Gender Differences in Leadership

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ABSTRACT

THE TOPIC OF GENDER DIFFERENCES in leadership style has been of great interest to researchers in the fields of psychology, management, and sociology, especially in recent years, as women have begun to assume more leadership positions. This article presents an overview of the research on gender differences in leadership, examines the impact of sex stereotyping, looks at the organizational effects of various types of leadership, and argues for the acceptance of a diversity of non gender linked leadership styles.

INTRODUCTION

> Over the centuries, femininity has been stereotyped as dependent, submissive and conforming, and hence women have been seen as lacking in leadership qualities.... The male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command or control. As leadership comes properly to be seen as a process of leaders engaging and mobilizing the human needs of followers, women will be more readily recognized as leaders and men will change their own leadership styles (Burns, 1978, p. 50).

For the past two decades, gender differences in leadership styles have been the most intensely studied topics in the field of leadership. Are there inherent differences in the way men and women function as leaders and, if so, are these differences gender linked? This question has commanded attention because researchers have been trying to provide an explanation about why there have been so few women leaders. Even though women have become an increasingly large proportion of the work force, they still do not hold a proportionate

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share of the top administrative positions. Most of the gender difference research has focused upon whether women's comparative lack of success in attaining high positions could somehow be related to differences in their leadership style. It has examined the personality characteristics and behavior patterns of women as possible explanations for their lower status.

The accommodation of different leadership styles is an increasingly important issue for today's organizations. As women become a proportionately larger part of the work force, one of the greatest challenges for American organizations will be to assimilate a more diverse labor force into higher level management roles (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). The presence of a so-called "glass ceiling" is said to have inhibited women from advancing to the highest level of management in most organizations. (The glass ceiling also affects minorities in organizations. This article, however, focuses only on gender differences in leadership.) This glass ceiling is an almost invisible barrier that prevents ambitious women from moving up in the organizational hierarchy. Although in the past two decades women have made significant progress into lower and middle management positions, there is still a dearth of women in the most senior management positions. A recent Department of Labor study (Rivers, 1991) reports that the glass ceiling effect is a real one and not just a figment of feminist imagination. It is clear that women have found it more difficult to move up the organizational ladder. But is it a difference in leadership styles that has impeded women's progress?

The reader who turns to the vast body of literature on gender differences to find the answer to this question will likely be left in a state of confusion. The studies report a number of contradictory findings. There is basic disagreement focusing upon the primary question being examined—i.e., is there really a difference between the leadership styles of males and females? Some authors argue strongly that there are differences, while others assert just as strongly that there are none. (For authors asserting there are differences, see for example, Statham [1987] and Winther and Green [1987]. For those asserting no differences, see for example Powell [1990] and Donnell and Hall [1980].)

The purpose of this article is to present an overview of the topic of gender differences in leadership style and to provide a synthesis of the voluminous amount of material that has been written on the topic, primarily in the literature of management, psychology, sociology, and political science. First a brief overview of the way women have been viewed as leaders will be presented, and the impact of sex-role stereotyping will be discussed. The next section will provide

a historical perspective on how thinking about gender differences has changed over the past century. Here some of the most important literature on the subject will be reviewed. Then the effects of various leadership styles on organizations will be examined, and the concept of the androgynous leader will be discussed. Finally, a concluding section will focus upon the changes in thinking about gender and leadership that will be necessary to bring about "reinvented" organizations. There will be no specific references to libraries and librarians in this article because there has not been a great deal of research focusing on leadership styles in the library profession. Furthermore, there is no reason to think that gender differences in leadership styles in libraries would be any different from those found in other types of organizations.

Two points of clarification are necessary at the beginning. First, the focus will not be on men and women in biological terms, but on the social roles of the genders in contemporary society since these roles are determined primarily by culture. Second, this article has been derived from the current writings on gender differences in leadership, and because this literature usually looks at this phenomenon in an organizational setting, there is an overlap in the way that many researchers use the terms *leader* and *manager.* Although there are some commonly accepted differences between leaders and managers (see, for example, Zaleznik, 1977), for the sake of discussion the terms are used synonymously throughout this article.

At the outset, it should be recognized that there are dangers of overgeneralization inherent in this topic. Women bring diversity to leadership, but there is also great diversity among women. Schein (1989) states that, although research shows differences between males and females, the variations between them are fewer than is commonly believed, and the differences within each sex are greater than the differences between the sexes. Most experts agree, however, that women share many views and experiences, and some generalizations are warranted (Shavlik & Touchton, 1988). Nonetheless, the reader should always keep in mind that there are many exceptions to the notion of typical male and female leadership behavior.

Women as Leaders

Although more women are assuming leadership roles today than before, the notion of a woman as a leader is still foreign to many individuals, male and female alike. Changes in perception are difficult to achieve because the traditional norms of leadership are firmly entrenched. In our society, as in most others, leaders have customarily been males. In the past, leadership opportunities for women tended to be limited to all female organizations such as sororities, convents,

and female institutions of education—but even there the presidents of women's colleges were almost always men (Bass, 1981). From this phenomenon the generalization was made that leadership implies maleness and that, since women were not men, they lacked the qualities that are necessary to be leaders. The assumption that leadership equates with maleness is deeply embedded in both our thinking and language. Leaders are often described with adjectives such as "competitive," "aggressive," or "dominant," which are typically associated with masculinity. A female leader is frequently regarded as an aberration and "women who become leaders are often offered the presumed accolade of being described as being like men" (Hearn & Parkin, 1986-87, p. 38). For instance, Margaret Thatcher was often described as the "best man" in Great Britain.

Despite the societal mandates used to increase the number of women in leadership positions (e.g., various legal measures such as affirmative action), the traditional stereotypes remain. These stereotypes still exert a powerful influence and are at least partially to blame both for women's difficulty in attaining leadership positions and for society's struggle to accept them. Because women do not fit the stereotypical leader mold, those who want to be leaders usually need to be extremely well qualified, have proven records of accomplishments, and be overprepared for their positions. Once these positions are attained, women are often expected to "behave just like their male counterparts rather than enhancing their roles with the new and varied talents and fresh perspectives they might bring" (Shavlik & Touchton, 1988, p. 101).

Denmark (1977) speculated that sex role stereotypes accounted for the lack of women in leadership positions. Early research on sex role stereotypes in the late 1960s and early 1970s revealed that men were seen as more competent, and women were seen as warm or expressive. At that time, masculinity and femininity were seen as opposites. Men were expected to be masculine and women were to be feminine—and anyone who fell in the middle was considered maladjusted or in need of help (Powell & Butterfield, 1989).

The female sex role stereotype labels women as less competent and warmer emotionally than men, but the stereotype of the effective manager matches the masculine stereotype of competence, toughness, and lacking in warmth (Bass, 1981). Recent research (Powell & Butterfield, 1989) shows that the "good manager" is still described as masculine despite the growing number of women managers. This overlap between "good manager" and typical male has been found in other studies. Again, the inference is that "maleness" equates with leadership and "femaleness" does not. Powell and Butterfield warn of the possible hazardous effects on one's career of deviating from

the dominant management style in an organization. Complicating matters is the fact that subordinates respond differently to the same behavior depending on whether it is exhibited by a male or female leader (Russell et al., 1988).

These gender stereotypes, based on historical roles, often lead to a substantial bias against women and present a major problem for those trying to function as leaders in organizations. As Bass (1981) states:

> Stereotypes have their effects on behavior. We expect women to be more submissive, so we have trouble taking orders from women, no matter what they are like individually. Women leaders themselves are in conflict when facing divergence in what is expected from them in their roles as managers and in their roles as females, but do these stereotypes reflect reality? (p. 496)

As we shall see later, on the whole, these stereotypes do not reflect reality. Nonetheless, "one serious consequence of entrenched stereotypes is that women . . . may need to be occupied as much with overcoming negative attitudes as with performing their jobs well" (Hollander, 1985, p. 519).

A Historical Perspective

Before one can fully understand the contemporary thinking on gender differences in leadership, it is helpful to survey, at least briefly, the changes that have taken place in our thinking about leadership over the past century. It is telling that the topic of gender differences was completely ignored in the early writings on leadership. The original conception of leadership was founded on the assumption that all leaders possessed certain universal characteristics that made them leaders. These traits were largely inborn, universal, and fixed (Hollander & Offermann, 1990). Since this conception of leadership is often called the "Great Man Theory of Leadership," it should not, perhaps, be surprising that gender differences were not of interest. The concept of a woman as a leader would have been completely alien to the nineteenth and early twentieth century proponents of the trait theory of leadership.

By the 1940s, the trait theory of leadership was largely displaced by other explanations that propounded the necessity of looking not just at the leader but at the setting in which the leader is operating. The situational notion of leadership demands that the context of leadership be studied and suggests that different leadership styles are appropriate for different settings and for different tasks.

Gender differences still were not considered of great interest, however. For instance, Stogdill's mammoth *Handbook of Leadership,*

published in 1974, was almost completely devoid of any mention of gender differences in leadership, although the topic was seen as a useful subject for future research (Bass, 1981).

Much of the early research on gender differences was done in the field of psychology. Understandably, the focus of the psychological research has been on the personality characteristics and behavior patterns of women as explanations for their low job status (Riger & Galligan, 1980). Person-centered variables, rather than situational factors or environmental factors external to the individual, were identified as explanatory factors. This focus led to a concentration on changing the person, or, as Riger and Galligan write: "[W]hen person-centered variables become invested with causal significance, people become the targets, sometimes inappropriately, of ameliorative efforts" (p. 902).

Most of the early popular literature on women and leadership, especially in the field of management, reflected this point of view. For instance, Hennig and Jardim (1977) and Harragan (1977) focused on women's characteristics and job behaviors. These writers suggested that, if women wanted to succeed, they needed to learn to act more like men and to learn to play those male games "their mothers never taught them." It was asserted that women had not been socialized in ways that allowed them to compete on even terms with men, and the remedy lay in having women develop new skills that would allow them to succeed in organizational leadership. Hennig and Jardim compared the business world to a foreign country and advised women to learn the language and the customs of this male realm.

This type of literature told women how to change themselves rather than their places of work. Gradually, however, interest grew in the situational variables that might explain the lower status of women. Perhaps the best known proponent of the situation variable hypothesis is Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977). In *Men and Women of the Corporation,* Kanter looked at the settings in which women were trying to succeed, and attributed women's lack of success not to innate gender differences but to the distribution of opportunity and power. Kanter viewed the distribution of power and women's token status in most organizations as critical in determining the leadership differences between men and women. In her opinion, if women behave differently from men in organizations, it is a result of their being more often in positions of little influence or of little opportunity for advancement. Women's behavior reflects their lack of power, not innate differences between men and women. Writers in the situational variable school suggested that women were not being held back because they did not have the requisite characteristics required for success, but because of practices within organizations that were antithetical to their success.

A review article in *Psychological Bulletin* (Eagly & Johnson, 1990) provides the most recent comprehensive look at the differences in leadership styles of males and females. The authors present a meta-analysis of a large amount of the research that has been done on the topic. In their literature review and background section, Eagly and Johnson echo many of the same themes reported earlier. In general, they found that authors with extensive experience in organizations who write nontechnical books for general audiences and the general public are the proponents of sex differences in leadership styles. These nontechnical writings often report gender stereotypical leadership styles, with males preferring competitiveness, hierarchical authority, and high control for the leader, and women preferring cooperation, collaboration between managers and subordinates, and lower control for leaders.

On the other hand, according to Eagly and Johnson, social scientists have generally maintained that there are no differences in male and female leadership styles. The preponderance of social science research has found that there are no reliable differences between men and women who occupy leadership positions in organizations. This divergence in opinion has been complicated by the fact that the authors in these two competing categories have based their conclusions on different types of data; the writers of the books intended for general audiences gained their data primarily from their own organizational experiences or from interviews with managers. The social scientists based their conclusions on empirical studies. Because of the contradictory findings in the literature, Eagly and Johnson decided that a "thorough survey of this domain was long overdue," and that a meta-analysis would provide "a systematic quantitative integration of the available research in which leadership styles of men and women were compared and statistical analysis were performed on the resulting data" (p. 234).

The authors located 162 studies that met their criteria for research on this topic. The meta-analysis found few differences in the leadership styles of males and females. There were more differences found in laboratory and assessment studies than in actual field studies. The authors argue that gender stereotypical behavior is more apt to occur when people are interacting as strangers without the constraints of long-term relationships than when they are in laboratory or assessment center settings. When social behavior occurs in organizational settings, that behavior is regulated by other roles and thus loses much of its gender-stereotypic character.

Nonetheless, some differences were found even in the organizational settings. The overall trends showed that women were more concerned with both maintenance of interpersonal relationships and

task accomplishment—a finding that both confirms and refutes the stereotypical view of women as leaders (conventional wisdom has it that women are more concerned with relationships than with task accomplishment). The strongest difference found was that women tended to adopt a more democratic or participative style, and men tended to adopt a more autocratic or directive style. Eagly and Johnson provide two possible explanations for this difference. First, women who have managed to succeed as leaders might have more highly developed interpersonal skills. The other explanation is that women are not accepted as readily as men as leaders and, as a result, have to allow input into their decision making. "Thus proceeding in a participative and collaborative mode may enable many female leaders to win acceptance from others, gain self-confidence, and thereby be effective. Because men are not so constrained by attitudinal bias, they are freer to lead in an autocratic and nonparticipative manner should they so desire" (p. 248).

In conclusion, Eagly and Johnson claim that both views need to be revised: the one accepted by social scientists that men and women lead in the same way and the one proclaimed in popular management books that men and women are different. Their review established a more complex set of findings. It must be remembered that this meta-analytic research did not produce evidence about whether men's or women's leadership styles are more effective. It probably depends on the situation. "No doubt a relatively democratic style enhances a leader's effectiveness under some circumstances, and a relatively autocratic style enhances it under some other circumstances" (p. 249). The authors point out, however, that recent management writings have stressed the importance of moving away from hierarchical autocratic management and toward the more democratic and participative leadership styles that the meta-analysis suggests are more prevalent among women than men.

Eagly and Johnson's results are corroborated by other research. In a study not included in Eagly and Johnson's meta-analysis, Statham (1987) also found evidence of two sex-differentiated management styles. Statham reports that women used a more task-engrossed and person-invested style, while men use a more image-engrossed and autonomy-invested style.

> Here women were seen as focusing more on the task to be done and the people working for and with them, paying careful attention to what is happening in their areas of responsibility and interacting with others a great deal. . . .The men were seen as focusing on themselves and the need to "back away" from those who work with them, emphasizing the power they have, the contribution they make in a situation (and less the task itself); they felt the ideal way to manage is to "stay out of it." (p. 425)

Statham does not argue that one approach is superior to the other; the point emphasized is simply that the two approaches are different, and these differences undoubtedly cause tremendous misunderstandings between men and women in the workplace.

In a study that focused on gender differences in communication, Tannen (1990) provides a possible explanation of why these two different approaches have developed. Tannen points out that men and women have different experiences while growing up, and, as a result, have learned to value different things. Men are taught to prize status, independence, and individual power, while women tend to value connection, interdependence, and the power of community. These different values lead men and women to behave in different ways. The resulting differences in the communication styles of men and women can also cause misunderstanding in the workplace.

Obviously, the topic of gender differences in leadership style is not a simple one. Just as in the tale of the blind men and the elephant, individual writers often see just one portion of a large topic. Because different writers are viewing the topic from different perspectives, it is not surprising that the results of all of these studies are ambiguous. It may be too that there are aspects of gender differences in leadership style as yet unexplored that would make us completely rethink all we have learned to date. But in trying to summarize the paradoxical evidence that has been presented by researchers, perhaps the best approach is to accept Eagly and Johnson's comprehensive meta-analysis of the topic. Their findings suggest that there are some small differences in the leadership styles of males and females. What we cannot untangle, however, with our present knowledge of the subject, is how many (if any) of these differences are innate and how many are the result of difference in conditioning and socialization experienced by males and females. In addition, we also need to remember Kanter's findings that organizational position is a more powerful determinant of behavior and attitude than supposedly inherent sex differences. As with many other social questions, we are forced back into the "nature versus nurture" controversy, and, as yet, we do not have sufficient evidence to know which is the better explanation.

Again, the dangers of overgeneralization must be emphasized. Some women have become leaders and instead of bringing a "softer" approach—based on supposedly inherent female characteristics of submissiveness, passivity, and caring—they have demonstrated that women can be competitive and assertive, in some cases trying to be more "male" than the males (Hearn & Parkin, 1986-87). On the other hand, some men have exhibited the softer approach traditionally associated with women. There is a real danger of encouraging new

stereotypes when asserting that there are different gender-linked leadership styles. But it does seem safe to say that the typical male and typical female at this point in time practice distinct leadership styles. What needs to be explored is whether either of these two styles is more functional in today's organizations or whether a blend of both might be the best solution.

The Impact of Leadership Styles on Organizations

In the past, most women who succeeded in becoming leaders did so by adopting the masculine style of leadership. There are now indications that women are beginning to make an impact on organizations using their own style of leadership. Rosener (1990) has studied what she calls the second generation of managerial women. The first generation of female managers had to adhere to the same rules of conduct for success that applied to men. This new generation is making its way "not by adopting the style and habits that have proved successful for men but by . . . drawing on what is unique to their socialization as women and creating a different path to the top" (pp. 119-20). Most of these women are working in medium-size organizations that have experienced fast growth and rapid change, organizations that have been most hospitable to women and nontraditional management styles.

Rosener borrowed the concepts first used by Burns (1978) to describe the different leadership styles she found. The men in the study were typically "transactional" leaders, that is, they see job performance as a series of transactions with subordinates. The transactions consist of exchanging rewards for services rendered or punishments for inadequate performance. Rosener found that men are more likely to use power that comes from their organizational position. Women in her study were characterized as "transformational" leaders. They are skilled at getting subordinates to transform their own self interest into the interest of the larger group. Women ascribe their power not to their position within the organization but to their own personal characteristics.

The findings of this study corroborate those of the Eagly and Johnson (1990) meta-analysis, which found that women leaders are more democratic.

> [T]hese women actively work to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved. More specifically, the women encouraged participation, share power and information, enhance other people's self-worth, and get others excited about their work. All these things reflect their belief that allowing employees to contribute and feel powerful and important is a win-win situation—good for the employees and the organization. (p. 120)

Rosener (1990) attributes the behaviors of these women to two things—their socialization and their career paths. The average age of the women in the study was fifty-one, which means that they had life experiences that had been affected because of gender. As Rosener states, until the 1960s, men and women received vastly different messages about what was expected of them. While men were supposed to be competitive, tough, decisive, and in control, women were allowed to be cooperative, emotional, and supportive. This is one reason that the women of today are more likely to be transformational leaders. The other reason is that women's career experiences have differed from those of men who were more likely to have held staff, rather than line, positions. Lacking formal authority over others, these women had to find other ways to accomplish their goals.

Rosener contrasts the men's command and control style with the different style exhibited by the women and argues for an increase in diversity in acceptable managerial behavior. She cautions against linking transformational leadership to being female; women are capable of making their way up the corporate ladder using traditional management style, and some men are transformational leaders. She also fears that companies that perceive transformational leadership as "feminine" will automatically resist it.

Rosener argues for acceptance of this new type of leadership style because she sees it as working best in today's workplaces with today's workers. She is just one of the authors who point out that the type of leadership style usually linked to women is also the type of leadership style that is most congruent with the changes going on in the organizations of today.

Helgensen (1990) describes the innovative organizational structures and strategies of a number of successful women leaders. She describes the organizations shaped by these women as being more like "webs of inclusion" than hierarchies of exclusion, and stresses the advantages found in this type of organization for information sharing, since there are more points of connection in a web than in a hierarchy, where the communication flow is usually vertical. She has written that "in the Information Age, the value of the old pyramid is being questioned as being too bureaucratic, lumbering and muscle-bound for a fast-changing global economy and far too expensive as well" (quoted in Eisler, 1991, p. 11).

Many other management experts have pointed out that today's organizations need to be transformed if they are to be successful in the future. There has been much written about the demand for new managerial abilities, and there is a widely shared perception that the vertical skills of command and control need to be supplemented,

or in some cases replaced, by a set of skills that includes negotiation, bargaining, and mediation. In addition, many authors extol the virtues of a more humanized workplace. For instance, Peters and Waterman (1982) have called for the establishment of a workplace in which people can blossom and develop self-esteem. Drucker (1981) explained the success of Japanese organizations by citing their use of female-oriented strategies, such as cultivation of relationships to establish common interest, trust, loyalty, and pride in the accomplishment of the entire organization. Naisbitt and Aburdene (1986) have described the smashing of the hierarchical pyramid and the growth of more people-centered organizations. Others, such as Cleveland (1985), Kanter (1985), and Ouchi (1981), have also noted these trends.

The changes that are occurring in the workplace are, according to Riane Eisler (1991), reflections of a larger societal transformation. Eisler describes two types of social organization models—i.e., the dominator and the partnership models. Dominator societies are marked by rigid male dominance, a generally hierarchic and authoritarian social structure, and a high degree of institutionalized violence. The partnership model is marked by more equal partnership between women and men, less institutionalized violence, and a more democratic or egalitarian social structure. She argues that society is being transformed from the dominator to the partnership model, and that the "contemporary re-emergence of a 'softer' or, in terms of dominator stereotypes, more 'feminine' style of leadership and governing ethos—particularly in the world of business and economics" (p. 17)—can best be understood in light of this shift between the two models.

According to Eisler, the modern workplace was patterned to conform to the requirements of the dominator model—hence, its hierarchic and authoritarian characteristics and its top-down chain of command. In this type of organization, women were under tremendous internal and external pressures to behave like men if they wanted to succeed. The author asserts that the workplace is evolving into a more humane, people centered place where the female style of leadership will be fully at home. If, as Kanter (1977) wrote, it is the situational variables that have kept women from ascending to top leadership in modern organizations, the situational variables that have worked against them in the past will work for them if organizations continue their evolution into places where their style of leadership will fit nicely into the prevailing ethos.

Thus it seems that experts' views of gender differences in leadership style have taken some curious turns over the past few decades. Originally, there was the idea that men and women had

different leadership styles based on inherent sex linked characteristics. Then the view became that, even though there were differences, women could learn to succeed in organizations by being more like men. All along, however, there were social scientists who were asserting that there were few differences in male and female styles, and that once women became leaders they would act in the same way as men. Now the pendulum has swung once more, and there is again a perception that there are differences in the leadership styles of men and women. This time, however, assertions are made that these differences will work to the advantage of women because the qualities associated with their management style is what is needed today to make organizations more effective. As Marilyn Loden (1985) writes:

> In some respects, it seems that women managers may be better prepared to cope with the challenges of the future than many traditional male leaders who succeeded in the past. For many of the characteristics being touted as critical for future success—concern for people, interpersonal skills, intuitive management and creative problem solving—are qualities that women as a group are encouraged to develop and rely on throughout their lives. (pp. 18-19)

Cleveland (1985) echoes this point when he writes: "It is not an accident or coincidence that women are breaking into the executive market just when the key to success in executive work is working-with-each-other people skills" (p. 80). Finally, Nelton (1991) states: "The controversy over whether women's styles of leadership are better than men's or whether there's any difference at all is merely a signal that all leadership is becoming more feminized simply because it makes good business sense" (p. 21).

The Androgynous Leader

Does this interest in the strengths women can bring to leadership mean we have come back to that notion of the "androgynous" leader or manager, a concept that was highly popular in the early 1980s? Androgyny is an amalgam of male and female styles. The androgynous leader blends the characteristics typically associated with males—such as dominance, assertiveness, and competitiveness—with those typically associated with females—such as cooperativeness and a concern for people.

On the surface, the androgynous manager concept is an attractive one, and there are still a number of advocates of this style of leadership (see, for example, Sargent & Stupak, 1989). However, the androgynous manager concept is not a panacea and, indeed, has many pitfalls. To advocate this style as the "ideal" oversimplifies things. If there is anything we have learned from research in leadership, it is that the trait theory is not a particularly useful one. Leadership skills

need to be varied to meet various tasks and environments. There is no one right style and no one right set of "traits" even if they are androgynous. Although androgyny is appealing because it incorporates what are viewed as the strengths of both males and females, it also perpetuates some of the same stereotypes that have hindered the development of leaders of both genders. Schein (1989) condemns the entire idea of an androgynous leadership style as a "foolhardy and dangerous one."

> It will not add to our understanding of leadership effectiveness, for it takes a narrow and simplistic approach to what is a broad and complex set of issues and activities. It will not promote equality of opportunity in the workplace because it perpetuates sex role stereotypical thinking that has no basis in reality. The androgynous orientation builds a managerial access bridge for women on a shaky foundation of sand. (p. 155)

We need to move beyond viewing any one style as the ideal and to strive to create organizational environments that will be receptive to many diverse types of leadership styles.

Conclusion

The field of gender differences in leadership styles is an area that is still full of ambiguity and paradox. Despite the number of studies devoted to the topic, there are still unanswered questions. Researchers will doubtlessly continue to work on the topic, and perhaps, with time, we will arrive at some definitive answers to the question of whether there are really any innate differences in the leadership styles of males and females. Currently, the evidence suggests that there are some small differences; however, it seems likely that they are not innate but the result of differing socialization.

In conclusion, let us leave the vast, and often confusing, body of literature dealing with gender differences in leadership style and return to the quotation that began this article. Burns (1978) writes that when women are accepted as leaders "men will change their own leadership styles" (p. 50). This phrase is a useful one to use as a springboard for some personal perceptions about the need for all of us to change our thinking about gender differences in leadership styles. In my opinion, Burns is right. When women are accepted as leaders, some men will change their leadership styles because that option will then be available to them. The maintenance of rigid gender role stereotypes has hurt not only women but men. We all need to realize that people, with their widely divergent abilities and advantages, should be looked at first and foremost as individuals rather than as simply members of one gender or the other. Many of the problems that have confronted women have also confronted men; these are human problems not women's problems. When

institutions are able to involve both men and women equally on the basis of individual merit, they will be better places for everyone.

The modern workplace has stunted the development of both males and females. Douglas McGregor (1967), long an advocate for the human element in organizations, wrote:

> The model of the successful manager in our culture is a masculine one. The good manager is aggressive, competitive, firm, just. He is not feminine, he is not soft or yielding or dependent or intuitive in the womanly sense. The very expression of emotion is widely viewed as a feminine weakness that would interfere with effective business processes. Yet the fact is that all of these emotions are part of the human nature of men and women alike. Cultural forces have shaped not their existence but their acceptability; they are repressed, *but this does not render them inactive*. They continue to influence attitudes, opinions, and decisions. (p. 23)

There is, at the present time, a growing awareness on the part of many males that their options have been limited by societal norms about what is proper male behavior. The current rash of books and articles dealing with how men can reestablish connections with their emotions is evidence of the interest in this topic. The reshaping of tomorrow's organizations will assist men as well as women since the traditional hierarchy has hampered the development of the full potential of both.

Men will have a vital role to play in this restructuring of the workplace. Qualities such as decisiveness, assertiveness, and risk taking that have been considered masculine will be valuable in creating the workplace of the future (Eisler, 1991). Men and women have a great deal to teach each other about leadership and, as they learn from one another, they can bring strengthened leadership abilities to their organizations (Nelton, 1991). Allowing women a greater role in leadership will provide a win-win situation for both genders.

What we are seeking is not androgyny, which tries to meld masculine and feminine leadership styles, but a recognition that both genders have an important role to play. We need to get away from thinking about one style as masculine and one as feminine. Epstein (1990), in a response to Rosener's article, wrote:

> It is up to the leaders of business and other institutions to affirm the humanitarian values that women are associated with but that men can (and do) express if they are not made to feel embarrassed about showing them. And those qualities of toughness and drive that men are made to feel comfortable with should be prized in women who wish to express them when they are appropriate. The category is "people," not "men and women." (p. 151)

The challenge to organizations of the future is to accept a variety of leadership styles. There is no one "best" style of leadership. It

all depends on the organization and the task to be done. If organizations continue to become flatter and less hierarchical, some of the leadership traits traditionally associated with women leaders will be most appropriate in those organizations. Both men and women should feel free to adopt leadership strategies that will help them succeed. The recognition of a diversity of leadership styles will allow potential leaders to lead in ways that will draw upon their individual strengths. The restructured workplace will provide a setting for a variety of leadership styles to flourish, and, as a result, it will gain in strength and flexibility.

Clearly we are in a period of transition in regard to our thinking about gender differences in leadership styles. The cultural factors supporting differences in leader behavior are in a period of flux. It seems likely that as more women assume leadership roles and as sex role stereotypes fade away, the very notion of gender differences in leadership style will also disappear. We will recognize that different leaders have different styles, but we will not automatically associate one style with women and another with men. Males and females alike will be challenged to develop the type of leadership skills that will be needed to lead the organizations of tomorrow.

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