Women as Managers:
Sex-Role Stereotypes and the Concept of Androgyny

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
May 1984
INTRODUCTION

As a female student about to embark on a professional career, it is interesting for me to learn how since 1962 women's roles as housekeeper and paid worker have been reversed dramatically. Bureau of Labor statistics reveal that in the early 1960's, 65 percent of all women kept house full-time while only about 37 percent of them were in the labor force. In 1983 it was the other way around. Fifty-three percent of women were in the labor force and 35 percent were in the home full-time (Working Women. . ., 1983).

What is especially interesting is that not just the number of women entering the labor force has changed, but the types of positions they fill have changed greatly. It was during World War II that the labor force participation rate of women increased so dramatically. Female employment became a national necessity, and millions of women went to work. But it has been during the last 10 years that we have seen the increase in the number of women in professional fields. Professional women now number 7.7 million, an increase of 71 percent in the past 10 years. And the number of those in managerial positions rose 129 percent to 3.2 million (Working Women. . ., 1983; Dowd, 1984).

The demand for these female managers is increasing. In 1984, The Wall Street Journal reports that while executive demand has leveled off generally after a 1983 jump, demand
for women executives is higher than ever (Labor Letter. . ., 1983). Part of this demand is due to a recovery in the economy, but other factors must also be considered. In some cases, for example, firms may fear affirmative action or discrimination suits. However, I believe that the growth in the number of women in executive positions is due largely to a change in society regarding the role of women.

This role is definitely changing. In the past, women have been overlooked for managerial training and promotion. It was not believed that women could succeed in the business world—due to the fact that they were female. Because there have been no women in managerial or leadership roles, there have been no models for young women to follow. Until the 1970's, management texts did not even suggest the possibility that women could be managers (Missirian, 1982).

In the past, our culture has expected one thing of men and other of women; but now the roles of men and women in the workforce are shifting (Labor Letter. . ., 1983). In our changing society and business world, managers are facing problems that require a specific personality composition. Modern managers must face problems of stress, interpersonal relations, and difficult decision making that have never been encountered before.

The question is, do women have the characteristics and skills needed to make good managers and face today's difficult business world? It is important to determine if, after the decades of advancement in the workforce, women fulfill
these requirements. I plan to show that women do possess
the natural abilities to become quality managers.

Specific areas of investigation include:

- What does a manager's job entail, and what skills are
  needed?

- How have women historically been stereotyped?

- What characteristics do men and women actually possess?

- How do female managers and male managers perform?
Characteristics of the Manager's Job

Each manager has a model or a theory of management that is their own. It is used to make many different types of decisions and is a critical element in organizational functioning. Approaches to a model of management in this country have ranged from Frederick Winslow Taylor's "scientific management," to "humanistic management," in which attempts have been made to recognize human potential and encourage self-actualization (Boyatzis, 1982). It is important to keep in mind how these models have blended to form the modern manager who possesses interpersonal, collaborative, and communication skills.

The job that a manager must perform encompasses several areas. A manager must apply both analytical and interpersonal skills in order to achieve the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling. Planning deals with defining and obtaining goals. Managers need analytical and intellectual skills to break projects into component parts and schedule complex activities. However, to get the data necessary to develop goals and criteria and for judging if these goals are attained, managers need to consult and communicate with their subordinates. The organizing function brings together financial, human, and capital resources to meet management's goals. Therefore, managers must exercise
interdependence and cooperation with each other. Staffing extends beyond hiring and work assignment to the responsibility for working closely with employees in developing them on the job and evaluating their performance. Finally, controlling requires that managers compare goals and objectives and use available resources to achieve desired results. On a wide scale, managers must collaborate for effectiveness; while on an individual basis, they must demonstrate "analytical skills, clear judgment, and the ability to gather and utilize data (Sargent, 1981, p. 42)."

Matrix management, MBO (Management by Objectives), and other management systems are being utilized to meet these ends. As interpersonal dimensions of management continue to gain in importance, these specially created systems will become even more valuable to the manager (Sargent, 1981; Blake and Mouton, 1980).

Personality Characteristics of the Manager

Today it is generally agreed that the two most important managerial requirements are concern for task and concern for people. This thinking has come about because of the realization that there is a strong interaction between managing work and managing people--that human factors have an impact on organizational effectiveness. If indeed the management of people is as important as the management of task, then effective managers need to value both instrumental and expressive behaviors.
In order to achieve this very important balance, the manager needs to possess certain personality characteristics. According to The Corporate Connection, the ideal manager is a person who possesses: "A strong personality, a high level of energy, the ability to conceptualize ideas, the ability to communicate well, and the ability to relate to others in a congruent fashion (Missirian, 1982, p. 99; Sargent, 1981)."

Due to the recognition of the diversity of needs of the new workforce and the importance of responding to these needs, managers have been encouraged to show greater concern for human factors and people skills.

These same thoughts are supported by Edgar Schein who discusses the manager's emotional competence and is quoted in The Androgynous Manager as defining this competence as:

"the capacity to be stimulated rather than exhausted, by emotional and interpersonal crises, to bear high levels of responsibility without becoming paralyzed, and to exercise power without guilt or shame" (Sargent, 1981, p. 49).

Empirical studies conducted by Blake and Mouton in establishing the managerial grid support the theory behind a more people-oriented and versatile manager. In their book, The Versatile Manager: A Grid Profile, it is discussed how a manager can achieve these goals through utilizing behavioral science principles. A manager may become more versatile through learning how to solve a large range of production and people problems in an effective way (Blake, Mouton, 1980).

From the material previously cited, it has been determined that the effective manager may be characterized as being
skilled not only in the traditional functions of managerial planning and organizing but in the more subtle skills of personal interaction and human behavior. The modern manager must possess analytical as well as interpersonal competencies. These skills will take them toward accomplishing their goals and will lead toward more effective management.
STEREOTYPES

Perceptions of Women's Characteristics

Historically, men and women have been considered to have entirely different psychological make-ups and separate sex-roles in society. Relating to managerial skills, one sex may be seen to be more analytical and the other to be more interpersonal. I would like to discuss these images as they are presented in the literature.

The 1960's brought the development of the School of Management Science. The major proponent of early Management Science, Frederick Winslow Taylor, emphasized the need for "rationality, logical thought, and objectivity" as managerial traits. These traits, of course, are all traditionally "male" (Heller, 1982, p. 2). Management Science stressed the use of technical resources and skills--relying on such tools quantitative methods and computer analysis to solve problems and plan for the future (Sargent, 1981). The School of Management Science is seen by many to be a source of male bias in the conception of leadership.

Men fit into this old school of management thought--the managerial positions that characterize a leader as aggressive, competitive, demanding, and "masculine." In early childhood they are encouraged to express more aggression than girls. They are taught competition and problem-solving all in order
to establish the sex-role that will bring them success later in life (Sargent, 1981).

In their early years, many women were conditioned to conform to authority and to avoid conflict. Consequently, many women never learn negotiation skills. For the most part, girls were encouraged to be quiet and demure—never aggressive. Educationally, females avoided studying math and science because society did not think that these subjects were proper for them. These things taught to and ingrained in the minds of women have stunted the professional growth of many female managers in the workforce today (Hammer, 1983).

Now, with the increasing emphasis on the management of people and on the concern for personal satisfaction on the job, as well as outside work, men are questioning whether adherence to all things "masculine" is worth the pressure and harm to their health. Many men are becoming aware of the effects of sex-role stereotyping and are starting to reassess their relationships. They realize that one characteristic of women—their interpersonal ability—is a valuable managerial asset. Men are learning from women that as they become more intuitive, sensitive, and collaborative, they will undoubtedly enhance their managerial skills (Sargent, 1981; Hammer, 1983).

Business schools are already providing this opportunity for students of both sexes to learn together. In this way, males and females are acquiring respect for each other's ability. They are becoming more tolerant of each other and
are learning to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. When these people move into the male-dominated corporate world they will work together to modify the psychological behavior of organizations. As they reach management levels, most of the old "male" stereotyped leaders will have retired from the organization. These older male managers do not realize the potential of "feminine" management techniques because they have never had female peers with which to learn (Feather, 1981).

This past stereotyping has greatly affected the management field because it has affected both men's and women's self-images. Self-image refers to a person's perception of himself or herself and the evaluation of that image. Peoples' evaluations of self-concept results from a comparison of themselves to others in their organization--their environment. This is a result of socialization of sex-roles--how the society stereotypes individuals to behave in a manner deemed appropriate for their sex (Boyatzis, 1982).

Changes in the field of management are leading to changes in leadership styles. The stereotypes are beginning to fade and behaviors can no longer be categorized as male-appropriate or female-appropriate, but rather as appropriate for a successful manager (Greenwald, 1980). I feel that these changes represent a challenging opportunity for managers to develop a style that could increase both employee and organizational effectiveness. This new management mode focuses on the word androgyny. As a psychological term, androgyny
suggests that it is possible for people to exhibit both masculine and feminine qualities and that such values, attitudes, and behaviors reside in varying degrees in each of us (Heller, 1982). In an androgynous society or organization both feminine and masculine qualities would be seen as important and as necessary for success.

It is important to keep these stereotypes in mind. Traditionally, women have been considered to be too emotional, quiet, and shy to succeed in business. They were not aggressive like men, nor did they take opportunities to learn analytical or decision-making skills. As the same time, males in our society are brought up to be leaders. They are taught that competition and aggression will get them ahead. An androgynous manager is a blend of historically "male" and "female" characteristics, and it is possible that the most effective managerial style may result from this combination.

How relevant are these stereotypes? We will in the next section consider research comparing men and women.

Research Support

The reality behind the existence or non-existence of sex-role stereotypes has been uncovered in some interesting findings. Several researchers' results are included in order to provide a factual support for the above mentioned stereotypes.

In a 1980 study which compared the managerial behavior of nearly 2000 male and female managers in a way designed to find sex-based differences, researchers Donnell and Hall
found what they coined, "a significant case of no significant difference." This result was published in Brown's *The Woman Manager in the United States*. Donnell and Hall studied five dimensions of managerial achievement. These were: "managerial philosophy, motivational techniques, participative practices, interpersonal competence, and managerial style." No "significant" overall differences between males and females were found (Brown, 1981, p. 70). In a similar study conducted by researchers Harlen and Weiss, men and women were found to have very similar psychological profiles. Both sexes were found to have "high power and achievement needs, high self-esteem, and high motivation to manage (Brown, 1981, p. 68)."

These studies obviously support the case in which men and women are seen as not differing in managerial ability.

Other studies, however, have questioned managers' subordinates and peers in order to determine sex-role differences and have found minor differences--ones caused mostly by upbringing and that would not greatly affect a manager's performance.

In research results published in *Women and Men as Leaders*, employees, when asked about their male and female supervisors, described their male and female bosses as erring in opposite directions. Women were seen as being too emotional and demonstrative; and men were seen as being too remote and inaccessible (Heller, 1982). Here the stereotypes are more apparent than in other studies, but both male and female managers were found to have faults, just in different areas.
These behavioral faults are seen by many to be a result of sex-role upbringing and to have little effect on managerial effectiveness.

In an article reported in The National Underwriter, the researcher states:

Are there differences between men and women in business? If so, the current literature says they appear caused by different backgrounds and experiences rather than reasons suggesting any inherent inequality between men and women (Reckley, 1982, p. 33).

This reflects the opinion that the minor differences between males and females in management are those in the personality of the individual because of their upbringing.

Even after the current awareness of these stereotypes has been developed, a 1983 New York Times Poll reports that only about half of the women polled said that men's attitudes toward women in business had improved over the last decade, and over a quarter disagreed, arguing that no real change had taken place. When considering the results of this poll, I find it interesting that chauvinism was the thing that bothered women most about men. A majority of the poll's respondents felt that men still think of themselves as superior beings (Dowd, 1984).

In reality, men and women do not perform extremely differently in leadership or managerial roles. Unfortunately, stereotypes and chauvinistic attitudes still exist; but recently, the positive characteristics that women possess are being recognized as useful in management. The next section
examines how women can utilize parts of their "special" characteristics to become effective managers.
WOMEN AS EFFECTIVE MANAGERS

The female stereotype has been recognized. Now it is time to see how these perceived personality characteristics can be used positively to develop a good manager. Many women have been brought up to be expressive and fill the needs of families. They are seen as maternal, and one can anticipate that they will be more interested in nurturing the firm than are men--more interested in the long-term harmony and the livelihood of the organization (Feather, 1981).

A study originally done by Virginia Schein and reported in The Androgynous Manager, supports that female managers are "intuitive, employee-centered, understanding, and aware of others' feelings (Sargent, 1981, p. 55)." Women, as effective leaders, know how to open communication, explore alternatives, negotiate differences, and build consensus with subordinates (Sargent, 1981). They are more sensitive to the needs of others--they can contribute a great deal to the professional development of fellow employees (Sargent, 1981; Hammer, 1983). According to Carol Greenwald, author of Women in Management, "consideration--leader behaviors that show concern for the comfort, status, and contribution of the followers" can be considered to be the most positive characteristic of a female manager (Greenward, 1980, p. 4).

Similar support was given in a paper presented at a conference of the National Organization for Women's Legal Defense
and Education Fund by researchers Schwartz and Rosener. They defined two styles of managerial leadership which they call "alpha" and "beta." The more feminine, or "beta," style emphasizes more of a concern for growth of the individual and the organization, and quality with a tendency for long-range planning and careful examination of choices (Heller, 1982).

An article in *Industry Week* discussed the differences in the human brain, saying that women are superior to men in verbal skills. The female brain is more symmetrically organized and less tightly structured. A woman's ability to shift backward and forward between hemispheres is also better. Women are more sensitive to tones of voice and intensities of expression. They are also better than men at combining perceptual and verbal skills. Females are, therefore, more sensitive to social cues and their meanings than men—"women's intuition." As a result, women in general have much better people-management skills (Feather, 1981; Thompson, 1980).

These human relations skills are valuable because life is not all logic. If it were, the biggest barriers to human effectiveness would not exist. But rationality is not the strongest force in human affairs; emotions are what supply the power; and women are much more sensitive to these emotions and the needs of others than are men (Blake and Mouton, 1980; Thompson, 1980).
The more recent development of the Human Relations in Industry school of thought has brought about a true appreciation for the skills of women managers and has introduced such "feminine" values as, "communication among co-workers, and sensitivity to feelings of subordinates." Human Relations and its relationship to the "female" manager serves as a complement to Taylor's model of the rational, "male" manager (Heller, 1982, p. 2).

It is apparent that through utilizing their natural abilities of communication and interpersonal relation, women can prove to be effective Human Relations managers. Christine Candela, who is the National President of the Women's Equity Action League, is quoted in Management Strategies for Women as saying:

Their (women's) ways will result in a pattern that is more humanistic, one which will be to the advantage of the business community and to productivity in general (Thompson, 1980, p. 210).
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

We have seen that a person in a management position contributes to the achievement of organizational goals through planning, coordination, and decision making regarding the use of human resources. And in addition to the basic functions of planning, staffing, directing, and controlling, an effective manager must incorporate interpersonal and emotional skills. They must strive to develop a balance between people and productivity.

Today's managers need to strike a balance between personal attitudes, emotions, and expressions and the qualities that promote effective work relationships. They need to possess dimensions of self-reliance and independent decision-making as well as the interpersonal skills of being trustful and possessing self-awareness. The organization must allow both vulnerability and dependency in order to understand the human needs and develop the human resources of their employees. Such a climate can lead to the discovery of management strategies that will motivate workers and aid in their career growth.

Of these managerial characteristics, it has been shown that women excel in the Human Resources area. Positive feminine characteristics include: interpersonal abilities, concern for employees, long-range planning capabilities, and
communication skills. Women's natural personalities make them more skilled in these areas and more understanding of the people in the organization.

On the other hand, men tend to do better at quantitative and analytical tasks. The old school of management thought stereotypes the manager as aggressive and competitive, which typifies many male managers today. They are good at getting ahead but perhaps not so considerate of their fellow employees or the growth and development of others around them.

The research actually shows that there are no major differences between men and women as managers. Both sexes develop similar managerial styles even though their backgrounds and personalities differ. Stereotypes still exist, but in actuality, men and women do not perform much differently in leadership or managerial roles.

Conclusions

Modern managers seem to be tossed around by conflicting demands and needs. Human Resources management promotes collaboration and democratic leadership, open communication and participation. Yet in the competitive world of business, a person is still valued for independent thought and aggressive leadership. What is therefore being realized is that the effective manager must possess both stereotypically male and female attributes. To survive in today's business world, this manager must possess rational problem-solving and analytical skills, as well as supportive and interpersonal skills.
What is most important to note is that both men and women possess these skills in varying degrees. It has been proven that effective managerial planning, staffing, and organizing functions are not dependent on sex-role characteristics. Males and females are equally as qualified to perform these tasks. The question concerns how well a person can utilize all the characteristics (both masculine and feminine) to become an effective manager.

Ideally, these managers will come to practice the concept of androgyny. Androgyny demonstrates the value of masculine and feminine traits working in tandem. As more people embrace the concept of androgyny, characteristics from both sex-roles will become respected characteristics of management. Neither women nor men will need to give up their present personalities, only acquire a few new characteristics.

If the concept of androgyny were to be adopted as the most effective management strategy, it would redefine the characteristics of management to include a great many qualities that have previously been prescribed as "feminine." Women are contributing a great deal to management today. Society in general and business in particular should strive to utilize and protect women's valuable traits. Business and industry will profit from the differing viewpoints stemming from a "feminine" background. The presence of women in management should be seen as enriching; and in this way, I believe that men and women will learn to recognize each
other's strengths for the joint benefit of them in their organizational tasks.

Both sexes should come to realize that becoming androgynous can lead to a much more positive work situation with more support from co-workers. If all managers would strive to acquire the necessary characteristics and strive to develop their people as they increase productivity, the best results would be achieved and the concept of the most effective manager would be attained. Managerial success would be seen not to be gender dependent, and people would be treated as individuals, each with unique qualities to offer.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


