

Critical Analysis Paper

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Society often defines leadership using gender stereotypes and gendered characteristics. The analysis will focus on Eagly and Carli's eighth chapter, "Do Women Lead Differently from Men?" The authors focus this chapter on the characteristics, roles, and stereotypes associated with gender in respect to leadership styles. Eagly and Carli support the above by describing leadership styles, stereotypical characteristics of leaders based on gender, and the evolution of how gender is perceived by society. This paper will dissect the gender stereotypes and gendered characteristics as described in the chapter published in 2007 compared to the more inclusive terminology and gender roles used in present day society.

Eagly and Carli explicitly established their evidence of stereotypical leadership roles. Task-oriented male leaders emphasize "behavior that accomplishes assigned tasks" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). For example, an employee may be in the midst of a family emergency. A task-oriented leader may check on the employee briefly but still insist that the deadline be met. There are both benefits and downfalls to this leadership style. Potential benefits are that the company or business is efficient and delivers their tasks in a timely manner. However, Simon Sinek claims probable downfalls can lead to employees believing they are outside of the company's safety circle causing high anxiety in the office. Uneasiness can be brought home leading to high tensions, short fuses, and violence being within the realm of possibility (2013). On the flip side, interpersonally oriented female leaders emphasize "behavior that maintains positive interpersonal relationships" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). To use the same example as before, an employee is in the midst of a family emergency. Interpersonal oriented leaders will offer their sympathies, support, and allow the employee to take some personal time, handing off tasks to co-workers. Much like the task-oriented leadership style, the interpersonal oriented leadership style has favorable and adverse traits. Specifically, empathy and being understanding are important

qualities for leaders to have. However, being too empathetic can be taken advantage of leading leadership to be overwhelmed and employees slacking off. Eagly and Carli sufficiently presented evidence to support their thesis stating women and men lead differently.

Moreover, Eagly and Carli, composed a well written, researched, convincing chapter as evidenced by the multitude of studies cited throughout. To demonstrate, Eagly and Carli pull ideas from Kanter, 1977; Nieva and Gutek, 1981; and van Engen, van der Leeden, and Willimsen, 2001 when they state “that seemingly different male and female styles are an illusion because any difference in style is really a reflection of the typically different roles that men and women occupy” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Through this example, one can see that many researchers share the opinion that gender does not impact how someone leads but has the potential to impact the role they occupy as a result of societal influences and pressures.

Similarly, the authors empower women and their performance as leaders. Notably, Eagly and Carli discuss many facets in which “Expectations based on gender also influence how leaders think about themselves.” According to the content of the chapter, many women in leadership positions describe themselves with passive, modest characteristics. For example, some of the terms include “collaborative, flexible, inclusive, and participative” (2007). What in society makes women believe that they must feel inferior in the workplace? Gender roles and norms enforced by society impose ways in which females are expected to act, feel, and lead.

While Eagly and Carli did an exceptional job at describing the differences between men and women leadership styles, there are many topics that were overlooked. Correspondingly, there is “no basis for denying women leadership opportunities” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, the authors present a one-sided argument. Eagly and Carli hardly mention the outliers of male leaders who go above and beyond. Particularly, male leaders who use their genuine, authentic

personalities and values, as described in *The Leadership Quarterly* (Eagly, 2005). Those individuals are the ones Eagly and Carli should have highlighted to make their argument stronger.

In like manner, Eagly and Carli describe ways in which women feel out of place within society. Significantly, "...men rarely have to worry about being too masculine or too feminine or about tailoring their leadership style so that they can be taken seriously" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The above describes the policing of gender roles implemented throughout society. For example, a male who is effeminate is typically presumed to be gay. Being feminine could lead the male to have less perceived authority over his team. Additionally, women are often "negotiating two roles: woman and leader" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Many women in leadership often struggle with the following give and take imposed on them by society: to be a good leader means I'm a bad woman but to be a good woman means I'm a bad leader (Kanda-Olmstead, 2018). By and large, Eagly and Carli represent females well but they do not represent the internal struggles of women within society.

Eagly and Carli do not address those who are transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and non-binary. The authors make an attempt at inclusivity when they state: "...people who defy expectations—the *male* nurse, the *female* surgeon, the *male* secretary, the *female* CEO—attract attention" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Be that as it may, there are not any obvious mentions of transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and non-binary folks. The above folks struggle with navigating day to day life. Adding in societal pressures that gender roles and expectations must be completed further others folks. If Eagly and Carli considered those who do not fit into the labels of male and female, their paper would become stronger and more inclusive. Folks in the transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and non-binary

communities are represented in fewer numbers than women in leadership positions. It would be interesting to see scholars analyze why this occurs. Transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and non-binary folks need to be better represented and thought about when comparing males and females.

Eagly and Carli are brilliant scholars. They represent women and their struggles within leadership well. If they addressed transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and non-binary folks and the problems they face within society their work would be groundbreaking, innovative, and have immense magnitude that paves the way. After reading this piece, the world has become a better place for women, transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and non-binary folks in leadership, however, there is still much work to be done. By researching the root of the causes of discrimination and ignorance when hiring or promoting these folks, there is the potential for revolutionary change. Leadership is about authenticity, understanding, collaboration, empathy, integrity, and values. Gender does not play a role in possessing the above traits. Therefore, gender should not play a role in how a leader is defined, character and values should.

References

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