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Public versus Private Managers: How Public and Private Managers Differ in Leadership Behavior

Current Trends in Public Personnel Administration

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This article aims to find out whether there are behavioral differences between public and private sector managers. Two groups of public managers (managers of social insurance agencies and public school principals) and a group of private managers (two samples) are investigated. Behavioral dimensions are investigated including leadership style (task, relationship, and change orientation), decision-making style (the functions of sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling), and motivation profile (achievement, affiliation, and power motivation). An analysis of data from 459 managers in four organizations in Sweden reveal significant differences in behavior between public and private managers. However, no significant differences in leadership behavior are discovered among public managers. Possible explanations for such differences and similarities are explored.

Bower (1977) wrote that although we know enough about management in the public sector to know that it is different from corporate management, we do not know nearly as much as we should. Twenty-five years later, Van Wart (2003) pointed out the lack of empirical research on public leadership. A number of studies have been undertaken aimed at describing and understanding the differences, if any, between public and private management.

Buchanan (1975) compared public and private managers' attitudes toward job involvement. Significant differences were found between business and government managers, but the results were not as expected. Middle managers in business ascribed significantly more salience to formal structure than the government group and reported significantly greater job involvement. This study did not concern the question of managerial behavior, but rather managers' attitudes. Rainey (1979) held that the specification of empirical

differences between categories is fundamental to the development of sound theory.

Some scholars complain about the general scarcity of empirical studies of public management. Rainey (1982) found differences between public and private managers regarding reward preferences, but did not investigate differences in behavior. Consequently, Rainey (1989) presented a table of distinctive characteristics of public management and public organizations, including work-related attitudes and behaviors. One of the areas for research mentioned by Rainey (1989) was a comparison of public and private managers in terms of behavior. He discussed the developments in research on the distinctive characteristics of public managers and the organizations in which they work. Public and private organizations and their employees often do virtually the same tasks. There is no real distinction between public and private management. The present study challenges this statement regarding managerial behavior.

It may, therefore, be valid to investigate whether managers in public agencies differ from managers in private companies in terms of behavior. The study aims to isolate the behavioral patterns that guide leaders' behavior. Extensive research has been undertaken on each of the variables investigated (e.g., Yukl 2002).

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether there are behavioral differences between public and private managers. Additionally, the aim is to determine whether there are behavioral differences between different groups of public managers. In order to do so, managers of social insurance agencies, public school principals, and private managers in Sweden are investigated. The comparison of managerial behavior is based on three theoretical concepts: (1) *leadership style* describes the

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behavior of the leader by task, relationship, and change orientation; (2) *managerial decision-making style* describes the typical way in which managers solve problems and make decisions by sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling; and (3) *motivation profile* captures the relative strength of managers' achievement, affiliation, and power motivation.

Leadership Style

Leadership style theories describe the behavioral patterns of leaders in terms of *consideration* and *initiating structure* (Fleishman and Harris 1962). The factors are found simultaneously in the behavior of leaders, but to varying degrees. Ekvall and Arvonen (1991, 1994) investigated these two behavioral factors. When analyzing data from several hundred managers in Sweden, Finland, and the United States, a third factor called *changed-centered leadership style* emerged. This factor may have developed as a result of the accelerating rate of change. Yukl (2002, 64) noted with reference to Ekvall and Arvonen (1991) that research suggests a three-dimensional model provides the most useful way to group specific behaviors into general categories. The bulk of the research on leadership style has been carried out on business managers. However, Dunoon (2002) argued in favor of the learning-centered leadership approach to public management, which is associated with the transformational leadership theory. This approach is somewhat similar to the change-centered leadership style concept applied in this study (Arvonen 2002). The leadership style variables used by Hanbury, Sapat, and Washington (2004) in studying public managers are theoretically closely associated to the ones applied here, but are measured by a different instrument.

Decision-Making Style

Problem solving and decision making are vital components of management. Jung's typology (1921) has greatly influenced management research. Jung claimed that humans are guided by one of four functions when solving problems: sensing, which is a perception through our senses; thinking, which gives us meaning and understanding; feeling, which judges and assesses; and intuition, which tells us about the possibilities in the future (Jung 1976, 203). There are two ways in which we can perceive problems, namely, by the use of sensing and by intuition. There are only two ways to solve a problem, that is, by thinking and by feeling. According to Jung, all humans have a dominant function (which is that person's strength) and an inferior function. If, for instance, the dominant function is thinking, the weakest function will be feeling. Keegan (1984) adopted this theory and made it available to professionals and managers. He claimed that Jung's typology gives a genuine insight into the question of why individuals succeed or fail in their decision making. Several scholars (e.g., Cook 1998; Hanbury, Sapat, and Washington 2004; Van Wart 2003) have underlined the importance of decision making for public managers.

Motivation Profile

McClelland (1990) performed extensive research on motivation-related behavior in managers. Every individual has, to a varying degree, a need for achievement, power, and affiliation. The need for achievement is defined as the desire to do better than others or to solve problems and master difficult tasks more effectively. The need for affiliation is the desire to establish and maintain close and friendly relationships with other people. The need for power is defined as the desire to control other people, to influence their

behavior, or to be responsible for other people and their work. The term "need profile" denotes the relative strengths of the three needs. Three motivation profiles are used in this research tradition based on the "strongest" of the three needs, namely, the achievement motivation profile, the affiliation motivation profile, and the power motivation profile. What is crucial is not the strength of any specific need, but rather the relative strength of the needs—the motivation profile.

Do public and private managers differ in their leadership styles, decision-making styles, and motivation profiles? If so, in which behavioral dimensions do they differ? Finally, if they differ, what might the reasons be for differences in leadership behavior between public and private managers?

The Organizations and Their Managers

The National Social Insurance Board and the social insurance offices together administer social insurance schemes in Sweden. They are responsible for the greater part of the Swedish financial safety net. The local social insurance offices are given directives and tasks to perform by the National Social Insurance Board. At present, there are 200 social insurance offices in Sweden, each with a senior officer in charge.

Almost all schools in Sweden are public organizations, even though independent schools are increasing in number. Each school has a principal and at least one deputy. The public schools are the responsibility of the municipalities. Guidelines for the schools are subject to government decisions. The municipalities decide how to manage the schools in their area, a fact that has led to many different structures. The public managers taking part in this study are neither elected nor tenured.

Since the early 1970s, major changes have taken place in Swedish society, and especially within the public sector. Today, there is an imbalance between what the people demand and what the state can supply. For the social insurance agencies, the discrepancy between the need for services and the public funds available is dramatic. Consequently, a great number of changes have been introduced to cope with this quickly growing deficit of funds. For civil servants, this has meant enormous changes to be coped with internally, as well as in relation to the demands of citizens.

Since the mid-1970s, education in Sweden has been restructured. The decentralization of educational decisions is now linked to economic restrictions. Local authorities have more responsibility, local initiatives are encouraged, and school leaders now experience cross-pressures between conflicting expectations. The state expects school leaders to be bosses with ultimate responsibility for all daily activities. The teachers, in turn, expect their principal to be an administrator. Thus, the role of the principal is partly that of being a manager (related to the external world) and a leader (encouraging local initiative and priorities).

Business managers are individuals in formal leadership positions in private companies. The responsibility for producing results and for personnel is vested in them. Attainment of (financial) goals is the core of business management. In this respect, there are no differences between private and public managers' tasks, as public

managers are also preoccupied with the achievement of established goals (Cook 1998).

Hypotheses

Previous research indicates both differences and similarities between public and private managers as well as among public managers in a number of aspects. Therefore, two general propositions are formulated: (1) there are significant differences between public and private managers in leadership behavior (leadership style, decision-making style, and motivation profile), and (2) there are significant differences among public managers in leadership behavior (leadership style, decision-making style, and motivation profile).

Leadership Style

Fernandez (2004) applied the term "leadership style" and described a style that gives subordinates greater discretion. This concept is somewhat similar to the *relationship-oriented* leadership style. Fernandez reported no data on business managers. No research is found on public managers' production-oriented style.

Regarding the *change-oriented style,* Roessner (1977) addressed the question of whether public organizations are inherently less innovative than private organizations. Empirical evidence, though limited, gives reason to doubt the hypothesis that public organizations are inherently immune to efforts to increase innovation. He found that the available evidence indicates no particular superiority on the part of the private sector. Roessner (1977), however, did not investigate change-related behavior of managers. Rainey (1979, 1983) and Baldwin (1986) found no differences between middle managers in public and private organizations on self-reported interest in innovation. Yet in attitude surveys, public employees and managers reported an interest in change and openness to it (Rainey 1983).

Innovative behaviors on the part of government executives show—according to Doig and Hargrove (1987)—that many assertions about rigidity in the public sector overgeneralize to a harmful degree. When describing entrepreneurial public managers in the United States, the dimensions used were management skills and commitment to program goals. These are not behavioral dimensions, but antecedents of behavior. Rainey (1989) wrote that previous research had not indicated the extent to which public managers show more initiative. Fernandez (2004) described a leadership style that actively promotes change. His concept of style may have something in common with the relationship-oriented and change-oriented styles. Any similarity between these concepts and the ones used in this study cannot be ascertained, however, as the items used to measure the styles are not given.

Nutt (2004) offered a framework to determine when a public organization will be susceptible to change and some ways to manage the change process. His work does not address the question of managerial behavior, but rather the structural limitations to strategic change. Nutt's suggestions for effective leadership with regard to organizational change are not presented in terms of managerial behavior. Fernandez and Rainey (2006) investigated the role of public managers in the change process. However, they do not address the issue of managers' change behavior. In summing up previous research, we note that no study concerns change-oriented behavior. No empirical study reports differences between public and private managers in terms of attitudes to or interest in change.

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The objective of the social insurance agencies is to provide social security for citizens according to legislation and administrative rules, in addition to providing these services as efficiently as possible. For these logical reasons, senior officials in the social insurance agencies are expected to be predominantly production oriented. As the school manager has frequent contact with pupils and citizens and is in charge of a labor-intensive organization, we may expect public managers to have a relationship-oriented leadership style.

Previous research on business managers in Sweden shows that they have a predominantly relationship-oriented leadership style. Research gives strong indications that this style is found relatively more often among private managers than among public managers (Arvonen 2001b; Arvonen and Pettersson 1999; Sverke, Arvonen, and Lindell 1999). We expect the same pattern to emerge in the private manager sample.

> **H1**: Managers in social insurance agencies have a predominantly production-oriented leadership style, while school principals have a relationship-oriented style. Business managers have a relationship-oriented style.

Decision-Making Style

It is difficult to find research on decision-making behavior in public managers. However, some studies have addressed issues of restrictions on and support for public managers regarding decision making. Rainey, Pandey, and Bozeman (1995) found that public and private managers differed little on general questions about rule enforcement. Public managers did not differ from business managers in terms of their perceptions of organizational formalization.

Because of the high number of legal documents and formal procedures that characterize the social insurance sector, these managers are expected to use the sensing decision-making function. Schools are established to provide education for the younger generation. School principals are in daily contact with many individuals apart from staff. This includes meeting pupils and parents, among others. For these logical reasons, principals are expected to make decisions based on the feeling function. Because of the single objective of private companies (generating return on assets), private managers (as a group) are expected to use the thinking decision-making function.

> **H2**: Managers in the social insurance sector use the sensing decision-making function. School managers make decisions based on the feeling function. Private managers use the thinking decision-making style.

Motivation Profile

Guyot (1962) compared the motivation profile (achievement, affiliation, and power motivation) of 247 middle managers in

businesses and the U.S. federal government. He found that differences in achievement motivation were significant between government and business managers. The levels of achievement motivation and affiliation motivation were higher for the public managers. No significant difference was found between the two groups regarding power motivation. He based his work on McClelland's theory (as in this study) and used the Thematic Apperception Test to measure motivation factors.

Rainey (1979, 1983) and Baldwin (1986) found no differences between middle managers in public and private organizations on self-reported motivation. Rainey (1979) stated that the results do not necessarily indicate that government managers have lower motivation than business managers. Perry and Porter (1982) reviewed the motivational bases of behavior in organizational settings in public organizations. Their review does not address the motivation of public managers. Rainey (1983) studied public and private managers' perceptions of motivation and promotion (as well as other factors), which are relevant to this study. Baldwin (1987) explored the impact of employee motivation. His study dealt with the degree of motivation of public managers, whereas this study is about the *kind* of motivation that public managers have (motivation profile). Durant et al.'s (2006) study is not about managers' motivation, but rather the motivation of subordinates.

Based on the findings of Guyot (1962), achievement motivation and affiliation motivation are expected to be higher for public managers than private managers. For logical reasons, senior officials in the social insurance agencies are expected to be predominantly achievement motivated. Schools are "people" organizations. For this reason, principals are expected to be affiliation motivated.

As managers are primarily concerned with influencing other people, they are assumed to be power motivated (McClelland 1971). Harrell and Stahl (1981) found that power motivation was dominant for American executives. Contrary to Guyot's findings, we expect business managers to be more power motivated than public managers, as more recent research indicates that this might be the case.

H3: Managers in social insurance agencies are predominantly achievement motivated, while school principals are affiliation motivated. Business managers are power motivated.

The heads of social insurance offices and public school principals are in charge of different organizations with quite different objectives and tasks. Consequently, the second general proposition says that there are significant differences between the two groups of public managers in leadership behavior. We note that no previous research concerns differences in behavior between managers in different kinds of public organizations. For this reason, the hypotheses formulated here are based on the logical arguments given earlier. The hypotheses specify the differences between the two groups of public managers with regard to leadership styles, decision-making styles, and motivation profiles. Table 1 summarizes the hypotheses regarding the differences in leadership behaviors.

> Four samples constitute the basis for the comparison between formal leaders in Sweden. . . . [However, no] claim is made that the samples investigated are representative for all public and all private managers in Sweden.

Table 1 Overview of Hypotheses

Behavioral Dimensions	Public Managers		Private Managers
	Social Insurance Managers	School Managers	
Leadership style	H$_1$: Production oriented	H$_1$: Relationship oriented	H$_1$: Relationship oriented
Decision-making function	H$_2$: Sensing	H$_2$: Feeling	H$_2$: Thinking
Motivation profile	H$_3$: Achievement	H$_3$: Affiliation	H$_3$: Power

Method and Instruments

Rainey (1979) pointed out the importance of basing research into public management on a sound conceptual basis, building on previous research where feasible and appropriate. For this reason, the concepts, definitions, and instruments used in this study belong to a long and well-established tradition in leadership research (Bass 1990; Yukl 2002).

Samples and Data Collection

Guyot (1962) argued that procedures and styles are more in evidence in the middle brackets of management. Buchanan (1975) stressed the importance of middle management for comparisons between public and private organizations. Rainey (1979, 1983) investigated middle managers in public and private organizations. Rainey (1979, 1982) defined the middle manager as a person in a supervisory position below the level of vice president or assistant agency head, yet with at least one supervisory position below him or her. The empirical definition of administrative leadership applied by Van Wart (2003, 216) as leadership from above the frontline supervisor to the nonpolitical head of the organization, is used in this study of public managers. The present investigation concerns middle managers. They hold supervisory positions below the level of chief executive officer (or vice president), yet with at least one supervisory position below them.

Four samples constitute the basis for the comparison between formal leaders in Sweden. One sample contains data from 61 senior officials, constituting 31 percent of all officials in charge of regional social insurance offices. Data on senior officials in two regions were collected by a postal survey (response rate 95 percent) (Andersen and Månsson 2004). The second sample came from 176 principals and deputy principals in primary and secondary schools based on the membership files from the two main unions for school principals. Again, the method used was a postal survey. The response rate was 70 percent (Hansson and Andersen 2007). The data from the private sector came from two samples of managers at different levels, excluding top managers (chief executive officers) and supervisors (lowest level). The third sample contained leadership-style data on 148 Swedish managers rated by 1,561 subordinates (Arvonen 2001a). This sample was collected in situ when the respondents were participating in management training programs. The fourth sample contains postal survey data on decision-making styles and motivation profiles from 222 managers (response rate 71 percent) from eight manufacturing and service companies

(Andersen 1994). Identical instruments (Swedish version) were used for all factors and samples. No claim is made that the samples investigated are representative for all public and all private managers in Sweden.

Instruments for Measuring Leadership Behaviors

The CPE (change, production, employee) instrument was published in Ekvall and Arvonen (1991). It is used to measure *leadership style* and contains 10 items for each factor on the Likert scale from 1 to 4. The questionnaire has been tested and found reliable and valid (Ekvall and Arvonen 1991; Skogstad and Einarsen 1999). Subordinates of the managers filled in the instrument in the private sample. In the public sample, a self-reporting version was applied (the same items on the Likert scale from 1 to 6). Some caution must be taken when comparing the results from subordinates' ratings and self-reporting instruments. The instrument has been applied in research (e.g., Arvonen and Ekvall 1996; Arvonen and Pettersson 1999; Ekvall and Arvonen 1994; Sverke, Arvonen, and Lindell 1999).

Decision-making style is measured by the Keegan Type Indicator Form B (KTI; Keegan 1982) and published in Keegan (1984). The instrument contains 32 items, 24 of which are bipolar statements, and 8 of which are statements to be ranked (scale from 1 to 4). The instrument has acceptable face and content validity and is based explicitly on Jung's typology. The KTI is a test for managers measuring decision-making styles based on Jung's theory (Andersen 2000a, 57). The KTI instrument has been used in research (e.g., Andersen 1994, 2000a, 2004; Hansson and Andersen 2007).

The Andersen Motivation Profile Indicator (AMPI) is applied to measure *motivation profile* according to McClelland's definitions. It is a forced-choice instrument with 24 pairs of questions and 8 pairs of items for each of the variables. Items of the AMPI instrument are found in McClelland and Steele (1972). The full instrument is available in English. The instrument has been tested for reliability and validity (Andersen 1991). The AMPI has been applied in research (e.g., Andersen 1994, 1999, 2000b; Hansson and Andersen 2001).

Analysis

Two kinds of analyses are applied in order to find out whether managers have different behavioral patterns. First, theories on leadership style, decision-making style, and motivation profile all focus on grouping leaders into categories. The highest scores for the three variables for leadership style, the four decision-making variables, and the three motivation variables are used to classify each respondent. The χ^2 tests are used to find out whether there are significant differences in the distribution of leadership behaviors between leaders. Second, in order to compare the mean scores of the 10 behavioral variables across the categories, pairwise *t*-tests are applied. It is important to stress that these are two different kinds of analyses.

Analysis by Respondents

In order to establish whether the difference in distribution of leadership styles between public and private managers is purely random, χ^2 tests are applied. A 3 x 2 χ^2 test on the samples shows that the difference in leadership styles is significant, χ^2 (2, *n* = 361) = 22,396, *p* < .001. This result supports hypothesis 1 (see table 2a).

Table 2a Distribution of Leadership Behavioral Dimensions, Public and Private Managers (*N* = 439)

Behavioral Dimensions	Public Managers	Private Managers
Leadership style	*N* = 213	*N* = 148
Relationship style	46% (98)	69% (102)
Task style	4% (9)	6% (9)
Change style	50% (106)	25% (37)
Decision-making function	*N* = 230	*N* = 209
Sensing	15% (34)	26% (55)
Intuition	38% (87)	32% (66)
Thinking	20% (46)	23% (49)
Feeling	27% (63)	19% (39)
Motivation profile	*N* = 205	*N* = 209
Achievement motivation	46% (95)	33% (68)
Affiliation motivation	21% (43)	26% (55)
Power motivation	33% (67)	41% (86)

Table 2b Distribution of Leadership Behavioral Dimensions, Public Managers (*N* = 230)

Behavioral Dimensions	Social Insurance Managers	School Managers
Leadership style	*N* = 58	*N* = 155
Relationship style	43% (25)	47% (73)
Task style	5% (3)	4% (6)
Change style	52% (30)	49% (76)
Decision-making function	N = 58	N = 172
Sensing	19% (11)	14% (23)
Intuition	37% (21)	38% (66)
Thinking	22% (13)	19% (33)
Feeling	22% (13)	29% (50)
Motivation profile	*N* = 53	*N* = 152
Achievement motivation	53% (28)	44% (67)
Affiliation motivation	7% (4)	26% (39)
Power motivation	40% (21)	30% (46)

We also find differences in the relative distribution of distinctive decision functions between the groups. A 4 x 2 χ^2 test shows that the difference between public and private managers is significant, χ^2 (3, *N* = 439) = 12,603, *p* < .05. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is supported.

There are considerable differences in the distribution of distinctive motivation profiles between the two groups. A 3 x 2 χ^2 test informs us that the difference is significant, χ^2 (2, *N* = 414) = 8,263, *p* < .05. Public and private managers' motivation profiles are significantly different. This supports hypothesis 3.

Managers in social insurance agencies predominantly have the change-oriented style, and not the hypothesized production-oriented style (see table 2b). Almost half of the school principals have the change-oriented style, and not the relationship style. More than two-thirds of the business managers have the relationship-oriented style (table 2a). The means for these variables are also the highest (table 3a). These data indicate no support for hypothesis 1 for the public managers, but do support the hypothesis for the private sector.

The managers in the social insurance sector are mostly intuitive types. They do not mainly use the sensing decision-making

function, as hypothesized. Most school managers also use intuition when making decisions, but were expected to make decisions based on the feeling function. As a group, private managers also depend more on intuition, and less on thinking than expected. The means for these variables are also the highest (table 3a). These data indicate no support for hypothesis 2 for any of the groups.

More than half of the managers in social insurance agencies are achievement motivated, as expected. School principals are also mainly achievement motivated and not affiliation motivated as hypothesized. Most business managers are characterized—as expected—by power motivation (table 2a). The means for these variables are also the highest (table 3a). These data indicate support for hypothesis 3 for the social insurance and private managers, but not for the school managers.

Analysis by Variables

Pairwise *t*-tests are performed in order to ascertain whether there are significant differences between public and private managers

in leadership behavior (table 3a). These tests show that there are significant differences between public and private managers in terms of leadership style (all three variables), decision-making style (three out of four variables), and motivation profile (two out of three variables). Public and business managers are significantly different in leadership behavior.

In order to find out whether there are significant differences between the two groups of public managers in leadership behavior, pairwise *t*-tests are performed (table 3b). This analysis shows that there are no significant differences between public managers in social insurance agencies and schools regarding change-oriented style, intuition, and achievement motivation. This is in accordance with the distribution of variables (table 2b). Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are not supported. Managers in these two different public organizations do not differ significantly in leadership behavior. For behavior variables, which do not characterize public managers' behavior, there are significant differences in relationship and task styles, in thinking and feeling decision functions, and in affiliation and power motivation.

Table 3a Leadership Variables, Public and Private Managers, Means and *t*-test (*N* = 459)

Behavioral Dimensions	Public Managers Mean	Private Managers Mean	Pairwise Comparisons of Means *t*-value
Leadership style	*N* = 237	*N* = 148	Public versus private managers
Relationship style	4.66	4.998	−10.08**
Task style	4.31	3.968	2.76**
Change style	4.96	4.507	3.66**
Decision-making function	*N* = 237	*N* = 222	
Sensing	41.20	45.47	−2.26*
Intuition	49.68	46.43	3.03**
Thinking	40.26	42.09	−1.85
Feeling	44.86	42.02	2.87**
Motivation profile	*N* = 237	*N* = 222	
Achievement motivation	8.99	8.31	2.33*
Affiliation motivation	6.87	6.87	0
Power motivation	8.16	8.82	−2.59**

* *p* <.05; ** *p* <.01.

Table 3b Leadership Behavioral Variables, Public Managers, Means and *t*-test (*N* = 237)

Behavioral Dimensions	Social Insurance Managers Mean	School Managers Mean	Pairwise Comparisons of Means *t*-value
Leadership style	*N* = 61	*N* = 176	Social insurance managers versus school managers
Relationship style	4.93	4.56	5.23**
Task style	4.43	4.27	1.97*
Change style	5.03	4.93	1.23
Decision-making function	*N* = 61	*N* = 176	
Sensing	43.26	40.49	1.80
Intuition	48.26	50.18	−1.15
Thinking	42.74	39.40	2.05*
Feeling	41.74	45.92	−2.55**
Motivation profile	*N* = 61	*N* = 176	
Achievement motivation	9.36	8.82	1.47
Affiliation motivation	5.89	7.22	−3.31**
Power motivation	8.75	7.95	2.10*

* *p* <.05; ** *p* <.01.

Summary of Findings

When testing whether there are differences in leadership behaviors, the χ^2 tests yield significant differences between public and private managers regarding leadership styles, and motivation profiles distributions. Public and private managers differ significantly in leadership behavior, but not in decision-making styles.

Senior officials in social insurance offices mostly have the change-oriented leadership style. They are mostly intuitive types and have the achievement motivation profile. Most school principals have the change-oriented style. They are basically intuitive in their decision making. The principals are also achievement motivated. Private managers are predominantly relationship oriented. They are basically intuitive when making decisions. As expected, private managers are power motivated. It is worth noting that both public and private managers use intuition most frequently when making decisions. This is not the case for all kinds of organizational managers (Hansson and Andersen 2001). Nutt (2006) investigated whether public and private managers had different views of risk and adoption in decision making. Based on the Jungian functions, he found that public managers used the intuition and thinking styles more often than private managers. Private managers used the sensing and thinking styles more. These results are not directly comparable to this study as "no analysis of individual responses was offered" (Nutt 2006, 313). When testing for differences in behaviors, pairwise *t*-tests show significant differences. There are significant differences between public and private managers in terms of leadership style and motivation profile. This result supports hypotheses 1 and 3. This is contrary to Rainey (1989), who claimed that there is no real distinction between public and private management.

> This study shows that there are significant differences between public and private managers in terms of leadership behavior, while public managers appear to have virtually the same behavioral patterns.

An interesting result from this study is that the public managers as a group appear to have virtually the same behavioral patterns. Public managers have the change-oriented leadership style, make decisions by use of intuition, and are achievement motivated. The result is contrary to Van Wart (2003), who pointed out that the differences between public leaders are far greater and more challenging than are the similarities. In table 4, the hypothesized differences as well as the differences and similarities found are presented. Table 5 shows the behavioral differences and the similarity between public and private managers.

How Can These Differences and Similarities Be Explained?

This study shows that there are significant differences between public and private managers in terms of leadership behavior, while public managers appear to have virtually the same behavioral patterns.

The purpose of this section is to interpret and contextualize these findings in the light of two prominent theoretical traditions: the public–private distinctions tradition, which is primarily rooted in public administration, and the person–organization fit, which draws from the larger body of scholarship on private sector management. In addition to the public–private distinction and the person–organization fit, the criteria used when promoting employees to managerial positions may also explain the differences found.

Public–Private Distinction and Leadership Behavior

When studying public and private organizations, two competing perspectives are found. The generic perspective contains the claim that no such differences exist. The public–private distinction perspective contains the argument that there are significant differences between public and private organizations.

Table 4 Overview of Hypotheses and Results from the Tests

Behavioral Dimensions	Public Managers		Private Managers
	Social Insurance Managers	School Managers	
Leadership style	H_1: Production oriented	H_1: Relationship oriented	H_1: Relationship oriented
	R: Change oriented	R: Change oriented	R: Relationship oriented
Decision-making style	H_2: Sensing	H_2: Feeling	H_2: Thinking
	R: Intuition	R: Intuition	R: Intuition
Motivation profile	H_3: Achievement	H_3: Affiliation	H_3: Power motivation
	R: Achievement	R: Achievement	R: Power motivation

H = Hypothesis
R = Result of analysis

Table 5 Behavioral Differences and Similarities between Public and Private Managers

	Public Managers	Private Managers
Leadership style	Change-oriented style: Offers ideas about new and different ways of doing things; pushes for growth; initiates new projects; experiments with new ways of doing things; gives thoughts and plans for the future (Arvonen and Ekvall 1999, 245)	Relationship style: Shows regard for his or her colleagues as individuals, is considerate, is friendly, trusts his/her subordinates, allows his/her subordinates to decide (Arvonen and Ekvall 1999, 245).
Decision-making style	Intuition: Seeks to exploit the possibilities; oriented towards the future; tries to discover new possibilities and find new solutions; uses imagination; gets carried away with new ideas and possibilities and ignores practical realities (Jung 1971, 1976).	
Motivation profile	Achievement motivation: Desires to outperform someone else, meet or surpass some self-imposed standard of excellence, do something unique, be involved over long term in doing something well (McClelland and Steele 1972, 34).	Power motivation: Desires to have impact; make an impression on others; make powerful actions; exert strong positive or negative emotions in others: have concern for own reputation or position (McClelland and Steele 1972, 43).

Researchers advocating the *generic perspective* claim that public and private organizations face similar constraints and challenges. Management in all types of organizations should be viewed as a generic process. Buchanan (1975) held that these categories are not mutually exclusive. There is a continued need for clarification of the public–private distinction (Rainey 1983). The problem of defining public–private distinctions is not surprising. Organizations actually range along a continuum of public–private control. Up to 1983, only a few empirical comparisons of public and private organizations had been carried out.

Rainey, Pandey, and Bozeman (1995) found that public and private managers differed little on general questions about rule enforcement. They found no significant difference between the public and private managers in perceived goal ambiguity. Rainey and Bozeman (2000) found that public managers do not differ from private managers in response to such issues. Nor do public managers differ from business managers in their perceptions of organizational formalization. Perry and Rainey (2001) discussed the usefulness of the public–private distinction in organizational theory. In contrast to the "public-is-different" view, they presented the thesis that distinct characteristics of public organizations are merely myths that need to be clarified or discarded through sound research.

Vaillancourt Rosenau and Linder (2003) noted that the distinction between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors is being questioned. Some economists contend that the differences are disappearing altogether. Executives of nonprofits and for-profits agree that they face the same pressures, that they share the same incentives, and that convergence is taking place. In short, the authors suggested that recent events appear to be driving the two closer together. Many of the conventional distinctions between for-profits and nonprofits no longer apply.

Among the advocates of the *public–private distinction perspective,* we find Rainey, Backoff, and Levine (1976), who presented a number of propositions about differences in public and private organizations that have implications for management. They claimed that there still is a divergence between public and private organizations and their management. Analysis of similarities and differences between public and private organizations raises major difficulties of classification and definition that are not readily resolved. Rainey, Backoff, and Levin (1976) stated that there are indications of a number of important differences between private and public organizations that cannot be ignored in management research. More importantly, there are reasons to continue public and private comparisons, not to reject a general understanding of organizations and their management but to supplement it. They claimed that there are significant differences in (1) purposes, objectives, and planning; as well as in (2) selection, management, and motivation; and finally in (3) controlling and measuring results between these groups of management.

Bower (1977) claimed that public management is not just different in degree from corporate management, but is different in quality. The differences have important implications for public managers and how they view their jobs. Rainey (1979) claimed that his study might be taken as support for the generalization that, compared to most business organizations, government organizations in the United States will operate under greater procedural constraints on the administration of extrinsic incentives. Although Rainey (1979) did not investigate the same variables as in this study, it is possible to claim, as he did, that the enduring nature of the differences is related to the characteristics of public administration and private companies. Wittmer (1991) stated that previous research indicates that public employees and managers are different from their private sector counterparts in terms of work-related values, reward preferences, needs, and personality types. His study gave mixed results regarding hypothesized differences in the following work-related values: pay, job security, service ethics, and other rewards. Rainey, Pandey, and Bozeman (1995) found a striking difference between public and private managers on personnel rules and constraints. This is consistent with other studies. Public agencies show sharply higher levels of formalization of certain functions such as personnel and purchasing.

Cook (1998) argued that it is the character of public administration as a political institution that should be at the center for the conception of public management. What makes public administration and public management *public,* and thus distinctive, is that politics of the most fundamental sort are at the heart of the enterprise. Cook pointed out that differences in external environments help us understand how public and private organizations function and managers act.

Other studies show differences between these two groups in other areas. Bozeman and Rainey (1998) found—contrary to expectation and much of the literature—that managers in private organizations were more likely to prefer a greater number of rules than managers in public agencies. Furthermore, Rainey and Bozeman (2000) referred to the almost universal agreement among scholars that public organizations have more complexity and ambiguity. If we conclude that there are profound differences between public and private organizations, these differences may explain the differences in leadership behavior reported here.

Perry and Rainey (2001) stated that the public–private distinction is a significant area of organizational research that needs further analysis. Organizational and management theorists have much to contribute to this topic. The "public–private difference" stream of research concerns the roles that public and private organizations have in our society. Using this framework, researchers have found that the demands placed on public and private organizations vary to the extent that different practices are recommended for each sector (Nutt 2006). Pandey and Wright (2006) noted that even though well-argued beliefs favor public organizations' distinctive institutional context, much of the scholarship on organizational behavior and theory subscribes to a generic perspective on management and organizations. Public management scholarship has suggested that public organizations are fundamentally different from private organizations as a consequence of the functions they provide to society. Pandey and Wright's study does not make any direct public–private comparisons, but may shed some light on the potential distinctiveness of public sector organizations and management if one assumes that public organizations are more likely to experience considerable influence by organized external actors. The findings presented here may be interpreted as support for the importance of the public–private distinction as this study reports significant differences in leadership behavior between public and private managers and similarities

in public managers' behavior. If public and private organizations are different in significant ways, these differences may explain the differences found in leadership behaviors.

Person–Organization Fit, Promotion Criteria, and Leadership Behavior

Person–organization fit theories address the antecedents and consequences of compatibility between people and the organizations in which they work. These theories often include models of person–vocation fit and person–group fit. Person–vocation fit theories may predict vocational choice (Kristof 1996). O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) maintain that researchers seem to agree that culture may be an important factor in determining how well an individual fits into an organizational context. In studying person–organization fit, organizational behavior researchers have often taken one of two broad paths. One has led to exploration of the interaction of individual characteristics and broad occupational attributes. The other studies focus on the fit between specific characteristics of an organization and the people in it. The two major theories of vocational choice referred to by O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) both postulate that an individual will select a career or occupation that is similar to or that fits that person's self-concept. The study offers strong support for the validity of assessment of person–organization fit on the basis of value congruence. When investigating person–organization fit and six independent variables, Hanbury, Sapat, and Washington (2004) found that leadership style and decision-making style (personality) were strongly correlated with years of service for city managers in the United States.

Guyot (1962) assumed that there is a particular appropriate relationship between an individual and his occupational position. Another set of theoretical questions has to do with the latitude of personal behavior that "fits" into a particular role. There is general agreement that some sort of relationship does exist between personalities and occupational roles. One of the explanations suggested by Buchanan (1975) relates to the person–organization fit theory. When reviewing the motivational bases of behavior in organizational settings in public organizations, Perry and Porter (1982) also applied the individual–organization fit argument. Rainey (1983) noted that the absence of differences on the motivational scale failed to support the argument about the effect of civil service systems on motivation. Rainey (1989) asked whether differences in context produce differences in managerial roles. Commenting on "individual characteristics, work-related attitudes and behaviors," Rainey (1989) asked whether differences in incentive systems result in different attitudes and behaviors.

The choice of profession and career is, according to McClelland (1990), related to the power motive. Some professions and vocations give people more opportunity to exercise power and exert influence. According to McClelland (1971), the power motive may explain why some individuals are attracted to managerial positions. Those who work in the social insurance sector appear to be attracted to the possibilities of working for public welfare. It is important to create and sustain confidence among the general public in the social insurance system. People engaged in the educational sector are supposed to be characterized by a concern for other people. This study indicates that this is not the case for public managers. The differences found in work-related values may result from the personal

characteristics of those selecting public service or from socialization and organizational culture (Wittmer 1991). Individuals have different values, orientations, and goals and make organizational choices accordingly.

Guyot (1962) suggested that the explanation for differences between public and private managers in terms of motivation has to do with the merit system being different in these types of organizations, as well as the selection, retention and promotion criteria. Rainey (1983) commented on the promotion subscales used in his study. He stated that they appear to reflect badly on the personnel systems and incentive structures of public organizations. Relative dissatisfaction among public managers was perceived on promotion opportunities.

Knowledge about the differences in work-related values can be useful in, for instance, recruiting, selecting employees, and promoting managers (Wittmer 1991). As the analysis shows that there are no significant differences between the two groups of public managers with respect to leadership behavior, an explanation is needed. Some previous research has also reported similarities based on other variables (e.g., Rainey and Bozeman 2000; Rainey, Pandey, and Bozeman 1995). The causes of similarities in public managers' leadership behavior need to be explored further. It may be that public organizations are (1) basically similar, that (2) some individuals are attracted to public organizations rather than to private companies, and, finally, that (3) the criteria for promoting employees to managerial positions in public organizations are basically the same.

Swedish social insurance officials have often worked in the same agency for years. Their motivation to apply for a senior position is probably no different than that of most other employees. The promotion criteria for senior positions are professional qualifications, past experience, and personal abilities. School principals are academics, and academic merits are thus required. Promotion criteria in schools include educational proficiency (degrees and teaching experience), but because staffing is in the hands of the local administration, promotion criteria may differ. We must expect that promotion in companies is to some degree based on managers' effectiveness.

A "public–private difference" stream of research initiated a study of the roles that public and private organizations play in our society. Using this framework, researchers have found that the demands placed on public and private organizations vary to the extent that different practices are recommended for each sector (Nutt 2006). Even though the study by Nutt (2004) and this study are not directly comparable, empirical data suggest and support the public–private distinction. Pandey and Wright (2006) found that the political environment of organizations had an effect on organizations and individuals working in them. This relationship is not only at the core of public management theory, but also can inform public management practice. These three studies indicate that the leadership practices of public managers needs to be different from those of private managers.

Conclusion

From these analyses, we conclude that public and private managers are different in terms of two of the three leadership behavioral

dimensions investigated. The public managers investigated in two different types of organizations appear to have almost the same behavioral pattern. Managers in social insurance offices and school principals have the change-oriented leadership style. They use mostly intuition when making decisions. These public managers have the achievement motivation profile. Private managers are predominantly relationship oriented. They are also intuitive when making decisions. Private managers are power motivated. There are significant differences in leadership behavior between public and private managers, as hypothesized. One similarity in behavior has been reported: both public and private managers are characterized by intuition as the main decision-making function. The theoretical implication is that the behavior dimensions of leadership style, decision-making style, and motivation profile are relevant in research of leadership behavior in public organizations.

Three explanations for the differences in leadership behavior between public and private sector managers are presented. The first refers to organizational differences leading to behavioral differences. The second has to do with the choice of profession or vocation. Finally, the criteria used by the organizations for promoting people to leadership positions may present yet another explanation. These explanations may cause differences in leadership behavior between public and private managers. The same factors may also explain why the two groups of public managers exhibit similarity in leadership behavior. Public and private managers may differ in behavior, but basically they face the same challenges of achieving organizational goals with or through other people.

> There are significant differences in leadership behavior between public and private managers, as hypothesized. One similarity in behavior has been reported: both public and private managers are characterized by intuition as the main decision-making function.

Acknowledgments

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