

What Determines Leadership Style?

The Honors Program
Senior Capstone Project
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ABSTRACT

This project examines selected traits valued in friends by educated individuals, and it seeks to determine if these valued traits vary by gender, race, and generational cohort. A literature review reveals that variations in leadership attributes are evident among these traits. In order to test the broad applicability of this literature, data were taken from the General Social Survey (GSS). The key analyses center on correlations between gender, race, and cohort, on the one hand, and the selected valued traits identified with effective leadership on the other. In some cases, the literature yields weak hypotheses, and in other cases the research is solely exploratory.

According to leadership expert Peter Northouse, the personal traits of intelligence, integrity, and sociability are closely tied to effective leadership. This project examines the influence of gender, race, and cohort on how much these traits are valued.

The findings of this project have potential usefulness for organizations to better understand how these three leadership traits are associated with gender, race, and age—perhaps ultimately influencing how organizations train and view their managers.

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INTRODUCTION

I chose this project because leadership is a human phenomenon that penetrates all forms of social relationships. It is an essential ingredient in the success or failure of all organizations. It is a term that has many meanings as well as a multitude of definitions. As a management major, management and leadership styles have always been of interest to me. My original proposal was to conduct research and test a sample of women to determine if there is a correlation between a woman's ethnicity and her management style. As a diversity advocate, I thought it was important to study the differences in management style among women of different ethnic backgrounds. As I began to conduct research and collect data, I soon realized that my topic was much too specific and that in order to draw more comprehensive conclusions I would have to broaden the scope of my project. This was the first obstacle that I faced in completing this project. After researching many alternatives, I finally decided to expand my research to include both men and women, and to test differences in leadership traits by gender, race, and cohort.

The major objective of this project is to uncover how social background might explain differences in what is valued in leadership styles. In today's corporate America, there is a growing need for employers to understand and embrace diversity. This project seeks a better understanding of why differences exist in the level of importance placed on various leadership traits among individuals of different gender, race, and cohort. It is hoped that the conclusions gained from this research will provide organizations with a better understanding of individual differences rooted in social background. It is also hoped that my research will contribute to a broader knowledge of why diversity of leadership style exists, and what benefits and/or obstacles it has to offer.

Although a common definition of leadership is "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal," leadership has also been conceptualized in terms of acts or behaviors, power relationships, transformational processes, and more. For this study, I will examine leadership using the *trait approach* to leadership which conceptualizes leadership from a personality perspective.

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TRAIT APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

Many people believe that some people are born to be leaders while others are not. They assume that natural leaders are born having certain leadership traits. The trait approach to leadership suggests that select individuals have fundamental characteristics that differentiate them from nonleaders. These characteristics may include physical, personality, or ability factors.

The trait approach to leadership was one of the first attempts to study leadership and was explored throughout the twentieth century. Researchers sought to identify great leaders and determine what common traits were possessed among those leaders. Two important studies were conducted by R. M. Stogdill in 1948 and 1974. Between the two studies, Stogdill examined a total of 287 trait studies that were conducted between 1904 and 1970. His first study cited intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability as top characteristics of effective leaders. His second study identified ten additional characteristics including drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in social situations, self-confidence and sense of personal identity, willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other people's behavior, and capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand.

Another trait study was conducted by Lord, DeVader, and Alliger in 1986 using meta-analysis to determine what characteristics are most highly associated with leadership. This study identified intelligence, masculinity, and dominance as the top personality traits.

A study conducted by Kirkpatrick and Locke in 1991 contended that leaders are distinguished by six traits—drive, the desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business.

Lastly, Kouzes and Posner, authors of The Leadership Challenge, have administered their “Characteristics of Admired Leaders” survey to over seventy five thousand people around the globe since 1987 and update the findings continuously. Their research has found that honesty,

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forward-looking, inspiring, and competence are the most desired leadership traits across countries, cultures, ethnicities, organizational functions, gender, levels of education, and age groups. They have summarized these attributes in one word—*credibility*. According to these authors “credibility is the foundation of leadership” and they assert that follower “loyalty, commitment, energy, and productivity depend on it”. Table 1 below outlines the personal characteristics of leaders identified by each of the aforementioned studies on leadership traits.

Table 1: Leadership Trait Studies and Personal Characteristics

Stogdill (1948)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord et al. (1986)	Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991)	Kouzes & Posner (1987-2007)
Intelligence Alertness Insight Responsibility Initiative Persistence Self-Confidence Sociability	Achievement Persistence Insight Initiative Self-Confidence Responsibility Cooperativeness Tolerance Influence Sociability	Intelligence Masculinity Dominance	Drive Motivation Integrity Confidence Cognitive Ability Task Knowledge	Honesty Forward Looking Inspiring Competent Credibility

Overall, each of the various studies that have taken place during the past century propose a unique set of definitive leadership traits to serve as a benchmark for evaluating individuals on their leadership ability. Leadership expert Peter Northouse (2007) has investigated these studies to identify which attributes have consistently been ranked as determinants of leadership. He concludes that the majority of followers believe that a truly effective leader must possess the following five attributes:

- **Intelligence** – Having strong verbal ability, perceptual ability, and reasoning
- **Sociability** – Inclination to seek out pleasant social relationships
- Integrity – Honesty and trustworthiness
- Determination – Initiative, persistence, dominance, and drive
- Self-Confidence – Ability to be certain about one’s competencies and skills

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Leadership experts Kouzes and Posner assert that “what people most look for in a leader has been consistent over time.” With that said, it is fair to say that the above five traits serve as a dependable set benchmark for my analyses.

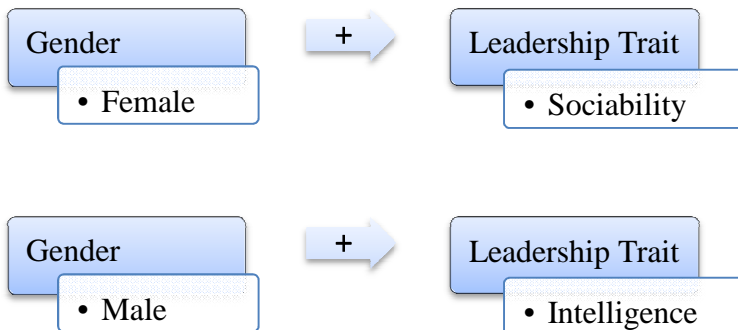
In sum, this study will analyze the influence of gender, ethnic background, and cohort on the likelihood of an individual to value two of the five leadership traits—intelligence and sociability (the choice of these two being dictated by available data). I am most concerned with the degree to which these traits vary by gender, race, and cohort.

HYPOTHESES, EXPLORATIONS, & INTERPRETATIONS

In this section I offer selected hypotheses and interpretations that this study will test. I also observe that in some instances no clear hypotheses can be made and thus our data analyses must be exploratory.

Gender

My prediction is that females will tend to place the highest emphasis on sociability as a leadership trait, while males will tend to place the highest emphasis on intelligence. The simple causal models are illustrated below:



Numerous studies have been conducted to explore the differences in personality, values, and behavior of men and women. I decided to test gender because it is a variable that is repeatedly examined in multiple disciplines including psychology, communication, education, and sociology. Although there is plenty of research concerning how men and women act and

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think differently as individuals, the purpose of this study is to determine whether they differ in their valuing of selected personality attributes.

Author Nichole Cundiff (2007) attests to the importance of studying gender inequality prior to analyzing the differences in leadership style among men and women. She explains that the differences in male and female leadership arise from different circumstances. Women have put forth great effort in order to obtain a more equal role in the workplace since the 1950's. Since then, the number of women in the workforce has been steadily climbing, and it now comprises 51.8% of the total workforce. Furthermore, women have surpassed men in earning college degrees. Despite these accomplishments, only 4% of top executives are women (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Many researchers have examined this discrepancy and concluded that it is caused by a glass ceiling, which is “an invisible barrier that exists for women and minorities due to unconscious bias that emerges from prescribed social roles and expectations.” Gender bias is illustrated in perceptions of leadership, even when men and women exhibit similar behavior and participation levels.

Additional research examining the barriers preventing women from holding executive positions illustrates a “think-manager-think-male” phenomenon (Schein, 2001). Schein conducted studies in the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, China, and Japan to assess typical male attributes, typical female attributes, and typical manager attributes. Respondents throughout the world rated typical male attributes similar to managerial attributes; while typical female attributes were dissimilar to managerial attributes. Although the association of typical female traits with managerial traits is growing, women still have a long way to go.

In another study, researchers Eagly and Johnson (1990) examined conflicting sides of the topic on gender differences and similarities in leadership traits. These studies explored whether organizational culture weakens the effects of gender roles on organizational leaders, or if gender roles do in fact impact leadership style. Prior to conducting their study, previous studies had found evidence of both theories. Some found that gender differences do not impact leadership style. Instead leaders, regardless of sex, are socialized to meet the demands

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of follower roles and expectations. The opposing view found that sex differences in leadership styles did exist, and offered examples of ingrained personality differences as well as differences in behavioral expectations.

In order to address this contradiction, Eagly and Johnson conducted a meta-analysis on 162 of these studies to get a better understanding of how laboratory and natural settings impacted the results of the studies. Overall, they concluded that leadership styles were slightly gender stereotypic, and that there were stereotypic differences among the interpersonal styles of men and women. Women tended to be more interpersonal while men tend to be more autocratic. In short, this study established that males and females have some differences in leadership style.

“Social role theory of leadership portrays a difference between male and female leadership styles due to congruence with the roles they are expected to enact” (Eagly & Karau, 2002). It provides a rationale for the differences and similarities of men and women’s leadership styles; in which both genders exhibit leadership traits that are consistent with their gender role. Eagly and Karau (2002) examined the likelihood of men and women to display the traits of each of the three prominent leadership styles:

- Transformational
- Transactional
- Laissez-Faire

Leadership expert Peter Northouse (2006) defines transformational leadership as the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in the leader and the follower. Transformational leaders are attentive to the needs and motives of their followers. They enable them to reach their full potential, are concerned for greater good, and they emphasize emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long term goals. They are also committed to satisfying their followers’ needs. This involves an “exceptional form of influence” that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. Transformational leaders often incorporate charismatic and visionary leadership.

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Northouse defines transactional leadership in terms of the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers. A transactional leader does not individualize the needs of subordinates or focus on their personal development. This leader exchanges things of value with subordinates to advance their own and their subordinates' agendas. They are influential only because it is in the best interest of subordinates to do what the leader wants.

Lastly, Northouse defines laissez-Faire leadership as the absence of leadership; it is a "hands off" approach in which the leader hands over responsibility, delays decisions, offers little feedback, and makes little effort to satisfy follower needs or help followers grow.

Eagly and Karau (2002) found that women tend to be higher than men on three of five characteristics of transformational leadership. These traits include idealized influence attributes, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. Women also surpass men in one characteristic of transactional leadership which was contingent reward. Men, on the other hand, tend to exceed women in laissez-faire leadership styles.

Eagly and Karau used role congruity to explain the differences in the leadership styles of men and women. Leadership roles are viewed as having more male dominant characteristics and are inconsistent with female characteristics. This causes women's performance to be viewed as inadequate. They conclude that attitudes toward women leaders are less favorable than men leaders; women have less access to leadership roles; and women face more difficulty becoming successful once they are in a leadership position. These conclusions offer insight as to how prejudice towards women in leadership positions could be the reason that few women are found in top leadership roles to this day. In another study by Eagly and Karau (1991), men emerged as leaders in short-term groups and in groups carrying out some specific tasks, whereas women emerged as social leaders.

Morrison et al. (2008) confirm the conclusion of previous research that males are more rational, assertive, and direct, while females are more sensitive, warm, and tactful. Similarly, several studies have identified males as being more autocratic and task-oriented while females are more nurturing and democratic. In addition, both males and females perceive female leaders as being more adept at mentoring, fostering trust, building positive working

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relationships, and motivating others to be creative. Table 2, which has been adapted from Grisoni and Beeby (2003), highlights the different skill sets possessed of men vs. women.

Table 2: Gender-Specific Leadership Skill Sets (Grisoni & Beeby, 2003)

	Women's Skill Sets	Men's Skill Sets
Skill Set 1:	Empathizing, appraising, performance, listening, motivating others	Interviewing, disciplining staff, managing conflict, counseling others
Skill Set 2:	Team building, interviewing, negotiating	Decision-making, problem solving, negotiating, running meetings
Skill Set 3:	Leading change, managing conflict, running meetings, counseling others	Communicating verbally, empathizing, listening

A more recent study, by the marketing research firm RapLeaf (2008), examined approximately 30 million social networkers on various social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster, Hi5, LiveJournal, Flickr, and more. The study found that there are more women than men subscribed to social networks, and on average women have more “friends”—although men tend to be more focused on acquiring “friends.” Women are also more focused on building relationships than men.

Eighty percent of the sample was comprised of “Social Networkers,” which are operationally defined as individuals having 1-100 friends. Women were more likely to be “Social Networkers” than men. Nineteen percent of the sample consisted of “Connectors,” which are those individuals having 100-1000 friends. Women were more likely to be “Connectors” than men. Less than one percent of the sample consisted of “Super Connectors,” which are those individuals having 1,000-10,000 friends. Men were more likely to be “Super Connectors” than women. Lastly, less than one percent of the sample consisted of “Uber Connectors,” which are those individuals with more than 10,000 friends. Men were more likely to be “Uber Connectors” than women. Overall, the Rapleaf study theorized that “women are spending more time on social networks building and nurturing relationships, whereas men are likely spending more time acquiring relationships (a transactional approach) than nurturing them.” Table 3 presents a summary of these findings.

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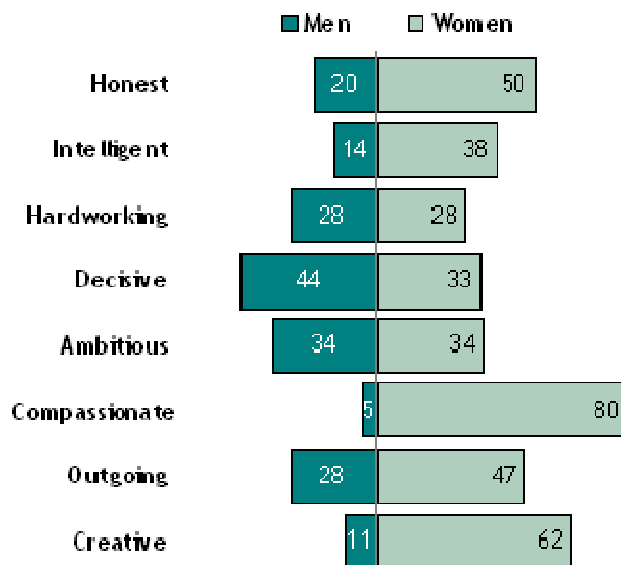
Table 3: Social-Network Women vs. Men (2008 RapLeaf Study)

	Women			Men		
	Count	%	Avg.	Count	%	Avg.
1 friend	3,477,849	21.12%		3,139,918	22.00%	
2-5 friends	3,127,321	18.99%		2,904,458	20.35%	
6-10 friends	1,506,900	9.15%		1,306,375	9.15%	
11-20 friends	1,452,552	8.82%		1,266,455	8.87%	
21-30 friends	809,235	4.91%		703,960	4.93%	
31-40 friends	583,339	3.54%		499,574	3.50%	
41-50 friends	469,606	2.85%		396,328	2.78%	
50-100 friends	1,593,346	9.68%		1,303,557	9.13%	
100-1,000 friends	3,336,626	20.26%		2,655,297	18.60%	
1-100 friends (Social Network)	13,020,148	79.07%	62	11,520,625	80.72%	57
101-1,000 friends (Connectors)	3,336,626	20.26%	185	2,655,297	18.60%	172
1,001-10,000 friends (Super Connectors)	107,062	0.65%	1837	93,676	0.66%	1944
10,000+ friends (Uber Connectors)	1,989	0.01%	24077	2,371	0.02%	24584
At least 1 friend	16,465,825	100.00%	81	14,271,969	100.00%	78

While all of the above research indicates that the personality traits possessed by women are less valued than the personality traits possessed by men when it comes to rating leadership effectiveness, a survey distributed to 2,250 adults by Pew Research Center discovered a paradox in public attitudes. The study found that most Americans, both male and female, believe women are superior to men when it comes to most character traits that are valued in leaders. The survey asked respondents whether eight traits were more true of men or women. Public perception was that women outperform men in seven out of the eight categories—honesty, intelligence, work ethic, ambition, compassion, outgoingness, and creativity. The only trait in which men outperformed women was decisiveness. Figure 1 presents a summary of the Pew findings.

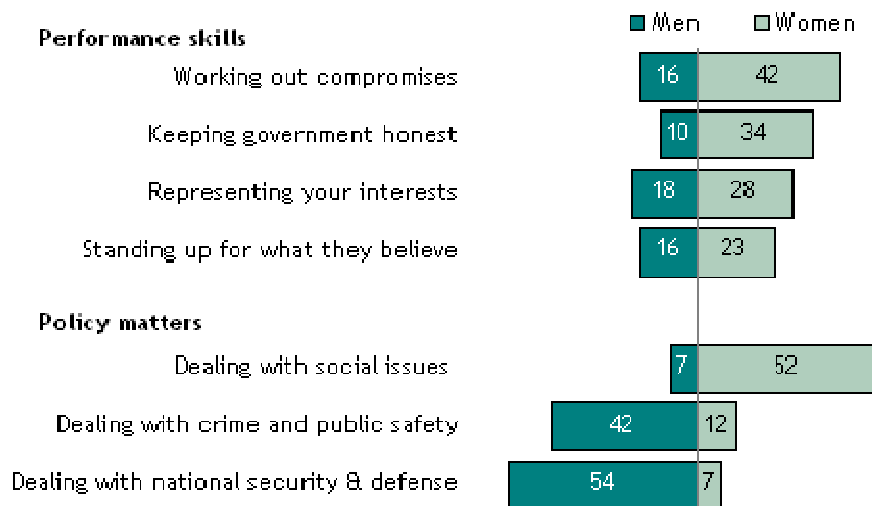
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Figure 1: Leadership Traits (Pew Research Center, 2008)



A second question asked whether men or women in public office were better at particular performance skills and policy matters. Public perception was that women outperform men in regards to performance skills, yet men outperform women in dealing with policy matters. When it came to performance skills, women are better at working out compromises, keeping government honest, representing interests of their constituents, and standing up for what they believe. In regard to policy matters, women are better at dealing with social issues, however men are better at dealing with crime and public safety—as well as national security and defense. Figure 2 summarizes these findings.

Figure 2: Are Men and Women in Public Office Better At... (Pew Research Center, 2008)



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Despite public opinion asserting that leadership traits are more characteristic of women and that women have better performance skills, the majority of Americans still think that men are better political leaders than women. Only 6% of the respondents in this study thought that women make better political leaders. Twenty-one percent of respondents felt that men would make a better leader, and 69% of respondents answered that men and women are equally effective political leaders (4% responded “don’t know”). This further illustrates the glass ceiling that prevents women from excelling, not only in corporate America, but in the political environment as well.

In sum, the above research reveals that men and women indeed have different leadership traits. Moreover, the overall pattern of findings in these studies support my hypothesis that women should be more inclined to emphasize sociability, while men should be more inclined to emphasize intelligence. The Morrison et al. (2008) study found that female leaders are more adept at mentoring, fostering trust, building positive working relationships, and motivating others—all characteristics of sociability. Furthermore, the Grisoni and Beeby (2008) study found that male leaders are more adept at decision-making, problem-solving, negotiating, and communicating verbally—all of which are associated with intelligence.

Adding Race into the Mix

Like gender, race is another fundamental component of diversity. In fact, although diversity comprises many factors, race and ethnicity are usually the first that come to mind. Changing demographics demonstrate that 18.7 % of the total U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home. By the year 2050, non-Hispanics will comprise only 50% of the population. Hispanics/Latinos will make up 25% of the U.S. population, African American 14.5%, Asian American 8%, and all other races at 5%. Organizations can no longer ignore diversity (Benton, 2007).

Because there is little research on the relationship between race and ethnicity with leadership style, this phase of my project is exploratory. It seems obvious that cultural differences would influence leadership styles, norms, role expectations, and traditions governing the relationship among various members of society. Moreover, cultural differences are strong determinants of

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effective leadership behavior in a society (Fatehi, 1996). Fatehi argues that “what constitutes a good leader in one culture may not constitute a good leader in other cultures.” He points out that although the United States would prefer democratic leaders who seek input from subordinates, other cultures would view this as incompetence. Fatehi explains that many other cultures prefer leadership that is decisive and takes charge of the situation. Consequently, culture-specific leadership traits may affect the way members of a society view leadership style and ability.

As observed by Hanges, Lord, and Dickenson (2000), “since cultural meaning patterns are well established, they serve as a frame that partially activates (or inhibits) specific traits associated with leadership, making them more (or less) likely to be used in defining leadership.”

More particular to my project, I am assuming that there are subcultural differences between whites and Nonwhites in the United States, further that these differences might be reflected in the degree to which the personal traits under study here are emphasized. And, finally, that race differences may well interact with gender in the emphasis of leadership traits.

Generational Cohort

My prediction is that the Generation X cohort will tend to place the highest importance on Sociability. The simple causal model is illustrated below:



The research is unclear as to how we would predict the importance given to intelligence. If anything, we would predict little to no difference as noted by authors Vanessa Winzenburg and Ron Magnus (2005) who claim that we should avoid judging the intellect of members of each of the generational cohorts. Author Anne Houlihan (2009) attests that Gen Xers, those born between 1965 and 1980, place much more importance sociability and work/life balance than prior age cohorts. In her article “From Baby Boomers to Gen-X: An Evolution of Leadership Style” she states that,

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“For many years, those in the Baby Boomer generation have held the reins in most companies, leading the Generation X workers in the day-to-day activities. However, with the members of the Boomer generation ranging in age from 44 to 62 now, in just three short years the oldest of the Boomers will start exiting the workforce. And as the years tick by, more and more Boomers will be retiring, leaving the leadership reigns in many companies up for grabs.

What does this mean for Gen-Xers? Namely that they’ll be moving into leadership positions rapidly. In doing so, though, they’ll not only be leading their fellow Gen-Xers and the younger Millennial workers, but they’ll also be leading Baby Boomers and possibly some older workers from the veteran generation who are still in the workplace. It’s a leadership transition the likes of which corporate America has never seen before due to the stark differences in values between the two dominant generations.

At the same time, you need to remember that business and society in general are changing, so it’s only natural that the next generation’s leadership style will change as well. In other words, Gen-Xers are not going to lead the way the Boomers did. They’re working in a different economy and business model, and they have different values and experiences that they bring to the table. So, you need to look at the future leadership of corporate America in a different light... [Among these is the] high value on life balance. As such, they tend to get the job done and leave at 5 o’clock. Older workers, on the other hand, believe in working late. In their view, the more hours you put in, the more loyal and productive you are. The moral here is to not be surprised when the new Gen-X leader refuses to put in 15-hour days on a regular basis. And even though Gen-Xers tend to work only eight- or nine-hour days, they still get the job done because they value results rather than hours. Additionally, they grew up with technology and are comfortable using it. As

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such, they are always looking for the quickest way to do something.”(Houlihan, 2008)

METHODOLOGY

Sample

My original intention for this project was to distribute a survey to associates at my current employer, MetLife Auto & Home, and analyze the survey results in search of any correlations that might exist. In late October, I received approval from the Human Resources Department to go forward with distributing the letter that I written and survey that I created via e-mail to employees throughout the MetLife Enterprise (See Appendix for letter and survey).

Unfortunately, I was later notified that the Legal Department would not authorize the distribution of my survey because the company’s e-mail policy states that “all information stored, transmitted, received or contained in MetLife's e-mail system is MetLife's sole property and may be accessed and decrypted by MetLife at any time.” It was determined that the use of e-mail for this project would not be consistent with a business purpose and therefore I could not proceed as I had intended.

My faculty advisor and I decided to use data collected by the General Social Survey (GSS) to overcome this obstacle. The GSS “conducts basic scientific research on the structure and development of American society with a data-collection program designed to monitor social change within the United States” (General Social Survey, 2009). Furthermore, the GSS “contains a standard 'core' of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal questions, plus topics of special interest” (General Social Survey, 2009). Overall, the GSS is a well-known scientific sample of the U.S. population that is universally respected by social scientists. Having tracked the opinions of Americans over the last four decades, we found that the GSS contained useful data for testing the relationships that I have chosen to analyze for this project.

The data are for all individuals participating in the 1993 GSS and include only those individuals that have completed at least one year of college—with the assumption being that

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these individuals are more likely to work in a professional atmosphere and have had more leadership experiences.

Measurements

The GSS provides no direct measurements of personality traits related to leadership style. The 1993 GSS, however, does contain a question that provides a good proxy and taps into the personal traits valued by individuals. More specifically, item #476 states: “I’m going to read seven qualities one might look for in a personal friend. All of the qualities may be desirable ones for a personal friend, but I’m interested in those that are most important to you.” The seven qualities that respondents could select from include a) creative, b) cultured, c) dynamic, d) fun-loving, e) honest, f) intelligent, and g) responsible.

I recoded the original seven response choices to item #476 to three: *Very Important* (original GSS responses of Extremely Important/Very Important), *Fairly Important* (original GSS response of Fairly Important), and *Less Important* (original GSS responses of Not Too Important; Not At All; Don’t Know; No Answer).

Using this sample, I analyzed the influence of gender, race, and cohort on the likelihood of an individual to value two of the five leadership traits identified by Peter Northouse—intelligence and sociability. In order to do so, I will assume that those who responded that d) fun-loving was an important characteristic value *sociability*; and those who responded that f) intelligent was an important characteristic value *intelligence*. (I originally wanted to also use the “Honest” quality, but because there was no variability in this variable—that is 99% of the respondents said it was “Very Important” to them—I could not use it.)

Regarding my three key independent variables, I recoded the GSS **Race** variable as *White* (original GSS response of White), and *Nonwhite* (original GSS responses of Black or Other). I recoded **Age** to reflect operational definition of the three cohorts discussed in the literature: *Traditionalist* (original GSS responses of age 48 and above), *Boomers* (original GSS responses of age 29-47), and *Gen X* (original GSS responses of age 17-28). (Recall that the study year is 1993).

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The GSS data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). The key data analysis procedure used was crosstabulation; to determine statistical significance the Chi-Square statistic was calculated for each crosstab.

FINDINGS

Formal Hypotheses

I first tested the hypotheses for gender. Tables 4 and 5 present the findings for these tests. (Note that all data in this paper have been percentaged by the column, and thus percentages should be compared across the row. Also note that I will focus the discussion for this paper on the first row—“Very Important.”)

Table 4: Sociability by Gender

			Gender		Total
			MALE	FEMALE	
Sociability	Very Important	Count	236	314	550
		% within Gender	65.4%	70.7%	68.3%
	Fairly Important	Count	108	111	219
		% within Gender	29.9%	25.0%	27.2%
	Less Important	Count	17	19	36
		% within Gender	4.7%	4.3%	4.5%
Total		Count	361	444	805
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 2.7, sig. = .261$

Prediction: Females are more likely to be in the “Very Important” row.

Finding: Weakly confirmatory (though statistically not significant), e.g. females have a 5.3% greater chance of being in the “Very Important” row.

Table 5: Intelligence by Gender

			Gender		Total
			MALE	FEMALE	

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Intelligence	Very Important	Count	178	231	409
		% within Gender	49.3%	52.0%	50.8%
	Fairly Important	Count	136	157	293
		% within Gender	37.7%	35.4%	36.4%
	Less Important	Count	47	56	103
		% within Gender	13.0%	12.6%	12.8%
Total		Count	361	444	805
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 0.61$, sig. = .738

Prediction: Males are more likely to be in the “Very Important” row.

Finding: Nonconfirmatory, e.g. females have a 2.7% greater chance of being in the “Very Important” row.

Next, I tested the hypothesis for age cohort. Table 6 presents the finding of this test.

Table 6: Sociability by Cohort

			Age Cohort			
			17-28 GenX	29-47 Boomers	48+ Traditionalists	Total
Sociability	Very Important	Count	119	260	171	550
		% within Age	80.4%	65.3%	66.0%	68.3%
	Fairly Important	Count	27	120	72	219
		% within Age	18.2%	30.2%	27.8%	27.2%
	Less Important	Count	2	18	16	36
		% within Age	1.4%	4.5%	6.2%	4.5%
Total		Count	148	398	259	805
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 14.5$, sig. = .006

Prediction: GenXers are more likely to be in the “Very Important” row.

Finding: Strongly confirmatory, e.g., GenXers have a 14.4% greater chance of being in the “Very Important” row compared to Traditionalists, and a 15.1% greater chance compared to Baby Boomers.

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Table 6 gives us the first indication that it is important to look at social background characteristics when seeking to understand the importance given to personality traits. Clearly, as predicted by the literature review, the Gen Xers are much more likely to value sociability.

Exploratory Analyses

Tables 7, 8, and 9 present findings developed from my exploratory analyses. I began by testing the relationships between Race and Sociability and Race and Intelligence, followed by Cohort and Intelligence.

Table 7: Sociability by Race

			Race		Total
			White	Nonwhite	
Sociability	Very Important	Count	469	81	550
		% within Race	68.0%	70.4%	68.3%
	Fairly Important	Count	188	31	219
		% within Race	27.2%	27.0%	27.2%
	Less Important	Count	33	3	36
		% within Race	4.8%	2.6%	4.5%
Total	Count	690	115	805	
	% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$X^2 = 0.1, sig. = .568$

Prediction: *Exploratory.*

Finding: Nonwhites have an insignificant 2.4% greater chance of being in the “Very Important” row.

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Table 8: Intelligence by Race

			Race		
			White	Nonwhite	Total
Intelligence	Very Important	Count	337	72	409
		% within Race	48.8%	62.6%	50.8%
	Fairly Important	Count	264	29	293
		% within Race	38.3%	25.2%	36.4%
	Less Important	Count	89	14	103
		% within Race	12.9%	12.2%	12.8%
Total	Count	690	115	805	
	% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$X^2 = 8.3$, sig. = .016

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: Nonwhites have a highly significant 13.8% greater chance of being in the “Very Important” row.

Table 9: Intelligence by Cohort

			Cohort			Total
			17-28 GenX	29-47 Boomers	48+ Traditionalists	
Intelligence	Very Important	Count	73	194	142	409
		% within Age	49.3%	48.7%	54.8%	50.8%
	Fairly Important	Count	57	149	87	293
		% within Age	38.5%	37.4%	33.6%	36.4%
	Less Important	Count	18	55	30	103
		% within Age	12.2%	13.8%	11.6%	12.8%
Total	Count	148	398	259	805	
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$X^2 = 14.5$, sig. = .006

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: Traditionalists have a (significant) 5.5% greater chance of being in the “Very Important” row compared to GenXers, and a 6.1% greater chance compared to Boomers.

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Table 9 embellishes what we found in Table 6 that for the younger generation sociability tends to be given more importance than intelligence.

Next I reanalyzed the relationships between Gender and Sociability and Gender and Intelligence controlling for Race.

Table 10: Sociability by Gender, Controlling for Race

Race				Gender		Total
				MALE	FEMALE	
Nonwhite	Sociability	Very Important	Count	32	49	81
			% within Gender	71.1%	70.0%	70.4%
	Fairly Important	Count	12	19	31	
		% within Gender	26.7%	27.1%	27.0%	
	Less Important	Count	1	2	3	
		% within Gender	2.2%	2.9%	2.6%	
	Total	Count	45	70	115	
% within Gender		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
White	Sociability	Very Important	Count	204	265	469
			% within Gender	64.6%	70.9%	68.0%
	Fairly Important	Count	96	92	188	
		% within Gender	30.4%	24.6%	27.2%	
	Less Important	Count	16	17	33	
		% within Gender	5.1%	4.5%	4.8%	
	Total	Count	316	374	690	

(Nonwhite) $X^2 = .05$, sig. = .976

(White) $X^2 = 3.2$, sig. = .202

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: For Nonwhites, the original (though very weak) positive correlation between gender (female) and sociability disappears, while for Whites it strengthens slightly from a 5.3% difference between females and males to a 6.3% (though statistically insignificant) difference. Moreover, Nonwhite men have a 6.5% greater chance of being in the “Very Important” row, compared to white men.

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Table 11: Intelligence by Gender Controlling for Race Cross Tabulation

Race				Gender		Total
				MALE	FEMALE	
Nonwhite	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	26	46	72
			% within Gender	57.8%	65.7%	62.6%
	Fairly Important	Count	11	18	29	
		% within Gender	24.4%	25.7%	25.2%	
	Less Important	Count	8	6	14	
		% within Gender	17.8%	8.6%	12.2%	
	Total	Count	45	70	115	
% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
White	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	152	185	337
			% within Gender	48.1%	49.5%	48.8%
	Fairly Important	Count	125	139	264	
		% within Gender	39.6%	37.2%	38.3%	
	Less Important	Count	39	50	89	
		% within Gender	12.3%	13.4%	12.9%	
	Total	Count	316	374	690	
% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

(Nonwhite) $X^2 = 2.20$, sig. = .333

(White) $X^2 = 0.461$ sig. = .794

Prediction: *Exploratory.*

Finding: For Nonwhites, the original (though very weak) positive relationship between gender (female) and intelligence strengthens from a 2.7% difference to a 7.9% difference while for Whites the relationship disappears.

Table 11, like Tables 6 and 9, gives strong evidence of the importance of looking at social background characteristics in trying to predict what personality traits are most valued in people. More specifically, Nonwhites, regardless of gender, are much more likely to value intelligence than are whites. Interestingly, black females are most likely to value intelligence, while white males are least likely to value intelligence (with a 17.6% difference in considering Intelligence to be “Very Important.”)

Next I reanalyzed the relationships between Cohort and Sociability and Cohort and Intelligence controlling for race. Tables 12 and 13 present these findings.

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Table 12: Sociability by Cohort Controlling for Race

Race				Cohort			Total
				17-28 GenX	29-47 Boomers	48+ Traditionalists	
Nonwhite	Sociability	Very Important	Count	17	45	19	81
			% within Age	81.0%	64.3%	79.2%	70.4%
	Fairly Important	Count	4	22	5	31	
		% within Age	19.0%	31.4%	20.8%	27.0%	
	Less Important	Count	0	3	0	3	
		% within Age	.0%	4.3%	.0%	2.6%	
	Total	Count	21	70	24	115	
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
White	Sociability	Very Important	Count	102	215	152	469
			% within Age	80.3%	65.5%	64.7%	68.0%
	Fairly Important	Count	23	98	67	188	
		% within Age	18.1%	29.9%	28.5%	27.2%	
	Less Important	Count	2	15	16	33	
		% within Age	1.6%	4.6%	6.8%	4.8%	
	Total	Count	127	328	235	690	
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

(Nonwhite) $X^2 = 4.2$, sig. = .333

(White) $X^2 = 13.1$ sig. = .011

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: The original positive relationship between cohort (GenX) and sociability maintained itself between Gen Xers and Baby Boomers for both Nonwhites and whites. An important observation is that for Traditionalists, Nonwhites were 14.5% more likely to be in the “Very Important” row. That difference disappears for Gen Xers and Baby Boomers.

Table 12 once again reemphasizes the importance of considering social background characteristics while trying to understand what personality traits are most valued. More particularly, note the large difference between Nonwhite traditionalists and white traditionalists (the percentage difference between these two in considering sociability to be “Very Important” being 14.5%).

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Table 13: Intelligence by Cohort Controlling for Race

Race				Cohort			Total
				17-28 GenX	29-47 Boomers	48+ Traditionalists	
Nonwhite	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	11	45	16	72
			% within Age	52.4%	64.3%	66.7%	62.6%
	Fairly Important	Count	6	16	7	29	
		% within Age	28.6%	22.9%	29.2%	25.2%	
	Less Important	Count	4	9	1	14	
		% within Age	19.0%	12.9%	4.2%	12.2%	
	Total	Count	21	70	24	115	
% within Age		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
White	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	62	149	126	337
			% within Age	48.8%	45.4%	53.6%	48.8%
	Fairly Important	Count	51	133	80	264	
		% within Age	40.2%	40.5%	34.0%	38.3%	
	Less Important	Count	14	46	29	89	
		% within Age	11.0%	14.0%	12.3%	12.9%	
	Total	Count	127	328	235	690	
% within Age		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

(Nonwhite) $X^2 = 2.9$, sig. = .567

(White) $X^2 = 4.3$ sig. = .371

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: For Nonwhites, the original positive relationship between Cohort (Traditionalists) and Intelligence strengthens from 6.1% difference between Traditionalists and Gen Xers to 14.3%. For Whites, this relationship weakens slightly from 6.1% to 4.8%. Furthermore, it is important to note that for every age cohort Nonwhites value Intelligence more than Whites, although the difference has weakened from 18.9% for Baby Boomers to 3.6% for Gen Xers.

Once again we find the importance of age and race in predicting personality traits. Next I reanalyzed the relationships between Cohort and Sociability and Cohort and Intelligence controlling for Gender. Tables 14 and 15 present these findings.

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Table 14: Sociability by Cohort Controlling for Gender

Gender				Cohort			Total	
				17-28 GenX	29-47 Boomers	48+ Traditionalists		
FEMALE	Sociability	Very Important	Count	65	145	104	314	
			% within Age	82.3%	67.8%	68.9%	70.7%	
		Fairly Important	Count	13	59	39	111	
			% within Age	16.5%	27.6%	25.8%	25.0%	
		Less Important	Count	1	10	8	19	
			% within Age	1.3%	4.7%	5.3%	4.3%	
	Total		Count	79	214	151	444	
			% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	MALE	Sociability	Very Important	Count	54	115	67	236
				% within Age	78.3%	62.5%	62.0%	65.4%
		Fairly Important	Count	14	61	33	108	
			% within Age	20.3%	33.2%	30.6%	29.9%	
		Less Important	Count	1	8	8	17	
			% within Age	1.4%	4.3%	7.4%	4.7%	
Total			Count	69	184	108	361	
			% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

(Female) $X^2 = 6.9$, sig. = .143

(Male) $X^2 = 8.24$ sig. = .083

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: For Females and Males, the original positive relationship between Cohort (Gen X) and Sociability has maintained itself. Furthermore, for every age cohort, females value sociability more than males. Moreover, the relationship between gender and sociability is sturdier than the relationship between race and cohort.

Once more we see the importance of social background; with the extremes here being GenX Females versus Traditionalist Males (with a 22.3% difference between these two in valuing Sociability).

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Table 15: Intelligence by Cohort Controlling for Gender

Gender				Cohort			Total
				17-28 GenX	29-47 Boomers	48+ Traditionalists	
FEMALE	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	33	107	91	231
			% within Age	41.8%	50.0%	60.3%	52.0%
	Fairly Important	Count	36	76	45	157	
		% within Age	45.6%	35.5%	29.8%	35.4%	
	Less Important	Count	10	31	15	56	
		% within Age	12.7%	14.5%	9.9%	12.6%	
	Total	Count	79	214	151	444	
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
MALE	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	40	87	51	178
			% within Age	58.0%	47.3%	47.2%	49.3%
	Fairly Important	Count	21	73	42	136	
		% within Age	30.4%	39.7%	38.9%	37.7%	
	Less Important	Count	8	24	15	47	
		% within Age	11.6%	13.0%	13.9%	13.0%	
	Total	Count	69	184	108	361	
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

(Female) $X^2 = 8.8$, sig. = .065

(Male) $X^2 = 2.7$ sig. = .615

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: For Females, the original positive relationship between cohort (Traditionalists) and Intelligence has strengthened significantly from a 6.1% difference between Traditionalists and Gen Xers to 16.3%. For Males, the original relationship HAS NOT maintained itself. Indeed, the relationship actually changed directions and changed from a +6.1% difference to a -10.8% difference.

The lesson: Social background cannot be ignored.

Lastly, we reanalyzed the relationships between Race and Sociability and Race and Intelligence controlling for Gender. Tables 16 and 17 present these findings.

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Table 16: Sociability by Race Controlling for Gender

Gender				Race		Total
				White	Nonwhite	
FEMALE	Sociability	Very Important	Count	265	49	314
			% within Race	70.9%	70.0%	70.7%
		Fairly Important	Count	92	19	111
			% within Race	24.6%	27.1%	25.0%
		Less Important	Count	17	2	19
			% within Race	4.5%	2.9%	4.3%
	Total		Count	374	70	444
			% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
MALE	Sociability	Very Important	Count	204	32	236
			% within Race	64.6%	71.1%	65.4%
		Fairly Important	Count	96	12	108
			% within Race	30.4%	26.7%	29.9%
		Less Important	Count	16	1	17
			% within Race	5.1%	2.2%	4.7%
	Total		Count	316	45	361
			% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(Female) $X^2 = 0.6$, sig. = .759

(Male) $X^2 = 1.1$ sig. = .572

Prediction: *Exploratory*.

Finding: For Females, the original (though very weak) positive relationship between Race (Nonwhite) and Sociability disappears completely. For Males, this relationship strengthens from 2.4% to 6.5%.

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Table 17: Intelligence by Race Controlling for Gender

Gender				Race		Total
				White	Nonwhite	
FEMALE	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	185	46	231
			% within Race	49.5%	65.7%	52.0%
	Fairly Important	Count	139	18	157	
		% within Race	37.2%	25.7%	35.4%	
	Less Important	Count	50	6	56	
		% within Race	13.4%	8.6%	12.6%	
	Total	Count	374	70	444	
		% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
MALE	Intelligence	Very Important	Count	152	26	178
			% within Race	48.1%	57.8%	49.3%
	Fairly Important	Count	125	11	136	
		% within Race	39.6%	24.4%	37.7%	
	Less Important	Count	39	8	47	
		% within Race	12.3%	17.8%	13.0%	
	Total	Count	316	45	361	
		% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

(Female) $X^2 = 6.3$, sig. = .004

(Male) $X^2 = 4.0$ sig. = .133

Prediction: *Exploratory.*

Finding: For Females, the original positive relationship between Race (Nonwhite) and Intelligence strengthens slightly from a 13.8% difference to 16.2%. For Males, this relationship weakens slightly from a 13.8% difference to 9.7%. Nonwhite females are most likely to value intelligence, followed by Nonwhite males.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Relationship between Gender and the Importance of Personality Traits

As predicted, females were more likely to feel that sociability is very important as a personal trait. However, the difference between females and males on this trait was statistically insignificant. My prediction regarding the relationship between gender and intelligence was nonconfirmatory. I had hypothesized that males would place more emphasis on intelligence as

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a personal trait, and the findings were opposite. Females were slightly more likely to value intelligence than men.

We further investigated the relationship between gender and sociability and gender and intelligence by controlling for race. When race was added into the mix the positive relationship between gender (female) and sociability disappeared for Nonwhites and strengthened slightly for Whites. For Nonwhites, sociability was equally important for both males and females. This leads to me conclude that Nonwhite males value sociability more than white males, and would therefore emphasize the importance of sociability skills among leaders more than White males. The positive relationship between gender (female) and intelligence, on the other hand, strengthened for Nonwhites and disappeared for whites. For whites, intelligence was equally important for both males and females. For Nonwhites, the relationship strengthened considerably. Furthermore, while intelligence was equally important to both white and Nonwhite females, Nonwhite males were more 6.5% likely to value intelligence than white males.

Relationship between Race and the Importance of Personality Traits

We explored the relationships between race and sociability and race and intelligence to determine if any correlations existed. We found that Nonwhites are slightly more likely to value sociability and significantly more likely to value intelligence compared to whites. One would wonder why Nonwhites value intelligence more than whites. Recall that the respondents for this study were individuals with at least one year of college. Therefore they are likely to be in the middle class.

It has been estimated that the median income of African Americans is approximately 55% that of Whites, or European Americans. According to sociologist Gregg Carter, “we might expect whites to have higher incomes because they have faced less current and historical discrimination in the labor force. In addition, many good jobs are acquired through ‘connections,’ and because whites have historically been more likely to hold higher prestige jobs, they have an “inside advantage denied to blacks” (Carter , 2004 p. 70). Therefore, blacks that have risen to middle class want to exhibit their standard of living. Sociologist Elijah

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Anderson explains this trend in his book Code of the Street (1994). He describes how blacks in the middle class exert much more effort to reflect their success compared to whites. For blacks, it's a bigger deal to have gone to college. Therefore, they are more sensitive to the issue of intelligence and are likely to want to emphasize their intelligence.

We further examined the relationships of Race and Sociability and Race and Intelligence by controlling for gender. The positive relationship between Race (Nonwhite) and Sociability disappeared completely for females and strengthened for males. This is consistent with the above finding that Nonwhite males value sociability more than white males, while females, both white and Nonwhite, place equal emphasis on sociability. The positive relationship between race (Nonwhite) and intelligence strengthened for females and weakened for males. Nonwhite females are most likely to value intelligence.

Relationship between Generational Cohort and the Importance of Personality Traits

As predicted, members of the Generation X cohort were most likely to believe Sociability is a "very important" quality. We also found that traditionalists were most likely to believe intelligence is a "very important" quality. Interestingly, the emphasis on intelligence has declined in recent years.

To further examine the relationships between Cohort and Sociability and Cohort and Intelligence we controlled for Race and Gender. The positive relationship between Cohort (Gen X) and Sociability maintained itself for both whites and Nonwhites. We also discovered that Nonwhite traditionalists were significantly more likely to value sociability than white traditionalists. As for Intelligence, the positive relationship between Cohort (Traditionalists) and Intelligence strengthened significantly for Nonwhites and weakened slightly for whites. This implies that compared to whites, the value of intelligence to Nonwhites has decreased at a much quicker rate over time. When we controlled for gender, we found that the original relationship between cohort and sociability maintained itself for both females and males. The relationship between cohort and intelligence yielded surprising results. The relationship strengthened significantly for females but switched direction for males. This implies that

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while females have placed less emphasis on intelligence over time, males have placed more emphasis on intelligence over time.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the patterns of the findings in this study confirm my initial research hypothesis that the personality traits of others valued by individuals can vary considerably by the individuals' race, gender, and cohort. The strongest correlations were between Cohort and Sociability and Race and Intelligence. A fundamental conclusion is that sociability has become increasingly important to the most recent generation. Another fundamental conclusion is that the level of importance given to intelligence is far more significant for Nonwhites than for whites, and that the importance of intelligence is increasing for men over time, while it is decreasing for women. In short, it is important for leaders to consider the social backgrounds of those whom they lead and realize that values and expectations will vary according to social background.

In today's competitive business environment, leadership has become an increasingly important quality. Companies are constantly in search of extraordinary leaders to strengthen their competitive position and get results. Human Resource specialists are seeking ways to train their employees to become more effective leaders. Part of being an effective leader is understanding followers. Many leadership theories, including situational leadership and transformational leadership, emphasize the importance of determining follower needs first. It is my hope that this study will encourage leaders to try to better understand those whom they lead by taking into consideration their social backgrounds. In a nutshell, grasping the similarities among different social groups in the importance placed on the personality traits of leaders will allow leaders to better match their leadership style to the preferences of those whom they lead.

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