear) and how previous employees described the leader (concerned about the welfare of employees, focussed on organizational profits, willing to stay late to finish projects on time). A survey was eliminated at the first missed question so that four were eliminated for missing the experience question, ten for missing the leader sex question, and three for missing leader description question. This process resulted in a sample of 201 (described below).

The survey also contained demographic questions, questions about expectations for future leader behavior and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick and Fiske, 1996). Demographic questions included participant sex (female, male, other), race (white, Hispanic, African-American, Asian, other), class level in university (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), and work experience (reported in years and months, then coded to total months).

Participants. The sample contained 109 men and 92 women. This size was sufficient to find a medium-sized effect with power set at the customary 0.80 (Cohen, 1988). In all, 64 men reported being white, 0 Hispanic, 10 African-American, 28 Asian, and 7 other. In total, 60 women reported being white, 1 Hispanic, 7 African-American, 10 Asian, and 4 other. Ten women did not report race. There were no significant differences between women and men with respect to race, $\chi^2(4) = 6.79$, $p = 0.15$. There were no significant differences between women and men with respect to university class level, $\chi^2(3) = 5.46$, $p = 0.14$, with the most widely reported level for both women ($n = 40$) and men ($n = 59$) being sophomore.

The mean age for women ($M = 20.26$, $SD = 2.96$, range = 18-26) did not differ from that of men ($M = 21.74$, $SD = 1.86$, range = 18-25), $F(1, 198) = 1.98$, $p = 0.16$. The mean

level of work experience for women ($M = 46.37$ months, $SD = 33.67$) did not differ from that of men ($M = 40.17$ months, $SD = 33.67$), $F(1, 189) = 1.50$, $p = 0.22$.

Measures

Expectations for leader behaviors. Servant and authoritarian leader behaviors were drawn from discussions of leader types by Bass and Bass (2008). The behaviors were used to create the e-mail description of the leader, and the same behaviors were used to assess behavioral expectations (a four-item measure for servant behavior and a four-item measure for authoritarian behavior). When examining the subtle effects of gender on biased decisions, consistency of information across conditions is important (e.g. Moss-Racusin *et al.*, 2012). In this study, consistency was created across descriptions of the woman and man leaders and also across descriptions and assessments of behavior.

Students were asked to rate how often (1 = never to 5 = always) they thought their new leader would engage in various behaviors. Items for servant leader behavior were: Be committed to your personal growth and the growth of your coworkers; Listen receptively to you and your coworkers; Have empathy and genuine concern for the well-being of others; practice stewardship, placing the needs of others ahead of the leader's own needs. Internal consistency for these items was $\alpha = 0.94$. Items for authoritarian leader behavior were: make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group; provide almost no personal guidance to subordinates and offer almost no interpersonal interaction; stress the competitive nature of running an organization and being able to outwit the competition; be concerned with control and domination, having little concern for people and relying on pressure and punishment to increase employee performance. Authoritarian items were either consistent with behaviors the leader was said not to use (e.g. does not make employees feel controlled vs concerned with control) or were implied opposites of the servant description (e.g. meet demands of organization by focussing on individuals vs stressing competitive nature of organization). Internal consistency for these items was $\alpha = 0.92$.

Sexist ideology. The hostile sexism assessment within the ASI (Glick and Fiske, 1996) was used to assess attitudes of hostile sexism. This inventory uses a six-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 0 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. In the inventory, there are 11 items assessing hostile sexism. Examples are, "Women seek to gain power by gaining control over men," and "Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them." Internal consistency was $\alpha = 0.91$.

Results

H1-H4 predict effects of target leader gender and perceiver gender on servant and authoritarian leader behaviors. Effect sizes are interpreted according to Cohen's (1988) general guidelines wherein partial η^2 effects of 0.01, 0.06, and 0.14 are considered small, medium, and large, respectively. Although no interactions between leader gender and participant gender were predicted, it was important to allow for the variance of a possible interaction. Moreover, because expectations for servant and authoritarian leader behaviors were related ($r = -0.34$, $p < 0.0001$), *H1-H4* were tested with a MANOVA. Means and MANOVA results are in Table I.

Leader gender

H1 predicted expectations for servant leader behavior would be greater for a female than male servant leader. There was a significant, non-trivial main effect for the

leader's gender (coded man = 0, woman = 1) on expectations of servant behavior, $F(1, 196) = 9.59, p = 0.002$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.05$. Reported expectations of servant behavior were greater for a female ($M = 4.22, SD = 0.58$) than a male servant leader ($M = 3.92, SD = 0.73$), thereby supporting *H1*.

H2 predicted expectations for authoritarian leader behavior would be greater for a male than a female servant leader. There was a significant, non-trivial main effect for the leader's gender on expectations for authoritarian behavior, $F(1, 196) = 9.07, p = 0.003$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$. Reported expectations for authoritarian behavior were greater for a male ($M = 2.57, SD = 1.11$) than a female servant leader ($M = 2.15, SD = 1.06$), thereby supporting *H2*.

Participant gender

H3 predicted women participants would report greater expectations for servant leader behavior than would men. There was a significant, non-trivial main effect for participant gender (coded 0 = man, 1 = woman) on expectations for servant behavior, $F(1, 196) = 7.56, p = 0.007$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$. Expectations for servant behavior reported by women ($M = 4.21, SD = 0.66$) were greater than those reported by men ($M = 3.95, SD = 0.66$), thereby supporting *H3*.

H4 predicted expectations for authoritarian behavior would be greater for men than women participants. There was a significant, non-trivial main effect for participant gender on expectations for authoritarian behavior, $F(1, 196) = 8.45, p = 0.004$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$. Expectations for authoritarian behavior reported by men ($M = 2.57, SD = 1.10$) were greater than those reported by women ($M = 2.11, SD = 1.06$), thereby supporting *H4*. There was no significant interaction between leader gender and participant gender on expectations for either servant, $F(1,196) = 0.49, p = 0.49$, or authoritarian behavior, $F(1, 196) = 0.06, p = 0.83$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.0001$.

H5 predicted the discrepancy in expectations by women and men for authoritarian behavior would be augmented by hostile sexism. This was tested with linear regression analysis. To account for the known influence of leader gender on expectations of authoritarian behavior, leader gender was entered first as a control variable. After controlling for leader gender, expectations for authoritarian behavior were

Table I.
Means and
MANOVA results
for effect of
participant
gender and leader
gender on
expectations for
servant behaviors
and expectations
for authoritarian
behaviors

Predictor	Behavior	Mean (SD)	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2	Power
Leader gender	Servant	Woman	7.56	0.007	0.04	0.78
		Man				
	Authoritarian	Woman	8.45	0.004	0.04	0.82
		Man				
Participant gender	Servant	Woman	9.56	0.002	0.05	0.87
		Man				
	Authoritarian	Woman	9.07	0.003	0.04	0.85
		Man				
Leader gender × participant gender	Servant	Woman	0.49	0.49	0.002	0.11
		Man				
	Authoritarian		0.06	0.83	< 0.0001	0.05

regressed on participant gender, hostile sexism, and an interaction variable crossing participant gender with hostile sexism.

After accounting for the unique effects of leader gender, $b = -0.17$, $p = 0.02$, participant gender, $b = -0.52$, $p = 0.14$, and hostile sexism, $b = 0.23$, $p = 0.03$, on expectations of authoritarian behavior, a significant link exists between the interaction of participant gender and hostile sexism on expectations for authoritarian behavior, $b = -0.68$, $p = 0.04$. A test of the simple slopes showed that this was due to a significant change in the expectations of men. The slope for women, -0.10 , was not significantly different from zero, $t = -0.58$, $p = 0.56$. The slope for men, 0.42 , was significantly different from zero, $t = 2.21$, $p = 0.03$. The interaction is depicted in Figure 1.

Discussion

RCT (Eagly and Karau, 2002) predicts that gender bias is affected by target gender, perceiver gender, and perceiver sexist attitude. These predictions were explored through an investigation of prototype composition consistent with LCT (Lord *et al.*, 1984, 2001). Results showed that overall, regardless of leader or participant gender, expectations for servant behavior were greater than expectations for authoritarian behavior. This is not surprising given the description participants read about their leaders, but because gender bias is often a subtle, complex process (Hogue and Lord, 2007), the pattern of differences found provides important insight.

According to LCT, reports of expected behavior indicate prototype composition and categorization of a target as a leader (Lord *et al.*, 2001; Johnson and Lord, 2004). Expectations for communal behavior indicate feminine prototype composition, and expectations for agentic behavior indicate masculine composition. The present findings show that feminine composition of the leader prototype was greater when the target was female than male, and masculine composition was greater when the target was a male than female. Findings also show that feminine composition of the leader prototype was greater when generated by women than men participants, and masculine composition was greater when generated by men than women participants. Further, the masculine composition of the leader prototype generated by men was enhanced by men's hostile sexism.

Together, this pattern of results indicates that when leadership is defined in communal terms: first, target women may be more likely than target men to fit the leader prototype and be categorized as leaders; second, women perceivers may be more likely than men perceivers to categorize a target as a servant/communal leader;

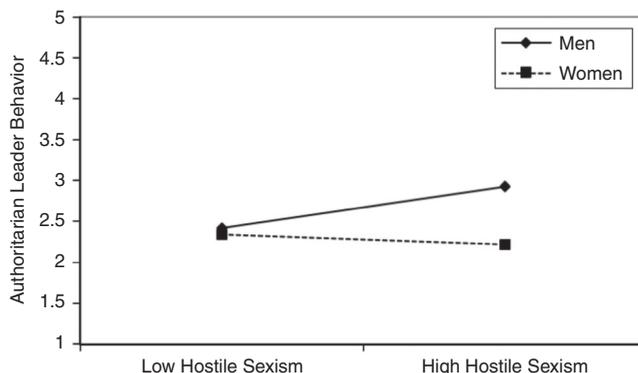


Figure 1.
Interaction of gender
with hostile sexism
on expectations
for authoritarian
behaviors

and third, men, especially men high in hostile sexism, may be more likely than women to hold onto the idea of leadership as an agentic/authoritative process.

These results contribute to the ongoing discussion of shifting gender bias. As previously noted, experts contend that bias already has shifted from first-generational, intentional discrimination to a more covert, second-generational bias (Ely *et al.*, 2011) and that it may shift again as leadership is coming to be redefined culturally in more communal terms (Eagly and Carli, 2003, 2007). There has been debate in the literature about whether such a shift will (Eagly and Carli, 2003, 2007) or will not (Vecchio, 2003) advantage women. The present findings add to this discussion by showing that when leadership is defined in communal terms, women may have a general advantage if bias is considered only as coming from the target's gender category, but when information about perceivers is considered, dissimilarities in perceptions may exist.

LCT researchers suggest that dissimilarities in perceptions can create nonlinear change, which can be explored with nonlinear models (see Medvedeff and Lord, 2007 for a review). For example, it may be that accumulation of information has a linear effect on perceptions until a threshold is reached, after which a radical shift in perception occurs. Nonlinear models provide a means of investigating the willingness or reluctance of individuals to change their prototype or to recategorize an individual (i.e. see someone as a leader who was not seen as a leader before). Understanding differences in bias within individuals can provide awareness about how changes in bias across people may occur. Thus, a valuable contribution of the present research is the evidence of meaningful insight that can come through integration of RCT and LCT, and a valuable implication is the importance of continued theoretical integration.

Another meaningful contribution from this paper is its demonstration of the importance of self-concept in prototype development. Findings support the claim that perceiver-specific information is used to generate leader prototypes (Hogue and Lord, 2007). Part of second-generation gender bias is the self-limiting effect for women of not having developed a leader identity (Ely *et al.*, 2011). Developing a leader identity occurs over time as an individual assumes a leader role and watches her- or himself be successful in that role (Lord and Hall, 2005), but it must begin somewhere. The present research suggests that when the leader role is defined in communal terms, the leader prototype developed by women contains communal qualities. Because categorizing oneself as a leader follows the same process as categorizing another person (Lord and Hall, 2005), feminine composition of the leader prototype may make it easier for a woman to categorize herself a suitable leader, suggesting the importance of future investigations into how easing self-categorization transfers to a woman's attempts to lead and ultimately the building of a leader identity.

Understanding possible shifts in gender bias involves also understanding resistance to the shift. The present results contribute to the discussion of the obstinacy of masculine qualities in men's thoughts about leaders. A review of research spanning decades and countries suggests that men are more likely than women to view managers in masculine terms (Schein, 2007). Further, meta-analytic research shows that although the masculine nature of the leader stereotype has been reduced over time, the leader stereotypes held by men remain more masculine than those held by women (Koenig *et al.*, 2011). Present findings indicate that hostile sexism increases the likelihood for men that a servant leader prototype will contain masculine qualities, so it suggests the importance of considering perceiver attitudes in addition to perceiver gender category when exploring the obstinacy of gender bias.

Although the present research provides important insight, it is not without its limitations. One limitation is the context. Gender can affect leadership differently when research is conducted in the lab vs in the field (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). Perceptions of leaders change over time as followers interact with the leader (Hogue and Lord, 2007), and changes in definitions of leadership toward more communal forms can be subtle in the real world. The current study relied on college student participants in a mock-work setting. All participants had some work experience, with the average being four years, so they were not naïve. However, they were placed in an artificial situation, so it is important to replicate the results in a real-world setting. Another limitation is apparent from the results. Although the primary focus of this study was to explore gender bias in a communal form of leadership, in light of study results, it seems that investigation of the masculine and feminine content of the authoritarian leader prototype would provide an interesting comparison for interpreting the current results.

In sum, findings from the present research suggest that the tide may turn in leader gender bias as leadership becomes more communal, but it also suggests that changes in bias may not occur in similar ways across individuals. In the present research, bias in servant leadership was examined. Servant leadership is practiced increasingly in organizations of all sorts, from non-profit healthcare systems to large, for-profit companies such as Starbucks and Southwest Airlines (Spears, 2010). However, servant leadership may not be appropriate in all organizations or authentic for all women. Because this research examined servant leadership as an example of a communal form of leadership, though, results may generalize to other types of communal leadership to suggest that as leadership is culturally redefined, gender bias may shift so that women no longer are disadvantaged in the same way they have been under more traditional understandings of leadership.

References

- Avolio, B.J., Walumbwa, F.O. and Weber, T.J. (2009), "Leadership: current theories, research, and future directions", *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 60, pp. 421-449.
- Barbuto, J.E. and Gifford, G.T. (2010), "Examining gender differences of servant leadership: an analysis of the agentic and communal properties of the servant leadership questionnaire", *Journal of Leadership Education*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 4-21.
- Bass, B.M. and Bass, R. (2008), *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research and Managerial Implications*, 4th ed., Free Press, New York, NY.
- Cohen, J. (1988), *Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ.
- Conrey, F.R. and Smith, E.R. (2007), "Attitude representation: attitudes as patterns in a distributed connectionist representational system", *Social Cognition*, Vol. 25 No. 5, pp. 718-735.
- Eagly, A.H. and Carli, L.L. (2003), "The female leadership advantage: an evaluation of the evidence", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 807-834.
- Eagly, A.H. and Carli, L.L. (2007), *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about how Women Become Leaders*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Eagly, A.H. and Johnson, B.T. (1990), "Gender and leadership style: a meta-analysis", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 108 No. 2, pp. 233-256.
- Eagly, A.H. and Karau, S.J. (2002), "Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 109 No. 3, pp. 573-598.
- Ely, R.J., Ibarra, H. and Kolb, D. (2011), "Taking gender into account: theory and design for women's leadership development programs", *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 474-493.

- Gerstner, C.R. and Day, D.V. (1994), "Cross-cultural comparison of leadership prototypes", *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 121-134.
- Gigerenzer, G. (2010), "Personal reflections on theory and psychology", *Theory and Psychology*, Vol. 20 No. 6, pp. 733-743.
- Glick, P. and Fiske, S.T. (1996), "The ambivalent sexism inventory: differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 70 No. 3, pp. 491-512.
- Glick, P., Fiske, S.T., Mladinic, A., Saiz, J.L., Abrams, D., Masser, B., López, W., Adetoun, B., Osagie, J.E., Akande, A., Alao, A., Annetje, B., Willemsen, T.M., Chipeta, K., Dardenne, B., Dijksterhuis, A., Wigboldus, D., Eckes, T., Six-Materna, I., Expósito, F., Moya, M., Foddy, M., Kim, H., Lameiras, M., Sotelo, M.J., Mucchi-Faina, A., Romani, M., Sakalli, N., Udegbe, B., Yamamoto, M., Ui, M., Ferreira, M.C. and López, W.L. (2000), "Beyond prejudice as simple antipathy: hostile and benevolent sexism across cultures", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 79 No. 5, pp. 763-775.
- Greenleaf, R.K. (1977), *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ.
- Hausman, R., Tyson, L.D. and Zahidi, S. (2012), "The global gender gap report 2012", World Economic Forum, Geneva, available at: www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf (accessed February 9, 2014).
- Hogg, M.A., Hains, S.C. and Mason, I. (1998), "Identification and leadership in small groups: salience, frame of reference and leader stereotypicality effects on leader evaluations", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 75 No. 5, pp. 1248-1263.
- Hogue, M. and Lord, R.G. (2007), "A multilevel, complexity theory approach to understanding gender bias in leadership", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 370-390.
- Johnson, R.E. and Lord, R.G. (2004), "Leader categorization theory", in Burns, J.M., Cho, K., Goethals, G.R. and Sorenson, G.J. (Eds), *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 823-828.
- Johnson, S.K., Murphy, S.E., Zewkie, S. and Reichard, R.J. (2008), "The strong sensitive type: effects of gender stereotypes and leader prototypes on the evaluation of male and female leaders", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 106 No. 1, pp. 39-60.
- Koenig, A.M., Eagly, A.H., Mitchell, A.A. and Ristikari, T. (2011), "Are leaderstereotypes masculine? A meta-analysis of three research paradigms", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 137 No. 4, pp. 616-642.
- Leary, M.R. and Tangney, J. (2003), "The self as an organizing construct in the behavioral and social sciences", in Leary, M.R. and Tangney, J. (Eds), *Handbook of Self and Identity*, Guilford Press, New York, NY, pp. 3-14.
- Lord, R.G. and Brown, D.J. (2004), *Leadership Processes and Follower Self-Identity*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.
- Lord, R.G. and Hall, R.J. (2005), "Identity, deep structure and the development of leadership skill", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 16, pp. 591-615.
- Lord, R.G., Foti, R.J. and de Vader, C.L. (1984), "A test of leadership categorization theory: internal structure, information processing, and leadership perceptions", *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 343-378.
- Lord, R.G., Brown, D.J., Harvey, J.L. and Hall, R.J. (2001), "Contextual constraints on prototype generation and their multilevel consequences for leadership perceptions", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 311-338.
- Medvedeff, M.E. and Lord, R.G. (2007), "Implicit leadership theories as dynamic processing structures", in Shamir, B., Pallai, R., Bligh, M.C. and Uhl-Bien, M. (Eds), *Follower-Centered Perspectives on Leadership: A Tribute to the Memory of James R. Meindl*, Information Age Publishing Inc., Greenwich, CT, pp. 19-50.

-
- Moss-Racusin, C.A., Dovidio, J.F., Brescoll, V.L., Graham, M. and Handelsman, J. (2012), "Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 109 No. 41, pp. 16474-16479.
- Rudman, L.A. and Kilianski, S.E. (2000), "Implicit and explicit attitudes toward female authority", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 26 No. 11, pp. 1315-1328.
- Schein, V.E. (2007), "Women in management: reflections and projections", *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 6-18.
- Scott, K.A. and Brown, D.J. (2006), "Female first, leader second? Gender bias in the encoding of leadership behavior", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 101 No. 2, pp. 230-242.
- Spears, L.C. (2010), "Character and servant leadership: ten characteristics of effective, caring leaders", *The Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 25-30.
- Uddin, L.Q., Iacoboni, M., Lange, C. and Keenan, J.P. (2007), "The self and social cognition: the role of the cortical midline structures and mirror neurons", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 153-157.
- van Dierendonck, D. (2011), "Servant leadership: a review and synthesis", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 1228-1261.
- van Quaquebeke, N., van Knippenberg, D. and Brodbeck, F.C. (2011), "More than meets the eye: the role of subordinates' self-perceptions in leader categorization processes", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 367-382.
- Vecchio, R.P. (2003), "In search of gender advantage", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 835-850.

About the author

Mary Hogue received her Degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Akron. As an Associate Professor of Management at the Kent State University, her research focusses on the differential work experiences of women and men. Her work has appeared in top publications including *The Leadership Quarterly*, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. Mary Hogue can be contacted at: mhogue@kent.edu