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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.

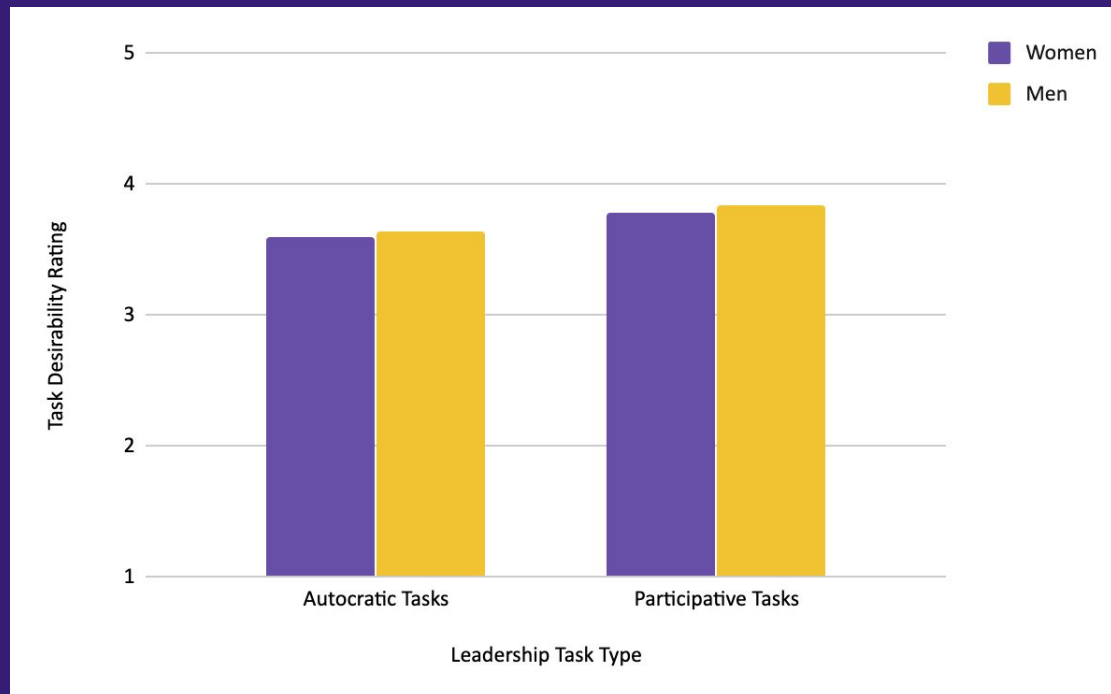
## RESULTS

- 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