Intersectional Leadership: The Interaction of Gender and Race

Aspen Schmidt

Oklahoma State University

Abstract

This study is designed to determine the perceptions and evaluations of four different races of female leaders. While female leaders are becoming more common, there is still a significant lack of female leadership in high-level management and executive positions. Through considering Implicit Leadership Theories, especially the Categorization Theory, it is revealed that all individuals have their own personal idea of what an ideal leader is and should be. Because these leadership prototypes have been developed based on an individual's previous leadership interactions, most of their prototypes are associated with white males. Due to a female's stereotypes, she is evaluated as not being a competent leader because she is lacking the necessary prescriptions. This study also looks into the Intersectional Theory and how the interaction of gender and race impacts a female leader's evaluation. Once another possible category for someone is introduced, their evaluations may be subject to change.

Introduction

Area of Research

The concept of leadership has been studied for decades. Whether it is leadership styles, characteristics, or qualifications, the ideology of leadership has intrigued numerous researchers throughout the years. However, more recently researchers have focused on specific dynamics of leadership and how other factors attribute to the perception of a leader. In this paper, we will focus specifically on female leaders and uncovering potential factors that impact their evaluations. Gender is believed to play a substantial role in subordinates' perceptions and evaluations of their leaders. The overall concept of leadership is standardly associated with male and related terminology. This therefore causes female leaders to be perceived and evaluated as deficient in stereotypical characteristics that determine and confirm a competent leader. Gender biases have played a large role in preventing females from obtaining both low and high-level leadership roles within a company.

Another attribute this research paper will examine is the role race plays in the perceptions and evaluations of a female leader. When gender and race are examined at an intersectional crossroad, expected perceptions and evaluations change. Race creates a new bias that may enact the backlash effect which is when increased

competence perceptions of a female leader concurrently decreases a female leader's likeability (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016).

Implicit Leadership Theories

Through various studies, it is believed that individuals develop "Implicit Leadership Theories" based on their own personal assumptions and perceptions about the characteristics and stereotypes required to be regarded as a competent leader (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). While these perceptions may be misguided and not a completely accurate evaluation of their leader, the subordinate's perceptions of their leader are still influenced by their personal biases that have been developed (Nye & Forsyth, 1991).

One example of an Implicit Leadership Theory is the Categorization Theory. In a formal setting, it is suggested that an individual will compare their leader to their personal leadership prototype (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). Once a leader is categorized, their subordinate's perceptions are determined. This personal bias will then impact their leader's evaluation. If a leader fails to significantly align with their considered prescriptions, they will not be perceived as a competent leader (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). Because there are many forms of leadership styles and characteristics that are acceptably considered to qualify a competent leader, it is impossible for individuals to unanimously agree on the criteria that determines a competent leader. Because a vast majority of individuals rely on some preconceived leadership prescriptions, not every person will possess these same prescriptions. Implicit Leadership Theories are ultimately decided and developed based on personal preferences and biases that can be cultivated through multiple leadership interactions with varying leaders over time (Nye & Forsyth, 1991).

Implicit Leadership Theories can be broken into two main categories: prototypic and antiprototypic. Prototypic can also be considered prescriptions being that they are positively associated leadership attributes, whereas antiprototypic, or proscriptions, are negatively associated leadership attributes (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). These two categories can be further broken down into six first-order factors including: Sensitivity (Understanding, Sincere, Helpful), Intelligence (Intelligent, Knowledgeable, Educated, Clever), Dedication (Motivated Dedicated, Hardworking), Dynamism (Energetic, Strong, Dynamic), Tyranny (Domineering, Pushy, Manipulative, Loud, Conceited, Selfish), and Masculinity (Masculine, Male) (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). Through this research, it has been suggested that all leaders will be perceived as either negatively or positively in each of these categories and subcategories.

A Leader's Gender

Another vitally important factor to be considered when researching leadership categorization is the sex of the leader. Traditionally, subordinates gravitate more

towards male leaders as opposed to female leaders. While there is not a singular definitive reason as to why this it, research suggests that because individuals are mostly exposed to white male leaders, their leadership prescriptions have been influenced (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). When categorizing someone as a leader, individuals will correspond white males to leadership. If anyone outside of this gender and race is perceived and evaluated as a leader, they receive a penalty because they fail to meet the individual's prescribed leadership qualifications (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). It is also possible that because of stereotypes, female leaders are perceived to lack the necessary prescriptions required to be positively evaluated as a competent leader. When evaluating a leader, an individual is mostly likely to associate common male prescriptions such as dominance, strong, and achievement-oriented to a competent leader (Nye & Forsyth, 1991).

Gender normalities stem from both prescriptive and proscriptive stereotypes. Prescriptive stereotypes being the expected characteristics a leader should possess or the behavior in which the individual is expected to act (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Proscriptive stereotypes, on the other hand, are the characteristics an individual is expected not to possess or behavior in which they are not supposed to act (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). For example, males are prescribed to behave in a dominant manor, whereas that would be considered proscribed behavior for females. In reverse, communal behavior is prescribed for females and proscribed for males.

Communal and Agentic Prescriptions

Communal prescriptions are achieved through an individual reaching fulfillment through the development and nurturing of intimate relationships and cooperation with others (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Communality is associated with descriptive prescriptions such as warmth, family-oriented, weak, and emotional (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). However, while possessing communal prescriptions can be extremely beneficial and even necessary in certain roles or functions, these prescriptions fail to align with an expected leader's traits and characteristics required to effectively achieve an organization's or team's goals. Unfortunately, because of this, female leaders are consistently regarded as lacking the prescriptions to be considered and evaluated as a competent leader (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016).

Agentic prescriptions are developed and maintained through a leader's independent achievements and self-direction (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Agency also consistently pursues competence, proficiency, and control (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Agentic prescriptions can be divided into two different sections: agentic-competent and agentic-dominate. Agentic-competent individuals are determined to possess the characteristics and traits essential to lead an organization or team in the

positive advancement during their pursuit of accomplishing the set goals and objectives. Agentic-competency is very task-focused and represents the successful attainment of the functional and instrumental leadership aspects needed (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Prescriptions associated with agentic-competency include positive intellect and hardworking.

On the other hand, agentic-dominance is very interpersonal-focused in a way that an individual leader is dominant towards another individual or group (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). However, this form of agency also results in the largest agentic penalties for females. The state incongruity hypothesis suggests that women are in a lower status than their male counterparts who are regarded as occupying a higher status (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). The hypothesis also discusses that because females are in a lower status, if they display any form of dominance, they are determined to be contrasting with their prescriptions (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Therefore, dominance is considered to be a proscription for female leaders, and females that display any form of dominance are considered to be violating her prescribed communal role. Prescriptions associated with agentic-dominance include strong and achievement-oriented.

Regardless of a female's developed skill-set that she possesses, females are still perceived to lack the necessary agentic characteristics necessary to be perceived as a qualified and competent leader. These perceptions of a female leader then impact her evaluations. Once a female leader is perceived as agentically deficient, she fails to be evaluated as a competent leader. This mismatch between gender and a leadership role is associated with the communal stereotypes that females are consistently perceived to possess and the agentic characteristics attributed to a standard leader (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). However, male stereotypes are more commonly correlated to the standard leader behaviors and characteristics expected. Since males and their stereotypes are perceived as more agentic, they receive higher positive evaluations, therefore making them the ideal leader candidate (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016).

Because agentic characteristics are derived from descriptive stereotypes, females are stereotyped to have a deficiency (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). For example, a female leader may be perceived as communal, emotional, and family-oriented, but not as dominant, strong, and achievement-oriented. If a female leader does, in fact, exceed the stereotypes and fulfills an agentic leadership role and is instead perceived as strong, she will still be evaluated negatively however (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Because she is violating gender normalities, she will receive an agentic penalty.

Intersectional Theory

A deeper level of understanding stereotype perceptions is possible through the introduction of the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality is the cross of two separate dimensions to determine the impact each has on one another and their implications (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). As race is introduced to the stereotypes of female leaders' perceptions, a greater understanding of possible numerous forms of social inequality is obtained. Traditionally, intersectional research has been utilized to determine the correlation between two social categories and how they simultaneously interact (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). By only examining race or gender alone, research results can be very limited and skewed. However, by looking at two separate categories and how they impact one another, results will provide a deeper understanding of the addressed issue.

Intersectionality helps researchers understand the breadth of complex social dimensions. Through history, social interactions, and the operation of structured power, individuals find themselves having compounded, layered identities (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Because of an individual's identity in multiple categories, they are subject to experiencing both advantages and disadvantages, sometimes simultaneously. Race, class, and gender are not composed as autonomous categories of intersectionality, but instead are utilized to inspect their interactions in a professional setting (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

Double Jeopardy Hypothesis and Intersectional Invisibility

The Double Jeopardy Hypothesis introduces the idea that racial minority females have "double" the amount of penalties when being evaluated as a leader (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Because they are both female and an ethnic minority, they fall victim to twice the amount of discrimination and harassment. A racial minority female leader will be compared to both all races of men and white women, and therefore are subject to sexual and racial stereotypes when being evaluated. For example, it has been discovered that black female leaders who made a mistake while working in a leadership role were penalized to a substantially higher degree than black males or white females (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). This is because a black female is twice as far removed from the prescribed leader stereotypes of a white male (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016).

Additionally, once the concept of intersectionality is applied, racial minority female leaders may find themselves un-scribed to a category. Meaning, a black female leader is no longer a part of a singular identity group, but is instead separately prescribed as black and female (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Because she falls into two separate categories, they can cancel one another out, and she may be unnoticed or invisible. While being invisible may be helpful and reduce the amount of proscriptions associated with a racial minority female leader's perceptions and

evaluations, it can also prevent her from obtaining high-level management positions (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Instead, she would be consistently passed by and forced to remain in the entry, low-level positions within a company.

Proposed Intersectional Leadership Study

Predictions

While female leaders in low-management levels are increasing throughout the country, there is still a substantial, marginal lack of female leadership representation in high-level and executive management roles (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). The inconsistency of female prescriptions and expected leadership prototypes are believed to play a large role in the prevention of female leaders obtaining high-level and executive leadership roles within an organization. The role congruity theory suggests that female leaders receive less favorable evaluations because of their prescriptions failing to align with leadership prototypes (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). The theory also suggests that because of historic male leadership, this has significantly influenced leadership prototypes. This means that leadership prototypes and male prescriptions go hand-in-hand, complementing one another (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

Through the examination of the interaction of gender and race, we can learn if all women are considered to be proscribed leaders, or if through the intersectional cross of gender and race, certain racial groups actually possess leadership prototype prescriptions. This study's purpose is to research the role race plays in the perceptions and evaluations of female leaders. It is possible that female leaders of other races than White actually possess agentic prescriptions that are associated with leadership prototypes.

The following is the suggested study to further examine the four different races of White, Black, Asian-American, and Latina-American. Through intersectionality, each of these races will be examined with a female gender component. It is predicted that a female leader's race will be related to agency and/or communality stereotypes such that (a) White female leaders will be evaluated as the most communal than the other leaders (b) Black female leaders will be evaluated as the most agentic-dominant than the other leaders; (c) Asian-American female leaders will be evaluated as the most agentic-competent than the other leaders.

Through the application of Implicit Leadership Theories, especially the Categorization Theory, leadership prototypes as well as the prescriptions and proscriptions of leaders can be determined. As female leaders of one of the four races: White, Black, Asian-American, or Latina-American are perceived and categorized based on their stereotypes, their evaluations are also impacted. Either agency or communality form the foundation for a vast majority of social judgements. When gender stereotypes

are also taken into considered, agency can be further divided into two separate categories comprised of agentic-competent and agentic-dominant. Agentic-competence is primarily focused on functions, tasks, skills, and performance qualities, while agentic-dominance focuses on winning through competitive actions and a sense of control (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Therefore, agentic-competent actions represent how goals or tasks are accomplished, and agentic-dominant actions are considered to be the pursuit of control and supremacy over their peers, subordinates, teams, or other individuals (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016).

Because of commonly-known racial stereotypes, it is predicted that Black female leaders will be rated as the most agentic-dominant when compared to other leaders. Black females' stereotypes include words such as dominance, anger, and strength (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Each of these prescriptions correlate with agentic-dominant prescriptions. It is also predicted that Asian-American female leaders will be evaluated as the most agentic-competent when compared to other leaders. This is because of common Asian-American stereotypes such as that they are considered to possess a high level of intellect (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). This means that Asian-American female leaders are most likely to demonstrate the expertise and mental ability to advance a group forward in the pursuit of their goals. Other stereotypes associated with this race include mild-tempered and hard-working (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Both of these are also highly correlated with agentic-competent prescriptions. The white female leader, while possibly ranking the highest in status when compared to the other female leaders of different races, is predicted to be evaluated as the most communal leader. Some prescriptions for this leader include family-oriented, weak, and positive which are all highly correlated with communal prescriptions (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Finally, the Latina-American leader is predicted to be found somewhere in the middle of agentic-dominance and communal. Latinas have posed a greater challenge to study because they are considered to be racially ambiguous. Unfortunately, any Hispanic/Latina origins were not recognized as an official race in the United States Census questionnaire until 2014 (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Because of this, there has been a significant lack in data and research on this specific racial background, and therefore causing this racial group to be more challenging to study and determine their respective prescriptions (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016).

Proposed Method

To determine which races are most congruent with agentic and communal prescriptions, I propose that a survey be conducted. The survey could be administered utilizing the Qualtrics system. Participants completing the survey should be told that the purpose of the study is to evaluate an individual for a management position. In the study, participants should assume the role of a hiring manager for a large fictional

company such as a technology firm. In this role, they will evaluate one job candidate for a leadership position. As such, they would be given a variety of employment application materials then asked to evaluate the fit of this candidate with the open leadership position. The survey should be expected to take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Responses would be completely anonymous. Participants should be told that the results of the conducted study would be used to create knowledge of how applications are evaluated for leadership positions.

Once participants begin the survey, they should first be shown a job description of the position in which they are hiring for. For example, the job could be for the Marketing Director position at Global Road Technologies, a fictional company created for the study. Participants should be able to review the duties of the Marketing Director, as well as the role's requirements associated with the position. Both of these documents should be fictional and created specifically for the study. After having the opportunity to review this information, participants will move onto the next page of the survey where they would be shown the actual Marketing Director position candidate.

Participants will be told to review their candidate's resume and most recent performance evaluation; both of these documents being created specifically for the study. The participants will be informed that the position they are responsible to hire for is that of the Marketing Director, and that the position requires overseeing three product teams composed of six people each. The participant's evaluation of the applicant should be based on his/her previous management experience, competence in his/her previous roles, and performance record (scoring above a 4) on his/her past performance evaluation. Participants should then be shown one of four randomized job candidates while completing the survey.

As previously mentioned, each candidate's profile will be fictional and comprised of a headshot picture, resume, and performance evaluation. The headshots should be stock photos. The resumes and performance evaluations should be created specifically for this study. There should only be a couple of significant differences in each of the four candidate's profiles, with race being the most significant. Each candidate should have a name with an ethnic connection. For example, Claire Scott as the White female, Ebony Smith as the Black female, Xiang Shang as the Asian-American female, and Marina Sancho as the Latina-American female. Each candidate should also have a headshot of a mid-aged woman that represents each of the four races. One being White, one Black, one Asian-American, and one Latina-American. Finally, the resumes should also mention various ethnic associations and councils each of the four women could be associated with. For example, Ebony Smith could be involved with the National Council of Negro Women and the Black Career Women's Network. Each of the candidate's performance evaluations should be scored at over 4. Aside from these race-related

adjustments, all of their education, experience, and evaluations need to remain constant among the four female candidates.

After participants review all of the supplied information about their randomized candidate, they should be asked seven questions on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Questions include ones such as "I would feel very comfortable if Ms. (candidate being evaluated name) were my boss," "I think Ms. (candidate being evaluated name) is the right person for the job," and "I put my trust in this supervisor," among others. These questions are being asked to gauge an initial evaluation of the candidate after the participant reads all of the candidate's respective profile information.

The next part of the survey should be split into two separate sections. Utilizing a 7-point Likert scale, one section should ask participants to select how strongly they disagree or agree with a list of words to describe the candidate they had just evaluated. The second block should also utilize a 7-point Likert scale, but instead ask participants to rate how strongly they disagree or agree with various statements about their personal beliefs about leaders. Each of these two sections should be presented in a randomized order to the participants.

For the survey question block asking participants to rate their personal beliefs about leaders, list of descriptive words from Olga Epitropaki and Robin Martin's "From Ideal to Real: A Longitudinal Study of the Role of Implicit Leadership Theories on Leader-Member Exchanges and Employee Outcomes" article could be used. The Implicit Leadership Theory scale is composed of six dimensions including the following: Sensitivity (Understanding, Sincere, Helpful), Intelligence (Intelligent, Knowledgeable, Educated, Clever), Dedication (Motivated, Dedicated, Hardworking), Dynamism (Energetic, Strong, Dynamic), Tyranny (Domineering, Pushy, Manipulative, Loud, Conceited, Selfish), and Masculinity (Masculine, Male) (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). Sensitivity, Intelligence, Dedication, and Dynamism are all considered to be prescriptions of leadership prototypes. However, Tyranny and Masculine are both considered to be proscriptions for leadership prototypes.

The second survey question block should be composed of a list of descriptive words that participants are asked to determine if they describe the candidate they had just evaluated. The list of words could be used from Rosette, Koval, Ma, and Livingston's "Race matters for women leaders: Intersectional effects on agentic deficiencies and penalties" article. The descriptive words to be used include: Positive Intellect, Mild-tempered, Communal, Angry, Strength, Dominance, Achievement-oriented, Sexual, Subservient, Self-centered, Interesting, Family-oriented, Work Ethic, Warm, Refined, Negative Intellect, Lazy, Cold, Ordinary, Greedy, Naïve, Trustworthy, Different, Emotional, Creative, Shrewdness, Positive Physical, Negative Physical,

Neutral Physical, General Positive, General Negative, General Neutral, Racial Slur, and Redundant (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016).

Through utilizing both of these articles, we gain a foundation to examine the perceptions and evaluations of female leaders of the four different races: White, Black, Asian-American, and Latina-American. It is being proposed that a female leader's race will be related to agency and/or communality stereotypes such that (a) White female leaders will be evaluated as the most communal than the other leaders (b) Black female leaders will be evaluated as the most agentic-dominant than the other leaders; (c) Asian-American female leaders will be evaluated as the most agentic-competent than the other leaders.

General Discussion

Limitations

There would inevitably be a few limitations to this study. First, this study would evaluate four very broad races: White, Black, Asian-American, and Latina-American. However, all four of these races can be broken down substantially further into several other race groups. For example, Latina-American can be further broken down into Hispanic, Central American, Columbian, and so on. Asian-Americans can also include several different ethnicities such as Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Chinese. While all Asian, these different sub-categories could encompass their own leadership prototypes and related prescriptions that are not necessarily known when grouped as Asian-Americans. This study also does not fully encompass all races in the United States. For example, Native American is not included in the research.

Another limitation would be the narrow participant spectrum. The demographics of the participants would be very constricted and weighted by a heavy majority. Because of this, there may not be an adequate diverse opinion that would able to form. Another limitation with the participant pool could be that students were the ones that provided the data. While some have had various work and leadership experiences, they may not have had the same level of developed personal leadership prototypes which could impact their evaluation of their randomized leader.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this proposed study is attempting to raise awareness about the stereotypes and proscriptions that female leaders of varying race encounter in a professional business leadership role. Implicit Leadership Theories have shown that individuals develop their own personal leadership prototypes. They are proven to be typically associated with males because of their constant exposure of white male leadership in the workplace. As we learn how race and gender interact with one another through the Intersectionality Theory, we can understand the impact magnitude race has

on female leaders' evaluations. By understanding this correlation, we can better understand the barriers that continue to prevent female leaders from obtaining high-level and executive management positions.

Works Cited

Epitropaki, O., & Martin, R. (2005). From Ideal to Real: A Longitudinal Study of the Role of Implicit Leadership Theories on Leader-Member Exchanges and Employee Outcomes. Journal of Applied Psychology, 90(4), 659-676.

Nye, J. L., & Forsyth, D. R. (1991). The Effects of Prototype-Based Biases on Leadership Appraisals. Small Group Research, 22(3), 360-379.

Richardson, A., & Loubier, C. (2008). Intersectionality and leadership. International Journal of Leadership Studies, 3(2), 142-161.

Rosette, A. S., Koval, C. Z., Ma, A., & Livingston, R. (2016). Race matters for women leaders: Intersectional effects on agentic deficiencies and penalties. The Leadership Quarterly, 27(3), 429-445.