

Gender, self-image and leadership: a gender-specific comparison of the self-images of female and male leaders.

Brigitte Streibich (streibich.brigitte@gmail.com)

Christoph Desjardins (christoph.desjardins@hs-kempten.de)

Professional School of Business and Technology, University of Applied Sciences Kempten, Germany

Summary

- Research questions:** Are men and women in leadership roles different? How do the self-images of male and female leaders differ? Is there a linkage between leadership, gender and self-image?
- Methods:** Based on a comprehensive overview of relevant theoretical concepts and scientific literature, the Leadership Tasks Survey was used for a self-assessment of 91 German leaders. The collected data was processed and statistically analyzed.
- Results:** The concepts of leadership, gender and self-image are strongly linked to each other. Differences exist between the self-images of men and women in leadership positions with women having the more negative, self-critical self-image. These differences were found to be statistically significant.
- Structure of the article:** Introduction; Literature Review; Research questions and methods; Empirical results; Conclusion; About the author; Bibliography

Introduction

Gender Quota, #MeToo movement, Gender Wage Gap – the discussion around gender and feminism has reached a new climax in politics, business, media and society over the last couple of years. At all levels and in all Western countries, women demand more participation, more equality and more diversity.

When it comes to the business world, pioneers as Facebook manager and bestseller author Sheryl Sandberg (Sandberg, 2013) paved the way for a discussion around women in leadership positions. Business networks as *BPW International – International Federation of Business and Professional Women* (BPW, 2018) and *GDW – Global Digital Women* (GDW, 2018) are committed to enable women to find a seat at the relevant tables.

Although women in Western countries have caught up considerably in recent years, they are still under-represented in politics and business. In 2017, in the European Union the proportion of women in management positions was 34 % (European Union, 2018). With only 29 %, Germany is part of the lower third (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018). Despite the gender quota, amongst the board members of the Top 200 German companies, only 8 % were female (Statista, 2018). In January 2019, amongst the 30 DAX companies, only 14.5 % of their board members were female. Historically, this might be the highest number ever, but it is still not high enough (Ernest & Young, 2019.)

Without a doubt, there is a glass ceiling that hinders women from climbing up the career ladder. This phenomenon is multidimensional and due to socialization processes, stereotypes, traditional role models, skepticism and prejudices (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Kent, Blair, Rudd & Schuele, 2010; Heilman, 2001). Also, women are often perceived to be less-effective leaders (Schein, 2001; Koch, Biemann & Weckmüller, 2014; Heilman, 2001; Sczesny, 2003). However, this argument was refuted by many scientific researches proving that typically female leadership styles and behaviors – transformational, people-focused, empathic – are even more beneficial in modern organizational contexts (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003; Rohmann & Rowold, 2009; Hoyt & Simon, 2016).

Nevertheless, it seems that the medial, politic and scientific discussion around female leadership focuses on the differences between the genders instead of identifying the many similarities. Previous researches

and their findings have been widely divergent on this question: most of them show that women's leadership style is different from men's (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003; Rohmann & Rowold, 2009; Radu, Deaconu & Frăsineanu, 2017), whereas others state that there is very little or no difference between male and female leadership (Kent, Blair, Rudd & Schuele, 2010; Andersen & Hansson, 2011).

Inspired by the current debate and driven by a certain curiosity of gender-specific differences amongst leaders, this study offers a comparison between men and women in leadership roles. More specifically, it focuses on the self-image of German male and female leaders. This is considered to be a crucial part of leadership, as a leader's perception, esteem and concept of himself/herself is very much related to his/her leadership style, behavior and, in the end, performance (Herman & Zaccaro, 2014; Matzler, Bauer & Mooradian, 2015; Axelrod, 2017). However, there are very few scientific researches which combine the three concepts of gender, self-image and leadership.

The article consists of two parts. Firstly, the literature review will use previous scientific researches and literature to link the concepts of leadership, self-image and gender. Secondly, the empirical part will examine, compare and analyse the self-image of men and women in leadership positions based on the Leadership Tasks Model and the corresponding Leadership Tasks Survey (Desjardins, 2012; Desjardins & Baker, 2013; Desjardins, 2018a; Desjardins, 2018b).

The purpose of this master thesis is to investigate the self-image of German male and female leaders and to identify similarities and differences between the genders. Based on the results of the survey and considering gender-specific needs, recommendations for the education, training and development of leaders as well as future research projects will be made in the final conclusion.

Literature Review

Leadership

Although Leadership has been a relevant topic in scientific research since the early 20th century, the term itself has never been clearly defined (Harrison, 2018). On the contrary – it seems that there are as many definitions of Leadership as scholars examining the topic. Depending on the focus of their research, various

controversies and questions were discussed in the relevant literature.

Leadership is often defined as “a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (Yukl, 2013, p. 2). As a consequence, there are attempts to examine the source and type of influence as well as its purpose and outcome (Yukl, 2013).

While a large part of the research focuses on examining the relevant factors for the effectiveness of leadership (Yukl, 2013), others point out the difference between management and leadership (Kotter, 1990; Zaleznik, 1977). Moreover, the concept of Self-Leadership has contributed to the discussion, as it focuses on the leader’s ability to influence himself/herself in order to achieve personal goals. The idea is, that leaders can only be successful if, first and foremost, they are able to influence and lead themselves. (Furtner & Baldegger, 2016; Desjardins & Baker, 2013)

Furthermore, in a fast-paced, increasingly changing world, leadership has to adapt to new circumstances. Therefore, amongst others, two major trends find their way into leadership research: Digital Leadership – the specific challenges and aspects of leadership in the era of digital transformation (e.g. Wagner, 2018; Petry, 2016) – and Change Management seen as the crucial leadership task by giving security and orientation within change processes. (v. Rosenstiel, 2006)

While most of the earlier studies were focused on only one aspect of leadership, scholars move the discussion to a more holistic view aiming to understand and define “the whole of leadership” (Winston & Patterson, 2006, p. 7). Therefore, they integrate in their models all relevant factors: leaders, followers, further stakeholders, organizational and cultural contexts, as well as their interdependencies (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009, p. 441; Bruch, Vogel & Krummacker, 2006, p. 3; Winston & Patterson, 2006, p. 7; Dhiman, 2017).

As leadership is a complex, multidimensional, and often subjective phenomenon, it will be impossible

to find the one correct definition that satisfies all needs and purposes. Nevertheless, despite all controversies, most scholars agree that the primary responsibility of leadership is the achievement of organizational goals (Desjardins, 2012; Yukl, 2013; Winston & Patterson, 2006). Therefore, leadership is defined as “the processes in leading others, including organizing, directing, coordinating, and motivating their efforts toward achieving certain group or organizational goals.” (APA, 2019).

Furthermore, considering the comprehensive scientific literature in leadership studies this article is based on a leadership model that include theoretical concepts, but also has practical implications: The Leadership Tasks Model.

Leadership Tasks Model

The Leadership Tasks Model was developed by Desjardins and Baker in 2013, with the goal to “provide reflective leaders with a results-oriented set of leadership behaviors derived from scientific theory and practical economic effectiveness. Simply speaking it answers the question: What do I need to do to be a good leader?” (Desjardins & Baker, 2013, p. 18).

This multi-layered and interdependent model organizes leadership behavior in three different levels of leadership tasks good leaders need to fulfil. In this context “good” is defined as achieving organizational goals within a commercial enterprise, and at the same time, being a responsible, positive and social individual (Desjardins & Baker, 2013, p. 18).

The Leadership Tasks Model offers a holistic, theoretical framework to understand the role of leadership in modern organizations. At the same time, it gives practical advices on how leadership can be productive, successful and ethical at the same time. Based on more recent empirical findings (Dobbelstein, 2018), the model has been revised in 2018 (Desjardins, 2018b) (figure 1).

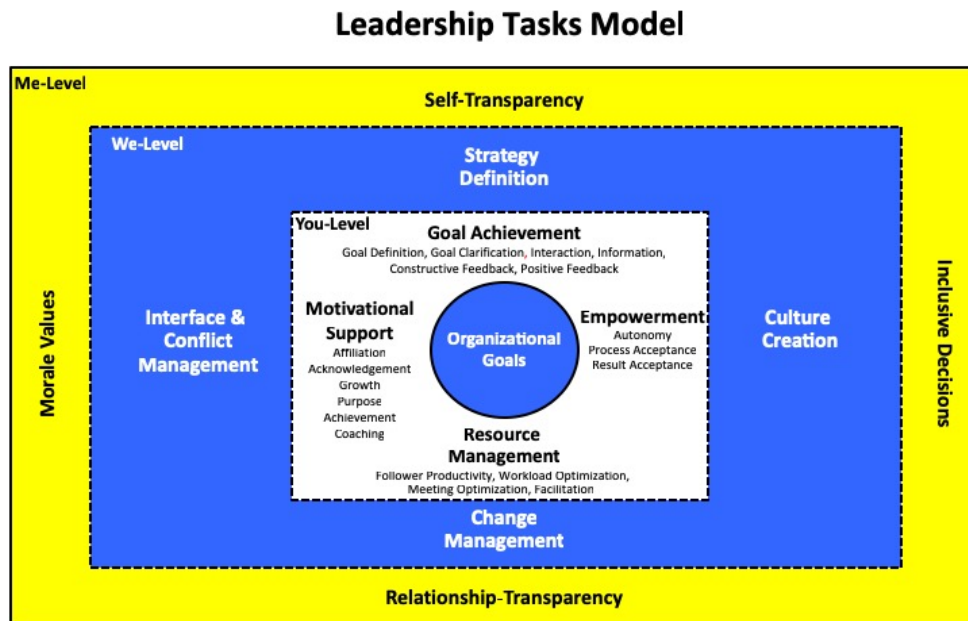


Figure 1

The Leadership Tasks Model (Desjardins, 2018b)

The Me-Level focuses on the self of the leader assuming that a good leader must be first and foremost able to lead himself/herself. Self-awareness and self-knowledge are therefore the precondition for the four leadership tasks on the Me-Level: Moral Values, Inclusive Decisions, Self-Transparency and Relationship Transparency. The We-Level emphasizes the responsibilities of the leader within a modern, fast-paced and ever-changing organizational context and includes the leadership tasks Strategy Definition, Culture Creation, Change Management as well as Interface and Conflict Management. The You-Level represents the interactions of the leader with his or her followers while aiming to achieve organizational goals. In order to reach these goals, a leader needs to perform 19 tasks in four leadership task areas: Goal Achievement, Motivational Support, Resource Management and Empowerment (Desjardins, 2018b).

The first dimension, *Goal Achievement*, is about the core responsibility of a leader to achieve the strategic and operative organizational goals. This can be fulfilled by defining SAVE goals (specific, achievable, valuable and elevated) (Desjardins, 2018b), by clarifying them when they change and by sharing all relevant information on a regular basis. As communication is a key driver of leadership, goal achievement can only be fulfilled

through a regular – if possible, face-to-face – interaction between the leader and the followers (Desjardins, 2018b, p. 26).

The second dimension, *Empowerment*, emphasizes why it is important that followers work in an autonomous, self-responsible way to achieve their goals. For motivational reasons, it is important that leaders accept the outcome of their followers' work as well as the processes and results that contribute to the achievement of a common goal (Desjardins, 2018b, p. 33).

The third dimension, *Motivational Support*, implies a leader's responsibility to evaluate the followers' performance and support their personal and professional development through instruments as Coaching. As motivation is a complex construct, a leader needs to understand what each of his/her followers needs to be intrinsically motivated (Desjardins 2018b, p. 33).

The fourth dimension, *Resource Management*, describes a leader's capacity to assess his or her impact on the work time allocation of the followers. Therefore, when delegating tasks and organizing meetings, a leader must consider the followers' workload and effectively plan tasks and meetings in order to optimize the time management (Desjardins, 2018b, p. 50).

With the You-Level, the Leadership Tasks Model integrates the Leadership Productivity Model which was developed by Desjardins (Desjardins, 2012)

and aims to define leadership tasks that increase the leadership productivity. According to Desjardins, “Leadership Productivity means that a leader has the responsibility for the work productivity of his team and causes changes of this productivity by his performance” (Desjardins, 2012, p. 20) (figure 2).

As empirical research shows, the leadership tasks included in the Leadership Task Model have a significant impact on the work productivity of a leader’s subordinates (Kachru, 2016; Kozuch, 2009; Meggle, 2009; Pinheiro Zebra, 2017). The research was mostly conducted based on the Leadership Tasks Survey (LTS), a comprehensive questionnaire developed by Desjardins (Desjardins, 2018a). This questionnaire will also be used and further discussed in this thesis.

Therefore, leaders need to increase the productivity of their followers in order to increase their own productivity as a leader. For modern leaders, it is often challenging to find the right balance between optimizing their own work productivity and taking enough time to interact with their followers. By only concentrating on their individual productivity, they risk creating an overall negative effect on the whole organization. Embedded into the Leadership Tasks Model, the Leadership Productivity Model describes the major leadership tasks and subtasks (Desjardins, 2012; Desjardins & Baker, 2013; Desjardins, 2018b).

Individual Productivity	+	Leadership Productivity (Total Productivity of all Subordinates)	=	Productivity of a leader
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Figure 2

Leadership Productivity (own illustration, based on Desjardins, 2012)

Gender and Leadership

The relation between gender and leadership has been examined by academic researches since the 1960s. The earlier works were dominated by the “‘great man concept’ – good leaders are born, not made” (Brown, 1979, p. 596) and therefore were trying to figure out if women are even capable to lead (Hoyt & Simon, 2016; Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003).

Over the past decades, the discussion has moved to the question if there are differences in male and female leadership styles and behaviours that have an impact on leadership effectiveness. (Hoyt & Simon, 2016) Other scholars focus on the question if the differences are actually existing or if prejudices lead to divergent perceptions (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003). The results are ambiguous: some studies find gender differences in leadership style (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003; Rohmann & Rowold, 2009; Radu, Deaconu & Frăsineanu, 2017), whereas others show that there are only little or no differences (Kent, Blair, Rudd & Schuele, 2010; Andersen & Hansson, 2011).

In their article published in the Wall Street Journal, Hymowitz and Schellhardt introduce the term “Glass ceiling” (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986) for a

phenomenon that has been obviously existent, but never officially named. In other words, “because of gender bias and the way in which it influences evaluation in work settings, being competent provides no assurance that a woman will advance to the same organizational levels as an equivalently performing man.” (Heilman, 2001, p. 657)

Different reasons have been found for this gender gap. On the one hand, being the ones who take care of domestic responsibilities and childcare, women have fewer straight careers than their male counterparts, and therefore, suffer from less development opportunities (Hoyt & Simon, 2016). On the other hand, patriarchal corporate environments and “old boys’ networks” make it hard for women to climb up the career ladder (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003).

Comparing numerous countries in Western and Asian cultures, “think manager – think male” is a global principle leading to the fact that leadership positions are associated with typically masculine characteristics. Men are perceived as more qualified to fulfil these roles than women (Schein, 2001; see also Koch, Biemann & Weckmüller, 2014; Heilman, 2001).

For women in leadership roles, a personal dilemma arises: As leaders, they should be masculine and tough, but as women, they should not be too manly. These opposing expectations for women often result in the perception that women are less qualified for elite leadership positions than men, and in harsh evaluations of effective female leaders for not being female enough (Hoyt & Simon, 2016).

Nevertheless, based on empirical findings, the recent scientific discussion has turned more optimistic from a female point of view. Women are considered to have a more transformational, communicative, democratic, empathic and people-oriented leadership style – characteristics of a modern, state-of-the-art definition of effective leadership (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003; Rohmann & Rowold, 2009; Hoyt & Simon, 2016).

Summing up the above, it can be stated that organizations need to find a balance in terms of masculinity and femininity to achieve their goals in a sustainable way (Radu, Deaconu & Frăsineanu, 2017, p. 78).

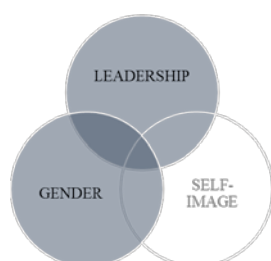


Figure 3

Leadership and Gender (own illustration)

As the literature review demonstrates, the relation between gender and leadership is a complex one that has many facets. It was the aim of this chapter to emphasize this fragmentation considering the strong connection illustrated in Figure 3. The overview is a very important basis for the next chapter that will add a third dimension – self-image – to the three-dimensional model.

Leadership, Self-Image and Gender

The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines self-image as “one’s view or concept of oneself. Self-image is a crucial aspect of an individual’s personality that can determine the success of relationships and a

sense of general well-being. A negative self-image is often a cause of dysfunctions and of self-abusive, self-defeating or self-destructive behaviour.” (APA 2019)

Self-image is closely linked to terms as self-concept, self-perception and self-esteem. In this article, self-image is considered as their lowest common denominator and will therefore be used as a collective term that describes an individual’s perception, description, evaluation of himself/herself as well as his/her competencies.

Various empirical studies and scientific works prove that the self-image influences all aspects of being a leader (Herman & Zaccaro, 2014; Matzler, Bauer & Mooradian, 2015; Axelrod, 2017). It has an impact on how leaders set goals for themselves and their teams, on how they motivate themselves and their followers, on how they act and react and on how authentic they are. Especially in complex, global working environments, it can be the crucial factor for driving effective and successful leadership (Herman & Zaccaro, 2014).

Persons with a high self-esteem are more likely to engage in transformational leadership behavior. This means that they develop and articulate a shared vision and set high expectations that motivate, inspire, and challenge followers and serve as a role model and act in a way that is consistent with the articulated vision. They should also stimulate employees intellectually to question assumptions, reframe problems and to contribute their own suggestions and ideas. This should be supported by engaging in coaching and mentoring behavior and therefore fostering their followers’ trust and satisfaction and motivate them to perform at higher levels (Matzler, Bauer & Mooradian, 2015).

Leaders with a high self-esteem believe in themselves, in their values and in their vision of the future and are therefore able to transport their messages in a more charismatic way. As transformational leadership is generally regarded as the one leadership style that can cope with the challenges of a modern, future-oriented organization, self-esteem can be seen as the crucial factor of successful and effective leadership (Matzler, Bauer & Mooradian, 2015).

Still, it has to be taken into account that leaders do not only have to be self-confident, but they also have to be perceived as such by their followers (Axelrod, 2017).

To sum up, various studies found empirical support that the more positive the self-image of a leader,

the more influential, effective and successful he or she is. This causal relationship emphasizes the second dimension in our model (figure 4).

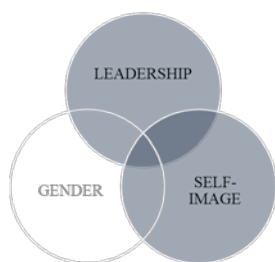


Figure 4.

Leadership and Self-Image (own illustration)

Within the scientific discussion around self-image and leadership, gender becomes a relevant issue and completes the three-dimensional model.

Women tend to underestimate their performance – especially when it comes to typically male dominated contexts. At the same time, men are much more confident in self-evaluations and even tend to overestimate their intelligence and competencies. (Sieverding, 2003).

As mentioned in the previous chapter of this thesis, women face a personal dilemma that is based on prescriptive norms implying that female leaders behave against the culturally universal definition of femininity (Sczesny, 2003, p. 135).

Thus, women suffer a lot from stereotypes, not only because they are not accepted as effective leaders, but also because these “feelings of inferiority” (Simon & Hoyt, 2012, p. 233) have a negative effect on the well-being, motivation, self-esteem and, therefore, performance of female leaders. Analysing gender stereotypes in media it can be found that the exposure to negative stereotypes will negatively affect self-perceptions of women and therefore also their performance outcomes. This has also a negative impact on future performance expectation (Simon & Hoyt, 2012).

Gender having an impact on the self-image of leaders completes the three-dimensional model (figure 5)



Figure 5.

Leadership, Self-Image and Gender (own illustration)

Thus, the results of previous research projects will serve as a basis for the empirical study conducted within this thesis. They demonstrate that leadership and self-image are strongly linked to each other and, at the same time, gender differences might impact both of them. The aim of this thesis is to examine the intersection of the three dimensions.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were formulated based on relevant findings of several previous empirical studies around gender and leadership. As there is evidence that self-image is a fundamental component of leadership, and that, up to a certain point, men and women display different leadership styles and behaviours, the following hypotheses were derived:

- (1) *There are differences in the self-images of men and women in leadership positions.*
- (2) *Female leaders have an overall more self-critical, negative self-image than men.*

Research Questions and Methods

Data collection

Data will be collected based on the Leadership Tasks Survey (LTS) (Desjardins, 2012; Desjardins, 2018a).

This self-assessment questionnaire aims to evaluate the major leadership tasks of the Leadership Tasks Model (Desjardins & Baker, 2013; Desjardins, 2018b) in terms of leadership productivity. As the Leadership Tasks Model itself, the questionnaire has been updated (Desjardins, 2018a) based on recent empirical research (Dobbelstein, 2018).

The LTS is a standardized feedback sheet including 108 items concerning the leader’s behaviour. Four items are representing one leadership task. There are four tasks at the Me-Level, four tasks at the We-Level and 19 tasks at the You-Level which are differentiated into four task areas (Goal Achievement, Motivational

Support, Empowerment, Resource Management). The LTS uses a seven-point Likert scale (Desjardins, 2019a).

At the beginning of the questionnaire, four opening questions were added. They aim to gain personal information about the respondents regarding their gender, age, industry and the size of the team they lead.

As this research focuses on German leaders, the questionnaire will be provided in German only ("Fragebogen Führungsaufgaben").

Data will be collected anonymously with the Google tool Google Forms.

Considering that the target group for this research is quite busy with an already heavy workload, they should be able to choose when and where they would like to answer the questions. Moreover, the online character of the questionnaire helps to create an anonymous atmosphere that encourages leaders to answer the very personal questions of the Leadership Productivity Survey.

Sampling

Considering the applied sampling techniques – judgement sampling and snowball sampling – 91 persons could be motivated to participate in the survey. Details about their personal characteristics as gender, age and industry will be discussed in the following chapter.

Empirical results

Descriptive statistics

Between December 18th, 2018 and January 23rd, 2019, a total of 91 leaders in German companies participated in the survey. All of them completed the full online questionnaire. Table 1 shows the results of the three questions concerning personal information on the respondents.

Two-thirds of the respondents are male, one third is female. Considering that women in leadership positions are underrepresented in German companies, this result seems a logical consequence.

The following three questions refer to the age and the team size of the participants. Due to the fact that personal networks of one of the authors were used for the snowball sampling procedure, the participating leaders are rather young: the majority of them is under 45 years old and the group of respondents between 30 and 34 years is the largest one.

Most of the participants are responsible for three to ten followers. With 28.6 %, the respondents with less than three followers constitute the second largest group. Their challenges, feelings and behavior might differ from those of the leaders with a larger team size, which could be analysed in a further study. In this thesis, all leaders are treated the same – whether they have a disciplinary responsibility for a large team or a technical responsibility for a smaller project team.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics, N=91

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	61	67.0 %
Female	30	33.0 %
Age		
<30	11	12.1 %
30-34	31	34.1 %
35-44	23	25.3 %
45-55	19	20.9 %
>55	7	7.7 %
Number of followers		
<3 followers	26	28.6 %
3-10 followers	34	37.4 %
11-20 followers	17	18.7 %
>20 followers	14	15.4 %

Table 2.

Medians and Mean Ranks, n_{female}=30, n_{male}=61

	Median female	Median male	Min-Max female	Min-Max male
Me-Level				
Moral values	4.62	5.25	2.75-5.75	3.25-6.25
Inclusive decisions	5.75	5.50	2.50-7.50	3.50-7.00
Self-transparency	5.34	5.50	2.50-6.50	3.25-6.75
Relationship transparency	5.50	5.50	2.75-6.75	2.75-6.75
We-Level				
Strategy	4.75	5.50	1.50-6.75	2.75-7.00
Change management	4.63	5.25	1.00-6.75	3.50-7.00
Culture creation	4.63	5.50	2.50-7.00	2.50-7.00
Interface and conflict management	5.75	6.00	2.50-7.00	4.00-7.00
You-Level				
<i>Goal Achievement</i>				
Goal definition	5.25	5.50	2.75-7.00	2.50-7.00
Goal clarification	5.50	6.00	1.00-7.00	2.50-7.00
Interaction	6.50	6.25	2.50-7.00	3.75-7.00
Information	6.38	6.25	2.75-7.00	4.00-7.00
Constructive feedback	5.25	5.50	2.75-7.00	3.75-7.00
Positive feedback	5.50	5.75	3.00-7.00	3.25-7.00
<i>Resource management</i>				
Follower productivity	5.00	5.75	2.75-7.00	3.50-6.75
Workload optimization	4.88	5.50	1.75-6.75	2.25-7.00
Meeting optimization	4.50	5.25	1.50-6.75	2.75-7.00
Facilitation	4.63	5.00	1.00-6.75	1.00-6.75
<i>Motivational support</i>				
Affiliation	4.00	5.25	1.00-6.25	1.00-7.00
Coaching	4.75	5.50	2.00-6.50	3.00-7.00
Acknowledgement	5.13	5.50	2.75-7.00	3.75-7.00
Growth	5.13	5.50	2.75-7.00	3.25-7.00
Purpose / Sense	4.38	5.25	1.50-7.00	2.75-6.75
Achievement	4.63	5.00	2.50-6.25	2.50-7.00
<i>Empowerment</i>				
Autonomy	4.50	5.25	1.75-6.25	2.25-7.00
Result acceptance	5.00	5.50	2.50-6.25	3.00-7.00
Process acceptance	5.50	5.75	3.00-6.25	3.50-7.00

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov-Test shows that the dependent variables are not normally distributed for all items.

Table 2 therefore shows the medians and the mean ranks for all items.

For most leadership tasks, the median values of the female groups are lower than the values of the male group. Only the tasks Inclusive Decisions, Interaction and Information show slightly higher medians for the female group. In addition to this there is a wider range

between minimum and maximum values for female leaders, therefore indicating a more differentiated self-evaluation for this group.

Table 3 shows the aggregated results of the Mann-Whitney-U-Test. As being indicated by the median values, the mean ranks of the two groups can be clearly distinguished. For all leadership tasks, the mean ranks of the male group are higher than the mean ranks of the female group, with the exception of the task

Information. The mean rank of the total value for all leadership tasks is also higher. These differences are statistically significant for the total value ($U = 1206, p = 0.014$) and 14 of the 27 tasks of the Leadership Task Model. On the Me-Level there is only the task Morale Values ($U = 1340, p = 0.000$) with a significant difference. On the We-Level the tasks Change Management ($U = 1173, p = 0.029$) and Culture Creation ($U = 1208, p = 0.013$) show such differences.

The majority of the tasks with a statistical-significant difference belong to the You-Level of the Leadership Task Model. Here, there is a clear distinction between the different task areas. In the area Goal Achievement, only the task Goal Clarification ($U = 1149, p = 0.047$) shows a significant difference. In the area of Resource Management there are the two tasks Workload Optimization ($U = 1196, p = 0.017$) and Meeting Optimization ($U = 1160, p = 0.038$). In comparison, 5 of 6 leadership tasks in the task area Motivational Support show significant differences. These are Affiliation ($U = 1294, p = 0.001$), Coaching ($U = 1258, p = 0.004$), Acknowledgement ($U = 1167, p = 0.032$), Growth ($U = 1177, p = 0.026$) and Purpose ($U = 1188, p = 0.021$). Also, all differences for the three tasks in Empowerment are significant: Autonomy ($U = 1282, p = 0.002$), Result Acceptance ($U = 1263, p = 0.003$) and Process Acceptance ($U = 1277, p = 0.002$).

Analysis

The analysis of the descriptive statistic already indicates that the self-evaluation of productive leadership behavior is higher for male than for female leaders. Almost all median values are higher for the male group. Another relevant insight is the difference regarding the minimum and maximum values for the gender groups. The minimum values for the male leaders are for 18 of the 27 leadership tasks higher than the values of the female ones. It is therefore possible to derive that female leaders are more heterogenous in terms of personality, self-image and behaviour than their male colleagues. They also seem to have a more differentiated self-image than men.

Statistically these differences become clearer when looking at the different mean ranks of female and male leaders. Here, all values, besides one, are higher for men. This is also true for the total value for all leadership tasks. This difference is also statistically significant for the total value and more than half of the leadership tasks (14 of 27) plus several tasks for which the difference is almost significant (3).

Interestingly, there are differences between the different leadership task levels and areas as defined in the Leadership Task Model. While there is only one significant difference for the Me-Level (1 of 4), two for the We-level (2 of 4) and one for the area Goal Achievement (1 of 6) on the You-Level, almost all leadership tasks in the areas Resource Management (2 of 4), Motivational Support (5 of 6) and Empowerment (3 of 3) are statistically different.

It can therefore be derived that men have a more self-critical assessment of their capabilities in self-leadership and organizational leadership as well as the classical management part of leadership (Goal Achievement) compared to the evaluation of their skills in interactional leadership (Motivational Support, Empowerment and Resource Management). Based on the literature, which does rather attribute higher interpersonal competencies to female leaders, this seems to be a contradictory result. It therefore seems that male leaders clearly overestimate their skills, while female leaders are rather overly self-critical. This specific insight, in addition to the statistical results reported above, underlines the assumptions about the leadership behavior self-evaluation tendencies of female and male leaders.

As a consequence, the two hypotheses can be seen as supported based on the described data:

- (1) *There are differences in the self-images of men and women in leadership positions.*
- (2) *Female leaders have an overall more self-critical, negative self-image than men.*

Table 3.
Mann-Whitney-U-test results, $n_{female}=30$, $n_{male}=61$

	Mean Rank <i>female</i>	Mean Rank <i>male</i>	U	p
Total (all leadership tasks)	36.30	50.77	1206	0.014*
Me-Level				
Moral values	31.83	52.97	1340	0.000**
Inclusive decisions	44.15	46.91	970	0.636
Self-transparency	38,87	49,51	1129	0.069
Relationship transparency	40,77	48,57	1072	0.182
We-Level				
Strategy	38,30	49,79	1146	0.051
Change management	38.05	49.91	1173	0.029*
Culture creation	36.22	50.81	1208	0.013*
Interface and conflict management	38.67	49.61	1135	0.62
You-Level				
<i>Goal Achievement</i>				
Goal definition	38.70	49.59	1134	0.063
Goal clarification	38.18	49.84	1149	0.047*
Interaction	45.27	46.36	937	0.851
Information	47.77	45.13	862	0.653
Constructive feedback	41.93	48.00	1037	0.30
Positive feedback	41.22	48.35	1058	0.224
<i>Resource management</i>				
Follower productivity	39.52	49.19	1009	0.099
Workload optimization	40.85	48.53	1069	0.190
Meeting optimization	36.62	50.61	1196	0.017*
Facilitation	37.82	50.02	1160	0.038*
<i>Motivational support</i>				
Affiliation	33.37	52.21	1294	0.001**
Coaching	34.55	51.63	1258	0.004**
Acknowledgement	37.58	50.14	1167	0.032*
Growth	37.25	50.30	1177	0.026*
Purpose / Sense	36.90	50.48	1188	0.021*
Achievement	39.52	49.19	1109	0.099
<i>Empowerment</i>				
Autonomy	33.77	52.02	1282	0.002**
Result acceptance	34.40	51.70	1263	0.003**
Process acceptance	33.93	51.93	1277	0.002**

*p < .05 ; **p < .01

Conclusions

“Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus” is the title of a book written by the American relationship counsellor John Gray in 1992. Does this also

apply for leaders and their self-images? That is the research question this thesis aimed to answer.

Relevant scientific research showed that the self-image of a leader is a major driver for his/her behaviour, style, performance and success. (Matzler, Bauer & Mooradian, 2015; Axelrod, 2017; Simon & Hoyt, 2012).

Therefore, a comprehensive overview of relevant theoretical concepts and scientific literature was provided. After having found a general definition of leadership, the Leadership Tasks Model by Desjardins and Baker was used as a basis for further research. Moreover, the concepts of leadership, gender and self-image were linked in a three-dimensional model that marks the theoretical framework. Considering that there are only very few previous studies that include all three dimensions, this thesis aims to contribute to the current scientific discussion around these topics. Assuming that the self-image plays a major role on how leaders think, feel, act and perform, the purpose of this master thesis was to compare the self-image of male and female leaders in order to identify similarities and differences between the genders.

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested within an empirical framework. The Leadership Tasks Survey by Desjardins was used for a self-assessment of 91 German leaders. The collected data was processed and analysed with selected statistical approaches. Descriptive statistics provided general information and an overview on the survey results, whereas a Mann-Whitney-U test allowed a more in-depth analysis and interpretation.

The results support both hypotheses. In the overall self-images of men and women in leadership positions, there are significant differences and male leaders evaluate their own leadership competencies generally more positively than female leaders. This is especially true for the leadership tasks areas Motivational Support and Empowerment.

Although this thesis achieved to find an answer to its research question, it has its empirical limitations. The group size was limited and especially the group size for the female leaders was only half the size of the male group. As the recruitment for the study was not steered and rather accidentally, the selected group can't be assumed to be representative. This is especially true regarding the age group, which is relatively young, due to the recruitment process. The study also includes only German participants.

Leadership style, behaviour and performance are highly complex concepts which are influenced by many factors – gender being only one of them. Other factors might be age, industry, company and team size, culture, company culture, educational background or personality traits. In order to obtain a holistic perspective on male and female leadership, additional theoretical and empirical research needs to be conducted. Nevertheless,

this thesis paves the way for further projects and serves as a firm basis for reflections on the education, training and development of leaders. It is an initial step with the goal to understand the complex and multidimensional relation between leadership, gender and self-image.

There is reason to doubt that differences between male and female leadership must be considered when it comes to educating, training and developing leaders. But it is a fact that respective programmes have concentrated primarily on strengthening “classically male” virtues, as those were considered as relevant to be a strong and successful leader.

However, in a modern, globalized, digitalized and connected world, leadership is more than that: it is about being good leaders and good individuals at the same time. The leadership style needs to adapt to the new challenges, it needs to become even more people-oriented. Bringing more women in leadership positions might help, but it is only half the battle organizations need to fight. In the end, a balanced and diversified structure amongst leaders and followers is the key driver for performance, success and innovation. Studies like this master thesis give some food for thought.

About the authors

Brigitte Streibich is a marketing professional and an expert in developing and implementing integrated marketing communications strategies and campaigns for leading global technology brands in B2B environments. Followed by studies at the University of Heidelberg and the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po Paris), she graduated in social and political sciences. Thanks to a constant will to learn and a keen interest in business administration, leadership and management, Brigitte obtained an MBA degree at the Professional School of Business and Technology of the Kempten University of Applied Sciences.

Christoph Desjardins has been professor for Human Resources Management and Consulting at the University of Applied Sciences in Kempten, Germany since 2003.

After studying Economics at Constance, he graduated with a degree in Work & Organizational Psychology (Diplom-Psychologe) from Münster University.

He started his professional career as a Strategic Planner at the international agency Grey Advertising. Before and after joining Grey, he worked as a freelancer trainer and

market researcher.

From 1994 to 2003, Christoph worked as a HRM and Change Management consultant and manager for the consulting company Accenture. During this time, he also obtained his Ph.D. degree from the Johann-Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt.

His research focus is on leadership development as well as change management.

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