

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPES AND PERCEIVED MANAGERIAL PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS: EVIDENCE FROM GREECE

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ABSTRACT

Background - Although the number of women pursuing professional careers has grown quite rapidly in the last decades, women *remain* substantially *underrepresented* in upper-middle and senior management positions while the number of female CEOs in large corporations remains extremely low. Quite a number of theories attempting to explain this phenomenon appear in the literature, including lack of line experience, inadequate career opportunities, gender differences in socialization, the “old boy” network etc.

Alternative explanations involve gender-role and requisite management characteristics stereotyping by men and women. In this respect, seminal is the work of Helen Schein who in 1973 introduced a 92-item Index (Schein’s Descriptive Index) of human personality characteristics that was subsequently used to unveil gender-role and successful managers’ stereotypes; that is, determine genders’ perceptions of each other and managers with the view to developing adequate understanding of perceptual barriers limiting women’s progress towards occupying management positions. Schein’s (1973) research proposal was subsequently and up to the present day pursued by a number of researchers in quite a multitude of research settings (Brenner et al., 1989; de Pillis et al., 2008; Dodge et al., 1995; Schein et al., 1989; Orser 1994; Booysen and Nkomo 2010), albeit predominantly in, considered as egalitarian, protestant societies; despite this the pattern of reported results varied considerably.

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to pursue further the research stream originated by Schein (1973), this time on evidence from Greece that, culturally, reportedly stands quite apart from the protestant – egalitarian societies that so far have hosted studies reported in the literature. We examine the relationships between gender role stereotypes and perceptions of requisite characteristics of managerial personality.

Design/Methodology/Approach – This study is quantitative in nature. Data was collected through a research instrument that was built around Schein’s Descriptive Index (SDI) in two stages. Stage one was about collecting evidence on respondent’s perceptions of personality characteristics of managers while stage two dealt with collecting evidence on respondents’ own personality characteristics. Questionnaires were administered on-line to two separate samples of $n_1=134$ and $n_2=101$ respectively. All items, except demographics, were rated on identical 7-point Likert scales. Intra-class correlation coefficient (r') (Hays, 1963) was used to assess resemblance of stage one and stage two respondents’ responses across the 92 SDI items.

Results – Data analysis resulted in surprisingly unexpected findings. So much so, that a cultural paradox is unveiled. Contrary to, so far, reported in the literature findings on evidence mostly from egalitarian societies, our study resulted in findings indicating that: a) perceptions of managers’ personality characteristic between men and women are matching, b) the idea that managers should have masculine characteristics is rejected men and c) no differences between men and women exist in relation to identification of own personality characteristics.

Implications/Limitations – This study’s findings yield important implications to both academia and practice. In relation to academia the study adds to the literature on existing relationships between gender role stereotyping and perceptions of managerial personality characteristics. As regards practice the study unveils significant similarity of findings across genders leading to the conclusion that widely used terms such as “Think manager – Think male”, “Old Boys Club” etc. proved to be meaningless even though Greece is not considered as being among the most egalitarian societies in Europe and the world. Limitations of this study are certainly related to: a) drawing evidence from a convenience sample and b) surveying through the internet. However, due care was taken so that sampling bias was excluded.

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