An Investigation of Path-Goal Theory, Relationship of Leadership Style, Supervisor-Related Commitment, and Gender

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The conceptual framework of this leadership model is that leaders who practice certain leadership styles, according to subordinates’ expectations of gender stereotypes, could influence the subordinate commitment to superior. Does a leader’s gender and subordinates’ perceived leadership style influence the subordinates’ commitment to supervisor? This study was designed to accomplish a dual purpose: (a) to determine if there is a relationship between subordinates’ perception of leadership style and subordinate commitment to his/her leader and (b) to determine if supervisor’s gender moderates the relationship between the perceived leadership style and subordinate commitment to his/her leader. Responses were received from a total of 117 self-reported participants through social networking. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that path-goal leadership styles can predict subordinates’ commitment to superior; however, gender only predicts subordinates’ commitment to superior for achievement-oriented and directive styles. Further comparison of regression coefficients indicated no statistically significant difference between male and female leadership styles and subordinates’ commitment to the superior.
Leadership is complex and influenced by relationships, circumstances, personalities, and many additional factors within the realm of the workplace (DeCaro, 2005). Previous research has found psychological differences between male and female leaders that lead them to certain leadership behaviors (Lewis & Fagenson-Eland, 1998). Female supervisors are associated with considerate behaviors while male supervisors prefer task-oriented behaviors (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; Hammick & Acker, 1998; Lewis & Fagenson-Eland, 1998). The research problem here is determining how subordinates’ perception of their supervisor’s leadership style influences their commitment to their supervisor and whether gender of the leader may influence subordinates’ commitment to his/her leader. This study used the path-goal theory and sex-role congruency hypothesis as the foundation for this model.

**Research Purpose**

This study aimed to accomplish a dual purpose: (a) to determine if there is a relationship between subordinates’ perception of leadership style and subordinate commitment to his/her leader and (b) to determine if supervisor’s gender moderates the relationship between leadership style and subordinate commitment to his/her leader. The conceptual framework of the leadership model is that leaders who practice
certain leadership styles, according to subordinates’ expectations of gender stereotypes, could influence the subordinate commitment to superior.

In the relentless pursuit to present new knowledge, this study sought to provide significant value for both practitioners and academics whereby extending the current and future body of knowledge on leadership styles and the perceptual effect that gender influences the superior/subordinate relationship. Research results can be used by practitioners to identify leadership styles and enhance superior/subordinate relationships within the workplace. The Ken Blanchard Companies (n.d.) noted that 76 percent of managers suggested that failing to use a leadership style that is appropriate to the person, task, or situation is one of the common mistakes supervisors make; therefore, largely impacting “productivity, profits, performance, and overall success as a result” (as cited by Negron, 2008, p. 28).

**Theoretical Framework**

Path-goal theory, originally developed by Evans (1970) and later modified by House (1971), was designed to identify a leader’s most practiced style as a motivation to get subordinates to accomplish goals. The path-goal theory reinforces the idea that motivation plays an important part in how a supervisor and a subordinate interact and, based on that interaction, the overall success of the subordinate. The path-goal theory, according to House (1971), presents two basic propositions. Firstly, “One of the strategic functions of the leader is to enhance the psychological states of subordinates that result in motivation to perform or in satisfaction with the job” (House, 1971, p. 3). In other words, leaders need to be cognizant of the necessary steps to clarify goals, paths, and enhance satisfaction through extrinsic rewards, which will in turn increase subordinates’ intrinsic motivation. Secondly, House asserted that particular situational leader behavior will accomplish the motivational function. The path-goal theory recognizes four leadership behaviors to increase subordinates’ motivation. House and Mitchell (1974) based the four leadership styles on three attitudes exhibited by subordinates: (a) Subordinates’ satisfaction, (b) subordinates’ expectations of their leaders, and (c) subordinates’ expectations of effective performance (Negron, 2008).

The four path-goal leadership styles that function to provide structure and/or reward to subordinates are directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented (House & Mitchell, 1974; Indvik, 1987). The directive leader clarifies expectations and gives specific guidance to accomplish the desired expectations based on performance standards and organizational rules (House & Mitchell, 1974). The directive style is appropriate with newly hired or inexperienced subordinates and in situations that require immediate action (Negron, 2008). The directive style may be perceived as aggressive, controlling, descriptive, and structured by dictating what needs to be done and how to do it. Research indicates that the directive style is positively related to subordinates’ expectations and satisfaction for subordinates who are employed to
perform ambiguous, unstructured tasks; however, negatively related to satisfaction and expectations of subordinates who are well-structured and receive clear tasks (House, 1971; House & Dessler, 1974; Schriesheim & Von-Glinow, 1977; Al-Gattan, 1983).

The supportive leader behaves in a responsive manner thus creating a friendly climate and verbally recognizes subordinates’ achievement in a rewarding modus (Graen, Dansereau, Minami, & Cashman, 1973; House & Dessler, 1974; House & Mitchell, 1974). Supportive leaders demonstrate respect for subordinates, treat everyone equal, and concern for subordinates’ well-being (House, 1971). According to Reardon, Reardon, and Rowe (1998), supportive leaders “learn by observing outcomes and how others react to their decisions” (p. 132). The supportive style is suitable when subordinates show a lack of confidence in ability to complete a task and little motivation (Negron, 2008).

The participative leader takes on consultative behaviors such as soliciting subordinates for suggestions prior to making a final decision, albeit, they retain final decision authority (House & Mitchell, 1974). The participative leader shares responsibilities with subordinates by involving them in the planning, decision-making, and execution phases (Negron, 2008). Workers who are motivated become self-directed and generate a creative team thereby presenting a greater cohesive team and ownership amongst participants (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996). The participative style is appropriate when subordinates show a lack of judgment or when procedures have not been followed (Negron, 2008).

The achievement-oriented leader “sets challenging goals, expects subordinates to perform at their highest level, continuously seeks improvement in performance and shows a high degree of confidence that the subordinates will assume responsibility, put forth effort and accomplish challenging goals” (House & Mitchell, 1974, p. 83). Negron (2008) noted that the achievement-oriented style is suited for unclear tasks and subordinates who may need a morale booster to increase their confidence in ability to accomplish the given goal.

Each of the four path-goal styles can be exercised by leaders in any combination with various subordinates and within different organizational environments and situations (House & Mitchell, 1974). Experienced leaders mold their leadership styles according to the situation (Reardon et al., 1998). Subordinates may perceive the same superior as presenting different path-goal leadership styles, which may be influenced by background, personality, characteristics, motivation level, relational bond with supervisor, and many other variables. According to House (1971), path-goal theory is a conceptualization of explicit leader message behavior. Research on the path-goal theory includes dependent variables that are comprised of a range of subordinate outcomes and it assumes behavior is situational, according to House and Mitchell (1974), which is consistent with gender (e.g., Schneer, 1985) and communication (e.g., Smith, 1984).
Due to the introduction of gender as a moderating variable in this path-goal theory model, the sex-role congruency theory is explored in an attempt to gain an understanding of the gender relationships of superiors and subordinates within the workforce. Sex-role congruency hypothesis, according to Schein (1975), asserts that leader behavior consistent with sex-role stereotypes is expected to be more positively related to subordinates' satisfaction than inconsistent behaviors. The hypotheses specifically tested most frequently have been: (a) considerate behavior, being more consistent with female stereotypical behavior, should be more positively associated with subordinates' satisfaction for female leaders than for male leaders; and (b) initiating structure behavior, believed to be more stereotypically male, should be more positively associated with subordinates' satisfaction for male leaders than for female leaders (Indvik, 1987).

The supervisor acts as an agent of the organization and often interacts with subordinates on a daily basis, serving as administer of rewards to subordinates (Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002; Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990). Commitment to supervisor is defined by two dimensions: identification with supervisor and internalization of supervisor's values (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996). Identification occurs when a subordinate admires certain attributes of the supervisor such as attitude, behavior, personality, or accomplishments (Becker et al., 1996; Chen et al., 2002). Subordinates may feel a sense of pride by associating with the supervisor thus loyalty to supervisor. Internalization occurs when the subordinate adopts attitudes and behaviors of the supervisor because of congruent value systems (Chen et al., 2002). However, according to Chen et al., loyalty to supervisor extends beyond these two dimensions in a highly relationship-oriented context such as familial relationships where feeling of indebtedness may present itself.

This study explored the path-goal leadership styles from the subordinates’ perspective rather than the leader’s perspective. The premise of this study is that subordinates’ expect leaders to behave with certain stereotypical gender characteristics and, when leaders behave as expected and as perceived by the subordinate, the subordinates will show commitment to supervisor.

**Literature Review**

This research explored leadership styles in relation to subordinates’ commitment to supervisor and the possible impact of leaders’ gender in the relationship. Extant literature indicates that gender may impact the relationship between leader’s behavior and subordinates’ commitment to leader based on subordinates’ stereotypical expectations. The study will use the path-goal and sex-role congruency as the foundational theories for this model.
Path-Goal Leadership Style and Subordinate Commitment to Superior

The new age leadership paradigm focuses attention on the effects leaders have on their subordinates (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1989; Burns, 1978, 2003). House and Dessler (1974) stated the path-goal theory’s intention was to identify the “precise psychological mechanisms underlying the effects of leaders on others” (pg. 30). House’s path-goal theory assumes leaders are flexible and adjust their style to meet the challenge of the situation (Negron, 2009). According to DeCaro (2005), the theory proposes that when subordinates perceive superior’s behavior as the source to their satisfaction of their job, the leader’s behavior is considered acceptable and can lead to the subordinate’s satisfaction. Furthermore, the leader’s behavior will be viewed as acceptable only when subordinates’ perceive it as either an immediate or future source of job satisfaction (DeCaro, 2005).

Extant literature indicates path-goal theory has a significant relationship with the following dependent variables: (a) intrinsic job satisfaction, which is the expectancy that performance leads to effective performance (expectancy one); (b) the expectancy that performance leads to valued rewards (expectancy two); (c) role clarity (House, 1971); (d) satisfaction with extrinsic rewards (House & Dessler, 1974); (e) satisfaction with the superior (House & Mitchell, 1974); and (f) performance and overall satisfaction (House & Mitchell, 1974). Satisfaction with the supervisor, similar to commitment to supervisor, is often assessed as a feature of job satisfaction (Jingsong & Yuan, 2009) and has been positively correlated with loyalty to supervisor and organizational commitment (e.g., Wong & Kung, 1999). Supervisory support is positively correlated with organizational commitment (Gaertner & Robinson, 1999) and support from one’s supervisor is positively correlated with affective commitment (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003).

Affective commitment is when an employee identifies with and is psychologically involved with the organization (McCormack, Casimir, Djurkovic, & Yang, 2007). In other words, it is an emotional attachment to the organization versus subordinates’ commitment to superior. McCormack et al. (2007) conducted research that indicated satisfaction with supervisor has a significant positive correlation with affective commitment. Although, affective commitment to organizations seems to be unrelated to job performance (Becker et al., 1996; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), a significant and positive relationship has linked followers’ commitment to supervisor and followers’ performance (Becker et al., 1996). Therefore, it seems possible that if there is a significant positive relationship between the path-goal theory’s dependent variables such as intrinsic job satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, satisfaction with superior, high performance, and overall satisfaction, all of which enhance the psychological states of subordinates’ outcome, then a subordinate’s commitment to his/her leader may be a relevant dependent variable.
A subordinate’s commitment to his/her leader implies increased obligation to make a relationship succeed and mutually satisfactory and beneficially (Gundlach, Achrol, & Mentzer, 1995; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The research is scant in the study of subordinates’ commitment to their leader within the realm of path-goal theory. Griffin (1979) noted a limited amount of empirical studies on path-goal theory; moreover, the most reported research focused on directive and supportive.

**Sex-Role Congruency and Gender Stereotypes**

The study of gender is an important research topic in the realm of organizational leadership (Yukl, 2002). Knowing the gender relational dynamics between leaders and subordinates could transform how organizations hire and/or promote talent. There are many cognitive and contextual factors involved where gender influences perception, including (a) the beliefs, expectations, and motivation of the target and perceiver; (b) whether gender schema are primed by factors such as the organizational context, the nature of the task, or the characteristics of the target; (c) whether differential expectations are conveyed to men and women; and (d) whether these result in changes in the target’s self-presentation (Becker et al., 2002; Deaux & Major, 1987).

A number of meta-analyses of leadership gender differences reveal that leadership style is likely to be influenced by gender role stereotypes and various gendered social processes (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Moreover, male role expectations scored higher on measures of creating structure, enacting task-oriented behavior, and exhibiting more directive and controlling decision styles whereas women were expected to be characterized by considerate, relationship-oriented behavior, and participative decision styles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Druskat, 1994; Helgeson, 1990; Rosener, 1990; Thacker, 1995). Several researchers found conflicting results where no difference between male and female leadership styles was significant (Butterfield & Powell, 1981; Campbell, Bommer, & Yeo, 1993; Kolb, 1997; 1999; Maher, 1997; Nadim & Singh, 2005).

Research indicates that women are more often stereotyped as passive, friendly, dependent, less assertive, and less aggressive than the male counterpart (e.g., Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Cohen, Bunker, Burton, & McManus, 1978). Some authors have shown that women have better skills for interpersonal relationships than men (Bar-On, 2006; Bar-On, Brown, Kirkcaldy, & Thome., 2000). As a result, women may be viewed as more supportive and affective with characteristics involving the management of emotions (Lopez-Zafra, Garcia-Retamero, & Martos, 2012). Griffin (1979) found the theory to be internally consistent; however, further studies are needed to demonstrate external consistency. Sagie and Koslowsky (1994) agreed with the lack of path-goal theoretical research.
The direction of gender-moderated hypotheses is dependent upon additional reasoning not within the purview of the path-goal theory (Indvik, 1987). The modified sex-role congruency theory proposed by Schein (1975) posited “subordinates would prefer leader behaviors consistent with stereotypes of the subordinates’ own gender roles. In that case, male subordinates should prefer direction and achievement-orientation, while female subordinates should prefer support and participation” (Indvik, 1987, pg. 130). Schein (1978) has emphasized inconsistent results in research of the sex-role congruency hypotheses.

Rosen and Jerdee (1973) found that subordinates are satisfied with a considerate style of leadership from superiors of the opposite sex. Petty and Miles (1976) found male leader’s initiating structure more positively related to subordinates’ satisfaction of superior than female leader’s initiating structure and female leader’s consideration was more positively related to satisfaction of superior than male leader’s consideration. However, Petty and Miles did not control for subordinates’ demography whereas this research controlled for age, gender, education, and superior and subordinate tenure. Controlled variables are an important contributing factor in research when measuring the relationship(s) between dependent and independent variables because they could highly impact the results.

Rigg and Sparrow (1994) found in a study that women emphasized team work and were regarded as more people-oriented while men less emphasized team work and were considered more paternalistic and authoritative. According to Valentine and Godkin (2000), the gender of the supervisor may influence the subordinate’s perception of job design because males and females have been found to favor different leadership styles. Therefore, it is possible that female leaders are expected to be more participative and supportive while male leaders are expected to be more achievement-oriented and directive.

**Leader’s Gender and Subordinate Commitment to Superior**

The concept that an organization is merely one source in which an employee may be committed to has been widely accepted (Cohen, 2003; Cooper-Hakim & Viswevaran, 2005). “The supervisor, the work group, the client and the profession are all targets that are just as liable to foster worker commitment” (Pohl & Paillé, 2011, pg. 146). The concept of employee commitment to a supervisor has slowly gained increasing attention from researchers (e.g. Becker, 1992; Becker et al., 1996; Wong, Wong, C., & Ngo, 2002). Foci of commitment are individuals and groups to whom an employee is attached, according to Reichers, (1985).

Research indicates that subordinate commitment to supervisor has been one of the most important focuses influencing employees’ job performance (Becker, 1992; Becker et al., 1996). Berryman-Fink, Heintz, Lowy, Seebohm, and Wheeless (1987) conducted three
studies that explored perceptions of supervisor’s relation to gender. Results indicated a consistency of female respondents hold a more favorable attitude toward women superiors than male respondents. This study also found that the longer a subordinate works with women superiors, the more favorable s/he perceives the communicative competence of women superiors.

Becker, Ayman, and Korabik (2002) studied the relationship between leader gender, self-perception, and group members’ perception of the leader’s consideration and initiating structure. Becker’s (1992) study found commitment to superior and satisfaction was more strongly correlated to in-role performance than organizational commitment. Wong et al. (2002) noted, to their knowledge, no study has focused on antecedents of commitment to supervisor. Literature focusing on the relationship between superior/subordinate gender and commitment to the leader has been overlooked, according to Pohl and Paillé (2011). Most of the studies that concern how gender influences work-related outcomes, including commitment, have focused at the sub-organizational level of analysis, at the level of departments, work groups or teams (Peccei & Lee 2005; Riordan & Shore 1997; Tsui & Gutek 1999).

Research indicates that male role expectations scored higher on measures of creating structure, enacting task oriented behavior, and exhibiting more directive and controlling decision styles whereas women were expected to be characterized by considerate, relationship-oriented behavior, and participative decision styles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Druskat, 1994; Helgeson, 1990; Rosener, 1990; Thacker, 1995). Additionally, Schein (1975) posited that “subordinates would prefer leader behaviors consistent with stereotypes of the subordinates’ own gender roles. Specifically, Indvik (1987) noted, "male subordinates should prefer direction and achievement-orientation, while female subordinates should prefer support and participation" (pg. 130). Therefore, considering extant literature indicates a leader's style impacts a variety of subordinate outcomes, it is possible that subordinates' commitment to superior may also be impacted by leader's style. Therefore, it is likely that subordinates will show higher commitment to superior if leadership style is perceived as behaving stereotypically. Hence, the hypotheses:

H1: For female leaders, supportive and participative leadership styles for both gender subordinates will be more positively related with subordinates’ commitment to supervisor than directive or achievement-oriented leadership styles.

H2: For male leaders, directive and achievement-oriented leadership styles for both gender subordinates will be more positively related with subordinates’ commitment to supervisor than leadership styles.

Demographic variables that have been previously related to the commitment phenomena include age, gender, education level, and tenure with current employer.
(Fry & Greenfeld, 1980; Luthans, McCaul, & Dodd, 1985; Morrow & McElroy, 1987). Wharton and Baron (1987) asserted the importance in examining confounding variables relative to gender composition within the workplace when exploring gender similarities/dissimilarities. According to Peccei and Lee (2003, 2005), failure to include appropriate controls in the analysis may present bias of the true effects of gender dissimilarity. Tsui and Gutek (1999) argue that gender dissimilarity has a negative effect on employee psychological commitment, but that the impact is stronger on men than on women. Therefore, this study examines gender, age, superior/subordinate tenure, and education level as control variables.

**Method**

Hierarchical multivariate analysis was used to measure leadership style as the predictor variable, subordinate commitment to superior as the criterion variable, and leader’s gender as the moderator. A review of literature reveals instruments used to measure path-goal leadership styles in organizations (Indvik, 1988) and subordinate commitment to superior (Becker et al., 1996). Two instruments were used to measure the hypothesized relationships between leadership style and subordinates’ commitment: Path-goal leadership questionnaire (Indvik, 1988) and supervisor-related commitment scale (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996). Control variables include subordinate age, education, gender, and superior/subordinate tenure to help rule out alternative explanations.

**Participant Characteristics**

The sample selection for this study targeted employees who report to superiors. However, it is possible that some respondents may not have been employed or are self-employed, which is outside the target population and thus constitutes non-probability sampling using convenience and snowballing. A question was included in the survey that asked respondents about current employment status and if s/he reports to a superior. See Table 1 for sample characteristics.

**Sampling Procedures**

Due to time and money constraints, a non-probability convenience sample was used for this study. Prior to data collection, the human subjects review application process was completed and approved. Subsequently, the survey instruments were deployed using SurveyGizmo.com, an online anonymous research data collection site. The online survey presented a disclaimer that stated participation in the survey is a form of permission to use the data and all data will remain anonymous. Participation was voluntary and participants could cease responding at any time.
An electronic invitation through the social media portal was sent to prospective participants with a link to the online survey. Targeted participants included employees from global organizations who report to a superior. The invitation message included an overview of the study, purpose of the study, and an invitation to pass the link along to employed colleagues who report to a superior for a snowball effect. Research results were offered to anyone (participants and nonparticipants) upon request.

**Sample Size and Power**

According to Girden (2001), sample sizes need to be large enough to detect difference, assuming that a difference of a particular magnitude is anticipated. Because discriminant analysis is quite sensitive to the ratio of sample size it is recommended that there should be “20 observations per each observable variable” (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010, p. 252) with a minimum recommended size of five observations per independent variable. This study set out to obtain approximately 120 responses based on the recommendations by Hair et al. (2010). Approximately seven respondents (6.5 percent) reported to not work for a superior; therefore, their data were omitted from analysis. Data were collected for approximately ten weeks, which resulted in 117 usable responses (see Table 1).

**Measures and Covariates**

The predictor variables include the path-goal theory four leadership styles: (a) directive, (b) achievement-oriented, (c) participative, and (d) supportive. The criterion variable is subordinate’s commitment to superior. The moderating variable is superior’s gender and the control variables include subordinate’s age, gender, education, and subordinate/superior tenure. Both instruments used for this study have been previously validated (Indvik, 1986; Becker et al., 1996).

The directive leader is described as providing psychological structure by informing subordinates what is expected of them and giving specific guidance, clarifying roles, rules, and procedures (House & Dessler, 1974). The achievement-oriented leader is described as encouraging performance excellence, setting challenging goals, emphasizing excellence in performance, and showing confidence that subordinates will attain high standards of performance (House & Dessler, 1974). The participative leader encourages subordinates and considers their opinions and suggestions (House & Dessler, 1974). The supportive leader is concerned with subordinates’ needs and preferences by displaying a concern for their welfare and work environment (House & Dessler, 1974). Subordinate’s commitment to superior is described as admiration and pride of one’s superior (Becker et al., 1996).
Table 1

*Respondent Demographics and Leader Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic variables</th>
<th>Subordinates</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (coded as 1)</td>
<td>(75) 65%</td>
<td>(52) 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (coded as 2)</td>
<td>(39) 34%</td>
<td>(58) 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>22-62 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>42 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 4 year degree</td>
<td>(5) 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year degree</td>
<td>(29) 25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 4 year degree</td>
<td>(80) 68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate/Superior Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months (coded as 1)</td>
<td>(6) 5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 months (coded as 2)</td>
<td>(15) 13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years (coded as 3)</td>
<td>(49) 42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years (coded as 4)</td>
<td>(36) 30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 years (coded as 5)</td>
<td>(5) 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 12 years (coded as 6)</td>
<td>(3) 3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>100 (86%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamian</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahraini</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwandan</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: n = 117*

The path-goal leadership questionnaire (see Appendix Figure A1) is a leader-rated 20-item behavior scale with a seven point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always) developed by Indvik (1988). The path-goal questionnaire provides information about the four leadership styles: directive, achievement-oriented, participative, and supportive (Northouse, 2004). Each subscale is comprised of five questions. For the purpose of this study, the path-goal instrument was modified from a leader-rated instrument to a subordinate-rated instrument. This modification changed the verbiage from “I” to “My supervisor.” Examples include: “My supervisor asks for suggestions from subordinates concerning how to carry out assignments” and “My supervisor asks subordinates for suggestions on what assignments should be made.” Research on extant
literature does not indicate evidence that modification to the path-goal instrument is valid.

Indvik (1986) reported meta-analysis reliabilities as follows: directive (.80), supportive (.86), and participative (.81). The reliability of achievement-oriented leader behavior (.69) was borderline but based on only two studies. Moreover, “The number of studies reporting a given relationship ranged from 26 to two, with sample sizes ranging from 4,993 to 272” (Indvik, 1986, p. 190).

Subordinates’ commitment to superior was measured using the supervisor-related commitment scale developed by Becker et al. (1996), which is a nine-item self-rated Likert scale measure (see Appendix Figure A2). Five items were used to measure identification with supervisor and four items measure internalization of supervisor. Coefficient alpha was .85 for supervisor-related commitment based on identification and .89 for supervisor-related commitment based on internalization (Becker et al., 1996). Survey items consist of a seven-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Examples include: “I feel a sense of “ownership” for my supervisor” and “My attachment to my supervisor is primarily based on the similarity of my values and those represented by my supervisor.” Multivariate analysis positively related both supervisor-related identification and internalization with employee performance ratings (Becker et al., 1996).

Control variables include subordinate age, education, gender, and tenure with supervisor and subordinate. The age response was recorded in years. Gender for both respondents and supervisors was coded for females (1) and males (2). Education was coded as: some high school (1), high school/GED (2), some college (3), associate’s degree (4), bachelor’s degree (5), master’s degree (6), doctorate (7), law (8), medical (9), and trade/technical (10). Supervisor and subordinate tenure was coded as 0-6 months (1), 7-12 months (2), 1-3 years (3), 4-8 years (4), 8-12 years (5), and over 12 years (6) (see Table 1).

Research Design

This study is comprised of four continuous predictor variables (path-goal leadership styles), one dichotomous moderating variable (superiors’ gender), one criterion variable (commitment to superior), and the following control variables: subordinates’ education, age, gender, and superior/subordinate tenure. Data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software.

A survey pretest was conducted to determine strengths and/or weaknesses of the content due to the modified path-goal questionnaire and combined scale to measure subordinate commitment to superior using the superior-related commitment
questionnaire. The pilot study comprised of a convenience sample of five participants. Feedback from the pilot study indicated concerns with the superior-related instrument. One participant commented that the instrument seemed to imply an attachment or similarities as existential; moreover, with an increase in home-based employment and less face-to-face interaction, many virtual relationships comprise of task-oriented communication and there is less concern about the relationship.

**Results**

The central concerns of this study were the relationship between the predictor variables, which include participative, supportive, directive, and achievement-oriented leadership styles and the relationship with the criterion—subordinates’ commitment to supervisor. This study also examined the moderating impact of the leaders’ gender. Control variables include subordinates’ age, education, gender, and tenure with superior, which were incorporated into analyses to ensure that other relationships were not masking other relationships. Cronbach’s (1951) coefficient alphas were calculated to determine the internal consistency reliability of each subscale (see Table 2). One item within each of the four path-goal subgroups was reverse-scaled. Each subscale was summed and the mean score was computed. Finally, the four path-goal subscales were combined and computed as two predictor variables (achievement + directive, participative + supportive). Each subscale and the combined subscales were found to have high internal consistency (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Cronbach’s Alpha*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Path-Goal Achievement-oriented</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path-Goal Participative</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path-Goal Supportive</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path-Goal Directive</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior-related Commitment</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement + Directive</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative + Supportive</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: n = 117*

Table 3 illustrates the correlation coefficients between each pair of variable. The level of variance between the variables was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The zero-order correlations, means, and standard deviations for the four dimensions of path-goal theory and one factor of subordinates’ commitment to
superior are reported in Table 3. The mean score for subordinates’ commitment to superior were neither low nor high, indicating a moderate amount of commitment to superior. Both computed leadership style variables indicated a slightly high mean score and a significant positive relationship to subordinates’ commitment to superior (see Table 3). Alternatively, superior’s gender does not indicate a statistically positive relationship with subordinates’ commitment to superior. Furthermore, the control variables show no statistically significant relationship to subordinates’ commitment to superior.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Commitment</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participative + Supportive</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.73**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Achievement + Directive</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>.72***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Superior Gender</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Age</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Education</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Subordinate Gender</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tenure</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a Superior and subordinate gender is coded 1 = female and 2 = male
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
c. Listwise N=114

To examine the overall amount of variability in subordinate commitment to superior by perceived leadership style, and to examine the unique amount of variability explained by leadership style on subordinate commitment to superior, hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. Two hierarchical multiple regressions were performed to examine the composite variables of participative and supportive separate from achievement-oriented and directive styles (see Tables 4 and 5). Regression analysis was used to measure subordinates’ attributes (age, sex, superior/subordinate tenure, and education) as predictors of subordinate commitment to supervisor. The F statistics shows if the model brings a statistically insignificant explanation to the data. If the p (sig.) value is less than .05, then the relationship can be generalized to the population and the model concluded as significant. Regression analysis and regression coefficient comparisons were used to measure the following hypothesis:

**H1: For female leaders, supportive and participative leadership styles for both gender subordinates will be more positively related with subordinates’ commitment to supervisor than directive or achievement-oriented leadership styles.**
Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of participative and supportive leadership styles to predict subordinates’ commitment to supervisor and superior’s gender as modifying the relationship. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The presence of collinearity between the two predictor variables is recognized. Control variables (superior and subordinate tenure, age, education level, and gender) were added to the first step, explaining 1.3 percent of the variance in subordinates’ commitment to superior: R² = .01, ΔR² = -.02, F(4, 109) = .36, p = .837.

Superiors’ gender and the computed predictor variable, which equaled the sum of participative and supportive variables, were added to the second step model explaining 54 percent variance in subordinates’ commitment to superior. The second model indicated an additional 52 percent (R-square change = .52) of variance after controlling for superior and subordinate tenure, and subordinates’ age, education level, and gender: R² = .54, ΔR² = .51, F(4, 107) = 20.53, p = .000. Finally, the third step added the computed moderator variable = gender * (participative + supportive), which resulted in no additional variance (R-square change = .000). Overall regression results indicated that the effects of the computed predictor variable (participative + supportive) and the moderator variable does predict subordinates’ commitment to superior when controlled for age, gender, education, and superior/subordinate tenure, R² = .54, ΔR² = .51, F(4, 106) = 17.45, p = .000. In the final model, however, the only measure that was statistically significant to subordinates’ commitment to superior was the computed predictor variable (participative + supportive) as illustrated in Table 4. Therefore, H1 is not supported.

To examine the overall amount of variability in subordinate commitment to superior by perceived leadership style, and to examine the unique amount of variability explained by leadership style on subordinate commitment to superior, a multiple regression coefficient comparison was conducted to measure the following hypothesis:

**H2: For male leaders, directive and achievement-oriented leadership styles for both gender subordinates will be more positively related with subordinates’ commitment to supervisor than participative and supportive leadership styles.**

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of the computed achievement-oriented and directive leadership variable to predict subordinates’ commitment to supervisor and superior’s gender to modify the relationship. Control variables (superior and subordinate tenure, age, education level, and gender) were added to the first step, explaining 1 percent (1%) of the variance in subordinates’ commitment to superior: R² = .01, ΔR² = -.02, F(4, 109) = .36, p = .837. Superiors’ gender and the computed predictor variable, which equaled the sum of achievement-oriented and directive variables, were added to the second step model explaining 41 percent variance in subordinates’ commitment to superior. The second model explained an
additional 39 percent (R-square change = .39) of variance after controlling for superior and subordinate tenure, age, education level, and gender: R2 = .41, ∆R2 = .37, F(4, 107) = 12.16, p = .000.

Table 4
Result of the HLM for superior gender as a moderator of the relationship between participative and supportive and commitment to superior (n=117)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Control variables a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate gender b</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Predictor variables c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior gender b</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative + supportive</td>
<td>.48*</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 change</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Interaction d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior gender x (participative + supportive)</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 change</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a Step 1 = control variables. b Female is coded 1 and male 2. c Step 2 = (participative + supportive). d Step 3 = (participative + supportive) x superior gender for interaction variable. †p<.10  *p < .05   **p < .01.

Finally, the third step added the computed moderator variable = gender * (achievement-oriented + directive), which explained an additional 3 percent variance (R-square change = .03). The regression model as a whole indicated the added interaction variable showed a statistically significant contribution to subordinates’ commitment to supervisor, R2 = .44, ∆R2 = .40, F(4, 106) = 11.82, p = .000 (see Table 5). However, in the final model, the only measures that were statistically significant to subordinates’ commitment to superior were the computed predictor variable and the moderating variable. Therefore, overall results indicated that superior gender and achievement-oriented and directive leadership styles can predict subordinates’ commitment to superior. Further exploration of simple slope analysis (see Figure 2) illustrates the moderated relationship between the predictor variable, achievement-oriented and directive leadership styles, and subordinates’ commitment to supervisor. Results showed subordinates’ commitment increased as female leaders showed higher achievement-oriented and directive leadership styles; however, subordinates’ commitment decreased as male leaders showed higher achievement-oriented and
directive leadership styles (indicated by the steeper slope in Fig. 1). Thus, indicating H2 is not supported.

Table 5
Result of the HLM for superior gender as a moderator of the relationship between leadership style and commitment to superior (n=117)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Control variables&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate gender&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; change</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Predictor variables&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior gender&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement + Directive</td>
<td>.78&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; change</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Interaction&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior gender x (achievement + directive)</td>
<td>-.24&lt;sup&gt;†&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; change</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: <sup>a</sup> Step 1 = control variables. <sup>b</sup> Step 2 = sum (achievement-oriented + directive). <sup>c</sup> Female is coded 1 and male 2. <sup>d</sup> Step 3 = sum (achievement-oriented + directive) x superior gender for interaction variable. †p<.10  *p < .05  **p < .01.

Figure 2. Simple slope result of the effect of supervisors’ gender * (achievement-oriented + directive) styles on subordinates’ commitment to supervisor.
A comparison of the regression coefficients was examined to conclude the hypotheses. Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, and Piquero (1998) suggested using the following statistical formula to compare regression coefficients (see Figure 2). The calculated statistic using the formula in Figure 2 for H1 and H2 indicated $Z = .38$ (female leaders) and $Z = .92$ (male leaders), respectfully (see Figure 3 and 4). Results indicated both hypotheses are statistically unsupported.

$$Z = \frac{b_1 - b_2}{\sqrt{SEb1^2 + SEb2^2}}$$

Figure 2. Formula to compare regression coefficients.

$$Z = \frac{.72 - .66}{\sqrt{(.19)^2 + (.14)^2}}$$

$Z = .38$

Figure 3. Results for regression coefficient comparison for female leaders and achievement-oriented and directive.

$$Z = \frac{1.44 - .66}{\sqrt{(.19)^2 + (.14)^2}}$$

$Z = .92$

Figure 4. Results for regression coefficient comparison for male leaders and achievement-oriented and directive.
Discussion

Primary data were collected from 117 respondents for the purpose of this study. The data in the present study do not provide support for the sex-role congruency hypothesis as it pertains to subordinates’ commitment to superior and the path-goal leadership styles. Research has emphasized inconsistent results in tests of the sex-role congruency hypothesis (Petty & Bruning, 1980; Schein, 1978). Contrary to the hypotheses set in this study, the statistical findings do not support the hypotheses that superior’s gender moderates the relationship between leadership style and subordinates’ commitment to superior. The results of this study suggested subordinates’ perception of their leader’s leadership styles does predict subordinates’ commitment to superior; however, gender does not impact that relationship. Furthermore, Pearson’s correlation coefficient indicated subordinate’s age, education, gender, and subordinate/superior tenure do not influence subordinates’ commitment to superior.

Few studies have found gender differences in leadership styles (Helgesen, 1990; Hennig & Jardim, 1977; Rosner, 1990). However, a larger portion of research suggests otherwise (Bass, 1990; Dobbins & Platz, 1986; Donnel & Hall, 1980; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Results of this study could be attributed to several explanations: (a) self-report bias, (b) misleading statistical analysis, and (c) sample characteristics.

Self-reported bias may have contributed to the findings of this study. Some respondents may not have the right answers to some of the questions so they guess their answers, according to Rosenthal and Rosnow (2008). A small percentage of respondents were cross-cultural where leadership behaviors and cultures are different from those practiced in America. According to Hofstede (2001), Asian firms tend to be more bureaucratic, hierarchical, and have central decision making. Women in Japan make up a small percentage of the leadership roles (Hofstede, 2001). Japanese leaders are generally highly achievement-oriented and participative (Hofstede, 2001); therefore, a possible conflict of culture when considering the given hypotheses for this study.

Another possible explanation for the results may be due to a limitation of statistical analysis. The practice of applying a moderated regression or MANOVA to data and hypotheses that are actually reflective of latent-variable systems can be misleading (Chiu, Lin, & Tang, 2005; Lin, Chiu, & Joe, 2009). Therefore, conducting structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis may have presented stronger statistically conclusive findings and construct validity.

Sample characteristics may also impact the results of this study. This study used a convenience sample with broad backgrounds; however, the majority of respondents had advanced degrees. It is possible that individuals with higher degrees do less gender stereotyping. Another possible explanation is that white collar workers are not as segregated as blue collar workers. In other words, there are a higher percentage of male
blue collar workers than female and the gendered roles are more segregated. This could lead to more gender stereotyping at the blue collar level.

Study Limitations

According to Keyton (2006), research is not perfect and there is a possibility of error and bias in instances such as sampling and in measurement. Quantitative research emphasizes the importance of obtaining a sample representative of the population (Creswell, 2009). Representativeness can only be ensured with random sampling (Keyton, 2006). This study set out to obtain the perceptions of subordinates within the workforce; however, there exists a largely biased viewpoint as a result of convenience (nonprobability) sampling. Furthermore, there is no way to determine if participants answer the surveys truthfully and this presents bias. The researcher must take the best approach to reduce as much bias as possible.

The greatest threat to internal validity is confounding, which occurs when an extraneous variable changes systematically along the independent variable (Reid, n.d.). Confounding a situation when one finds a spurious association or misses a true association between independent and dependent variables as a result of a third factor or group of factors, also referred to confounding variables (Braga, Farrokhyar, & Bhandari, 2012). “A convenient method to check for a potential confounding factor is, first, to find out if the assumed confounding factor is associated with both outcome variable and exposure variable and, second, to compare the associations before and after adjusting for that confounding factor” (Braga et al., 2012, p. 133). Braga et al. suggests that commonly used methods to control for confounding factors and improve internal validity are randomization, restriction, matching, stratification, multivariable regression analysis, and propensity score analysis. This study would be improved by randomization and perhaps an addition to confounding variables. “The three most widely accepted forms of validity are convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity” (Hair et al., 2010, p. 161). Thus, this study would be greatly improved by performing more in-depth statistical analysis and validity checks.

Thomas (2003) asserts that it is rare, if possible, to draw generalizations from a convenience sample. The danger of nonprobability sampling is the potential for researchers to draw unwarranted conclusions about the universe from the data (Cryer & Miller, 1991). Ideally, this study would have access to a random sample of participants within one organization or industry. Therefore, generalizability of this study is unlikely to be universal due to convenience sampling. Additionally, the potential for common method variance limits the generalizability due to limiting the study to one source of self-reported participants.

Participants were solicited through social media groups and comprised less of labor workers and a greater amount of white-collar workers. This may present bias due to the
response limitation of internet users. Age and tenure of respondents may also present an inconsistent response. According to Kerlinger (1986), there is no guarantee that the sample of participants represents the population.

As with all quantitative research, results are limited to the questions and answers presented within the survey; thus, failing to present the rich data that qualitative open-ended questions and answers present. Additionally, the assumption is that participants will be honest with answers upon reflection of perceptions. Subordinates’ perceptions may differ considerably in quantifying the level of leader’s leadership style, which may present a limitation. Leader behavior may be perceived differently from person-to-person. While the instruments set out to measure follower perceptions of a supervisor’s leadership style based on the path-goal leadership styles, it should be recognized that leader’s do not operate within one specific leadership style framework. Using one leadership theory also adds to the limitation of this study.

This study presents perceptions from a large range of diverse responses, which can place the perception of the leader in a variety of contexts. The sample consists of cross-cultural participants with varied age groups, cultural backgrounds, gender, education experience, and work experience. This study would be strengthened by random sampling within one industry or organization.

The obtained self-rated data comprised of 117 cross-cultural participants with the vast majority being highly educated professionals with a graduate degree who worked for a supervisor at the time of the survey. The purpose for obtaining self-rated data from subordinates is twofold: (a) subordinates may be more reliable at gauging their level of commitment to superior and (b) the focus was on subordinates’ perception of their superior’s most practiced leadership style and how that perception may impact respondents’ commitment to their superior, therefore, obtaining data from superiors would not contribute to the data sought. Research also indicates that leaders rate their leadership styles differently than subordinates.

Podsakoff and Todor (1985) stated, “Invariably, when self-report measures obtained from the same sample are utilized in research, concern over same-source bias or general method variance arises” (p. 65). This research relied on a single-source for data collection thus the existence of systematic bias due to percept-percept inflation. Percept-percept inflation is one of the most commonly considered forms of systematic bias in organizational research (Gardner, Wright, & Gerhart, 2000). Percept-percept inflation results when each subject provides information for the independent and dependent variable at the same point in time (Gerhart, 1999).
Direction for Future Research

This research was prompted by organization’s challenge of seeking the best-fit talent when hiring or promoting supervisory roles. Organizations are faced with a significant competitive landscape and employing talent with certain characteristics and behaviors can place an organization a step ahead of the curve. Women’s underrepresentation of senior corporate roles and stereotypes may skew perceptions of women’s abilities. Overall, this study found no gendered differences and perceptions of leadership style in relation to subordinates’ commitment to superior. Thus, the need for further research in several directions has emerged from this study. Future research should consider obtaining larger industry-specific samples and conducting a longitudinal study to examine the relationship of subordinates’ preferred path-goal leadership styles and subordinates’ perception of supervisor’s most practiced leadership style.

Research seems to suggest that gender plays a limited role in the relationship between leadership style and subordinates’ commitment to superior; however, further research could investigate how gender influences work-group effectiveness. Additionally, work-group effectiveness moderated by gender of both leader and subordinate could also be examined to determine the possible relationship of subordinates’ perceived leadership style and the impact that may have on work-group effectiveness. Dixon and Hart (2010) found a significant positive correlation between path-goal leadership styles and workgroup effectiveness; however, how does gender within the group impact that relationship? Research should also more carefully examine between-cultures and gender differences at the organizational level, group, and team level. Also worth mentioning is the possibility that research focusing on the gender differences should be redirected since it seems clear that questions regarding leader effectiveness are better explained at the individual level than linked to gender (Applebaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003).

About the Author

Leana Polston-Murdoch has over 15 years of experience in marketing and communications and is currently a consultant specializing in internal and external organizational identity improvement by developing customized strategies that cogently stimulate desired outcomes. Leana is presently a doctoral student studying organizational leadership and human resource development with the School of Business & Leadership at Regent University. Research interests include organizational behavior, change management, personnel training and development, and strategic operational analysis and planning. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Leana Polston-Murdoch.

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