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# Gender and Leadership in the Public Sector

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## **Gender and Leadership in the Public Sector**

Traditionally, men have occupied top managerial positions in the public as well as the private sector. In recent decades this tradition has gradually changed. Although slowly and with significant variation between countries and sectors, the share of female top managers has been increasing. This article analyzes whether this demographic change may cause changes in the public service motivation and leadership behavior of public top managers. Is gender significantly related to the public service motivation (PSM) and leadership behavior of public sector top managers? The article presents a short review of theories and empirical research in the relations between gender, public service motivation and leadership behavior. Based on this review, hypotheses are formulated and tested in an empirical analysis of survey data from the Danish local government context. The results indicate that the behavior of female top managers is significantly more task and change oriented and significantly less policy oriented than their male colleagues, while they are motivated significantly less by PSM commitment. These findings, however, cannot be explained by theories based on simple gender stereotypes. Different interpretations of the findings are discussed and some implications are suggested.

### **Introduction**

Men have traditionally dominated the position as top CEO in public as well as private organizations. This strong tendency to favor men over women in high-level leadership has been referred to as the “glass ceiling” and has been documented in numerous leadership studies (Yukl 2010a). From normative ideas of justice, equality and a representative bureaucracy (Bradbury and Kellough 2008; Subramaniam 1967), this can certainly be seen as a problem, but also from an efficiency perspective it may prove unproductive and a liability in organizational competition. If organizations, public as well as private, through inappropriate career systems and recruitment mechanisms, lose valuable “female dimensions” of leadership or just neglect important potential leadership talent due to gender discrimination, this may prove dysfunctional in terms of efficiency (Hansen 2009).

No matter which attitudes one may have to these normative arguments, the long-term tendency in many countries is that women gradually increase their share of top executive positions (Powell and Graves 2003; Yukl 2010a). This is also the case in the Danish local government sector, from which the present analysis draws its empirical case. Comparing a survey among Danish local government top managers conducted in 1980 with a survey from 2008, the share of female top managers rose from around 3 percent in 1980 to around 17 percent in 2008 (Hansen 2009; Riiskjær 1982), and for other types of local government managers the increase is even higher.

These tendencies and normative arguments point to issues of the consequences of demographical changes in top management. Do the changes in gender composition matter to the motivation and leadership orientation characterizing top managers? Will the increasing share of female top managers imply a change on dimensions important to the organization?

This article examines whether there is a difference in female and male manager's approach to the managerial role. The article focuses on the possible gender differences in two theoretical literatures both found important to the performance of public top managers: the literature on leadership and the literature on Public Service Motivation. The gender's significance to a manager's orientation towards politics, relations, tasks and change is important because previous research in leadership indicates that these dimensions are important to leadership efficiency (Yukl, 2010c). Knowledge about the gender's significance to these four leadership dimensions will therefore indicate if the increasing number of female managers will have an impact on public sector efficiency. By the same token recent research within the literature on public service motivation (Perry and Hondeghem 2008) indicates that it does have an impact on measures of public sector performance (Petrovsky and Ritz 2010). Thus, if a significant gender relation to both leadership and public service motivation is found, the demographical gender changes we see in these decades are likely to have an impact on public sector performance.

In what follows is first a short introduction to the literature on gender, leadership and public service motivation, followed by the formulation of hypotheses concerning the relation between gender, leadership and public service motivation. Second, the empirical data and the analytical methods applied are presented. Third, the results of the empirical analysis are presented and compared to the hypotheses generated in the theory section. Fourth, the results and possible interpretations are discussed. Finally, some conclusions and implications of the analysis are suggested.

## **Theories and empirical research on gender, leadership and public service motivation**

### *Gender as an explanatory variable*

At the surface and in operational terms, gender is treated as a biological variable in this article. But this is not the same as treating gender as substantially determined by biological characteristics. Gender is very much characterized by cultural and social connotations likely to influence social practice. In most societies there are significant differences in the expectations to men and women and in the opportunities given to them in the labor market as well as in family life. These differences furthermore vary historically (Barnett and Hyde 2001), between countries (Yukl 2010a) and between organizational fields (Scott 2001).

In general terms, it is important to distinguish between substantial biological interpretations and relational cultural interpretations of gender-related variation in social practice (Bourdieu 1998). In *substantial biological models*, which have had a renaissance with the scientific success of the genetic revolution, the primary causal mechanism creating differences in the motivation and behavior of men and women is presumed to be biological – that is coded in the genes. In various versions of *relational cultural models* the primary causal mechanism is the socially constructed meanings and practices related to the categorical identities of men and woman within a specific field (nation, region, societal sector, etc.) (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Bourdieu 1998).

Within a relational cultural frame of interpretation, a number of theories have evolved which can be summarized in three broad explanatory models. *Formative socialization models* emphasize processes of socialization early in life in childhood and early youth, where a stable personality is presumed to be formed (Abramson 1975; Abramson and Inglehart 1995). *Lifelong learning models* presume that humans maintain their plastic capability for change and adaptation throughout life, and therefore put more emphasis on more recent experiences related to career and continuing education (Hazelrigg 1991; Jennings and Niemi 1974). *Social influence models* emphasize contemporary relations and networks. Here, the basic assumption is that motivation and behavior are influenced by the social relations and working networks in which the managers interact with other contemporaries (Chattopadhyay, Glick, Miller, and Huber 1999).

There are plausible theoretical arguments, which supports that gender may play a role in all of the four outlined models, to explain differences in motivation as well as behavior. Biological differences as for instance physical strength and the ability to give birth to children may be related to motivation and behavior in most of the lifetime. Although they vary in time and space, there are systematic differences in how girls and boys are brought up and educated in the early formative years, and these differences are likely to have an impact on motivation and behavior. It is also likely that there are systematic differences in how the career system works for women and men, as well as differences in the type of networks they associate with and the expectations they are confronted with in these networks.

Thus, based on the arguments related to the four models it would be really remarkable if gender differences were not in some way significantly related to the differences in motivation and leadership among public top managers. The question is, however, what kind of impact gender may have, and here there is neither empirical nor theoretical clarification. (Yukl 2010a). In this article, a contrast between stereotype and anti-stereotype theories of the

relation of gender to leadership and motivation will be utilized (Powell 1990). Stereotype gender theories assume that some genetically inhabited and/or some deep culturally determined gender-related norms and patterns of behavior exist and have a significant impact on leadership and motivation. Biology and early socialization are presumed to create a specific female (and male) leadership profile. These gender stereotype theories will be utilized to formulate hypotheses concerning the relations between gender, leadership and motivation. The anti-stereotype theories primarily build on the latter two models above. In order to break through in a male-dominated career system, female top managers are presumed to have reacted against stereotypical myths about females. Career systems and social networks are suggested to create a female leadership profile significantly different from our usual stereotypes. These anti-stereotype theories will be utilized to problematize the stereotypical assumptions and discuss the results of the analysis. First, however, we need to clarify how leadership and motivation are defined in this article.

### *What is leadership?*

Although a subject posing significant interest for millenniums, modern research in leadership has primarily evolved after the Second World War in USA and is characterized by an attempt to achieve systematic cumulative knowledge of leadership behavior in general and efficient leadership behavior in particular (Yukl 2010b). Different types of methodologies have been utilized to analyze similarities and differences in leadership behavior and their causes (Carlson 1991; Hansen 1997; Hansen 2000; Mintzberg 1973; Stewart 1982; Stewart 1989). Over the years, some classical leadership functions have been found to tend to be significantly related to efficient leadership, the two oldest being task-related and relations-related behavior (Yukl 2010c). Efficient managers are presumed to focus on tasks as well as the development and maintenance of relations to employees, superiors, colleagues, and significant stakeholders outside the organization.

The increased focus on change, development and innovation in recent decades has resulted in change leadership being added to the two old functions of tasks and relations, and these three orientations (Tasks, Relations, Change) may be characterized as the current trinity of efficient leadership in modern leadership research. In the context of public management, in which the organizational board consists of democratically elected politicians, it seems reasonable to argue that a political aspect of management is particularly important (Mouritzen and Svava 2002). Thus in a public context, I suggest to add the political dimension to the three standard orientations from the leadership literature. It may be perceived as a specific

dimension of the relation orientation, which in the public sector then is granted a special status. From the review above, this article defines four features that characterize public leadership orientations: Political orientation (P), Relations orientation (R), Task orientation (T), and Change orientation (C).

### *Public Service Motivation*

In recent decades, research in work motivation has increasingly emphasized the importance of context and mediating factors (Latham and Pinder 2005), and the *public service motivation* literature is currently the most sophisticated attempt, theoretically as well as empirically, to create a contextual work motivation theory for Public Administration. In contrast to leadership orientation, *public service motivation* (PSM) is a relatively new concept. The first theoretical formulations were published in 1990 (Perry and Wise 1990), and the first empirical attempt to measure it was published in 1996 (Perry 1996). As in the case of leadership orientation, the PSM literature was elaborated in an American context. In the original theoretical formulation, Perry and Wise defined PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (1990, p. 368), and they suggested to distinguish between rational, norm-based and affective motives related to public service organizations (public organizations as well as private non-profit organizations). Perry and Wise suggested eight types of *public service motivation* and formulated the following hypotheses: a) that people motivated by these factors were more inclined to seek work in the public sector, b) that *public service motivation* would be positively related to efficiency in the public sector, and c) that organizations with employees with a high degree of PSM would be less dependent on whip-and carrot mechanisms in order to increase work efficiency. Since then an increasing number of research projects including PSM have been conducted. The first research, and the majority, was done in the USA, but in recent years research in Europe and elsewhere has increasingly been conducted (Perry and Hondeghem 2008). The PSM literature has been competently reviewed elsewhere (Perry 2000; Perry and Hondeghem 2008; Perry, Mesch, and Paarlberg 2006). In this article it will be delimited to a short introduction of the PSM concepts utilized in the empirical analysis and of the empirical research focusing on the relation between gender and PSM.

Focus is on the relation between gender and the PSM concepts "compassion", "commitment to the public interest" and "attraction to public policy making". The argument relating "compassion" to PSM is that in public service organizations employees are at least partly

motivated by the emotions related to their tasks. For instance motivated by a desire to help disadvantaged people living under tough conditions. While “compassion” is related to affective motivation, the argument in “commitment to public interest” is that employees may be motivated by a normative obligation to contribute to a better society. This dimension of PSM resembles the concept of a “public ethos” which has been prominent in the public administration literature (Jorgensen and Bozeman 2007; Lundquist 1993; Woller 1998). The argument relating motivation to the third dimension of PSM included in the present analysis - “attraction to public policy making” - is rational (but not necessarily economically rational) in essence. An employee in public service organizations is motivated by a desire to influence societal change. Although affective, normative, and rational motivations are different in nature, the term PSM unites them in the sense that public service organizations (public or non-profit) are characterized by an opportunity to act out and find meaning in these motives more than in for-profit organizations. To which extent this is really the case of course varies between different types of public service organizations.

### *Gender and leadership*

As is often the case in social science, research in the relations between gender and leadership has found mixed and partly contradictory evidence. In an early review of the empirical research, three competing hypotheses all found some support: 1) no significant difference between male and female managers, 2) stereotypical differences between male and female managers, and 3) anti-stereotypical differences between male and female managers (Powell 1990). The concept of a stereotype is in itself context dependent. Since the overwhelming majority of the research has been done in North America in accelerating scope over the past sixty years, the empirical results must be understood in that context. In the most recent metaanalysis, I have been able to find of the relation between gender and leadership efficiency (Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani 1995), they even deliberately restricted the included research evidence to USA and Canada (Eagly *et al.*, 1995 p.129). According to Powell, stereotypical conceptions of gender differences imply that men are more self-confident, more aggressive, competitive and determined, while females are more sympathetic, friendly, gentle, shy and sensitive towards the need of others (1990, p.69). Translated to leadership terms such gender stereotypes imply that female managers are better than men at building good social relations, while male managers are better than women at solving task-related problems quick and efficient. In theories emphasizing gender stereotypes, such differences



are typically theorized as being the outcome of an interaction between a biological and an early socialization model.

It is somewhat more difficult to postulate clear stereotypical gender-related hypotheses concerning the politics and change dimensions of leadership. Based on the argument that politics historically has been the business of men, it does however seem plausible to argue that female managers on average will tend to be more reluctant to interfere into politics than their male colleagues. Concerning change orientation, any gender stereotypical differences can hardly be claimed. These considerations concerning the relation between gender and the four types of leadership orientation lead to the following four hypotheses based on a gender stereotype perspective.

H1: Female CEO's are less inclined to Policy-Oriented Behavior than their male colleagues

H2: Female CEO's are more inclined to Relations-Oriented Behaviors than their male colleagues

H3: Female CEO's are less inclined to Task-Oriented Behavior than their male colleagues

H4: Female CEO's do not differ from their male colleagues in terms of Change-Oriented Behaviors

The hypotheses above are formulated with the assumption that stereotypical gender-related differences between CEO's are usually based on either a biological or a formative socialization model. However, they are by no means undisputed in the literature, and theoretical arguments have been elaborated for both no differences as well as anti-stereotypical differences between female and male managers based on combinations of the lifelong learning model and the social influence model. The arguments presented here will later be included in the discussion about the results of the study.

The argumentation about gender-related differences is primarily linked to the long career path which most CEO's (and often also the local government CEO's who are in focus here) must go through to qualify for the position (March 1995; Powell 1990). The causal process is that the higher the managers are in the hierarchy, the more similar are their management styles, as they have been 'polished' and have passed a long line of 'selection points' with (roughly) similar evaluation criteria. Courses, further education and career paths standardize the CEO's qualifications, and no local government CEO makes it this far without

being policy, relation, task and change oriented. According to this argumentation there should be no or very few significant differences between male and female leadership.

As for anti-stereotypical processes the argumentation is primarily linked to the career path as above, but here are added some arguments about the historical development in women's role in society. Because female managers have to be exceptional in order to succeed in a male-dominated career system, the causal process is expected to be that they will develop motives and behavior that are more masculine than their male colleagues. That is, in order to obtain more impact, female CEO's have to break free of the stereotypical notion of 'the nice girls'. At least, this is what the first generation of women who move 'in high circles' experienced. Later surveys indicate that women are still the 'first generation' in Danish local government top management (Hansen 2009; Hansen 2010 (forthcoming)), which gives reason to expect that 'anti-stereotypical' causal processes matter in this context. According to this argumentation, the expectation is that female local government CEO's will display a more 'masculine' leadership style than their male colleagues.

#### *Gender and public service motivation*

As PSM is a new concept and developed within the, in relation to management, less extensive public administration tradition, much fewer analyzes of the relation between gender and the PSM indicators exist than of the relations between gender and leadership. However, this section uses the same logic as the previous, and three gender stereotypical hypotheses are formulated on the relations between gender and PSM. This is exactly the same strategy which is used in the latest study, I have been able to find, analyzing PSM among public manager from an explicit gender perspective (DeHart-Davis, Marlowe, and Pandey 2006), and their hypotheses are more or less replicated below. From a stereotypical concept of women's universal character, whether it is shaped biologically or culturally, you might expect 'compassion' to be more distinct in female CEO's than male CEO's, whereas rational motivation linked to the 'attraction to public policy making' is less distinct in female CEO's. It is difficult to tell whether normative 'commitment to the public interest' has a gender specific dimension, but this follows DeHart-Davis et al.'s (2006) argumentation. As women historically are linked to the private sphere, 'commitment to the public interest' here refers to the male sphere.

H5: Female CEO's are less motivated by "attraction to public policy making" than their male colleagues

H6: Female CEO's are more motivated by "compassion" than their male colleagues

H7: Female CEO's are less motivated by "commitment to the public interest" than their male colleagues

Similar to leadership orientation, some causal processes based on the lifelong learning model and the social influence model make it plausible to problematize the hypotheses above. Like their male colleagues, female CEO's have been through a long career path which has 'polished' them, which implies that they do not differ significantly from their male colleagues. Additionally, female CEO's might have had to distance themselves from the stereotypical notion of women to gain respect and impact. The idea is that when female CEO's are confronted with some of the wording about "compassion" and "commitment to the public interest" many react against them. Or more specifically, female CEO's (in order to gain acceptance in a still more male-dominated career system) may have had to distance themselves from traditional female values and develop an almost Amazon-like masculinity stronger than their male colleagues.

Looking at the empirical studies clarifying the relations between gender and PSM, you will find that most support gender stereotypical hypotheses, but most of these studies do not focus explicitly on gender and are not conducted among CEO's. Therefore, they do not consider the moderating effect of the career system. A previous study enlightening the relations between gender and PSM (Perry 1997) does not show significant relations to "attraction to public policy making" and "compassion" or a negative relation to "commitment to the public interest", but most of the respondents were not managers. According to the previously mentioned study by DeHart-Davis et al. (2006), the female managers in the American national social and health organizations obtained a significantly higher score than their male colleagues both in the sections "compassion" (as expected) and "attraction to public policy making" (not expected), however, the study showed no significant gender difference and "commitment to the public interest" (not expected).

### *Control variables*

Naturally, leadership orientation and PSM are affected by many other conditions than gender, and the article include variables recommended for control within management research (Yukl 2010a). First, the different organizational positions of the local government CEO's might be

significant to the differences in PSM as well as leadership orientation. For instance, the Danish equivalents to American city managers (Kommunaldirektør) have relations to the politicians as a very important part of their job, which is not the case for managers lower in the hierarchy. Second, age, seniority, and education might be significant to the gender's relation to leadership orientation as well as PSM.

## **Data and methods**

The empirical analysis builds on a survey from October-November 2008. The survey was distributed to the members of four Danish local government manager associations including almost all top tier municipal managers in Denmark: The association of Danish citymanagers, the association of Child- and culture managers (including primary school administration), The association of Technical service managers (including road constructing and city planning administration), and the association of social service managers (including eldercare administration). Among the 1105 members of the four associations 81.1 % (n=896) have answered the survey. Including 75.5 % (n=74) of the local government chief executives, 82.7 % (n=81) of the child and cultural service managers, 71.4 % (n=70) of the technical service managers and 76.5 % (n=75) of the social service managers in Denmark. Additionally 168 other top civil servant with other administrative functions and 407 other local government managers responded to the survey participated. The study is fairly representative of the two top tiers of local government managers in Denmark (Hansen, Jensen, and Pedersen 2009).

The survey asks a number of questions about the managers' prioritization between the daily management tasks and a number of questions about the concept *public service motivation* (PSM). The answers to these questions are analyzed by using factor analyses and reliability tests, and based on these answers four summative indexes of leadership orientation and three summative indexes of PSM are constructed (please see appendix 1). The seven variables correspond to the seven hypotheses. The four leadership orientation variables (leadership orientation index 1, 2, 3, and 4) are indicators of the policy, relational, task, and change-oriented leadership orientation, respectively, discussed in the theory section. The three PSM indexes are a translation and adaptation of questions from the American PSM literature (Coursey and Pandey 2007; Perry 1996) and are indicators of "attraction to public policy making" (PSM index 1), "compassion" (PSM index 2), and "commitment to the public interest" (PSM index 3), respectively.

The describing statistics for the indicators of leadership orientation and PSM as well as the other variables in the analyses are presented in table 1. Two dummy variables are used as control for position in the organization (variable 9 and 10). Whereas the chief executive officer is the highest ranking non-elected officer in the local government, the "other municipal managers" are the managers participating in the survey who do not have an executive administrative responsibility and therefore, do not have regular formal meetings with the politicians. The reference group is therefore executive managers with an executive administrative responsibility.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics for all variables included**

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mini	Maxi
1. Leadership Index 1 Politics	3.41	0.93	1.00	5.00
2. Leadership Index 2: Relations	3.44	0.56	1.60	5.00
3. Leadership Index 3: Tasks	4.43	0.44	2.60	5.00
4. Leadership Index 4: Change	3.91	0.48	2.40	5.00
5. PSM index 1: "Attraction to public policy making"	4.36	0.65	1.00	5.00
6. PSM index 2: "Compassion"	3.71	0.84	1.00	5.00
7. PSM index 3: "Commitment to the public interest"	4.31	0.56	1.00	5.00
8. Female	0.32	0.47	0.00	1.00
9. City Manager	0.07	0.25	0.00	1.00
10. Other Municipal Managers	0.38	0.49	0.00	1.00
11. Age	52.5	6.81	30.00	66.00
12. Master degree in social science or law	0.23	0.42	0.00	1.00
13. 0 to 2 years seniority in present position	0.29	0.45	0.00	1.00
14. 2.1 to 4 years seniority in present position	0.10	0.30	0.00	1.00
15. 0 to 5 years seniority in the municipal sector	0.04	0.20	0.00	1.00
16. 25.1 or more years seniority in the municipal sector	0.34	0.47	0.00	1.00

## Findings

The data is analyzed by using OLS regression, and the results of the analyses are presented in the tables 2 and 3. First, the results for the relations between gender and leadership orientation is presented (table 2). Next, the results for the relations between gender and PSM are presented (table 3). Finally, the relations between the results and the hypotheses are summarized before the discussion (table 4).

*Gender and leadership orientation*

The relations between the gender of the local government CEO's and the four indicators for leadership orientation are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Gender and leadership dimensions**

<b>Multiple OLS regression</b>	Leadership Index 1 Politics	Leadership Index 2 Relations	Leadership Index 3 Tasks	Leadership Index 4 Change
1. Female	-0.105**	0.038	0.122**	0.106**
2. City Manager	0.125***	-0.124**	-0.023	-0.019
3. Other Municipal Managers	-0.373***	0.223***	-0.073	-0.088*
4. Age	0.022	0.122**	0.084	0.060
5. Master degree in social science or law	0.008	-0.057	-0.071	-0.052
6. 0 to 2 years seniority in present position	-0.010	-0.011	0.033	0.007
7. 2.1 to 4 years seniority in present position	0.033	-0.004	0.017	-0.035
8. 0 to 5 years seniority in the municipal sector	0.004	-0.006	-0.022	0.026
9. 25.1 or more years seniority in the municipal sector	0.042	0.064	0.007	0.095*
N	786	771	784	780
R <sup>2</sup>	0.218	0.135	0.031	0.037
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.209	0.125	0.020	0.026

Note: Standardized regression coefficients.  
Level of significance: \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

The results of table 2 are furthermore tested in a bivariate pearson correlation without a control variable, which provides similar results in regard to the significance and sign for the relation between gender and the four forms of leadership orientation (not shown). Only at relations orientation does no significant difference between female and male CEO's exist. However, female local government CEO's are significantly more task oriented, significantly less policy oriented, and significantly more change oriented.

Apart from seniority in present position and 0-5 years seniority in the local government sector (variable 6-8) are all the control variables at least moderate significant (10 % level) in at least one of the models. Particularly the position variable 'other local government managers' (variable 3) is significantly related to leadership orientation. The

models' coefficients of determination vary between 3.1 % (task oriented) and 21.8 % (policy oriented).

*Gender and Public Service Motivation*

**Table 3: Gender and public service motivation**

<b>Multiple OLS regression</b>	PSM index 1 "Attraction to public policy making"	PSM index 2 "Compassion"	PSM index 3 "Commitment to the public interest"
1. Female	-0.023	-0.029	-0.108**
2. City Manager	-0.017	-0.055	-0.039
3. Other Municipal Managers	-0.091*	0.100*	-0.008
4. Age	-0.003	0.137**	0.079
5. Master degree in social science or law	-0.002	-0.062	0.025
6. 0 to 2 years seniority in present position	-0.063	0.035	0.005
7. 2.1 to 4 years seniority in present position	0.020	0.030	0.052
8. 0 to 5 years seniority in the municipal sector	-0.075*	0.029	-0.004
9. 25.1 or more years seniority in the municipal sector	-0.081	-0.023	0.007
N	765	758	762
R2	0.027	0.043	0.021
Adjusted R2	0.015	0.031	0.009

Note: Standardized regression coefficients. Level of significance: \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

According to table 3 do female local government CEO's have a lower level of all three PSM indicators, but this connection is only statistically significant for "commitment to the public interest".

There are no significant differences between male and female CEO's in relation to the indicators "attraction to public policy making" and "compassion". A bivariate parson's correlation without control variable provides the same result for direction and significance (not shown).

Some control variables also show significant relations to PSM. Other municipal managers are significantly negative related to "attraction to public policy making" and positively related to "compassion". Age is significantly positively related to "compassion" and 0 to 5 years seniority in the municipal sector is significantly negative related to

”attraction to public policy making”. Looking at the R2 values only between 1 and 3 percent of the variation in the PSM indicators are explained by the models.

*Hypotheses compared to the findings*

**Table 4: Findings compared to the seven hypotheses**

H <sub>1</sub>	Politics: Female CEO’s are less inclined to Politic-Oriented Behavior than their male colleagues	Confirmed
H <sub>2</sub>	Relations: Female CEO’s are more inclined to Relations-Oriented Behaviors than their male colleagues	Rejected (no significant relation)
H <sub>3</sub>	Tasks: Female CEO’s are less inclined to Task-Oriented Behavior than their male colleagues	Rejected (significant positive relation)
H <sub>4</sub>	Change: H4: Female CEO’s are not different from their male colleagues in terms of Change-Oriented Behaviors	Rejected (significant positive relation)
H <sub>5</sub>	PSM attraction to public policy making: Female CEO’s are less motivated by ”attraction to public policy making” than their male colleagues	Rejected (no significant relation)
H <sub>6</sub>	PSM compassion: Female CEO’s are more motivated by ”compassion” than their male colleagues	Rejected (no significant relation)
H <sub>7</sub>	PSM commitment to the public interest: Female CEO’s are less motivated by ”commitment to the public interest” than their male colleagues	Confirmed

As can be seen from table 4, only two (hypothesis 1 and 7) of the seven hypotheses based on a gender stereotypic perspective are confirmed by the empirical analysis. Three of the seven hypotheses (hypothesis 2, 5 and 6) are rejected, since there is no significant relation. One of the seven hypotheses (hypothesis 3) is rejected since the opposite result expected from a gender stereotypic perspective is found. The hypothesis expecting no significant gender difference (hypothesis H4) is also rejected since the findings indicate that female municipal top managers are significantly more change oriented than their male colleagues.

**Discussion**

Clearly gender is significantly related to differences in leadership orientation and (though less pronounced) to differences in public service motivation. In four of the seven models significant differences between the top managers related to gender was found. Female top managers were found to be significantly less policy oriented, more task oriented, more change oriented and less motivated by a ”commitment to the public interest” than their male colleagues. One implication from these findings thus seems to be that the demographical changes that have been observed in recent decades towards an increasing percentage of



females among top managers are likely to lead to real changes in the leadership priorities and motivation of the top managers.

Both the types of leadership orientation and the public service motivation included in the analysis has been found to be positively related to indicators of organizational performance in previous research (Petrovsky and Ritz 2010; Yukl 2010c). Thus another implication of the present study could be that both female and male qualities are needed in top management teams.

When it comes to explaining the gender related differences it is however less clear which processes that may have generated them. Only two of the seven hypotheses based on a gender stereotypical perspective were supported by the empirical evidence. One of the reasons may be that the theories presuming the existence of a gender stereotypic role that female top managers must relate to (either by adapting to it or reacting against it) is outworn. The classical theories of male- and female roles were formulated in the 1950ies and the societal changes in gender relations since then has been extensive (Barnett and Hyde 2001) in many countries. This is very much the case in the Scandinavian context analyzed in this article.

According to some researchers the leadership role has also been changing in recent decades (DeHart-Davis, Marlowe, and Pandey 2006) towards a more androgynous role, in which feminine as well as classical masculine aspects of the role are important. These changes imply that the processes through which gender become significant to leadership orientation and public service motivation becomes more complex and perhaps also more difficult to uncover.

Related to the above discussion, but more generally, the findings raise the question of the status of the four basic explanatory processes behind the stereotypic and anti-stereotypic theories of gender related differences in leadership orientation and public service motivation. In the theory section the four processes were summarized in a biological, a formative, a life-long learning and a social influence model. It was argued that all four models could plausibly have significant impact on if and in which ways gender makes a difference for leadership and motivation. I suggest that a useful way to interpret these models are as social mechanisms whose significance are context dependent (Hedström and Swedberg 1998). For instance, while biological explanatory models may have significant impact on leadership orientation and motivation, the exact outcome of this impact may be totally dependent on the institutional context (for instance career system and type of welfare state) in which the biological mechanisms work.

Finally, some limitations of the analysis should be acknowledged. It is based on cross sectional survey data from 2008 and thus susceptible to two well-known weaknesses of this type of design. First, we don't know if the findings are stable over time since only one year has been examined. A replication of the study in future research is thus warranted. Second, we don't know if those associates working with the managers perceive the same gender related differences in leadership and motivation as reported by the managers. This could be remedied by supplementing the current study by a research design including other stakeholders working with the managers in for instance a 360 degree evaluation design (Brett and Atwater 2001).

## **Conclusion**

This article has examined if and why gender is significantly related to differences in leadership priorities and public service motivation by analyzing top managers in local government in Denmark. The findings show that gender has significant impact on some types of leadership orientation and public service motivation. Female top managers were found to be significantly less policy oriented, more task oriented, more change oriented and less motivated by a "commitment to the public interest" than their male colleagues. The analysis thus indicates that the demographical change which has been observed in many countries in recent decades in terms of an increased share of female top managers are likely to generate real changes in leadership practice.

The article has furthermore analyzed whether simple models based gender stereotypes can explain the gender related differences in leadership and public service motivation. The conclusion is that they cannot. The most likely reason is that the huge societal changes in gender relations in recent decades have meant that many of our classical theories are outworn. There is a need to rethink the theories in a new context with new gender relations.

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**Appendix 1: Index constructions for leadership and public service motivation (PSM)**

<i>Leadership index:</i> Every local government manager has to prioritise different tasks. Several managerial tasks are listed below. Please consider how much importance you attach to the task in your daily work. Indicate your response on a scale from 1 (no importance) to 5 (great importance).	
1. Leadership Index 1: Politics (alpha=0,68)	9. Advise the mayor in legal, financial and technical matters 10. Provide political advice for the mayor 12. Develop norms for the relations between politicians and administrators
2. Leadership index 2: Relations (alpha=0,62)	1. Solving personal problems and conflicts 4. Guide employees in their daily work 5. Knowing the views of the employees 25. Be a problem solver and handle urgent crises 26. Develop and improve the relations between the decentralised companies and institutions
3. Leadership Index 3: Tasks (alpha=0,74)	13. Influence the decision-making process to achieve rational and efficient solutions 15. Ensure efficient utilisation of resources 16. Ensure that political decisions are carried out loyally and quickly 17. Be informed about political signals 18. Inform subordinates about aims and plans
4. Leadership Index 4: Change (alpha=0,58)	2. Encourage cooperation between sector administrations 3. Prepare ideas and visions 6. Develop and implement new work routines and methods 20. Create the foundation for the efficient utilisation of modern technology 21. Solve problems by adapting the organisation
<i>PSM index:</i> Senior administration officials in the public sector have different understandings of and may be motivated by different aspects of their work. Please consider whether you agree or disagree with the statements below. (Scale from 1 totally disagree ... 3 Neutral ... 5 Totally agree)	
5. PSM index 1: "Attraction to public policy making" (alpha=0,75)	1. I generally consider politics positive 2. I find the political decision-making process interesting 3. In general, I have a good impression of politicians
6. PSM index 2: "Compassion" (alpha=0,57)	9. I become very emotional when I see people in need 10. Daily events often remind me of how much we depend on one another
7. PSM index 3: "Commitment to the public interest" (alpha=0,51)	4. I unselfishly contribute to the community 5. Meaningful public service is very important to me 6. I prefer that public officials act for the benefit of the community even though this may harm my personal interests