

# Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance

ISSN: 2330-3131 (Print) 2330-314X (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wasw21>

---

## A Study of the First 99 Monday Morning Managers: Key Findings

Richard Boettcher & Linda Helm

To cite this article: Richard Boettcher & Linda Helm (2018): A Study of the First 99 Monday Morning Managers: Key Findings, Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance, DOI: [10.1080/23303131.2018.1500974](https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2018.1500974)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2018.1500974>



Published online: 31 Jul 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 33



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

---



## EDITORIAL

# A Study of the First 99 Monday Morning Managers: Key Findings

In July 2014, the Network for Social Work Management (NSWM) initiated a weekly blog series titled “Monday Morning Managers” (MMMs) featuring the autobiographical accounts of the history and experiences of actual practicing social work managers. The authors of this editorial recognized that this series of brief autobiographical essays could be a source of information, which would be responsive to several questions of significance to those who practice, study, and/or teach about social work leadership and administration. We resolved, therefore, to follow the series closely and to aggregate, through research methods, the reported experiences of these successful social work leaders and managers.

In March and April 2017, we executed a questionnaire survey of the 99 MMMs who had published their stories in the NSWM blog series from July 2014 through April 2017. Six email addresses were invalid thus yielding a survey universe of 93, of whom 68 responded (73.1%). This survey was a follow-up investigation of our first examination of this population in which we content analyzed the first 50 blogs published in the series. By means of our questionnaire, we sought to confirm or disconfirm conclusions drawn from the first study, and also we sought to “drill down” on two central questions: “What personality traits do Monday Morning Managers most prominently demonstrate as measured by the Five-Factor Model of personality,” and “What leadership styles do they favor?”

## Sample Demographics

The respondents in this study are middle age, well-educated, mostly female, mostly high-level and experienced managers. The mean age is 45.6 years with females outnumbering males 2:1. Only one respondent holds a BSSW degree, 45 respondents hold the MSW, 13 hold PhDs in social work, 8 hold PhDs in related fields, and 23 are non-MSWs. Five study respondents are front-line supervisors, two are university professors, and the other 61 respondents occupy middle-management to higher-executive level positions. The mean management experience is 14.8 years. The respondents work in the private nonprofit sector (34%), the public sector (22%), for educational institutions (21%), and in the for-profit realm (21%).

## Key Findings of the Survey

- 63.2% of the respondents entered into management roles after first working in direct social service roles.
- 25% of the MMMs went directly into management after obtaining a social work or related degree; three respondents (5%) were in management prior to obtaining a social work degree.
- In terms of educational preparation for management, 75% of the respondents indicated that their education prepared them in some specific way for a management or leadership role. Of this grouping, 19 specified that they had taken a management track in their MSW or other program and 27 identified content infused in their graduate curricula that informed them about management content such as leadership, financial management, strategic management, or community collaboration, for example. The remaining 18 respondents did not specify exactly how their education prepared them for a role in management.
- 74% of the MMMs indicated that networking has been extremely or very important to their careers and cite benefits such as receiving new positions, developing a network of supportive

colleagues, and receiving aid from network associates for challenging organizational problems. Another 17% said networking was moderately important to their careers.

- 85% of the study respondents acknowledge professional mentors who have guided them into leadership roles. The majority of mentorships originate from work-related relationships with college professors and field instructors coming in second.
- In terms of perceived leadership styles, 18% favor leading by personal behaviors such as expressing passion for mission, vision, and uplifting subordinate self-worth through reward and praise. Alternatively, 30% say they lead by focusing mainly on structural elements such as building organizational culture, shared decision making and collaboration. However, 52% favor neither approach exclusively and instead they say that they focus on the personal and organizational elements of leadership.
- When asked about approaches to motivating staff, 66.1% of MMM's rely heavily on personal interactions by using praise, recognition, and positive affirmation whereas 17.7% rely mainly on structural arrangements such as team-building professional development and various systems to support self-motivation, and finally 16% did not specify a favored means of motivation.
- On the Five Factor Model of personality (FFM) the MMMs scored high on Extraversion, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to new experience and slightly below the scale norm for Conscientiousness.
- On the Blake-Mouton Managerial Grid, a measure of preferred leadership style, three styles were detected among the MMM's, namely, the Team style, the Authoritarian style and the Country Club style.

## The Five Factor Model

As noted, one of the purposes of the questionnaire study was to get a clearer picture of the personality characteristics of the MMMs in our sample. For this purpose, we chose to employ an extensively researched personality theory known in the psychological literature as the Five Factor Model (FFM) also known as the “Big Five.”

Beginning in 1961, but especially since the 1980s, many research psychologists have concluded, through extensive lexical factor analysis, that five words summarily embrace the nearly 18,000 words that describe personality traits found in the English language dictionary. These overarching terms are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and non-neuroticism. These traits, also known by the acronym OCEAN or the Big Five, encompass broad domains of personality “facets” or characteristics. For example, *openness* subsumes imaginative, intellectually curious, willingness to try new things. *Conscientiousness* includes a tendency to self-discipline, to strive for achievement, to be prepared. *Extraversion* includes such qualities as high group visibility, talkativeness, self-assertion and derivation of energy from interaction, as distinguished from introversion whose persona have loner tendencies toward social engagement, for example. *Agreeableness* is a trait that is found in persons who value getting along with others. These persons are sincerely kind, generous, trusting, trustworthy, and helpful. *Neuroticism* is the tendency to be emotionally reactive and vulnerable to stress and to experience negative emotions such as anger, anxiety or depression. These five factors reside on continua ranging from high to low degrees of manifestation, for example, agreeable to disagreeable, and so forth. The FFM is the most widely used theory of personality in contemporary psychological research and enjoys a near validity consensus among personality researchers (Widiger, 2015).

The reason for our interest in the Big Five is because the model shows high correlation to work performance and to leadership in the workplace. This is the case across many different professions and occupational groupings such as managers, salespersons, police, business leaders, and several professions. The Big Five dimensions are also related to team performance and play a significant role in the emergence of leadership in organizations. For example, people scoring high in extraversion, openness

to experience, and agreeableness are more likely to become leaders than those who score low on these qualities (Greenberg & Baron, 2008).

Thus, in our questionnaire, respondents were invited to complete a brief measure of the Big Five, namely, the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). TIPI's authors report that though their short form lacks some desirable psychometric properties when compared to the standard, longer 240 item NEO-PI-R instrument (Costa & McCrae, 1992), they conclude that TIPI can stand "as a reasonable proxy for the longer instrument".

The MMMs who responded to this item ( $n = 58$ ) scored high on four of these dimensions of personality on a 7-point scale. A total of 36 reflected extraversion, six favored introversion, and we termed 16 "in-betweeners," neither clearly extraverts nor introverts. The mean score on this quality was 4.53 (the TIPI normative mean for extraversion is 4.44). The mean score for agreeableness was 5.31 (TIPI = 5.23). On conscientiousness, the MMMs  $M = 4.19$ , (TIPI = 5.4). On emotional stability, (non-neuroticism), the sample  $M = 5.92$  (TIPI = 4.83). Finally, on openness, the mean score = 5.8 (TIPI = 5.38).

These results clearly demonstrate the presence of the Big Five personality qualities in the sample to a level that exceeds reported normative mean scores, except for *conscientiousness* where a subset of SIX respondents tended to pull the group Mean to a lower level on this quality. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first time that social service leaders and managers have been studied within the framework of the Big Five model. Given its high degree of applicability, we believe that the FFM is a powerful conceptual framework that can be very usefully applied in educational and organizational contexts involving the evaluation, training, and development of social service managers and leaders.

### Blake-Mouton Managerial Grid

To identify the predominant leadership styles of the MMM sample we employed the Blake-Mouton Managerial Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964). The Blake-Mouton Grid was first introduced into management studies in 1964 as a way of expanding on McGregor's theory X and theory Y typology of leadership (McGregor, 1960). An updating of grid theory is offered by McKee and Carlson in their publication titled *The Power to Change* (McKee & Carlson, 1999). By completing an 18-item instrument, respondents classify themselves along two leadership dimensions: concern for people and concern for production or task. The intersection of these two dimensions produces five possible leadership style types:

- (1) Low concern for people and production called the indifferent or impoverished leader
- (2) The accommodating or country club leader who is high on people, low on task
- (3) The dictatorial or authoritarian leader, low on people, high on production
- (4) The status-quo or middle-of-the-road leader who displays equal, middle level concern for people and production
- (5) The sound or team leader who is high on people and production.

McKee and Carlson have added two types: the opportunistic style that is exploitative and manipulative and the paternalistic style. Opportunistic leaders have no fixed location on the Grid and will adopt any style to advance personal benefit. The paternalistic style alternates between country club and authoritarian by using praise and support but discouraging challenges to their thinking.

Grid theory is often criticized for built-in tendencies toward encouraging socially desirable responses. That is, people may have a tendency to select responses that will make them look like a "sound" or "team" leader. This is not to deny the existence of these five (or seven) types of leadership styles. It is, however, to say that the evidence that the Managerial Grid accurately reflects a respondent's true type in every case in this study is open to question.

The result of our administration of the Grid to our MMM respondents produced three types:

- 55 self-classified as Team Managers
- 4 came back as Authoritarian
- 1 identified as Country Club
- 8 did not complete the instrument.

The preference among the MMMs for the team style of leadership, as measured by the Managerial Grid is consistent with the central tendency of the sample's perceived leadership styles. For example, 52% of the sample favor personal and organizational elements of leadership. As one respondent wrote, "You have to manage the work and the people, not one or the other."

The results of the questionnaire survey, as reported above, are very consistent with the conclusions we gleaned from the previous qualitative study. Not surprisingly, the demographics of these two studies are closely congruent, though the first study was somewhat skewed toward less experienced MMMs. The first 50 bloggers similarly endorsed the importance of networking and mentorships and, again, like the questionnaire sample, testified that the work place, not academia, was the dominant source of mentorship relations. In terms of paths to management, the two studies are consistent. That is, the qualitative study revealed that about 66% of the MMMs had direct practice experience before management and about 25% went into administration with no background in direct service work, a finding that was closely repeated in the questionnaire survey. The findings in self-perceived leadership and motivational approaches are also consistent for the two studies.

## Discussion

### *Paths to management*

In both studies cited above we found that the predominant path to management for the MMMs was graduate degree → direct or clinical practice → supervision or management. This was the common pathway for 63.2% of the questionnaire respondents. However, for 25% of the respondents the path to management was: graduate degree → supervision or management. Given the strong bias in schools of social work for the direct service to management route, (Patti, 2000), this finding bears some further examination. Does this finding represent something peculiar to this sample, that is, is the graduate degree to management subgroup a sampling bias? Or does a macroconcentration support immediate entry into a management position? Some support for the later position can be gleaned from a study of one school's MSW graduates over a 5-year period. This study found that 27.5% of the students who completed the social administration concentration secured first jobs after graduation involving administration only. Additionally, 32.5% secured jobs involving a combination of administrative and direct service responsibilities (Boettcher & Burke, 2000).

### *Preparation for management roles*

A total of 70.6% of all respondents indicated that their graduate degree had prepared them in some specific way for a role in social service management. Of the 45 MSW graduates, 73% indicated they had been prepared educationally to assume managerial roles. This finding regarding respondents' perceived preparation for managerial roles via their MSW curricula provides support for the NSWMC Certificate Program in Social Service Management. This certificate program requires participating graduate schools to identify from their MSW curricula how these studies prepare students for roles in management. To partner in the NSWMC program, schools must identify by what means—course and field internships—students are exposed to 75% of 122 specific management performance indicators.

## Networking and mentoring

The vast majority of MMM respondents to the questionnaire report that networking (91%) and mentor relationships (85%) have been significant to the progression and sustainability of their careers. The benefits of networking reported by the MMMs are numerous. A total of 34 respondents reported that networking has aided them with various organizational challenges, 32 respondents state that networking has helped them secure a new position and 44 rely on their collegial networks for emotional and advising support. In a response that typifies the MMMs' enthusiasm for networking one respondent wrote, "Networking has been crucial to support what I do and to ensure that it is being done ethically."

Similarly, the MMMs affirm that mentoring relationships have been significant to their career progression and development. In a "check all that apply" item, the most frequently acknowledged mentor category was "work-related superior" (80%), "colleague" ranked second (42.6%), "college professor" was third (30.9%), and "field instructor" during internship ranked fourth (26.5%). Among those MMMs who went directly into management after graduate school, professors and field instructors were the predominant locus of mentorship relations, 65.7% to 44.9% for work-related mentors. This association suggests that teachers and field instructors have, in this sample, served to advance the careers of a subset of the MMMs whom they perceived to be prepared for roles in management.

## Two Conclusions

First The Big Five personality characteristics are clearly represented by the MMMs in this study. Those who aspire to positions of leadership as well as those who are currently entrusted with such positions would benefit from evaluating themselves against the FFM, particularly the qualities of extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness

Second, for a favored style of management, the MMMs collectively make a strong case for the Team Type of leadership that reflects a commitment to concern for people and a concern for task accomplishment. It is not sufficient to be focused on one dimension of leadership over the other; the successful leader must attend consistently and tenaciously to both.

## Future Research

As noted earlier, the cohort of MMMs is a significant population of successful leaders and managers whose collective experiences can significantly expand our knowledge of social service leadership and management practices. Content analysis and questionnaire studies can bring us somewhat closer to an understanding of these processes. What is needed next is for researchers to more directly observe and document the day-to-day activities of the leaders who guide and direct our vital social service systems. This type of research could be accomplished through direct observational studies in which the researcher "shadows" the leader/manager day to day. Or, managers might be invited to keep time/activity logs that would document their functioning on a day-to-day basis. Still another approach to more direct study of the MMM cohort or any grouping of social service managers might involve having these managers keep a narrative diary of their activities for some fixed period of time. We hope that other researchers will be stimulated to employ these and other direct methods of study on the next 100 MMMs.

## References

- Blake, R. & Mouton, J. (1964). *The Managerial Grid: The Key to Leadership Excellence*. Houston: Gulf Publishing.
- Boettcher, R. E., & Burke, C. A. (2000). The labor market experiences of MSW graduates with concentrations in clinical and social administration practice. *Areté, 24*(2), 1–13.

- Costa, P.T. Jr. & McCrae, R.R. (1992). NEOPIR Professional Manual. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.
- Gosling, D. S., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann, W. B., Jr. (2003, December 2003). A very brief measure of the big five personality domains. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37(6), 504–528.
- Greenberg, J., & Baron, R. (2008). *Behavior in organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- McGregor, D. (1960). *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- McKee, R., & Carlson, B. (1999). *The power to change*. Austin, Texas: Grid International, Inc.
- Patti, R. J. (2000). The landscape of social welfare management. In R. J. Patti (Ed), *The handbook of Social Welfare Management* (pp. pp.3–25). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Pub. Inc.
- Widiger, T. A. (2015). *The oxford handbook of the five factor model of personality*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Richard Boettcher  
*College of Social Work, The Ohio State University, Stillman Hall, Columbus, Ohio*  
 [boettcher.1@osu.edu](mailto:boettcher.1@osu.edu)

Linda Helm  
*College of Social Work, The Ohio State University, Stillman Hall, Columbus, Ohio*  
 [helm.28@osu.edu](mailto:helm.28@osu.edu)