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Women, men and management styles

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Although only 3 to 6 per cent of top managerial positions are held by women, employers have come to realize that they neglect managerial talent in nearly half their workforce if they do not appoint women to such positions. However, it is true that managerial work is undergoing rapid change and as Kanter has pointed out: "Change-adept organizations cultivate the imagination to innovate, the professionalism to perform, and the openness to collaborate" (Kanter, 1997, p. 7). Women are said to possess "feminine" qualities such as relationship building and teamwork that are valued in a more collaborative and creative management environment. This article will examine the implications of the use of the word "feminine" in psychological, social and cultural contexts. It will consider the application of the concepts of gender difference in language use, in theories of leadership and in communication styles.

Gender as a social construct

Man, woman, male, female, masculine, feminine are used in the discussion of sex and gender issues in biology, anthropology, social science, psychology, cross-cultural studies and even management theories. The concepts of sex and gender are often used interchangeably in written material and in conversation, as are the adjectives male and masculine, female and feminine. In order to know what is being discussed, therefore, these terms need to be defined more clearly.

Biology divides species according to sex: male or female, and these sex categories are mostly taken for granted. The biological dichotomy lends its structure to one of the current frameworks of gender studies, the "sex role theory". According to this, being a man or a woman means enacting a general role as a function of one's sex. But this theory also uses the words masculine and feminine, asserting that the feminine character in particular is produced by socialization into the female role. According to this approach, women acquire a great deal of sex role learning early in their lives, and this can lead to an attitude of mind that creates difficulties later, during their working lives (Lipsey et al., 1990). It is a form of "culture trap".

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Most sex role theory is constructed not on field observation but on analysis of standard cases. Role theory is often seen by psychologists as amounting to a form of social determinism whereby individuals are trapped into stereotypes, which people then choose to maintain as customs.

Psychological traits of masculinity or femininity were measured a quarter century ago on "gender scales" in the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). On the masculine side of the scale were the characteristics of dominion, ambition, cynicism and rebelliousness, while on the feminine side were consideration, tact, dependence, emotion. Typical masculine activities included repairing electrical appliances, for example, whereas typical feminine activities included paying attention to physical appearance. Such results did not dispel the frequent confusion between "sex difference" and "masculinity, femininity", although some items reflected an intuitive notion of what "masculinity" and "femininity" mean (Constantinople, 1973). For, as will be seen in the section on concepts of gender and culture below, the masculinity-femininity spectrum is a dimension of societal culture quite independent of sex. Accordingly, femininity and masculinity as attributes of women and men need not be treated as polar opposites. Rather they may be treated on separate scales, and the same person may get high scores on both.

Women and men have also been tested on their respective verbal ability, anxiety and extroversion. Popular perceptions suggest that "women have greater verbal ability" and that "men are more aggressive". In fact, studies have revealed few clear-cut generalized differences. Indeed, the striking conclusion is that the main finding, from about 80 years of research, is a massive psychological *similarity* between women and men in the populations studied by psychologists (Connell, 1987).

Gender is a social construct. Whereas sex is the term used to indicate biological difference, gender is the term used to indicate psychological, social and cultural difference. This is a practice-based theory according to which sexuality is socially constructed, as are the differences (other than biological) between men and women. Goffman (1977, p. 305) speaks of a "genderism" as "a sex-class linked individual behavioral practice" — a practice linked to gender as class. Gender identity thus emerges from rearing patterns, and is not determined by the hormones. Gender is determined by social practice, and its patterns are specifically social. Social structure is not preordained but is historically composed, thus femininity and masculinity should be seen as historically mutable. According to Harding (1986), the concept of gender applies at different levels. It is: (1) a dimension of personal identity, a psychic process of experiencing self; (2) an element in social order, the foundation of social institutions such as kinship, sexuality, the distribution of work, politics, culture; and (3) a cultural symbol which can be variously interpreted, the basis for normative dichotomies.

The femininity and masculinity dimension has also been applied in intercultural studies. As shown below, differentiation between groups implies that within so-called intercultural groupings — according to country, ethnicity, religion or language — new intracultural distinctions should be made accord-

ing to gender, as well as generation and social class. Gender is generally considered as representing a cultural category (Cox, 1993), as normative and value differences between women and men are perceived as significant (Hennig and Jardim, 1976; Gilligan, 1982; and Helgesen, 1990).

Gender and language

One of the areas to which gender has been widely applied is language. Gender, language and the relation between them are all social constructs or practices, under constant development by a group of individuals united in a common activity, e.g. a family, a sports team, colleagues, etc. (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 1992).

Until the 1970s, linguists' descriptions of sex differences in speech were based on intuitive observation rather than on scientific research. In sociolinguistics, the interaction between linguistic variation and sex has been examined, though the linguistic variation found between men and women may be a function of gender, and only indirectly a function of sex (Eckert, 1989).

In practice, male speech and conversation strategies are usually taken as the norm, so that female speech has been assessed in relation to male speech. Female speech is said to be less rational and to display greater sensitivity, to use fewer abstract words, a smaller vocabulary and a simpler structure. Women are said to use more adjectives, modal verbs, interjections, tag questions, etc. Female language has been defined as polite and insecure, male language as assertive and direct. The conversational styles of women have been described as cooperative, those of men as competitive. However, evidence to this effect is not fully convincing — sex differences in language use have sometimes been demonstrated, sometimes not. Moreover, differences have also been found according to the status and age of the speaker relative to the status of the person spoken to (Verbiest, 1990; Brouwer, 1982, 1991).

There are currently two approaches to gender differences in conversation styles: one stresses the dominance factor, the other, the cultural factor. The former, represented by Cameron (1985, 1995), West and Zimmerman (1983) and Zimmerman and West (1975), focuses on the unequal distribution of power in society: men have more social power, which enables them to define and control situations. As male norms are dominant in social interaction, when the interaction takes place between men and women, observable influences emerge. The approach based on cultural factors, represented by Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990, 1994), stresses socialization: men and women learn different communication strategies and develop distinct conversational styles because they belong to different subcultures.

Broadly speaking, men and women inhabit different worlds, which gives rise to sex-differentiated meanings attached to words. According to Spender (1980), language is literally "man-made" because the meanings of words were determined by men who established themselves as the central and positive norm: feminine forms in any language are often pejorative and reflect the inferior position of women in society and in the family. It may be that women face

barriers in the use of language at both the deep (semantic) level and the surface (register) level. In other words, there may be an additional process, an extra stage in which women must engage: they have to translate their meaning into words that have been established by the male-defined register. As reality is constructed and sustained primarily through language, those who control language are thus also able to control reality. This male control of meaning extends to the register of public discourse, a medium in which men are generally more at ease than women. There is a distinction between female speech and male speech which is related to differences in explicitness and implicitness, or directness and indirectness as observed in cross-cultural studies and to politeness and face-saving strategies as they are described in pragmatics — the application or use of an existing syntactic and semantic structure (Brown and Levinson, 1987). If female language can be described as displaying insecurity this may be because such insecurity is a face-saving strategy on the part of women.

However, what was initially seen by Lakoff (1975) as powerless and weak in female language can be redefined as being a valuable interactional skill. Indeed, what linguistics considers to be "women's talk" could be described as "feminine". In women's culture, people are requested to perform tasks, not commanded; hedges and disclaimers are frequent; directness is considered rude; and conflict and aggressive behaviour are avoided. An indirect use is made of language, with rising intonations, in order to avoid offending and to preserve good relations at all costs. This pattern can also be seen in the light of the accommodation theory developed by Giles and Coupland (1991), who state that conversational partners adapt to one another by showing converging conversational styles. This makes interaction easier because it reduces felt differences between conversational partners.

However, generalizing about language use on the basis of socio-cultural constructs such as gender or ethnicity is also problematic: it perpetuates a stereotype that is based on the assumption of group homogeneity (Davis, 1996). The context and institutionalization of language involve not only pragmatics but also their historical evolution. Indeed, Segal (1987) remarks that an overemphasis on language marginalizes the grass-roots concerns of the feminist movement. For example, most major publishers now have a feminist, women's studies or women writers' list — one of the most successful areas in contemporary book publishing. According to Connell, "To some extent the exclusion of women is replaced by marginalization, through such devices as a separate publishing list, or media trivialization. The main narrative of the public world — wars, rockets, governments falling, profits rising — carries on as before" (1987, p. 248). Gender concerns should extend beyond crude categorical assumptions about power and the relations between person and group, and should encompass institutions, economics, politics and the media.

Gender and culture

Social and cultural studies categorize people by country, region, ethnicity, religion or language but also by gender, generation and social class. Within

each category, however, cultural differences may be found and Hofstede (1980, 1991) identified four dimensions to these:

- individualism/collectivism (loose or tight group bonds);
- "power distance" (unequal power);
- femininity/masculinity (emphasis on relationships and caring vs. money, progress, success); and
- "uncertainty avoidance" (the degree to which individuals feel threatened by unknown or uncertain situations).

Hofstede describes the masculine and feminine poles as follows:

Masculine pole	Feminine pole
Fighting: "May the best man win"	Negotiation and compromise
Rewards to the strong	Solidarity with the weak
Economic growth	Protection of the environment
Arms spending	Aid to poor countries

Source: Hofstede, 1991.

A closer look at "feminine" as opposed to "masculine" values shows expected feminine and masculine behaviour. Of course, no culture is either wholly feminine or wholly masculine: there are many gradations, and a culture may be more or less feminine in one respect and more or less masculine in another.

Masculine pole	Feminine pole
Success, progress, money	Relationships, caring
Facts	Feelings
Living to work	Working to live
Decisiveness, assertiveness	Intuition and consensus
Competition	Equality
Confrontation	Compromise, negotiation

Source: Hofstede, 1991.

What people look for from their work also varies, according to their values:

Masculine pole	Feminine pole
Good income	Good relations with boss
Recognition	Collaboration
Promotion	Pleasant environment
Challenge	Security

Source: Hofstede, 1991.

Box 1. Implications of cultural differences in management

	Collectivist	Individualist
Communication		
Circulation	Top-down	Bottom-up/top-down
Mode	Direct	Indirect
Interpersonal relations	Hierarchical	Egalitarian
Separation of work and social life	Integrated	Separate
Leadership		
Style	Autocratic	Participative
Decision-making	Centralized	Decentralized
Perception of role of superior	Expert	Animator
Negotiation		
	Autocratic	Consultative
	Win/lose	Win/win
Organization and control		
Responsibility	Dependence	Independence
Structure	Collective	Individualistic
Organizational mode	Simultaneous	Sequential
Formalization	Implicit	Explicit
Recruitment, selection, promotion	Belonging to socio-cultural environment	By achievement, results
Promotion	Seniority	Competence, results
Planning, evaluation, innovation	Harmony	Control
	Past	Future
Leadership	External control	Initiative
Conflict resolution	Avoidance	Confrontation
Training	Theoretical	Experience

Source: Adapted from Gauthey and Xardel (1990), p. 50.

Thus, looked at from a cross-cultural perspective, "appropriate" managerial skills appear to be "masculine" skills. They highlight the dominant, assertive, decisive aspects of behaviour and downplay the team and supportive behaviours which are more readily identified with women. But this traditional view is now giving way to a more nuanced approach (see below).

The cultural differences described above imply different management styles, as expressed in communication, leadership, negotiation, organization and control. The differences are summarized in box 1. Although the focus here is on differences between collectivist and individualist cultures, it is clear that some management styles can be characterized as "feminine" or "masculine", though they are seldom unequivocally one or the other. Moreover, in some countries, cultural norms may display more "feminine" characteristics than in others. International management has now come to understand and accept differences in national management styles. The result has been a reappraisal and upgrading of feminine styles relative to the dominant "American management style", which is mostly masculine. Team behaviour is seen as increasingly important to successful management. Barham, Fraser and Heath (1988) portray

the manager of the future as concerned less with giving instructions and controlling subordinates and more with maintaining a network of relationships within the organization and with those outside, e.g. customers. The criterion used to assess managers may indeed discriminate against women, but it may also have been formulated according to a model of management now no longer appropriate for the work of managers as a whole (Hirsh and Jackson, 1989).

Women in management

Although still considered an untapped resource, women are now said to be welcome in management because of the values they bring. In more "feminine" cultures, values traditionally considered feminine, such as intuition, communication and social aptitude, already naturally form part of management style and of life in general.

Nevertheless, though increasing, the number of women managers remains small. Women are under-represented in highly-paid occupations; proportionately fewer women than men attain higher-paid jobs in the occupations in which both are represented; and it takes them longer to do so (Lipsey et al., 1990). Where women are present in management, they are usually in middle management. They seem unable to shatter "the glass ceiling" blocking access to top management. One of the reasons for this may be women's so-called lack of ambition. Gail Rebuck, chief executive of the Random House publishing group, feels that women's frequent failure to reach the top is largely due to lack of confidence and aspirations. Moreover, women usually pay a higher personal price for top positions than men do: "While men and women managers often share common stressors, females in managerial positions are often faced with additional pressures, both from work and from the home/social environment, not experienced by male managers ..." (Davidson and Cooper, 1992, p. 38).

In March 1995, the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission in the United States released a report which stated that women have made little progress in winning the power posts of corporate America. It reported that women make up a mere 5 per cent of senior managers — vice-president or higher — in Fortune 1000 companies. Furthermore, it concluded grimly that "At the highest levels of business, there is indeed a barrier only rarely penetrated by women or persons of color". However, *Newsweek* (1995) stated there are "holes in the glass ceiling theory", because women thrive in the rest of the economy, citing as evidence the fact that Fortune 1000 companies employ about 20 per cent of the nation's female workers and that even in the Fortune 1000 companies the 5 per cent of women senior managers represented progress from the proportion of 1.5 per cent in the mid-1980s. ILO (1997), on the other hand, concluded that, almost universally, women have failed to reach leading positions in major corporations and private sector organizations, irrespective of their abilities.

One of the reasons often given for the relative absence of women from top management positions is the way women act and react in organizations, in leadership posts, in negotiations, etc. Kanter (1977) summarized the barriers preventing women's access to the top as follows:

- Women do not behave in an authoritarian way: tasks become requests, women do not use imperatives.
- Women behave in a rather unaggressive way: they avoid conflicts.
- Women feel responsible: they frequently say "sorry ..." .
- Women are available: their door is always open.
- Women get personally involved: relationships are important.
- Women seek approval: they use indirect formulations, particular intonations in their speech.
- Women want to be "nice", and fear abuse of power: they are smiling, indirect, hesitant.
- Women attribute their success to others.

Lipsey et al. (1990) also consider sex role socialization to be a major cause of women's low representation in top management:

> The causes of gender differences in labor-market attachment have attracted attention from both social psychologists and from economists. There is ample evidence that *sex role socialization* is an important factor. To the extent that women and men are socialized to accept the view that women should be the primary caretakers of young children, some social scientists argue that differences in labor-force attachment arise from a form of indirect discrimination (p. 394).

This culture trap operates at different levels: the locus of control, low expectations, fear of success, assertion, the desire for power and the dependent role.

Locus of control. There is a strong tendency for women to be externalizers (to feel that events affecting them are the result of luck or chance), whereas men are more likely to be internalizers (to feel that events are the result of their own actions). This implies that women acquiesce more readily than men. But there are other possibilities: men may not be discouraged so quickly as women because as children they received more stimulation in their environment (from their parents, for example) than girls did. However, it is not always easy to distinguish cause and effect.

Low expectations. When performing a stereotypically male job, women may feel that their abilities are unequal to the requirements of the tasks involved.

Fear of success. In order to behave in a socially approved manner, women are said to avoid success or "the appearance of success".

Assertion and desire for power. Women are often socialized not to be assertive or aggressive or not to seek control and power.

The dependent role. Women are said to be more easily swayed and more reliant on others. The caring nature commonly attributed to women was said by Gilligan (1982) to be a result of psychological evolution whereby girls, seeing themselves as a continuation of their mothers, fear independence and so try to maintain the dependent relationship with their mothers. Boys, on the other hand, have to force a clear break with their mothers in order to prove their own separate identity, and as a result develop a fear of emotions. Society's constant emphasis on women's dependence, other-directness, self-sacrifice and nurtur-

ing, caring role contributes to women's ambivalence about their own worth (Finn, Hickley and O'Doherty, 1969).

However, Davidson and Cooper (1992) interviewed a sample of women managers and found a more nuanced pattern. For example, a majority of women in the sample were internalizers, in common with many male managers. Women who were firmly established in managerial careers often appeared both ambitious and career-oriented. In some studies they were found to be more ambitious than men and to be motivated more by intrinsic factors (such as personal growth) than by extrinsic factors (such as salary and status). The majority of women managers had learned not to fear success: they had gained in confidence and experience. Yet, assertive, power-seeking behaviour also presents women with a dilemma: the qualities perceived as displaying leadership in a man are often judged to be traits of hostility and aggression in a woman (Dipboye, 1978).

Too often, a woman is in a no-win situation. In order to be viewed as competent, she has to project certain masculine characteristics; but if she does, she is seen as non-conformist, and consequently as unpredictable and unsuitable for promotion. The solution women managers often find to this dilemma is to behave entirely like their male counterparts. Some women managers are proud to achieve this, while others strongly disapprove.

These findings confirm the theory of gender as a social construct. That which in one society is considered as a weakness in women, in another society is found to be a generally accepted cultural factor and a necessary element in cross-cultural communication. Behavioural differences between men and women are, then, simply differences between cultural groups, and should be studied as such. Indeed, given the present tendency toward less hierarchical organizations, with a stress on training, teamwork, the sharing of power and information, and networking, the talents of women in these fields may well turn to their advantage.

Leadership styles

For more than a decade now, new values, sometimes called feminine values, have appeared in business. These values contrast with the competitive and authoritarian approach usually associated with traditional masculine management as they are based on consensual relations and inspire a different management approach to communication, leadership, negotiation, organization and control. Increasingly, this rebalancing of values is seen as key to business success.

At the end of the twentieth century, the workplace is radically different. Flexibility and innovation characterize global economic conditions and fast-changing technology. Cameron (1995) calls this the "shift in the culture of Anglo-American capitalism" (p. 199) away from traditional (aggressive, competitive, individualistic) interactional norms and towards a new management style stressing flexibility, teamwork and collaborative problem-solving. According to Connell, "commercial capitalism calls on a calculative masculinity

and the class struggles of industrialization call on a combative one. Their combination, competitiveness, is institutionalized in 'business' and becomes a central theme in the new form of hegemonic masculinity" (1987, p. 156).

There seems to be a true structural change under way here. The business world is questioning the structure it copied from the military hierarchy at the end of the Second World War. The masculine culture of large corporations cannot easily adapt to a context of uncertainty and constant evolution. The team and supportive behaviours more readily identified with women are perceived as increasingly important for management (Hirsh and Jackson, 1989) and women's interactive style is often better suited to dealing with problems.

In the 1970s, women managers were supposed to act and talk like men, if they wanted to reach the top. Harragan (1977), characterizing business as a "no-woman's-land", urged women to recognize that the modern corporation was modelled on military structures and functioned according to the precepts of male team sports. This implied that, in order to master corporate culture, women had both to indoctrinate themselves with the military mindset and to study the underlying dynamic of confrontational games such as football. Hennig and Jardim (1976) also urged women to study football in order to master the male concept of "personal strategy": winning, achieving a goal or reaching an objective.

Grant (1988) studied what women can offer to organizations and identified the psychological qualities that are relevant to organizations and are commonly found in women. His findings support those of other studies that stress women's more cooperative behaviour (important for relational consultation and democratic decision-making) and their need for a sense of belonging rather than self-enhancement; their ability to express their vulnerability and their emotions; and their perception of power less as domination or ability to control, than as a liberating force in the community.

The feminine style of management has been called "social-expressive", with personal attention given to subordinates and a good working environment; by contrast, the masculine management style has been described as instrumental and instruction-giving. However, these qualities are not necessarily reflected in the way women managers actually manage. An attempt to examine their managerial behaviour was made by Helgesen (1990), who repeated Minzberg's diary study, only this time with women. Minzberg (1973) analysed the diaries of managers, all of them male: he described what managers actually did, discerning several patterns. In 1990, Helgesen conducted the same research with women managers. The differences that appeared are shown in box 2.

Rather than a comparison between male and female managers, this could be seen more as a comparison of management cultures that changed over time. In the 1960s, great value was placed on narrow expertise, on the mastery of prescribed skills and on conformity to the corporate norm. There was no need to integrate workplace and private-sphere responsibilities. In today's organizations, hierarchies tend to give way to less formal structures. The economy is more diverse, the focus is on innovation and fast information exchange, value is placed on breadth of vision and on the ability to think creatively. Top-down

Box 2. Sex differences in managerial styles

Male managers	Female managers
The executives worked at an unrelenting pace, and took no breaks in activity during the day.	They worked at a steady pace, but with small breaks scheduled throughout the day.
They described their days as characterized by interruption, discontinuity, and fragmentation.	They did not view unscheduled tasks and encounters as interruptions.
They spared little time for activities not directly related to their work.	They made time for activities not directly related to their work.
They exhibited a preference for live encounters.	They preferred live encounters but scheduled time to attend to mail.
They maintained a complex network of relationships with people outside their organizations.	They maintained a complex network of relationships with people outside their organizations.
Immersed in the day-to-day need to keep the company going, they lacked time for reflection.	They focused on the ecology of leadership.
They identified with their jobs.	They saw their own identities as complex and multifaceted.
They had difficulty sharing information.	They scheduled time for sharing information.

Source: Helgesen, 1990.

authoritarianism has yielded to a networking style, in which everyone is a resource (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1986).

Helgesen (1995) considered that feminine principles (such as caring, intuitive decision-making, non-hierarchical attitudes, integration of work and life, social responsibility) reflected basic cultural assumptions about differences in the ways that men and women think and act. She added, however, that belief in these notions was intuitive rather than articulated, that it was backed up with anecdotes instead of argument.

Women managers surveyed in the United Kingdom reported that the characteristics their organizations valued most highly in a manager were competitiveness, cooperation and decisiveness, and those they least valued were emotionalism, manipulativeness and forcefulness (Traves, Brockbank and Tomlinson, 1997). These obviously cut across styles that are identified as typically masculine or feminine.

One can perhaps detect a shift in values towards the "feminization" of management style, but one can also speak of a shift away from individualism and from explicitness. This resembles a shift from a left-brain conception of organizational structure (with analysis, logic and rationality predominating) towards a right-brain conception (with intuition, emotion, synthesis predominating). One anthropologist has described women as "high context integrating, feeling, intelligent" (Hall, 1996). But it seems that, in practice, management

styles are evolving towards valuing a mixture of the so-called masculine and feminine characteristics.

Flexibility and teamwork are among the feminine characteristics; and team behaviour is seen as increasingly important for management. Drucker (1994) pointed out that, in "knowledge work" (adding value to information), teams rather than the individual become the work unit. The idea of "group intelligence" has been explored (Williams and Sternberg, 1988), and according to Goleman, "the single most important element in group intelligence ... is not the average IQ in the academic sense, but rather in terms of emotional intelligence" (1996, p. 160). This emotional intelligence, or empathy, seems to result from the socialization of girls and much less from that of boys, with the result that "hundreds of studies have found ... that on average women are more empathic than men" (ibid., p. 132; see also Goleman (1998)). In their approach to work women have been found to be more relationship-oriented than men, more often defining themselves in terms of their relationships and connections to others (Belenky et al., 1986).

In their meta-analyses, Eagly and Johnson (1990) suggest that men demonstrate a more autocratic leadership style and women a more democratic leadership style, and a more interpersonally-oriented style: helpful, friendly, available, explaining procedures, tending to the morale and welfare of others. According to Kabacoff (1998), these assessment and laboratory studies may not be applicable to organizational settings, and moreover the role of women in management positions may have changed since.

Kabacoff's extensive study of gender differences in leadership styles records gender differences which were both self-described and observed (Kabacoff, 1998). Kabacoff found that women tend to be rated higher on empathy (demonstrating an active concern for people and their needs, forming close supportive relationships with others), and communication (stating clear expectations for others, clearly expressing thoughts and ideas, maintaining a flow of communication) than men. Women are also rated higher on people skills (sensitivity to others, likeableness, ability to listen and to develop effective relationships with peers and with those to whom they report). However, they are not seen as more outgoing (acting in an extroverted, friendly, informal fashion), or more cooperative in their leadership styles. Contrary to expectations, women tend to score higher on a leadership scale measuring an orientation towards production (strong pursuit of achievement, holding high expectations for self and others) and the attainment of results. Men tend to score higher on scales assessing an orientation towards strategic planning and organizational vision. Women tend to be rated higher on people-oriented leadership skills, men on business-oriented leadership skills. Overall, bosses see men and women as equally effective, while peer and direct assessment rate women slightly higher than men.

Women are rated higher on excitement (they are energetic and enthusiastic), communication (they keep people informed), feedback (they let others know how they have performed) and production (they set high standards). Men are rated higher on tradition (they build on knowledge gained through ex-

perience), innovation (they are open to new ideas and willing to take risks), strategy (they focus on the big picture), restraint (they control emotional expression, remain calm), delegation (they share objectives and accountability), cooperation (they are good team players) and persuasiveness (they sell ideas and win people over).

One can conclude with Eisler that in the movement toward more "feminine" or nurturing management styles, men's socialization into the "masculine" traits of domination, conquest and control is dysfunctional for the new styles of leadership, but that "other qualities also considered masculine, such as decisiveness, assertiveness, and risk-taking, have been, and will continue to be, highly functional, particularly for the effective exercise of leadership" (Eisler, 1997, p. 107).

Communication styles

A different management style implies changes in language and behaviour in business communication. Since women are concerned not just with content but also with relationships, their aims when communicating are different, as are the modes and strategies they adopt. There seems now to be a need in organizations to create a favourable context for the coexistence of the male and the female model, in order to make the most of their synergy.

Grice (1975) geared his "Rules of conversation" to the transmission of information:

- do not give more or less information than necessary;
- do not say anything you do not believe;
- link your contribution to the previous contribution;
- formulate your views as clearly as possible.

But communication is more than just a matter of passing on information. Relations should also be — and stay — good; communication involves seeking and working together at a productive relationship. Rules of conversation should include the principle of collaboration.

From the cross-cultural perspective, men and women inhabit substantially different worlds, and so their conversation styles are different: Tannen (1990) called female talk "rapport talk" (relationships are important), and male talk "report talk" (facts are important). This difference could be compared to that between the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon cultures (Gauthey et al., 1988): the Latin culture tends towards deductive reasoning (concepts first), implicit communication and the importance of emotional relations in work, whereas the Anglo-Saxon culture tends towards inductive reasoning (facts first), an explicit communication style and a separation of work and personal relationships.

Differences in strategy can be related to differences in group behaviour, described by Fischer and Gleijm (1992) as the "pecking order" for men and the "crab basket" for women. In the pecking order, where hierarchy rules, it is important that rank order is clear to everyone present. Only once agreement has been reached on this, can attention be given to content. In the crab basket, by contrast, the group is important, so everyone is involved. Women expect to

have their turn and to see a fair outcome, whereas men compete for the floor in order to establish a winner. Men will thus interrupt women (and other men) in discussion, but women will tend to fall silent after such an interruption.

The concept of leadership is also linked to public discourse. Men talk more often in meetings, and are more likely to determine the topics of conversation. If women in authority speak in ways expected of women, they are seen as inadequate leaders. If they speak in ways expected of leaders, they are seen as inadequate women. Fairclough argues that "power in discourse is to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants" (1989, p. 46).

Though there is little evidence for these assumed characteristics of women's speech, with the shift to new "softer" management styles, it is often said that male managers must learn feminine styles of behaviour and speech. One wonders what will happen to traditional styles of communication that express dominance, such as the "tough" stances so admired in business, or the use of "aggressive marketing" as a term of approval (Connell, 1987).

Concluding remarks

At a time when the ability to manage change is becoming so important, communication plays a major role. Yet a significant source of dissatisfaction in organizations today is the poor structures and networks for mediating and diffusing knowledge, values and experience within the organizational environment. The assumption by large numbers of women of leadership positions is an essential element in the shift from the traditional, hierarchical organization to one based on partnership and teamwork. This implies organizations need to create a favourable climate allowing the masculine and feminine models to co-exist and operate in synergy. Given the proper encouragement, women managers could apply their natural talents for empathy and relationship-building. For, it has been proved, women possess qualities which could contribute significantly to improved communication, cooperation, team spirit and commitment within organizations — qualities which today are essential for achieving excellence and maintaining the necessary networks of contacts and relationships.

Given that the leadership skills of the future appear to be developing into a combination of masculine and feminine traits involving strategic thinking and communication skills, both women and men have something to learn and to gain from working together (Powell, 1988). The final result of this evolution in required leadership skills should contribute to making organizations more competitive and more successful. Considering the trend towards flatter organizations with the emphasis on training, teamwork, networking and the sharing of power and information, women's aptitudes in these fields should work to their advantage. This is especially true if the emerging working environments allow for diversity. For "appropriate" managerial skills now tend to take into account cultural awareness, that is, the awareness and tolerance of differences. Openness and acceptance of cultural differences will lead to synergy, enabling change and promoting excellence in business and communication.

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