GENDER DIVERSITY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN CORPORATE LEADERSHIP

By

LESLIE L. NYKILCHYK

Integrated Studies Final Project Essay (MAIS 700)

submitted to Dr. Angela Specht

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Integrated Studies

Athabasca, Alberta

January, 2015
ABSTRACT

The following paper will discuss and analyze information surrounding the question; Gender Diversity and Corporate Leadership: Is there a link between gender diversity and performance between male and female leadership and does this limit or enable female advancement? This question is examined by questioning the relation between gender diversity and performance using supporting documentation through extensive research on particular case studies. As a formal investigation, the differences between male and female leadership and how this might limit or enable female advancement is investigated. A discourse analysis is conducted by using pre-existing documents, texts and media sources to critically analyze the issues and problems that surround gender performance based leadership. It is revealed that companies operating in a complex environment, which have a high portion of women, experience significant and positive returns. This affirms the idea that women representation does enhance a company’s performance as the rate of return is high. However, the research does indicate that there is evidence that supports the idea that gender diversity with respect to performance between male and female leadership does limit female advancement. This can be attributed to the amount of work that women have to put forth to be a successful leader. In turn, it becomes very difficult for women to pursue leadership roles and to allow their performance to positively impact an organization. Here, there are sacrifices toward home and family that many women have to make in order to attain high leadership roles within the workplace.
Gender Diversity and Performance Management in Corporate Leadership

“Gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured” (Gender Equality in Ireland, 2014). The following paper will discuss and analyze information surrounding the question; Gender Diversity and Corporate Leadership: Is there a link between gender diversity and performance between male and female leadership and does this limit or enable female advancement? This question will be further examined by questioning if there is a specific link between gender diversity and performance using supporting documentation through extensive research on particular case studies. As a formal investigation, the differences between male and female leadership and how this might limit or enable female advancement will also be investigated. The above will first be examined with the information presented in The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, which touches on the area of high performance management in females and males. The Board also explains what high performance is and how it is important in the workplace. Snyder’s (2014) research surrounding performance reviews (that directly relates to performance language, in organizations) will also be examined. Here, the different ways in which reviews are conducted depending on the gender of the employee will be analyzed. The implications surrounding financial performance in relation to the participation of women in a firm's senior management board of directors will be outlined using the information presented in Francoeur et al’s article. The relationship between gender and financial performance will be used to highlight the
strengths of different gendered employees. Information surrounding the analysis of advancement of women as researched by Tom Buchana will be used to identify how this results in higher performance. In the research conducted by Gorman and Kmec, as presented by Strenge, the amount of effort females must put forth in order to perform at a leadership level equivalent to their male counterparts will be discuss. The final literature that will be examined to highlight work life balance, which includes personal life and family, that often accompanies female leaders, is exposed by the results of Sevki Ozgener’s and the research of Accenture.

Using the academic information presented above, the method that will be used in this paper is a discourse analysis. The analysis will consists of reading and analyzing pre-existing documents, texts and media sources as a means to critically analyze the issues and problems that surround gender performance based leadership. The discourse analysis that will be conducted will specifically look at gender issues in the workplace and how this impacts female leadership. Gender issues in the workplace can be specifically highlighted using the discourses analyses method by analyzing research and information that exists that emphasizes that females’ do experience gender issues in the workplace when in the position of leadership or obtaining leadership.

According to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat an organization would lack structure and function without the people that work there. When the people that are employed in the organization share the same vision, trusts and values, it creates a high performance workplace. High performance workplaces contain people that are self-motivated to do a good job as a result of proper management. In high performance
management employees are not treated the same because that would mean treating employees who contribute the least to the organization the same way as those who contribute the most. This poses a problem as it can limit change and halt innovation because the employer believes that this is the most important element. According to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2012), “high performing employees don’t enjoy working for a manager who treat everyone the same because they discover that their exemplary performance provides no benefit. Excellence in managing people equates to excellent people.” When an individual feels valued and that the work he or she does contributes to the goals of the organization, real motivation is created within that person. People management experts add that people become motivated when an organization works on the premise that everyone in the organization has talent, which must be developed. Job enrichment and job enlargement results from the development of talent. When this occurs, people feel trusted to complete tasks that are complex and feel that their superiors trust in them to do so. Employees will generally take on challenges when their manager takes an interest in coaching and developing their employees.

Creating a high performance workplace is essential to all organizations as it benefits the employees and the organization itself. In every organization individuals who are responsible for creating high performance workplace exist and are extremely important. These individuals can create high performance workplaces by celebrating achievements and efforts that allow employees to feel validated and valued and allowing employees to grow by delegating work which in turn expands managerial control and shows that the employee is trusted. It is also important that an employer
encourages collaboration by using employee empowerment and enjoyment which increases problem solving skills and to support employees in work and growth to encourage new ideas in a learning environment. By using employee feedback to demonstrate that feedback is being used, to which shows a valued opinion and by giving immediate, positive and constant feedback, this creates a strong team by enabling employee enjoyment and interaction between all employees to create a sense of belonging. Higher performance workplaces can also be created and maintained by encouraging innovation by engaging employees in finding better ways to complete a task and by valuing and trusting employees. This builds elements through values in the organization and always allows for actions and behaviors to be conveyed by encouraging and being open minded to allow employees to express their ideas without criticism. Employers must also be transparent and readily share information with employees so that they see how their job contributed to the bigger picture; and, clearly communicate the organizations goals and objectives to all employees (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2012).

Feedback is a large area that can be used to show that differences do exist when receiving feedback from certain genders. Assertive and constructive feedback is a popular management method when providing feedback to employees. Assertive and constructive feedback, however, can be interpreted differently depending on what gender is delivering the feedback. Employees may feel that assertive and direct feedback issued by a female is bossy and aggressive; meanwhile, assertive and direct feedback issued by a male can be seen as constructive and productive as well as a sign of good leadership. According to Krenek (2012) there are ways in which feedback can
be standardized in an effort to be delivered constructively. Leaders of either gender can follow this process using the following steps as outlined by Krenek:

“If you can’t think of a constructive purpose for giving feedback, don’t give it at all. Focus on description rather than judgment. Focus on observation rather than inference. Focus on behavior rather than the person. Provide a balance of positive and negative feedback. Be aware of feedback overload. (Krenek, 2012)”

A large component of performance management involves performance reviews that are conducted on an employee by his or her supervisor to evaluate employee performance within a workplace. According to Snyder (2014) performance reviews are a high focus within this type of management structure as reviews provide written documentation of a manager’s perceptions regarding the quality of work an employee is doing. Snyder also uses performance reviews because many reviews can be collected at once to produce a statistical view of the situation. Snyder’s research is important because she asks two groups of technology employees of both genders to share their reviews for a study. Snyder assumed that only the strong performers would volunteer and the reviews that were collected were indeed mostly positive reviews. Snyder, like the research question posed above, was interested in looking at if the review or content differed based on the employees’ respective genders. Snyder also looked at whether the gender of the manager performing the review was a factor in how he or she reviewed the employees.

In Snyder’s study, one hundred and eighty reviews were collected; one hundred and five reviews were received from men and seventy-five from women. The reviews
came from twenty-eight different companies and included small environments, mid-sized companies and large technology corporations. Snyder highlights that the size of the company did not impact the results, and nor did she find any unique pattern in any individual company. Out of the one hundred and eighty reviews, seventy-one female reviews contained negative feedback and only twenty-three contained constructive feedback. For the men, only two reviews contained negative feedback and the remaining eighty-one reviews contained constructive feedback. In the category of criticism, ninety-four female reviews contained criticisms, and thirteen reviews contained no criticism. Eighty-three male reviews contained criticism and fifty-eight male reviews did not include criticism. As a result, it was concluded that women’s reviews were most likely to include critical feedback. It was also noted by Snyder that critical feedback was not distributed evenly by gender. When breaking the reviews down by gender of the person evaluated, fifty-nine percent of reviews received by men contained critical feedback and eighty-eight percent of female reviews received contained critical feedback. Interpreting those results highlights that female reviews are thirty percent more likely to include critical feedback than male reviews as the respective take of female interviewees explained that they experience critical feedback.

Snyder’s (2014) results highlight that men are given constructive feedback and so are women, however, women are also criticized more frequently than their male colleagues. Snyder did highlight that even though the gender of the managers performing the review did not factor, the reviews conducted by women were on average fifty percent longer than the review performed by managers that were male. The reviews that were performed on women generally included words such as “aggressive, strident, abrasive
and bossy” and words that were used to describe their behavior included “irrational and emotional” (Snyder, 2014). Snyder mentioned that the words listed above appeared at least twice as much in the reviews that she analyzed. The word “abrasive” alone was used seventeen times in the female reviews and the word aggressive only showed up in three of the male reviews.

Snyder concluded feeling puzzled as to why the results of her findings are negative towards women and positive toward men. She believed that a further investigation by mangers and human resources departments was needed to uncover and correct the patterns of systematic bias. She also highlighted that a review and action to bring the same rigor to the language used in the reviews is needed. (Snyder, 2014)

Snyder (2014) highlights above that many women are reviewed on their personality faults and that there is a specific language that is used to describe women and their personality faults in their performance reviews. Robert Strenge (2014) calls attention to Gorman and Kmec’s (2007) identification of this problem with the use of a long standing joke, “Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good” (2007). Gorman and Kmec (2007) use the aforementioned joke to highlight the reality for women in the workplace. The findings of Gorman and Kmec (2007), outlined by Strenge (2014), surround the idea that women have to work harder than men. In addition, a survey that was given five different ways over different years to different groups of women and men in the United States and Britain, concluded that a gender gap persisted in rating of the statement, “My job requires that I work very hard.” (Gorman and Kmec, 2007). This statement holds true for when women and men are matched in extensive measures of job characterizes, household responsibilities, family
and individual qualifications. Women again report that their jobs require more effort than the similar jobs of male colleagues. For a woman who shared the same job, had burdens at home and had the same skills and education as men, women reported feeling that they had to work harder. Strenge (2014) communicated that Gorman and Kmec (2007) highlight that the association between gender and reported required work effort is best interpreted as reflecting stricter performance standards imposed on women, even when women and men hold the same jobs. Experimental research also shows that employees rate the same performance as better when told a man did the work. This leads into the idea that women have to do better work than men in order to get the same quality of evaluation as a similarly positioned male colleague. This discrepancy in the evaluation between similarly positioned female and male workers often means that women must put more effort forward at work to prove themselves to their superiors and to male workplace colleagues.

A focus on required work efforts that an employee is expected to exert in order to perform her or his job at a level that is satisfactory to the employer is another focus of the research performed. Results were compared from the same question asked in nationally representative surveys in 1977, 1992, two in 1997, and in 2001. These surveys used the same statement in 1977 as in 2001 to yield comparable answers (Gorman and Kmec, 2007). Whether the factors were family responsibilities or drained energy, the research found that neither factors explained the different findings about work effort. The only interpretation that heightened was that women were held to a higher performance standard than men. The research conducted by Gorman and Kmec (2007) as outlined by Strenge (2014) also looked at whether women’s jobs were in fact more difficult than
men’s. This idea did not factor as jobs that were almost identical produced women that felt that they were significantly more likely to say they had to work very hard. Another factor that was considered was the influenced responsibility outside of work including housework and childcare that may have led to women feeling more fatigued. Unfortunately the answer to why women say they have to work harder did not emerge from the above proposition. As a result it was concluded that parenthood and marriage had the same effect on reports of required effort for men and women.

Gorman and Kmec (2007) use research to highlight a comparative between the findings and the attitudes and beliefs held about men and women in the workplace. It is known that lower marks on essays, paintings and resumes are found when a women’s name is on it. It is also found that when women and men work on a project together people assume that the man contributed more than the women did. This idea is explained in the following excerpt “the quality of women's work experience is likely to be lower than men's; physical and emotional effects could, in turn, have negative repercussions for families; and the difference in required effort could also have consequences for women's careers, making it harder for them to be recognized and promoted.” (Gorman and Kmec, 2007) Again this highlights how women have to work harder to win their bosses’ approval in all aspects of work.

As a result Gorman and Kmec (2007), through Strenge, stressed that using the findings of this research would be used incorrectly if females were exploited as a result. Instead employers should take into account women’s hard work when considering who is rewarded and promoted. The authors hoped that employers make job responsibilities to close this gap between men and women. It is hoped that performance standards become
more transparent and that employers be held accountable for their evaluations of women at work. Added difficulties are considered when concluding a closure to the gap that exists, including: the different in required effort could have consequences for women’s careers, making it harder for them to be promoted and recognized; the quality of women’s work experiences is likely to be lowered than men’s; and physical and emotional efforts could, in turn, have negative repercussions for families.

Touching on the idea of the excessive amount of work women must conduct in their careers is also highlighted by Catalyst’s *The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don’t*. Here, it is described that women leaders face higher standards and lower rewards than men leaders. It is also communicated by Catalyst that women leaders are held for a higher competency standard then men who are doing the same job. In organizations women have to constantly deal with stereotypical expectations such as abrasive leadership and then consistently have to prove that they can lead. As a result, women being held at higher standards tend to receive lower rewards for their competencies and efforts. Catalyst (2007) states, “stereotypes create a second predicament for women leaders. As prototypical leaders, a man’s potential to lead and, in particular, to lead effectively is rarely questioned a priori.” (p. 16). As such, women have to prove that they can lead as atypical leaders before they even have the opportunity to hold leadership positions. This affirms the idea that women have to work twice as hard to prove the same level of competence as their male counterparts and to do this they must constantly monitor stereotypical expectations and spend additional energy and time proving that they can lead. As such, the work that women preform is evaluated on a different scale than men. In addition, leadership behaviors that
are effective for females may not be the same as it would be for males. As a result, in order for women to lead and to prove their performance it is required that they work twice as hard to prove their competencies and will receive half the rewards of their male counterparts. This can be supported by outlining the example “women have to act “tougher” than men in the same positions. “Many female leaders are ‘tougher’ than men when it comes to things like dealing with low performance,” …Women are mostly tougher, target-oriented compared to men…” (Catalyst, p. 18).

Catalyst (2007) conducts a review where over fifty percent of their sample describes a higher standard accompanied by lower rewards as a dilemma present for women leaders. This is presented as a double standard of evaluation of female performance and describes how women have to prove themselves in their leadership positions by putting forth-additional efforts. In some cases, respondents report that the extra efforts that women put forth have negative views. Some respondents see this willingness as an unfavorable personal trait. As a result, some women in leadership are seen as lacking in mentoring and role modeling as they are trying too hard to prove their own abilities as a leader. Women also feel the need to act tougher to prove their abilities and existence as a leader compared to males. Women leaders are seen to be generally tougher and target oriented. This problem of ‘over working’ with women often leads to working too hard to prove their abilities and they often burn out. This ultimately injects men with power and allows them to gain the upper hand on performance. In conclusion, a predicament is created for the stereotypes that are created for women in leadership roles. Women are held to a higher standard than men and receive lower rewards for the same level of competency. With the information gathered from Catalyst (2007) it is evident
that gender diversity with respect to performance between male and female leadership
does in some areas limit female advancement. This is also supported by Devillard et al
(2014), who concludes:

“Year after year...women remain underrepresented at the top of corporations,
across all industries and countries. Those disappointing results persist despite a
body of research suggesting that companies with more women in top management
tend to perform better, both organizationally and financially, and despite decades
of effort by many companies. The upshot is that there’s still room for firmer
engagement among male executives, for more inclusivity, and for a more
comprehensive ecosystem of measures, which will benefit from a strong, visible
commitment by the CEO and the executive committee. (Devillard et al, 2014)”

As a formal investigation, Francoeur et al (2007) investigate the differences
between male and female leadership and how these differences might limit or enable
female advancement. The investigation follows the finding that there is little female
involvement in senior management boards. Francoueur et al highlight the enhancement
of financial performance by the participation of women in a firm's senior management
board of directors. This highlights how most corporations' ultimate goal is profit.
Therefore the financial enhancement of a corporation and its relation to women is
particularly important and interesting when discussing the link between gender diversity
and performance between male and female leadership and how it limits or enables female
advancement.
As investigated above, this article examines another source of diversity in corporate governance and top management, particularly the participation of women. The article highlights the “glass ceiling” effect that women experience as a barrier women face when attempting to climb the corporate ladder. Francouer et al’s (2007) article in particular discusses ideas around the barriers that women experience and highlights gender diversity in board and top management positions and whether this can enhance corporate performance.

In the details of the Francouer et al (2007) investigations, it is revealed that companies operating in a complex environment, which have a high portion of women experience significant and positive returns. These results equalled to “0.17% monthly intuitively amounting to a 6% return over a 3-year period” (Francoeur et al, p. 84); which affirms the idea that women representation does enhance a company’s performance as the rate of return is high. Another important finding explained is that organizations that have a high portion of women both in management and governance systems generated enough value to keep up with normal stock-market returns. This alludes to the fact that female directors may outperform their male counterparts, creating an existence of a “glass-cliff” whereby women are given riskier tasks when appointed to senior positions. The research that is presented on Francoeur et al fosters the idea that policies currently being discussed and implemented in the Western world, in organizations, seek the advancement of women in business. The important part of Francoeur et al findings is that their efforts for some countries and organizations craft and enforce policies and procedures that see the advancement of women in business as a result of higher performance levels.
Tom Buchanan (2014) also examines the analysis of advancement of women as a result of higher performance. Buchanan indicates that work performance is an important aspect in understanding workplace gender inequality and it also identifies that this concept is very real in today’s society. Buchanan touches on the idea that women earn less pay even though there has been an increase in women entering the professional and management world. These women consistently continue to earn less pay than their male counterparts. There are certain conditions that compliment why women tend to earn less than their male counterparts. Statistics Canada (2013) suggests that some of the discrepancies that exist can be explained by the fact that women work less primarily due to child bearing. Child bearing impacts women as mothers much greater than it would for men as fathers. Buchanan’s (2014) research directly links roles to workplace consequences and measures gender differentiation in work-related performance. This measure examines the male versus female performance in relation to the pay gap as well as to differentiate contribution to work in groups.

One of the issues that presents with respect to gender inequality is that men and women use gender categories to evaluate performance in the workplace. This creates and affirms gender inequality. There is also an idea that exists that indicates employees begin a job with some preconceived idea about gender and performance. Men believe that gender is a salient factor in perceptions of pay increases for performance. Males that see themselves in an advantageous position will perceive the females they work with as inferior performers. Buchanan (2014) states, “if attitudes pertaining to performance are biased by gender status, the equal performance of women is less likely to be perceived as comparable” (p.207). In addition, gender roles that are seen as more liberal, generally
initiate the importance of fair pay in females and males. In Buchanan’s research a scale of
gendered work performance is developed using analysis techniques that attempt to
highlight performance attributes of gender rather than fairness. As a result Buchanan
states, “males are higher on gendered work performance indicating that they differentiate
performance based on gender to a greater degree than females. This supports the
hypothesis that “gender was a significant predictor of sex role liberalism” (p. 211). It is
then evident that gendered work performance does exist and there is a difference between
male and female genders.

Organizational performance in relation to gender differences occurs in many
different areas of work. It also occurs in many different types of industries in many
different part of the world. In Sevki Ozgener’s Diversity Management and Demographic
Difference-based Discrimination: The case of Turkish Manufacturing Industry (2008),
workplace diversity with respect to organizational performance is examined. Diversity
and performance are becoming extremely important in medium and large-scale
workplaces. Diversity management is now a large component of human resources in
companies to help manage workplace diversity and to prevent discrimination. In Sevki’s
research the Turkish job market is examined as internationalization and globalization of
the Turkish economy increases. A failure of these companies to understand demographic
difference could lead to poor working conditions, discrimination and underperformance
as highlighted by Sevki.

As Sevki (2008) identifies issues of diversity and highlights the idea of
performance, a diversity manifest process is examined. This process was developed to
create and maintain an environment that allows individuals to reach their full potential in
pursuit of organization objectives. This environment is created so individuals, including women, feel like they are working in an environment that works naturally. According to Sevki, “diversity management focuses beyond affirmative action and promotes fairness towards all employees including women” (p. 622). Diversity management also attempts to value differences between people and it attempts to develop an inclusive workplace were these differences are accommodated and recognized. As a result, diversity management can give organizations a competitive advantage when competing in global markets as it is viewed as being crucial for competitive and economic success. Benefits that result for a workplace that practices diversity management include creativity, higher productivity, innovation, better recruitment, effective conflict management and retention of qualified employees.

To emphasize the idea of success related to issues of gender, the information that Accenture (2013) conducted uses global research in the areas of defining success. Accenture (2013) is a management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company helping clients in Canada become high-performance businesses that conduct research in the areas of gender issues in the workplace. The research was to be released for the 2013 International Women’s Day in order to gain knowledge into the attitudes and behaviors regarding women’s careers. The research highlighted how women professionals around all areas of the world believe that they can have it all. Accenture explained that balancing outside commitments, such as family and personal life, with a successful career outweighs income when defining success. Interestingly, it is also reported that fifty two percent of respondents reported turning down a job because of concerns relating to impacting work life balance. Work life balance also tops career
success, recognition and autonomy with respect to importance. The question here then arises; can women really have it all without it affecting other areas of their life? It is not believed that women can have a successful career and managed a successful personal life on their own. This requires additional help from outside partners in order to accomplish the idea of “having it all”. A balance is needed to be found in the sense that family and home should be just as important as a career for a woman. Women then tend to seek careers with less leadership responsibilities as this allows them to control their outside life to the fullest. However, even then it becomes somewhat difficult to juggle both career and personal life compared to males and can be seen as a deterrent altogether in women pursuing a leadership career.

From the information gathered above it is evident through a discourse analysis that gender diversity with respect to performance between male and female leadership does in some areas limit female advancement. This is primarily attributed to the amount of work that women have to put forth to be a successful leader. These women are also highly scrutinized in their performance reviews and a divide can be seen between the reviews that are conducted for female and male employees. This was seen in the example from Snyder’s (2014) research on females in the technological industry where one hundred and eighty reviews, seventy-one of which were female reviews contained negative feedback. Using the information presented by Francoeur et al (2007), surrounding women performance in the workplace, performance does play a role in the overall idea of financial gain; however, it is evident that this may trigger women to over perform compared to males who share the same roles. However, there is a solution, as presented by Sevki (2008). Diversity management focuses beyond affirmative action and
promotes fairness towards all employees including women. Accenture (2013) explains that women who perform at a high leadership level can have it all but work life balance is affected. This then becomes challenging for women wanting to pursue a career who have family and home commitments as well. In turn it becomes very difficult for women to pursue leadership roles and to allow their performance to positively impact an organization. Here, there are sacrifices toward home and family that many women have to make in order to attain high leadership roles within the workplace.
References


Gorman, E. & Kmec, J. (2007). We (Have to) Try Harder: Gender and Required Work Effort in Britain and the United States. Gender & Society, 21, 828-856,


