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Gender and Perceptions of Leadership Tasks

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Gender and Perceptions of Leadership Tasks Lydia Peña and Adam Butler



INTRODUCTION

- Women are underrepresented in leadership roles in organizations.
- One explanation may be that women are uninterested or perceive themselves as less capable at leadership.
- Women engage in a more participative leadership style, whereas men are more autocratic (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).
- We predicted that women would have greater interest and perceived capability at participative tasks than men, whereas men would have greater interest and perceived capability at autocratic tasks.

METHODS

1. N = 157 college students, 96 were women.
2. Students read 8 task descriptions pilot tested to represent a participative or autocratic leadership style. They rated their desirability and their perceived capability.

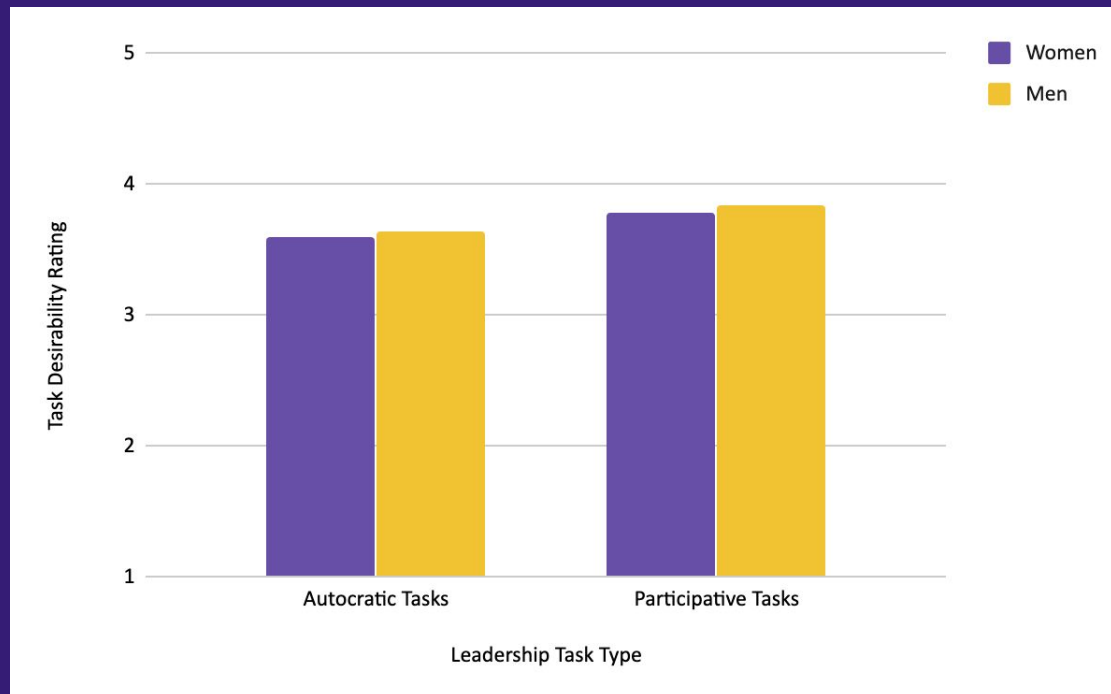
RESULTS

- Women and men had the same desire for both autocratic and participative tasks.
- Women and men had the same perceived capability for both autocratic and participative tasks.

DISCUSSION

- Women have the same interest in leadership tasks and perceive themselves as equally capable at leadership as men, regardless of task type.
- Results suggest that women's underrepresentation in leadership roles is not due to a lack of interest or self-efficacy.
- Future research could examine gender differences in leadership schemas.

Women and men rated equally the desirability of and their perceived success at autocratic and participative leadership tasks.



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Autocratic Tasks

- Interview and hire senior managers
- Assign tasks and responsibilities to specific employees
- Approve major contracts with suppliers
- Take disciplinary action for violations of organizational policies.

Participative Tasks

- Develop strategic plan with senior leadership team.
- Confer with management team to solve problems
- Plan shared operations with outside organizations.
- Listen to group members complaints and concerns.

Success: Not at All Successful (1); Extremely Successful (5)
Desirability: Very Undesirable (1); Very Desirable (5)

t-tests of Men Differences

	Women		Men		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Desirability Autocratic	3.5964	0.70185	3.6393	0.68848	0.377
Capability Autocratic	3.6736	0.69655	3.6762	0.76831	0.022
Desirability Participative	3.7813	0.7781	3.8333	0.68313	0.428
Capability Participative	3.9201	0.66797	3.7869	0.70719	-1.191

Correlations Among Dependent Variables

	1	2	3
1 Desirability Autocratic		0.423	0.576
2 Capability Autocratic		0.713	0.506
3 Desirability Participative		0.572	0.506
4 Capability Participative		0.713	0.572

References

- Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T. (1990). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 233–256. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.233