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# Gender and Leadership

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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## Abstract

The topic of leadership has been addressed and applied for millennia. Yet, it is only within the past 80 years that leadership has been a topic of serious discussion. It is important to understand variables relevant to effective leadership. Gender is one such variable that must be examined with regard to optimizing leadership effectiveness. The topic of gender and leadership deserves serious and thoughtful consideration and discussion because of professional, political, cultural, and personal realities of the twenty-first century. Women and men have been, are, and should be leaders. Gender must be considered to determine how each leader can reach maximum potential and effectiveness. The FourCe-PITO conceptual framework of leadership is designed to help guide leadership development and education. The present chapter uses this conceptual framework of leadership to discuss how consideration of gender may affect and optimize leadership development and effectiveness. It is the goal of this chapter to lay out the issues that educators of leaders, potential leaders, and “practicing” leaders should be aware of, to achieve success for the good of the groups and individuals they have the responsibility to lead.

**Keywords:** gender, leadership, FourCe-PITO, character, competence, context, communication, personal, interpersonal, team, organizational

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## 1. Introduction

Leadership has been a part of human experience since people formed groups to survive threats from the environment, dangerous animals, and other groups of people; work cooperatively to achieve goals beyond the abilities of individuals; and create families and various social groups to satisfy affiliative needs. Discussions of leaders and leadership appear as far back as Homer's *Iliad* and in religious texts, including the *Old Testament*, *New Testament*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and *Koran*. Essays and discussions of leaders and leadership have appeared during the past several centuries. But, the scholarly study of leadership dates back only about 80 years, when social psychologist Kurt Lewin and his students began studying group dynamics and differentiated among authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles [1]. Most discussions

about leaders and leadership from antiquity through the 1970s focused on men, with minimal discussion of women as leaders or gender and leadership. Social, cultural, and political developments over the past 50 years have made clear that men and women can be effective—and ineffective—leaders and today, men and women are expected to be effective leaders.

To optimize leadership effectiveness of men and women, it is important to go beyond consideration of the biological sex of the individual and simplistic generalizations of what makes a male leader versus a female leader successful. It is important to consider if and how gender relates to leadership. Gender is an individual difference characteristic that is relevant to how people think about themselves, are thought about by others, and act in various situations. Gender, therefore, is relevant to consider with regard to how it relates to leadership effectiveness.

This chapter begins with only a brief discussion of “gender” because the entire volume addresses gender and the other chapters discuss “gender” in greater detail. Then, the FourCe-PITO conceptual framework of leadership [1] is summarized to provide a foundation for the discussion of gender and leadership. FourCe-PITO provides a comprehensive way to catalog and examine interacting elements of leadership and is designed to guide leadership scholarship, education, and development. The chapter addresses gender in the context of the FourCe-PITO framework. The chapter ends with a summary and a conclusion.

## 2. Gender

According to the World Health Organization (WHO): “‘Sex’ refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. ‘Gender’ refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women” [2].

Since the 1970s, researchers have noted the need to differentiate between sex and gender [3, 4]. Sex is defined as a biological characteristic that incorporates the anatomical, physiological, genetic, and hormonal variation that exists in species [5]. Historically, conceptualizations of sex assumed XX and XY chromosomal arrangements for females and males, respectively; however we now understand that chromosomal configurations XXX, XXY, XYY, and XO exist as well as XY males and XX females [6, 7]. The discovery and existence of these various chromosomal arrangements have led to greater understanding of the X and Y chromosomes, their genetic contributions, and have resulted in the expansion of our conceptualization of sex and gender.

Gender is a multidimensional construct that refers to different roles, responsibilities, limitations, and experiences of individuals based on their presenting sex and/or gender [5]. Bem [3] defined gender (i.e., extent of masculinity and/or femininity) as pertaining to the psychosocial ramifications of biological sex (i.e., whether an individual is male or female) [8]. Generally, gender is operationalized by observing the behavior of men and women or by asking participants to self-report whether they are male or female [9]. Gender, however, consists of much more than the psychosocial ramifications of biological sex. Gender is a complex phenomenon

with many different facets [10]. These facets include gender schemas and stereotypes; gender-role identity; and gender-role traits, attitudes, and values [11].

Sandra Bem pioneered the Gender Schema Theory in 1981 to explain sex typing and gender stereotypes within the society. Bem [12] proposed that this process begins in childhood. Children learn which behaviors and attributes are associated with each sex and continue to process the information in terms of gender schema. While parents can teach more androgynous views at home (such as modeling equal roles for mothers and fathers, preventing access to media that promotes sex-typing, etc.), children are often exposed to sex-typing when attending school, including day care settings. Bem [13] suggested that parents should teach a sexism schema so that children recognize when sexist information or practices are occurring. She believed this practice is likely to help prevent children from mindlessly maintaining a particular gender schema and, as a result, will promote positive social change [13].

Sex typing creates a core gender identity influenced by how one is raised, the media, and other cultural influences. Bem identified four categories of sex typing: sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated. She defined sex-typed individuals as people who process and integrate information consistent with their gender; cross-sex-typed individuals as people who process and integrate information consistent with the opposite gender; androgynous individuals as people who process and integrate traits and information from both genders; undifferentiated individuals as people who do not appear to process sex-typed information [12].

Why do specific gender stereotypes become so ingrained in our societies? Bem [12] suggested that the Gender Schema Theory leads children, especially during adolescence, to conform to what is culturally defined for males and females, because it is easier to assimilate society's stereotypically congruent norms. As a process theory, the Gender Schema Theory further solidifies the gender stereotypes within societies. A heterosexual subschema, defining differences between proper societal benchmarks of masculinity and femininity, encourage the strong gender schema developed in societies. This subschema asserts that men and women should be different from each other and many societies use the heterosexual subschema as the norm. Bem [12] hypothesized that cross-sex interactions more readily take on gender stereotypes, especially in social settings, and people behave differently toward individuals of the opposite sex when they find them attractive or unattractive.

As societal norms are changing, with the acceptance of same-sex relationships and gender fluidity, gender stereotypes are evolving as well. Lee and Kashubeck-West [14] used confirmatory factor analyses to analyze four ethnic groups (African American, Asian American, European American, and Hispanic American) of young American adults. The analyses indicated that the two-factor differentiation proposed by Bem (i.e., masculine/feminine) did not fit men or women from any of the ethnic groups in a simple binary fashion. Donnelly and Twenge [15] reported that women's femininity scores, using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, decreased significantly from 1993 to 2012, whereas their masculinity scores remained constant. The scores for men did not change significantly during this 20-year time period. When the period of time was expanded from 1974 to 2012, women's self-reports of masculinity rose significantly during this time frame, with no significant change in self-reported femininity. Men's masculinity and femininity scores remained constant during this broader time frame. Women's androgyny scores significantly

increased since 1974 (but not since 1993), whereas men's androgyny scores remained constant. These findings may suggest that since the 1990s, women are less likely to endorse typical feminine traits, and/or the scale is not sensitive to modern gender stereotypes [15].

Gender also includes the manner in which individuals interact with each other and the social roles they are expected to fulfill in a society [9, 16]. In addition, ideas regarding gender are culturally and temporally specific and subject to change. Historically, men's higher social status within many cultures meant that they also have had more opportunities and access to power and resources than women have had and, as a result, men have been afforded more power and influence [17, 18]. Relatively recent changes in views, self-identity, and acceptance of varied gender roles (regardless of biological sex) make consideration of gender and leadership a topic worthy of discussion. Before discussing gender and leadership *per se*, leadership is defined and the FourCe-PITO conceptual framework for leadership is explained.

### 3. Leadership

There are many ways to finish the sentence, "Leadership is..." In fact, an online search for the definition of leadership yields more than 128,000,000 results. Over the past century, the definition of leadership has evolved from "the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation" [19] to "the enhancement of behaviors (actions), cognitions (thoughts and beliefs), and motivations (reasons for actions and thoughts) to achieve goals that benefit individuals and groups" [1]. It is noteworthy that concepts of effective leadership have shifted emphasis from "who" the leader is to "what" the leader does. Who the leader is remains important and is highly relevant to the present discussion of gender and leadership. The focus on relationships, influence, and outcomes allows for substantial individual differences and characteristics of effective leaders provided that they are aware of how to accomplish effective leadership. Effective leaders are aspirational and inspirational.

#### 3.1. FourCe-PITO framework

Callahan and Grunberg [1] considered many models of leadership to identify a conceptual framework for leader education and development, including authentic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional, transformational, servant, authoritative, and adaptive leadership. Callahan and Grunberg [1] found value in all of these models and identified four leadership domains to capture key elements of all of these models: Character, Competence, Context, and Communication. These four C's ("FourCe") occur across four different psychological levels—Personal, Interpersonal, Team, and Organizational (PITO). The PITO levels were adapted from the leadership training model developed at the United States Air Force Academy [20, 21].

The FourCe-PITO leadership framework considers the four domains across the four levels. Character includes all characteristics of the individual—physical (e.g., sex, race, age, appearance) and psychological (e.g., gender, personality, values, outlooks, attributes). Competence includes transcendent leadership skills (e.g., high emotional intelligence, critical and strategic thinking, leading by example, motivating and empowering others) and

specific expertise determined by role and specialty. Context includes physical, psychological, cultural and social environments, and various situations (e.g., stress). Communication refers to verbal (oral and written) and nonverbal, sending and receiving of information. Personal refers to aspects of self as well as perception of self and self-awareness. Interpersonal refers to how one's perception of self and personal characteristics, as well as perception by others, affects each dyadic relationship. Team refers to small groups of people interacting for a common purpose. Organizational refers to large groups of people and systems that affect people.

## 4. Character

Callahan and Grunberg [1] refer to character as the aspects of the individual including personality and values, but also more broadly to individual characteristics, such as physical stature and appearance. Gender, sex, race/ethnicity, and age also fall within this domain. Character contributes to the potential and realized effectiveness of leaders [1]. The importance of a leader's character is not a new or revolutionary idea. Ancient literature (including the Bible and Homer's epic poems) is filled with examples of leaders whose individual characteristics were greatly emphasized, for example, the cunningness of Odysseus, the wisdom of Solomon, and the courage of Hector. The earliest writings on leadership theory focused on the leader's individual characteristics. The "Great Man" theory of leadership appeared in Carlyle [22] who proposed that leaders shaped history through their character—especially their intellect, prowess of their leadership, and divine inspiration.

Consideration of a leader's character is relevant to leader effectiveness. It is noteworthy that key aspects of character pertinent to leadership (e.g., self-confidence, humility, trustworthiness, responsibility, integrity) are not gender specific. In addition, personality differences (e.g., extraversion versus introversion, judging versus feeling, sensing versus perceiving) occur in males and females of masculine and feminine gender. Personal values, beliefs, ethics, and morality also are individual differences that are not linked to sex or gender. However, gender—as an important aspect of Character—is relevant to consider with regard to leadership styles and effectiveness.

### 4.1. Gender and Character

The FourCe-PITO framework [1] includes the importance of character for effective leadership. Some character traits identified—such as responsibility, integrity, trustworthiness, optimism, adaptability, and humility—transcend gender roles and are important for the leader role [23]. However, Gutek and Morasch [24] argued that gender roles often affect leadership roles, and Ridgeway [25] maintained that gender provides an "implicit, background identity" relevant to leadership.

#### 4.1.1. Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes describe stereotypic beliefs about the attributes of women and men, and prescribe how men and women "should" behave [26, 27]. Men are stereotyped with agentic

characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality, and decisiveness; whereas women are stereotyped with communal characteristics such as concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness, and nurturance [28]. These gender stereotypes of women as warm, nurturing, and caring and the corresponding stereotypes of men as cold, competitive, and authoritarian may have contributed to the perception by some that women may be less effective than men in leadership positions although they can be, in fact, equally effective [29, 30]. It is noteworthy that any generalizations about men versus women as effective leaders based on sex or gender reveal an emphasis on the Character domain of leadership. Interestingly, Eagly et al. [30] found that men and women are equally effective leaders, unless the leadership role is “gendered” (i.e., people expect the leader to be a man or a woman). In that case, leaders of the expected gender and sex are more effective. This finding is further discussed under “Context and Gender” because the social role expectations and the context in which the leadership takes place influence leader effectiveness.

With regard to how leadership characteristics are gendered, research indicates that traditional managerial effectiveness (e.g., time efficient, performance focused) often is sex-typed as masculine (i.e., agentic as opposed to communal). This means that characteristics deemed necessary to be a successful manager or an effective leader have often been stereotypically associated with men [31, 32]. Schein and Mueller [33] and Schein et al. [34] reported that individuals perceive successful managers as having characteristics more often held by men than by women, and the expectation that successful managers will possess masculine traits is stronger among men than among women.

In leadership roles that transcend managerial roles, gender stereotypes may be particularly challenging for women because agentic, as opposed to communal, tendencies often are valued. According to the Role Congruity Theory [35], the agentic qualities thought necessary in the leadership role are incompatible with the predominantly communal qualities stereotypically associated with women, resulting in a prejudicial evaluation of the behavior of women leaders as less effective or unfavorable than the equivalent behavior of men. For example, the more agentic a leader role is defined (e.g., military officer, political leader, or scientist) or the more completely women fulfill its agentic requirements, the more likely such women are to elicit unfavorable evaluation because their behavior deviates from the social norm of the female gender role [35]. Therefore, in leadership roles, women are confronted with opposing pressures: as leaders they should possess agentic qualities (i.e., masculine characteristics), but as women, they should not be “too manly.” Therefore, women may receive more positive reactions if they include in their repertoire behaviors that are more communal (e.g., expressive, friendly, and participative), as long as these behaviors are not viewed as inappropriate for the leader role [35, 36].

#### *4.1.2. Leadership style*

Another consideration concerning the interaction of character and gender on leadership effectiveness is leadership style. Callahan and Grunberg [1] indicate that personality affects the leader's preferred leadership style and gender also is likely to affect preferred leadership style. Many different leadership styles have been identified over the years. In this chapter, we focus

on those task-oriented versus interpersonally oriented styles identified by Bales [37] and leadership styles discussed by Lewin and Lippitt [38].

Task-oriented leadership style is defined as a concern with accomplishing assigned tasks by organizing task-relevant activities. Interpersonally-oriented leadership style is defined as a concern with maintaining interpersonal relationships by tending to others' morale and welfare [37, 39]. These leadership styles can be categorized as agentic versus communal styles of leadership, respectively. Behaviors of the task-oriented style include: encouraging followers to follow rules, maintaining high standards for performance, and making leader and follower roles explicit [40]. Behaviors of the interpersonally-oriented style include: helping and doing favors for subordinates, looking out for their welfare, explaining procedures, and being friendly and available [40]. Male gender is commonly associated with agentic style, whereas female gender is commonly associated with communal style. Both styles can be effective, depending on the followers and the situation. Understanding one's own gender and which leadership style is more comfortable can help optimize one's effectiveness as a leader.

Another way to distinguish leadership styles is the classic distinction of democratic (participative decision-making) versus autocratic (directive) versus laissez-faire (little or no direction) leadership as identified by Lewin and Lippitt [38]. This spectrum is relevant to the consideration of gender roles, because a component of agentic norms implies that men are more autocratic and directive, whereas women are more participative and democratic [39]. It has been suggested that the extent to which female leaders favor a more participative rather than directive leadership style may reflect cultural influences based on expected roles of women versus men [35]. Women may encounter negative reactions and evaluations when they become directive and take charge in an agentic manner consistent with an autocratic style [39]. Because men probably do not experience the same incongruence between the male gender role and the leader role, they may be freer to lead in an autocratic manner. The fact is that each of these leadership styles has its place. If gender roles limit one's leadership style options, then effectiveness of leadership is constrained.

Other leadership scholars [41, 42] have examined distinctions between transformational leadership styles versus transactional leadership styles. Burns [42] defined transformational leaders as setting high standards for behavior and establishing themselves as inspirational role models by gaining trust and confidence of followers. Transformational leaders set future aspirational goals and motivate followers to achieve these goals. By mentoring followers, transformational leaders encourage followers to reach their full potential. In contrast, Burns [42] defined transactional leaders as those who establish exchange relationships with their followers and emphasize behaviors or actions. Transactional leaders clarify subordinates' roles and responsibilities, monitor work, praise followers when they meet objectives, and correct them when failing to do so. Transformational leadership, more than transactional, has communal aspects, whereby the leader is focused on mentoring and developing followers. Consistent with the possibility that the transformational leader role may be more aligned with the female gender role, research indicates that subordinates perceive greater continuity between leaders' feminine personality traits and a transformational style rather than a transactional style [43, 44]. Of note, however,

women are more likely than men to utilize the contingent award component (i.e., reinforcement or punishment) of transactional leadership than men [44].

Regarding leadership effectiveness, Eagly et al. [44] found transformational leadership and the contingent award component of transactional leadership to be effective, with null or ineffective findings for transactional leadership alone. This difference may be relevant to the leadership effectiveness of people who use communal and supportive leadership styles.

#### **4.2. Character, Gender, and PITO**

Gender is a core element of Character and includes self-perception of Gender as well as perception of Gender by others. Therefore, with regard to Character and Leadership, Gender needs to be considered and is relevant across all four levels of PITO. Gender affects our self-perception (Personal), perception of us by other people in dyads (Interpersonal), small groups (Team), and large groups or systems (Organizational). It is necessary for one to have self-awareness (Personal) of Gender. When other people are involved (be it Interpersonal, Team, or Organizational), it is important for one to be self-aware and to understand perception of self by others to determine how to best lead.

### **5. Competence**

Callahan and Grunberg [1] refer to competence as the “abilities, skills, and knowledge relevant to leadership that transcend various roles, professions, and responsibilities, and to abilities, skills, and knowledge specific to particular roles, professions, and responsibilities of relevance to the leadership position.” Leaders need to have both practical and working knowledge specific to their role as well as transcendent leadership competencies. Transcendent leadership competencies include management skills, critical thinking, decision making, problem solving, emotional intelligence, relational skills, and the ability to influence other people [1].

Effective leaders influence people and often demonstrate excellent management skills so that followers perform optimally, work as a team, and make best use of resources, including personnel, supplies, equipment, and time [1]. Levitt [45] indicated, “management consists of a rational assessment of the situation, and the systematic selection of goals and purposes; the systematic development of strategies to achieve these goals; the marshaling of the required resources; the rational design, organization, direction, and control of the activities required to attain the selected purposes; and finally, the motivating and rewarding of people to do their work.” Although management is important to leadership, leadership competencies go beyond management skills [1].

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to effectively manage emotions within oneself and in relationships with others [46]. Goleman [47, 48] takes a broader approach to emotional intelligence, suggesting that it consists of personal and social competencies. Personal competence consists of self-awareness, confidence, self-regulation, conscientiousness, and motivation. Social competence consists of empathy and social skills

such as communication and conflict management [47, 48]. The Hay-McBer group found that leaders with greater emotional intelligence competence were more influential than people who lacked this competence [49]. It is important to note that although individuals have different “natural” emotional intelligence, Callahan and Grunberg [1] catalog this construct as a Competence (rather than part of Character) because it can be learned and developed.

The art of influence is a leadership competency that is largely tied to the perception of leadership by others [1]. A leader's influence is the ability to motivate followers to change their behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes [50]. Yukl and Chavez [51] identified nine influence tactics that a leader may use to influence followers: inspirational appeal (i.e., when the leader seeks to gain commitment by arousing emotions), rational persuasion (i.e., when the leader uses logical arguments and facts to influence a decision), consultation (i.e., when the leader seeks the target persons' participation in the decision making process), ingratiation (i.e., when the leader uses praise or flattery to win over), personal appeal (i.e., when the leader uses an interpersonal relationship between the leader and the target person to carry out a task), exchange (i.e., when the leader offers an incentive or exchange for compliance), coalition tactics (i.e., when the leader uses the aid of other already complying individuals to gain support of the target person), legitimating tactics (i.e., when the leader refers to rules or formal policies to prove he or she has legitimate authority), and pressure (i.e., when the leader intimidates the target person to comply with their requests) [51].

Effective leadership also depends on relationship skills. In transformational leadership roles, relationships between leaders and followers are marked by a high degree of mutual trust, respect, understanding, and obligation toward each other. There is a high degree of reciprocity between leaders and followers; each affects and is affected by the other [36, 52].

## 5.1. Gender and Competence

As previously discussed, Callahan and Grunberg [1] define competence as the abilities, skills, and knowledge that transcend various leader roles, and the specific abilities, skills, and knowledge relevant to a particular leader role. This section focuses on emotional intelligence and the art of influence.

### 5.1.1. Emotional intelligence

Numerous studies [53–56] have indicated that emotional intelligence is an important component of leadership. Emotional intelligence increases the confidence of individuals and helps leaders and followers achieve levels of performance beyond expectations, especially when coupled with transformational leadership that emphasizes emotions and motivation [57]. Emotionally intelligent leaders are reported to be happier and more committed to their organizations [58], attain greater success [59], perform better [48, 60, 61], and understand their and others' emotions to improve decision-making and instill enthusiasm, trust, and cooperation among followers through interpersonal relationships [62].

A review of sex, gender, and emotional intelligence offers mixed findings [63]. Some research indicates that women may have slightly higher levels of emotional intelligence compared to

men [64, 65]. However, Bar-On [66] reported no significant differences between men and women regarding overall emotional intelligence. He did find gender differences for some components of emotional intelligence; however, Goleman [60] found none. Because of the mixed results regarding gender differences in emotional intelligence and research supporting the utility of emotional intelligence for effective research, improving one's emotional intelligence will be beneficial for leadership, regardless of gender.

### 5.1.2. *The art of influence*

A leader's influence can be defined as the ability to motivate followers to change or enhance their behaviors, cognitions, or motivations to achieve goals that benefit the individual or the group. Influence is often considered to be a measuring stick of a leader's effectiveness. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model [67], source characteristics (e.g., leader characteristics), such as expertise, power, and personal appeal or likeability, are important determinants of influence. Generally, leaders who have expertise and are likeable tend to exert greater influence than those without expertise who are unlikeable [68].

The characteristics of competence and likeability as contributors of influence have particular applicability to gender because stereotypically, women are often characterized as possessing likeable qualities and men are often characterized as possessing competent qualities [69]. People who are predominantly feminine in gender style may find themselves in a double bind when it comes to leadership and the incongruity between the stereotypical leader role and the female gender role. Women's ability to influence is often dependent on the ability to overcome this double bind, whereas men usually do not experience the social pressure to be both communal and agentic [70].

Men's historical predominance in high status roles has resulted in men generally possessing higher levels of status than women [69]. Gender differences in status are important determinants of influence because it relates to the perceived competency of the individual. Status Characteristics Theory [71] states that an individual's status can be used implicitly to form performance expectations of self and others. People presume that higher status individuals have more competence than lower status individuals and are more likely to yield to the influence of the high status individual [72]. In addition, individuals perceived as higher status are more likely to engage in agentic behaviors and are perceived as more influential [69].

Similar to previously discussed theories, Status Characteristics Theory predicts greater communal behavior by women and agentic behavior by men [69]. Because men historically have higher status, they have greater legitimacy as influence agents and are encouraged to behave agentially. On the other hand, because of their presumed low competence, low status individuals who exhibit agentic behaviors may be perceived as attempting to illegitimately gain power and influence and, as a result, their influence is likely to be resisted [69, 73]. To overcome this potential resistance, lower status individuals must communicate a lack of personal gain and little desire to control, but instead convey a relational and collectivist motivation (i.e., utilize communal behaviors; [74]) to be most effective. It follows then that communal behavior should enhance the influence of people who are perceived to have lower status.

## 5.2. Competence, Gender, and PITO

Gender is not a core aspect of Competence. Therefore, Competence should be judged across the four levels of PITO regardless of Gender. However, cultural biases often color interpretation of competencies based on sex and Gender. For example, outstanding performance in athletic events by men is usually attributed to the male athletes themselves. In contrast, similar outstanding performance in athletic events by women is often attributed to their male coaches. A leader should be competent and have the abilities, skills, and knowledge necessary to perform the jobs effectively. The Gender of the leader should not define a leader's competence on the Personal, Interpersonal, Team, or Organizational levels. Yet, because Gender biases may affect perception of Competence in self and others, it is important to be aware of any Gender-related biases that contribute to misperceptions about Competence and to, instead, focus on each Competence *per se*.

## 6. Context

According to Callahan and Grunberg [1], context includes physical, psychological, social, and economic environments, as well as various situations (e.g., stress). The leadership context is characterized by three categories: the unique characteristics of the group being led, the nature of the group's tasks, and the organizational climate/culture where the leadership happens [75]. Age, gender, individual characteristics, and culture are important contextual factors. Effective leaders are aware of and adjust to context in a variety of ways. Ayman and Adams [75] proposed that leaders can learn to alter behaviors, to adapt so they are perceived as behaving differently, or to actively manage and change the situation.

### 6.1. Gender and Context

With regard to gender and context, the most apparent, relevant research literature focuses on psychological and social context. Theories underlying this research vary from Androgyny Theory [3] to Status Characteristics Theory [17]. However, the most common theoretical positions that underlie the study of gender and leadership with regard to psychological and social context are the intrapsychic perspective, the social structural perspective, and the interpersonal perspective [9].

#### 6.1.1. Intrapsychic perspective

According to the intrapsychic perspective, the leader's intrapsychic gender-role characteristics (e.g., masculinity/agency/instrumentality and femininity/expressivity/communion) matter because they affect the leader's preferred style, behavior, and outcomes regardless of whether the leader is a man or a woman [9].

#### 6.1.2. Social structural perspective

The social structural perspective posits that the qualitative differences in men's and women's normative roles affect their leadership behavior and outcomes. Gender is important because of

the common perception that male gender roles are more congruent with the leadership role than are female gender roles. This perception may contribute to prejudice against women leaders [9, 35]. Men are commonly attributed higher status and are more likely to be in leadership roles congruent with their sociodemographic status and gender [9]. In contrast, women are commonly perceived as having lower status and the leadership role may be viewed as less congruent with their socio-demographic status and gender [9].

### 6.1.3. *Interpersonal perspective*

The interpersonal perspective focuses on how leaders interact with superiors, coworkers, and subordinates. This perspective incorporates aspects of both the intrapsychic and social structural perspectives because interactions are viewed as a function of socio-demographic gender stereotypes, gender-related beliefs, expectations about the self and others, and situational cues. Accordingly, gender makes a difference because men and women have different types of social interactions with their male and female supervisors, peers, and subordinates, and these interactions influence outcomes [9].

## 6.2. Context and leadership styles

A meta-analysis conducted by Eagly and Johnson [76] suggested that several factors in the organizational context moderate the emergence and direction of gender differences in leadership styles. One of the largest moderators is the sex composition of the organization. Differences between male and female leaders in democratic and autocratic styles are significantly reduced in male-dominated groups than in female-dominated groups. This finding suggests that female and male leaders use styles more congruent with the gender-typing of the context [29, 76].

In addition, context and leaders can be viewed from an interactionist perspective (i.e., context and leaders reciprocally influence each other) [77]. In other words, context constrains which behaviors are considered prototypical [78, 79]. The “stronger” the situation, the more salient are norms that guide behavior [80]. For example, in the military strict rules and procedures and strong norms produce over-determined behavior (strong situation), whereas relatively weak situations produce substantial variation in individual behavior [81]. Of note, not only do individuals behave as the situation demands, but they have selected particular environments and are active players in shaping the environments [82], particularly when they are leaders [83].

## 6.3. Gender and stress

In addition to psychological and social context, it is important to consider how stressful a situation is and whether stress affects behaviors of individuals as well as interactions among people. Stress is defined as a “process by which environmental events threaten or challenge an organism's well-being and how the organism responds to the threat” [84]. With regard to gender and stress, it is relevant to recognize that there are three major stress responses: the Fight-or-Flight response [85], the Polyvagal Theory [86], and the Tend-and-Befriend response [87]. The Fight-or-Flight response is demonstrated by all mammals, regardless of sex or

gender, but has sometimes been considered a more “masculine” response (perhaps related to sex and/or gender). The Polyvagal Theory refers to the freezing response (“frozen with fear”) or “playing dead” that mammals display when encountered with an inescapable predator or stressor, with no apparent sex or gender differences in this response. The Tend-and-Befriend response has been offered as a description of a predominantly “feminine” response (that can be demonstrated by females and males) to threat by protecting vulnerable individuals and by responding to stressors by seeking others for social collaboration and mutual protection. Males and females of masculine and feminine genders display all three of the major stress responses, but the relative magnitude of these stress responses appears to be related to sex and gender.

#### **6.4. Context, Gender, and PITO**

Gender is often a key aspect of Context, including, psychological context, social context, and situational stress. Context and Gender operate at all PITO levels of interaction. Cultural differences in Gender roles and biases as well as psychobiological differences in relative extent to which each of the three stress responses operate are likely to contribute to interactions among Context and Gender with regard to leadership. Self-awareness of these processes may help to optimize leadership effectiveness.

### **7. Communication**

In most leadership models, communication is identified as a critical element. Communication is defined as the sending and receiving of information, verbally (oral and written words) and nonverbally (including tone of voice, intonation, facial expressions, body language) [1]. Receiving information involves listening to verbal language as well as absorbing non-verbal information. Sending information similarly occurs verbally, through spoken words or written text, and non-verbally through the sender's facial expressions, body language, and non-verbal aspects of oral communication [1].

Effective leadership also depends on effective listening, reflecting respect, and a willingness to be involved with others [1]. Information gathered through “active” listening, strong relationships with the group, and strong communication skills is used to make informed decisions relevant to the individual and the group. It is the role of leaders to develop relationships with individuals and create positive and supportive communication environments [1, 88].

In addition, the communicator needs to be perceived as credible, trustworthy, and knowledgeable about the information being conveyed [1]. The most effective communication takes into consideration primacy, recency, repetition, clarity, and relevance of information. Furthermore, addressing opposing opinions, memorable imagery, and consistency of nonverbal information and verbal content all add to persuasive and effective communication [89–92].

#### **7.1. Gender and Communication**

Individuals employ different communication styles [93–95]. Feminine communication has been described as more indirect, elaborate, and emotional, whereas masculine communication

has been described as more direct, succinct, and instrumental [94, 96]. The feminine linguistic style can help to establish rapport and encourage conversation and comfortable exchange of information, but it also can be interpreted as uncertainty, tentativeness, and a lack of authority [97–99].

Stereotypically masculine characteristics (such as assertiveness and self-reliance) are often seen as components of effective leadership [32, 100]. Women who use a “feminine” communication style may be considered less competent than men in leadership roles [35, 101] and can be rated less favorably when competing for leadership positions [28, 102]. As a result, women's competence in leadership is often undervalued based on communication style, in part because of gender-based stereotypes [28, 35]. Because female leaders are not considered to be as effective communicators as male leaders [103, 104], women's communication style may reinforce the stereotype that they are less competent than men in a leadership position. In contrast, when women use more “masculine” communication styles, they may be perceived as pushy or arrogant, depending on context. Similarly, men who use more “feminine” communication styles may be perceived as weak or lacking confidence.

It is important to note, however, that linguists and communication experts have not reached agreement about whether there are truly differences in communication based on sex or gender. Tannen [105] proposed that there are sex differences in communication style that are learned within a given culture. Gray [106] argued that there are marked sex differences in communication style, both sending and receiving. In contrast, Cameron [107] argued against Gray's binary distinction and proposed that gender and communication should be considered in more complex and nuanced ways.

## 7.2. Communication, Gender, and PITO

Gender and Communication has a complex interaction. It often seems that interpretation and reactions to different Communication styles are affected by the Gender of the “sender” and of the Gender of the “receivers” of the communication. It also seems that Context plays an important role in the Gender by Communication interaction. The research literature and relevant scholars have not yet reached consensus on this complex issue. With regard to Communication, Gender, and PITO, it seems likely that the same complexity of interaction operates such that the level of interaction affects whether Communications are differentially interpreted based on Gender. Despite this lack of clear conclusion, it seems important to consider that Gender likely affects how Communication is interpreted, especially at the Interpersonal, Team, and Organizational levels.

## 8. Summary and conclusion

The topic of gender and leadership deserves serious and thoughtful consideration and discussion because of professional, political, social, and personal realities of the twenty-first century. Science and society have come to appreciate that women and men cannot simply be classified and distinguished based on biological sex. Instead, gender is a more complex and meaningful

way to understand individual differences. The present chapter uses the FourCe-PITO conceptual framework to discuss how gender relates to the leadership domains of Character, Competence, Context, and Communication across the Personal, Interpersonal, Team, and Organizational levels of interaction. We believe that it is important to understand and appreciate how gender may contribute to self-perception and perception by others and that this understanding has the potential to help optimize leadership effectiveness.

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