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Gender Differences and Leadership Styles in a Non Secular Setting

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Women are increasingly taking on the role of religious leaders despite some institutional barriers. Do effective female clergy lead differently than effective male clergy? The focus of this study was to examine gender differences in the context of non secular leadership. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) styles and NEO-Five Factor Inventory (FFI) was used to measure leadership and personal characteristics of female and male pastors. Limited findings indicate that female pastors were higher in Openness and Charisma than male pastors.

Keywords: Gender and Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Pastoral Leaders, Non Secular Leaders

Introduction

Women are assuming a greater number of leadership roles in religious organizations and for some "gender equality is becoming the accepted norm" (Fielder, 2010). The number of women in the pastorate has doubled since the 1990's along with the number of female seminarians who pursue ordination (Barna Study, 2009). However, some church leadership use Timothy 2:12 "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent (NIV)", as justification for denying women the role of pastoral leader. Paul wrote about equality in the sight of God in this passage of scripture

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (NIV, Galatians 3: pp. 26-28).

In addition, several women in leadership are noted in both Old and New Testament. For example, Deborah, mother of Israel and national leader, was a prophet and judge who provided strong leadership (Judges 4 & 5; Belleville, 2000).

Noriko (2000) argued that women not only in the Christian Church suffer injustice, but "institutionalized religion is inherently and irrecoverably patriarchal and can be detrimental to women's attainment of liberation and power" (p. 85). Therefore, women are denied positions of power in many religious organizations and in the US 50% of US churches do not grant women the privilege of ordination (Chaves, 1997). Further, those in ministry are restricted to entry level positions (1997), or smaller churches if permitted to be head pastor, and have limited appointment opportunities for prestigious assignments (Sullins, 2000) despite the fact that female clergy are more highly educated; approximately 77% earn seminary degrees while only 2/3 of their male counterparts receive degrees (Barna Study, 2009).

In this article female pastoral leaders who were perceived as effective by congregants participated in this study along with male pastoral leaders. Gender differences in personality, transformational, and transactional leadership style in the context of church leadership was explored.

Gender and Leadership

The perception of effective leadership is influenced by variables such as race, culture, gender, (Lorber, 1994), however, race will not be the focus of this paper. Gender is a social construct specifying the socially and culturally prescribed roles that men and women are to follow (Collins, 1990; Hooks, 2000; Lorber, 1994; Meade, 1935). It is also one of the ways human beings organize their lives (Lorber, 1994). According to social role theory sexual differences are based on a division of labor between the sexes that fosters the development of gender roles by which each sex is expected to have characteristics that equip it for the work roles that are typical for people of this sex (Eagly & Wood, 1987). In other words, gender roles are rules about how females and males should behave.

Gender roles are also central to gender centered theory of leadership which focuses on individual differences. This approach purports that there are female and male personal characteristics as they relate to leadership. Eagly, Wood, and Diekman, (2000) identify gendered attributes as agentic and communal. Agentic traits such as aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident and competitive have been closely associated with men in leadership (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Communal traits such as affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nuturant, and gentle have been identified with women in leadership (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

In a non secular context Zikmund and Lummis (1998) findings that women pastors were considered more caring, sensitive, and personable than their male counterparts were similar to Eagly et al. (2000). In another study, however, findings were different, female pastors were viewed as more radical, emotionally stable, dominate, expedient, non conforming, and self assured than male pastors (Musson, 2001).

Early gender centered theorists believed that men and women possessed personality characteristics that were incongruent with effective leadership skills (Cheung, 1997; Fagenson, 1990). How-

ever, social role expectations were a more plausible explanation that accounted for gender differences in most studies (Yukl, 1998). The emphasis on gender differences, some argue, has been used to exclude women from secular and non secular leadership positions (Cheung, 1997; Stelter, 2002).

Gender and Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles

Transformational and transactional behaviors are also associated with leadership style studies. The transformational (a.k.a. charismatic) leaders are those who articulate a vision of the future and share it with peers and followers (Bass, 1998; Burns, 1978; Judge & Bono, 2000; Lowe et al., 1996). The emphasis of this model is the connection between leader and follower as it relates to organizational development (Bass, 1985). These leaders regard leadership as a social process and partnership (Alimo-Metcalf, 2010). They are also risk takers who attempt to reshape and create new opportunities for employee involvement (Bass, 1985; Lowe et al., 1996). In addition, they intellectually stimulate followers and pay attention to individual differences and seek new and creative ways to solve problems.

Transactional leaders tend to operate within an existing system by maintaining status quo and avoid taking risks (Bass, 1985; Lowe et al., 1996; Madzar, 2001). An effective transacttional leader is able to work in a stable predictable environment (Lowe et al., 1996) and is good at negotiating deals for compliance and satisfactory performance (Burns, 1978).

Researchers have found that women exhibit more transformational leadership qualities such as establishing a vision, finding creative ways of problem solving, and developing follower's leadership skills (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) analysis and women and men's leadership style they found women rated slightly higher on three of the transformational leadership scales. Men were found to be higher in transactional leadership scales.

In terms of church leaders and leadership style, Ukeritis (1993) found "that church leaders were rated more consistently as transformational leaders than transactional leaders" (p. 168). Additionally, they explained this in linking "transformational leadership qualities such as charisma and intellectual stimulation as consistent with the values of religious life" (p. 168). The female leaders operated more democratically, collaboratively, and participatively. In addition, women found innovative ways to accomplish goals and objectives (Wallace, 1992). Results showed that women used a collaborative leadership style and fostered a sense of community.

Summary

As the research cited indicates, traits' impact on the way that women and men lead is inconclusive. However, in both secular and non secular leadership style studies women exhibit more transformational leadership style qualities than men. More empirical evidence is necessary to validate the assumption that effective female and male clergy lead differently.

Method

Pastors were recruited for the study via referral and online church directories and they were contacted by telephone, electronic mail, and mail. Of the full-time pastors who participated in the study, 13 were female and 80 were male. The mean age of females was 49 years, and males, 50 years. Pastors submitted names and contact information of congregants and/or staff members who could serve as raters. There were a total of 124 raters. Sixty six percent of the raters were female and 34% were male. The average for the age of participants was 51 years.

Measures

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used to measure leadership style. It assesses three dimensions of transformational leadership style: Charismatic Leadership, Individual Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation. The MLQ also assesses transactional leadership style: Contingent Reward and Management by Exception.

*The NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO FFI). D*eveloped by Costa and McCrae (1992), it is a 60-item questionnaire that operationalizes the five major dimensions of personality seen in the Five-Factor Model (FFM) (NEO FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

The PLES was designed by the author. The 23-item pool items were answered on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results

Descriptive statistics on all variables are presented in **Table 1**. Participating female and male pastors scored high in extraversion and agreeableness (T-scores > 55) and average in neuroticism, and conscientiousness (T-scores between 45 - 55). Female pastors scored high in openness (T-scores > 55).

In **Table 1**, observer rated MLQ transformational leadership scores (idealized influence attributed, idealized influence behavior, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration) were above normative means for these scales established by Bass and Avolio (1995). The normative means for idealized influence attributed, idealized influence behavior, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration were 2.56, 2.64, 2.64, 2.51, and 2.26 respectively. Observer rated transactional leadership scores were above the mean in contingent reward and below the mean in management by exception active and management by exception passive, as established by Bass and Avolio (1995). The normative means for contingent reward, management by exception active, and management by exceptionpassive are 2.20, 1.75, and 1.11, respectively. In **Table 2** Combined observer-rated transformational idealized influence attributed and behavior, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration scores revealed positive moderate correlations with observer ratings in the PLES. Additionally, a positive moderate correlation with contingent reward was also noted.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine differences in female and male pastors' personality and leadership style as it relates to pastoral leader effectiveness. Female pastors Openness mean scores were slightly higher than male pastors. Individuals high in Openness are characterized as being more willing to entertain novel ideas and interests and open to new experiences, such as new ideas, emotions, actions, and creative thought (Callister, 1999). Leaders high in Openness can also be described as intelligent, original, imaginative, broad interests,

Table 1.
Means and standard deviations for all variables.

NEO FFI Scores[a]	Female M	Female SD	Male M	Male SD
Neuroticism	47.37	10.37	46.88	8.44
Extraversion	59.24	14.13	59.90	9.51
Openness	62.34	10.00	50.62	10.00
Agreeableness	58.13	7.91	57.73	9.97
Conscientiousness	51.12	8.25	50.78	10.01
MLQ (rater) *Transformational Dimensions*				
Idealized Influence Attributed	3.60	.41	3.29	.81
Idealized Influence Behavior	3.55	.67	3.43	.63
Inspirational Motivation	3.32	.62	3.38	.67
Intellectual Stimulation	3.04	.62	2.89	.78
Individual Consideration	3.31	.41	3.14	.76
Transactional Dimensions				
Contingent Reward	3.19	.79	2.92	.82
Management by Exception Active	.84	.63	1.18	.85
Management by Exception Passive	1.26	1.29	1.37	.85
PLES	106.9	106.3	6.77	10.56

Note. NEO-FFI= NEO Five Factor Inventory; MLQ = Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire; PLES = Pastoral Leadership Effectiveness Scales; [a]NEO-FFI values are T-scores with Mean = 50 and SD = 10 based on normative values presented by Costa & McCrae (1992). *N*'s range from 59 to 91.

Table 2.
Correlations for observer ratings on the combined female/male PLES scores and observer ratings on the MLQ.

MLQ Dimension	PLES
Observer Ratings	
Transformational	
Idealized Influence-Attributed	.31[*]
Idealized Influence-Behavior	.26[*]
Inspirational Motivation	.33[**]
Intellectual Stimulation	.34[**]
Individual Consideration	.45[**]
Transactional	
Contingent Reward	.37[*]
Management by Exception Active	–.21
Management by Exception Passive	–.04

[*]$p < .05$; [**]$p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 65$.

and daring (McCrae & Costa, 1987). In addition, female clergy high in Openness may be depicted as more forward-thinking and less resistant to change than their male counterparts. These clergy may intellectually stimulate their followers by challenging them to think in new and different ways (Corbett, 2006). They may also be better at stimulating others intellectually because they understand and incorporate others perspectives (Costa

& McCrae, 1988b). Further, these pastors may be viewed as problem solvers and as people who welcome new opportunities (Corbett, 2006).

Female and male pastors' transformational scores were above the normative mean and female pastors mean MLQ's attributed idealized influence scores were also higher than male pastors, but because of the low *N* significance could not be determined. However, these limited findings are similar to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) who reported that females scored significantly higher on three of the transformational leadership scales, attributed idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration. Additionally, Bass and Avolio (1994) found that women were rated higher than men in idealized influence. According to Jones and Rudd (2008), "Idealized leaders have high moral and ethical values and provide their followers with a sense of mission" (p. 91). Women leaders are more likely than men to encourage participation, to enhance the self-worth of others, and to get followers to trade off their self-interests for the overall good of the Organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Due to the low N for females, the scores were combined with male scores to examine the relationship of leadership style with effectiveness. All five transformational leadership scales showed positive and significant correlations with the PLES.

Transformational Leadership qualities such as attributed idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration regardless of gender pastoral leaders probably work best during times of church growth, change or crisis (Nygren & Ukeritis, 1993).

Leadership researchers have urged managers to adapt more transformational styles which are considered to be perceived as more effective and inclusive (Valerio, 2009). This study's findings conclude that there are no significant differences between female and male pastoral leaders in personality or leadership style. More empirical studies are necessary to examine access and types of leadership positions available to female and male clergy and how it relates leadership effectiveness.

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