

Gender and Leadership through the Lens of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

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Abstract

Using the framework of emotionally intelligent leadership, this paper investigates how students view their leadership capacity and explores whether gender differences exist. Results indicate that gender differences do exist among college students with most differences indicating that women have higher

levels of self-perceived emotionally intelligent leadership than men.

Introduction

Students on college campuses today have innumerable opportunities to pursue leadership experiences in formal and informal settings. Students demonstrate leadership in student organizations, work settings, class projects, and even friendship groups. Understanding the level of involvement and its impact on students' leadership development provides important insight into the leadership experiences of students and how students understand their own capacity for leadership. Another important variable affecting how students understand their ability to demonstrate leadership is gender. Research on student experiences both in and out of the classroom demonstrates that gender matters. Gender is a significant influence on measures related to where students go to school, the nature of student-faculty interaction, and how students interact with "people, programs, and services on campus" (Sax, 2009, p. 9). With gender identified as a key variable for how students experience college and the complex arena of student life, the influence and role of gender must be taken into account when examining students' perceptions and demonstration of leadership. This paper will demonstrate how college student men and women understand leadership through the lens of emotionally intelligent leadership.

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

The model of emotionally intelligent leadership (Shankman & Allen, 2008) provides a framework for examining students' perception of leadership (Table 1). Emotionally intelligent leadership finds its roots in contingency theory and emotional intelligence. Three facets frame the model: consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others. Fiedler's (1972) groundbreaking work on the influence of context on leadership provides the foundation for consciousness of context, as does Heifetz and Linsky's (2002) work on the context or system in which a leader operates.

Consciousness of self and consciousness of others represent a synthesis of various theories, including: the five exemplary practices of leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2008), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), charismatic leadership (Conger, 1989), relational leadership (Komives, Lucas & McMahon, 2006), and the social change model of leadership (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996; Komives & Wagner, 2009). Integrated within the three facets of consciousness of context, self, and others are theories of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1998; Salovey, & Mayer, 1990; Weisinger, 1998). Specific capacities that comprise emotionally intelligent leadership include elemental concepts such as self-awareness (Singh, 2006), emotional self-control (Goleman), optimism (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Seligman, 1998), and interpersonal skills such as conflict management, teamwork, and empathy (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Jordan & Ashkanasy, 2006; Lopes, Salovey & Straus, 2003; Weisinger, 1988).

Table 1: Model of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership (Shankman & Allen, 2008)

Consciousness of Context

Being aware of the environment in which leaders and followers work

<i>Environmental awareness</i>	<i>Group savvy</i>
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Consciousness of Self

Being aware of yourself in terms of your abilities and emotions

<i>Emotional self-perception</i>	<i>Honest self-understanding</i>
<i>Healthy self-esteem</i>	<i>Emotional self-control</i>
<i>Authenticity</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>
<i>Achievement</i>	<i>Optimism</i>
<i>Initiative</i>	

Consciousness of Others

Being aware of your relationship with others and the role they play in the leadership equation

<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Citizenship</i>
<i>Inspiration</i>	<i>Influence</i>
<i>Coaching</i>	<i>Change agent</i>
<i>Conflict management</i>	<i>Developing relationships</i>
<i>Teamwork</i>	<i>Capitalizing on difference</i>

With the recent emergence of this model, greater understanding is needed on whether gender plays a role in students' self-perceptions of their capacity for and demonstration of emotionally intelligent leadership. This information can help leadership educators better understand the experiences of college women and men through the students' understanding of self, awareness and interactions with others, and consciousness of the larger environment in which they operate. This article describes how our current research can assist students in their own leadership development and inform leadership educators and faculty as they provide programmatic and curricular offerings that address students' leadership development needs.

Involvement, Gender, Leadership & Emotional Intelligence

Research overwhelmingly suggests that involvement in student groups and organizations is a significant predictor for college students' leadership development (Astin, 1993; Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999; Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, 1994). While involvement in organizations has been found most often to positively contribute to students' leadership outcomes, involvement in too many different types of organizations may also negatively contribute to students' leadership development (Dugan & Komives, 2007). One study found breadth of involvement negatively associated with outcome scores of *commitment* for college men (Haber & Komives, 2009). Additional findings related to gender emerged around involvement; women tended to be involved in student organizations more often than men, and involvement in student organizations was a significant predictor of leadership outcomes more

often for women than men (Haber, 2006).

Gender differences also exist in how women and men engage in leadership. Literature and research on leadership styles and capacities by gender suggest that women adopt more relational, democratic, and transformational approaches to leadership than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Northouse, 2004; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Dugan, Komives & Segar, 2008; Haber & Komives, 2009). Gender differences in leadership exist in the arenas of leadership traits, leadership styles, and overall approaches and perspectives of leadership. Men and women differ in personality traits that are predictors of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Women's personality traits tend to reflect agreeableness, warmth, positive emotions, extraversion, and openness to feelings, while men's personality traits tend to reflect greater assertiveness (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Eagly & Carli, 2007). These findings on traits are reflective of similar findings on leadership behavior.

Research on gender differences in leadership style, which is a behavioral measure of leadership, indicates that women practice more democratic leadership while men tend to demonstrate more autocratic leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Democratic leadership is characterized by a participative and collaborative style, which emphasizes shared power and decision-making, while an autocratic style is more hierarchical and directive (Northouse, 2004). In a study examining the leadership styles and experiences of college student women holding formal leadership roles, the participants used such terms as "nonhierarchical, interactive, accessible, one-to-one, equality and team-member" (Romano, 1996, p. 679) when describing their approaches to leadership. Another study emphasized women's leadership styles as being dependent on the larger environment and the particular role in which they are operating. For example, in male-dominated organizations or industries, women may demonstrate more autocratic leadership, which tends to reflect that of their male colleagues (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Women also demonstrate higher levels of transformational leadership than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly et al., 2003). Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and empowering followers, developing followers and responding to their needs, and aligning follower, leader, and organizational goals, is associated with greater follower satisfaction, performance, and commitment. Additionally, transformational leadership is associated with greater overall leader and organizational performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The recent Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) examines college students' socially responsible leadership development, which is informed by the social change model of leadership (HERI, 1996). Socially responsible leadership emphasizes a collaborative, accessible, values-based, and service-oriented process of leadership that includes three levels of the model and eight outcomes. The individual level focuses on consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment; the group level includes collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility; the societal level includes citizenship (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

Findings from MSL research indicate that women report significantly higher levels of socially responsible leadership. A single-campus study identified that women demonstrate significantly higher levels than men in all three of the group outcomes and the individual outcomes of congruence and commitment (Haber, 2006; Haber & Komives, 2009). The national study identifies more prominent gender differences; women report significantly higher scores than men

in all of the outcomes with the exception of change, in which there are no significant differences by gender (Dugan et al., 2008). Interestingly, results from this study also identify that men demonstrate significantly higher measures of leadership self-efficacy, or confidence in their ability to lead, than women (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Examining these findings side by side, women demonstrate higher competence in leadership, while men demonstrate higher confidence. Higher levels of leadership self-efficacy among men are also evident in Kezar & Moriarty's (2000) study on college student leadership.

Women's more collaborative and participative style is also reflected in research on emotional intelligence. The tendency for women to demonstrate higher degrees of emotional intelligence than men has been measured in various ways, including how people perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions (Brackett, Rivers, & Shiffman, 2006). Research also suggests differences between the genders in variables of emotional intelligence such as adaptability, stress management, intrapersonal skills (e.g., awareness and connection to inner-self), interpersonal skills, and general mood (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). Recent research, however, suggests conflicting findings for younger generations. While significant differences in women and men's emotional intelligence exist for older generations (mean age of late forties), with women scoring higher than men, no gender differences exist for the younger, college-aged generation (Guastello & Guastello, 2003).

This brief survey of the literature suggests that women tend to value others in their approach to leadership as well as demonstrate intrapersonal strengths more so than men. More specifically, women demonstrate a preference for the interpersonal dynamics of leadership, particularly working with others and groups in a collaborative way. Women also tend to demonstrate higher levels of intrapersonal skills than men. While there is evidence of women's greater intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, men's self-reported self-efficacy in their leadership abilities exceeds that of women. Research on emotional intelligence and leadership suggests significant differences by gender, with women demonstrating higher levels than men, yet a recent study examining college students does not show significant gender differences (Guastello & Guastello, 2003). Thus, examining gender differences in leadership and emotional intelligence among college students warrants additional research.

The examination of leadership and emotional intelligence through a model that integrates the two may shed additional light on the differences or similarities in college-aged women and men's emotionally intelligent leadership. Additional information on gender differences in leadership and emotional intelligence can allow for a better understanding of students' leadership development and awareness of themselves, others, and the larger environment. Investigating the interplay between involvement and gender will further these understandings and help college student educators enhance students' experience in leadership development by becoming well-rounded and emotionally intelligent leaders.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study responded to the need to better understand gender differences in emotionally intelligent leadership. The purpose of this study was twofold. The primary focus was to explore

the role that gender plays in college students' perceptions of the three facets of emotionally intelligent leadership (consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others). Additionally, this study examined gender differences in students' emotionally intelligent leadership based on students' levels of involvement in campus organizations. Based on the above, we identified two primary research questions:

1. What, if any, gender differences exist in students' consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others?
2. What, if any, gender differences exist in students' consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others based on level of involvement?

Methodology

From a purposeful sample of 566 students from 139 colleges and universities in the United States, participants completed an online assessment in the spring of 2008. The online assessment tool was a project utilized for developing the *Emotionally intelligent leadership for students: Inventory* (Shankman, Allen, & Facca, in press). The authors extended invitations to colleagues across the country who work with students, both undergraduate and graduate, in order to generate a target population of students who are interested in leadership. Faculty and student affairs staff at small, mid-size, and large public and private institutions invited students from their institutions to participate in the online assessment. Students voluntarily participated with the assurance of confidentiality of their responses.

The online assessment tool asked participants to assess themselves according to the three facets of emotionally intelligent leadership: consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others. Participants responded to five-point Likert-type scales to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements on how they *intentionally* demonstrated a specific behavior when they served in a formal or informal leadership role. Sample statements from the survey to which participants responded were:

When serving in a formal or informal leadership role, I...

1. *Take time to understand the informal traditions of the group*
2. *Learn the expressed and implicit values of the group*
3. *Monitor how my emotions affect my interactions with others*
4. *Work on my limitations*
5. *Tailor my leadership style to the situation*

Each of these statements corresponded to one of the three facets of emotionally intelligent leadership. For instance *work on my limitations* connects with the construct of consciousness of self, *monitor how my emotions affect my interactions with others* is a measure of consciousness of others, and *learn the expressed and implicit values of the group* is a measure of consciousness of context. A total of 24 statements captured the three constructs of consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others. After responding to the 24 statements, the participants' scores for the variables that fell into each construct category were added to arrive at

a score between 8 and 40 on each of the three constructs (assuming they responded to each question). Participants also completed a series of demographic questions.

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the three constructs. Reliability of the assessment tool ensured that the facets of emotionally intelligent leadership (also referred to as scales) were statistically reliable constructs. Each scale consisted of eight questions, and each scale achieved a strong level of internal consistency reliability (Table 2).

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha for EIL Inventory Scales

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Sample size
Consciousness of Context	$\alpha = .81$	n = 560
Consciousness of Self	$\alpha = .73$	n = 543
Consciousness of Others	$\alpha = .82$	n = 546

To identify significant differences by gender, t-tests were conducted at the $p < .05$ significance level for both research questions. Additionally, for research question two, students were grouped into different categories based on the number of student organizations in which they were currently involved (none, one, two, three, or four or more). These groups were compared across genders. Along with testing for significance by gender for the three constructs, significance tests were conducted for each individual measure that comprised the constructs.

Findings

Respondent Characteristics

Thirty-one percent of the respondents were men, and 69% were women. Eighty-seven percent identified as Caucasian, 4% as Hispanic, 3% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% as multiracial, 2% as African-American, and 1% as being of Middle Eastern decent. Upper-class students were slightly overrepresented as compared to under-classmen, with 10% freshman, 28% sophomores, 32% juniors, 22% seniors and 7% graduate students. This distribution was understandable, considering those respondents identified by faculty and student affairs staff were likely students who had been involved with programs and active on campus for a substantial amount of time. Given the varied ages that potentially comprised each class rank, respondents also reported their age. Twenty-one percent were 18-19 years of age, 55% were 20-21, 16% 22-23, 2% were 24-26, and 6% were 26 or older. Overall, respondents tended to be traditionally aged college students with a greater proportion of upper-classmen, Caucasians, and women.

Respondents also identified the number of campus student organizations in which they were

involved. While 85% of respondents declared involvement in two or more organizations, 5% indicated they were not involved in any on-campus student organizations. Ten percent identified themselves as involved with just one organization, in contrast with 25% who were involved in three organizations and 29% who were involved in four or more organizations. Further, 86% reported they were currently in some type of leadership role within an organization. Respondents were not asked to specify roles or positions they held. For the purposes of this study, the 5% who indicated they were not involved in an organization were removed.

Looking at involvement by gender, 12% of men were involved in one organization, 27% in two organizations, 25% in three organization, and 34% in four or more organizations. Ten percent of the women were involved in one organization, 34% in two organizations, 27% in three organizations, and 29% in four our more organizations.

Research Question One

Research question one read: *What, if any, gender differences exist in students' consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others?*

Gender results for mean differences indicated significant differences between men and women on both consciousness of self and consciousness of others. Consciousness of self was significantly higher for women at 33.08 as compared to men at 32.33 ($t = 2.25$). Consciousness of others was also significantly higher for women at 32.56 as compared to men at 31.64 ($t = 2.16$). No significant differences by gender were identified between the mean ratings on the consciousness of context construct.

Table 3 highlights the results for specific measures in which significant differences were identified between the means of the gender groups. Three of the measures loaded on the consciousness of others construct, and three loaded on the consciousness of self construct. Women more often appeared to *consider needs of others in the group* and *think about how their decisions were received by others*. In addition, women tended to monitor *how their emotions affected their interactions* (self) more so than men, and they placed a significantly stronger focus on *following through on commitments* (self). Women also demonstrated a greater likelihood to *reflect on how their actions align with their values* (self), and they *listened more carefully to what was said and not said* (others). The only variable in which men demonstrated higher mean scores than women was *capitalizing on strengths* (self).

Table 3: Gender Differences for Individual Measures from Research Question One

<i>When serving in a formal or informal leadership role, I...</i>	Construct	\bar{x}_{women}	\bar{x}_{men}	Mean diff	<i>t</i>
<i>Consider needs of others in the group</i>	Others	4.32	4.09	.23	3.47***
<i>Monitor how my emotions affect my interactions with others</i>	Self	3.99	3.79	.20	2.41**
<i>Think about how my decisions are received</i>	Others	4.13	3.94	.19	2.60*

<i>Follow through on commitments</i>	Self	4.52	4.33	.19	3.11**
<i>Reflect on how my actions align with my values</i>	Self	4.13	3.97	.16	2.16*
<i>Listen carefully to what is and isn't being said</i>	Others	4.15	3.99	.16	2.01*
<i>Capitalize on my strengths</i>	Self	4.08	4.23	-.15	-2.24*

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

In examining those respondents who scored in the highest levels across all three constructs of consciousness (between 35-40 on each, 13% of total respondents), there was only one significant difference by gender. Women reported significantly higher scores (4.93) than men (4.56) for the measure of *consider the needs of others in the group* ($t = 3.01$). Even among the students with the highest levels of self-reported leadership behaviors, women tended to consider the needs of others in the group more often than men.

Research Question Two

Research question two reads: *What, if any, gender differences exist in students' consciousness of context, self and others, based on level of involvement?*

When gender differences within the three constructs were examined in relation to respondents' level of involvement, a few significant differences emerged. Similar to findings from research question one, there were no significant differences by gender for the construct of consciousness of context. Significant differences by gender did exist for consciousness of self and consciousness of others when taking into consideration involvement. Likewise, there were many significant differences by gender across all levels of involvement for individual measures of consciousness of context, self, and others. The findings on gender differences for the individual measures are summarized in Table 4.

For students involved in only one organization, significant differences by gender were minimal. One significant difference emerged within this group of less-involved students for the consciousness of self measure of *capitalizing on strengths*, with mean scores of 4.03 for women compared to 4.53 for men ($t = -2.46$). No significant differences were evident by gender for the three constructs.

For respondents involved in three student organizations, women were significantly higher in the construct of consciousness of others than men (32.35 for women and 30.55 for men; $t=2.66$). On the individual measures, women in three organizations were significantly more likely to *consider others' needs* (4.30 vs. 3.92; $t = 2.73$), *think about how my decisions were received by the group* (4.09 vs. 3.75; $t = 2.19$), and *try to understand the priorities of others in the group* as compared with men (4.0 vs. 3.69; $t = 2.24$). These three individual measures were within the consciousness of others construct.

For those involved in at least four organizations, there were no significant differences by gender

in the three constructs. For individual measures, a few significant differences emerged. Men were significantly more likely than women in two measures related to consciousness of self: *work on my limitations* (3.83 vs. 3.48, $t=-2.25$) and *capitalize on my strengths* (4.38 vs. 4.11, $t=-2.27$). With respect to consciousness of others, men tended to *align disparate viewpoints within the group* more than women (3.93 vs. 3.64, $t=-2.07$),

Table 4: Gender Differences for Individual Measures Based on Level of Involvement

Number of Organizations	When serving in a formal or informal leadership role, I...	Construct	\bar{x}_{women}	\bar{x}_{men}	Mean diff.	t
One	<i>Capitalize on my strengths</i>	Self	4.03	4.53	-.50	-2.46*
Two	<i>Building a sense of team</i>	Others	4.15	3.80	.35	2.61**
	<i>Recognize patterns of behaviors in the group</i>	Context	4.11	3.78	.33	2.60**
	<i>Follow through on commitments</i>	Self	4.51	4.21	.30	2.68**
	<i>Consider needs of others in the group</i>	Others	4.34	4.07	.27	2.15*
Three	<i>Consider needs of others in the group</i>	Others	4.30	3.92	.38	2.73**
	<i>Think about how my decisions are received</i>	Others	4.09	3.75	.34	2.19*
	<i>Understand priorities of others in group</i>	Others	4.00	3.69	.31	2.24*
Four or More	<i>Work on my limitations</i>	Self	3.48	3.83	-.35	-2.25*
	<i>Align disparate viewpoints within group</i>	Others	3.64	3.93	-.29	-2.07*
	<i>Capitalize on my strengths</i>	Self	4.11	4.38	-.27	-2.27*

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

Discussion and Implications

Findings from research question one suggest that women and men in college lead differently. Women demonstrate significantly higher levels of emotionally intelligent leadership in the constructs of consciousness of self and consciousness of others. This supports previous findings that women tend to demonstrate higher competence in individual and group values of the social change model of leadership than men (Dugan et al., 2008). It also supports the idea that women have more democratic and relational leadership styles than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

In examining the individual measures from research question one, women tend to put the needs of others in front of their own, listen to others, and think about how their decision(s) will be received more often than men. This concern for others reflects a more democratic approach to

leadership, which emphasizes collaboration, shared power, and group decision-making (Northouse, 2007). Women's greater capacities for the consciousness of self measures of following through on their commitments and aligning their actions with their values reflect findings by Dugan et al. (2008) and Haber and Komives (2009) related to the social change model of leadership in which women demonstrate higher levels of commitment and congruence than men.

The behavior of considering needs of others is particularly noticeable, and among the students with the highest scores of all three levels of consciousness, women hold significantly higher scores than men on this measure. Considering the needs of others seems to be the behavior that most differentiates the genders at the highest self-perceived levels of leadership. This finding, along with the overall pattern of findings from this study, suggest that women have higher levels of many of the consciousness of others measures than men, which is consistent with the literature on gender differences in transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007) and the group values of socially responsible leadership (Dugan et al., 2008; Haber, 2006).

Men in this study demonstrate higher levels of the consciousness of self measure of capitalizing on strengths than women. While this measure does not specifically have to do with self-esteem, it does reflect acknowledgement of strengths and self-perception of ability to use strengths. This could reflect past research that men tend to demonstrate greater confidence and self-efficacy in leadership than women (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Moreover, this study suggests that highly involved men work on their limitations more often than women. This goes hand-in-hand with capitalizing on strengths and trying to develop one's strengths.

In examining gender differences based on levels of involvement, it does not appear that levels of involvement by gender provide many significant findings. Among men and women who are involved moderately (two or three organizations), women score significantly higher than men in the constructs of consciousness of self (for two organizations) and consciousness of others (for three organizations). There are no overall differences in levels of consciousness for respondents with low involvement (one organization) or high involvement (four or more organizations). It appears as if moderate involvement is associated with gender differences in measures of emotionally intelligent leadership. This emergence of gender differences for moderate involvement but not for high or low involvement warrants additional exploration as to the role that gender plays based on different levels and types of involvement in developing students' emotionally intelligent leadership.

Although there are no differences by gender in the three constructs of consciousness for those students involved in four or more organizations, gender differences are evident among certain individual measures. Men show a tendency to work on their limitations, capitalize on their strengths and align different points of view more than women. In examining this shift in gender differences from the moderately involved students to the highly involved students, there may be something to be said about women being overburdened or overwhelmed with higher levels of involvement or men benefiting more from higher levels of involvement. These observations would be worth exploring to understand what may contribute to these differences along with or beyond the sheer number of organizations in which one is involved. Further exploration into how men and women's emotionality intelligent leadership measures shift depending on levels of

involvement would also provide additional insight into the role of involvement in college men and women's emotionally intelligent leadership outcomes.

It is important to note that throughout both research questions no significant differences emerged for the construct consciousness of context. A significant difference was found for one of the consciousness of context measures, whereby women involved in two organizations recognize patterns or behaviors in a group more often than men. Beyond this narrow finding, it appears as if men and women have similar levels of awareness of the larger environment in which they operate. Overall, women tend to demonstrate higher levels of the consciousness of self and consciousness of others capacities of emotionally intelligent leadership than men.

Conclusion

These results demonstrate that gender differences exist among college students in terms of how they view their own leadership. Using emotionally intelligent leadership as the lens through which students explored their leadership capacity, this research builds upon previous research in how men and women view themselves differently in relation to being conscious of themselves and conscious of others. Further research would enhance our understanding of the breadth and depth of these differences. Surprisingly, the level of involvement did not produce the expected significant differences between genders. Additional research into the nature of student involvement, such as the ways in which they get involved and whether they play a formal role, may shed additional light on the subject. Finally, further investigation is needed to better understand students' understanding of their consciousness of context. The research confirms the importance of looking at gender as an influential factor in students' perceptions and demonstration of leadership, and leaves open the possibility for additional study into whether the ways in which students get involved matter in life outside of the classroom.

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