Senior Thesis Projects, 1993-2002   College Scholars

1997

The Power of Femininity: An Examination of the Qualities Women in Leadership Possess

Virginia Zeringue

Follow this and additional works at: http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_interstp2

THE POWER OF FEMININITY:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE QUALITIES
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS POSSESS

Virginia Ellen Zeringue

College Scholars Senior Project
Submitted to Dr. John W. Haas, Dr. Faye D. Julian,
Dr. Eric D. Sundstrom, & Dr. Jack E. Reese

University of Tennessee, Knoxville
April 23, 1997

The Power of Femininity: Women in Leadership Positions and the Qualities They Possess

Abstract

Often times women in leadership positions feel it necessary to adopt masculine traits and qualities to be perceived as effective. The purpose of this study is to uncover the strength and power of feminine women in leadership positions. The aspects that make women different from men such as being emotional, sensitive, and having the ability to share power are the very qualities named by the subjects participating in the study. The qualities of effective leaders named by the participants included qualities that eluded to feminine leaders. Taken together, the current research in this area and the present study demonstrate that it is possible for women to maintain their femininity and also be effective leaders.

The Power of Femininity: Women in Leadership Positions and the Qualities They Possess

The Power of Femininity: Women in Leadership Positions

and the Qualities They Possess

Leadership and masculinity are often equated in today's corporate world (Gurman, 1993). Women in top-level positions often feel it necessary to adopt masculine traits in order to fit the role of an effective leader. These characteristics might include dressing masculine, using abrupt language, and being overly aggressive. Another reason masculinity and leadership are paralleled is that fact women sometimes have a poor image of themselves. They believe themselves to be lesser, weaker, more trivial, and incapable of talking hold of a "big" job (Willett, 1971). Many men still have the notion that women are not creative and that women should hold jobs reflecting the traditional roles such as housekeeping and the wife's duties (Willett, 1971).

Although some women continue to believe this negative image, there are many women who have the ability and desire to be good leaders. This leads to a frequently contemplated question, "Is it possible to be an effective leader and still maintain the feminine traits of a woman?" Many studies have been conducted to investigate the differences between women and men in leadership positions. For example, Marilyn Loden conducted a study to examine the behavioral differences between men and women and the implications on leadership (Loden, 1985). However, the power of femininity, which successful female leaders often possess, has only recently begun to receive attention from researchers. What are the characteristics that denote an effective leader, male or female? Can the stereotypical characteristics of emotional, sincere women and independent, assertive men be combined to create an ideal leader? This study will examine characteristics, communication styles, and the strength of feminine characteristics all of which empower women to be successful in leadership positions.

Over the past two decades the number of women in the workplace has increased substantially. However, the number of women in top-level management positions still

does not begin to compare to the number of men in management positions (Adler, 1993). Through affirmative action and an influential feminist movement, women are beginning to be seen as effective leaders. It is obvious that men and women are different in many ways, but do women have to become "masculine" in order to be competent leaders? There is a continuing growth in the body of literature that documents the fact that women are evaluated differently from men in such positions (Loden, 1985; Alder, 1993). Although recent studies of leadership see the potential of female leaders and the unique qualities they offer to organizations, the possibility that women can be successful leaders and not feel compelled to alter their behavior has not been researched to a great extent.

We know men and women are different, but scholars are quickly realizing that the distribution of talent between the two sexes complements and creates a balance. For example, Rigmor Robert of IBM gives lectures on this theme providing insight and understanding of the differences among men and women (Bengston, 1990). At IBM, the employees believe in mixed working groups; a better balance is achieved, and is advantageous to the relations and communications in the workplace (Bengston, 1990). The purpose of this paper is to explore the characteristics women possess that are different from men, and how women can utilize these unique qualities and be effective leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the topic of leadership is extensive and broad. Therefore, the present study will focus on gender differences and communication styles, as well as the masculine and feminine stereotypes associated with leadership. Several recent studies have examined female leaders and how they differ from their male counterparts. Together, this literature suggests that although masculinity is associated with leadership, women possess many strengths and qualities that make them effective leaders.

Sex Roles and Leadership Performance

The understanding of sex roles is important in leadership research (Adams & Yoder, 1985). According to Mischel (1970), sex roles are those behaviors that are less expected and sanctioned when performed by one sex and in contrast are considered to be more appropriate when manifested by members of the other sex (Adams & Yoder, 1980). "Despite the get-tough advice being offered to working women and the emphasis placed on rational decision-making models and masculine leadership styles in business, there is growing recognition throughout industry of the need for a more people-oriented skills-the same skills that most women are taught to value and utilize from the time they are little girls" (Loden, 1985, p. 61). However, a popular theme in research recently has been to examine the influence of gender with leadership in masculine sex-typed tasks. Successful male performance is more often attributed to internal factors such as skill or personal ability (Adams & Yoder, 1980). In contrast, successful female performance is attributed to the situation or even the simplicity of the task. Most empirical studies of women as leaders in a situational context have been conducted by using surveys and laboratory studies. Often, the task involves written descriptions of leaders instead of "real life" interactions (Adams & Yoder, 1980). Hence, the findings of such studies have been questioned regarding the generalizability of organizational life.

In order to measure work role orientation, Gurman and Long (1992) used the Work Role Orientation Scale (WROS). The development of the WROS lead to the conceptualization of a continuum ranging from sex-typical to sex-atypical. A sex-atypical woman does not fit the typical feminine mold. For example, she has more male friends, pursues activities generally reserved for men, and is more competitive than the average women (Gurman & Long, 1992). As expected, the sex-atypical woman is perceived as a leader by others. To determine the relationship between leadership abilities and work role orientation, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. The result, $r=.26$, $p<.05$, suggests that high-WROS-scoring women were perceived as better leaders than

were more traditional women. Although this correlation is rather weak, the study addressed the topic of women in leadership positions and the qualities they possess. It was not recommended to women that they should adopt traditional male attitudes and behaviors to be successful. However, the authors did encourage further study to assess the presence of a female work role orientation as it relates to sex atypical women (Gurman & Long, 1992). Hence, it is necessary to examine the ability of women to hold top-level positions and enjoy rewarding careers without the risk of losing their identity and experiencing role conflict (Gurman & Long, 1992).

Characteristics of Men and Women

Although masculinity has been valued in leadership, for the past 25 years scholars have pointed out that corporations are now unlocking their doors for a certain type of woman (Willett, 1971; Williams, 1977). She is intelligent, articulate, assertive but not overly aggressive (Williams, 1977). Although feminine manifestations vary among women, maintaining signs of femininity can be profitable for women. Using femininity softens the competitiveness and aggressiveness one must have to be successful in business (Williams, 1977). A study done by Margaret Hennig at Harvard discovered that successful businesswomen have resolved their identity crisis by acting feminine. One of the major reasons for the women's success in the top level positions was the ability to accept themselves as women and act like women. They had the ability to combine technical skills with human skills, making their leadership style unique (Williams, 1977). Unquestionably, most people perceive that there are differences between men and women (Willett, 1971). One obvious difference is musculature; the muscular tension in males is released by strenuous physical activity, and may be expressed through aggressive behavior. In addition, men tend to fantasize more than women (Willett, 1971). In women, there is a generally less aggressiveness and need for fantasy. Therefore, women often perceive the world as it is (Willett, 1971). This perception is called "intuition",

"common sense" or "earthiness" in everyday language. It is accurate to say that women are perceived as more emotional than men. However, it is also correct to say that men are not socially permitted to be as emotionally expressive (Willett, 1971). Although the existing research points to the acknowledgment of the differences between men and women leaders, there is not sufficient research that examines the strengths of feminine characteristics in successful leaders.

Masculine and Feminine Leadership Styles

Many would argue that differences in leadership styles are not necessarily related to gender, yet, there is still ample discussion on how men and women communicate with each other and those they motivate. "Men tend to lead in a more competitive, aggressive way while women lead in a more sharing style," says James MacGregor Burns, former Senior Scholar at the Jepson School of Leadership at the University of Richmond (King, 1996). This "sharing style" points to the ability women possess to communicate effectively. In today's corporate environment the ability to communicate effectively is invaluable for a successful and efficient organization. "The very attributes which we have called female and for which women have been devalued are the ones that men are now being encouraged to develop," says Judy Rosener, a professor in the graduate school of management at the University of California. (King, 1996). The qualities such as being comfortable with ambiguity and being willing to share power and information are becoming more relevant in the global workplace (King, 1996). Women tend to be very good at subconsciously empowering others and working in groups. Females are more naturally inclined to be transformational leaders--they create a sense of mission and lead by developing or empowering people. (King, 1996).

Leader-Member Exchange in Female Leaders

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) in communication can be utilized as a means to understand the role of gender in social interactions. In a study examining the role of gender in the social construction of the LMX relationship, women leaders have been associated with greater efforts to restore solidarity in interpersonal relationships (Fairhurst, 1993). According to Graen and Scandura (1987) leaders afford high LMX members more latitude in task completion and decision-making influence. Women leaders may be especially good at this if they display a more collaborative style. While once regarded as negative for women managers, showing concern for the relationship has come to be celebrated in feminine models of leadership (Fairhurst, 1993). Although this study revealed a pattern that helps to create the ongoing structuring of leader-member relationships with female leaders, more discourse studies are needed to increase our knowledge of the interactional foundations of leader-member relationships. The ability for female leaders to successfully interact with their members is essential in providing a productive work environment. In addition, the study of the positive aspects of female communication and exchange is limited.

Female Stereotypes that Limit Women

The traditional feminine stereotypes often limit women in their abilities to attain leadership positions. These limitations include perceptions of women as soft-spoken, self-effacing, compliant, emotional and subjective in decision-making (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985). These characteristics directly confirm the perception that women are innately incapable of being an effective leader.

There are also distinct differences in communication that separate men from women. Research has documented vocabulary differences between men and women that may have implications for competent Leader-Member Exchange. For example, women have a more extensive vocabulary for colors than men. Although the difference between mauve,

lavender and violet may seem trivial and superficial, one could argue that the ability to discern more subtle differences in color is a strength of women's speech--not a detriment (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985). For women, communication is used as a mechanism for creating bonds. On the other hand, men have been encouraged to communicate primarily to exchange information (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985). Vocal differences such as higher pitch, rising intonation are frequently associated with women's speech patterns, and are often the source of discrimination in leadership positions. In addition, the soft-spoken women is at a disadvantage when presenting a report, negotiating a contract, or persuading a jury (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985).

The masculine model of communication denotes that a speaker be direct, confrontational, forceful and logical (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985). Due to the fact that the professional sector of our culture has been based on a male model of communication, any behavior that may be construed as deviating from this model may be considered as suspect, less worthy, or a threat (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985). For women who have worked very hard to achieve a particular professional status, the answer to stereotyping is not simply to start behaving like a man (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985). Therefore, the amount of research completed on this topic is limited and encourages one to pose the question, "Can a woman be a successful leader, maintain her femininity, and be perceived as effective by others?"

In the area of communication, gender is a variable that is receiving increasing attention. Neither masculine nor feminine communicative acts are inherently better or worse; stronger or weaker. Rather it is interpretation that has led people to value one over the other. Psychologist Carol Gilligan explained that "when the focus on individual achievement is equated with personal autonomy, concern with relationships as a weakness of women rather than as a human strength" (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985). The combined aspects of masculine and feminine characteristics would entail a sensitive, emotional, warm individual who is also intelligent, independent, and assertive. Is

not possible for some women to have the ability to display this constellation of attributes and thus fit the prototype of a successful leader?

There is the perception that only men are effective leaders. The research that closely looks at women who are successful in the corporate world does not examine those women leaders who utilize the power of femininity. We know there are obvious differences between men and women as leaders, but cannot both sexes be viewed as good leaders?

Qualities of Leadership

What are the essential functions that a leader in a business or organization should serve? Marilyn Loden (Loden, 1985) conducted a series of interviews and found that the key variables in managerial functions included:

> the use of power
> managing work relationships
> problem-solving
> conflict management
> motivation of employees
> goal setting
> decision-making
> teamwork

Loden found that these key elements were essential in leadership--male and female leadership (Loden, 1985). Although these elements appear to be essential in effective leadership, there are distinct differences between the male and female styles of leadership (Loden, 1985.). The basic premises of each model are on the following page.

Masculine Leadership Model

1. Operating Style: competitive
2. Organizational Structure: hierarchy
3. Basic Objective: winning
4. Problem-Solving Style: rational
5. Key Characteristics: high control, strategic, unemotional, &
                                        analytical

Feminine Leadership Model

1. Operating Style: cooperative
2. Organizational Structure: team
3. Basic Objective: quality output
4. Problem-Solving Style: intuitive/rational
5. Key Characteristics: lower control, empathetic, collaborative
                                      high performance standards

In her research, Loden distinguishes between the two types of leadership styles men and women display. Which style is better? Which style is seen as more effective to colleagues and employees? Which style is preferred by subordinates and co-workers? Who is the better leader--a man or a woman? Neither style is "better". Both the masculine and feminine styles of leadership have redeeming qualities that make men and women successful leaders. However, because there is a distinct difference between men and women as individuals, as people, and as leaders, society seems to place the burden of making a choice as to who is the better leader. With increasing numbers of women placed in top-level positions and achieving administrative status, it is imperative that the general public is educated on the qualities of an "effective leader"--regardless of gender.

"Most of the literature on educational management and on theories of management and organization ignored women, either by making the assumption that all managers are male or by assuming a 'gender-free' position" (Adler, et al., 1993, p. 3) There have been hundreds of books and articles on the topic of leadership. However, examples of female leaders are rarely given. Adolf Hitler, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F.

Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln, and Napoleon are a few key leaders that come to mind when one is asked to give the name of a "leader".

Female Leaders and Images

"Since organizations have forced women to behave like men in order to succeed, it is not surprising that many successful women would identify with a more masculine management style" (Loden, 1985, p. 70). In addition, women managers are often advised to play down their femininity for two reasons: to prevent the distraction of men and to project a serious image (Alder, et al., 1993, p. 106). In her book, Paths to Power: A Woman's Guide From First Job To Top Executive, (1980) Natasha Josefiwitz states, "To become an executive you must look like what others expect a woman to look like. Always be understated, never flashy. Underplay hips and bosom, don't accentuate curves. Wear clothes that allow you to cross your legs comfortably" (Adler, et al., 1993, p. 11).

Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of England, has been cited as "an example of demonstrating all the worst aspects of a woman adopting an authoritarian male management style; her handbag making one statement about her femininity, and her "Iron Lady" image making another" (Adler, et al, 1993, p. 11). Another woman who was interviewed in this study felt that "if women were too tough, they get criticized" (Adler, et al., 1993, p. 7). "No one wants to be Mrs. Thatcher. She has done a disservice to women as she doesn't' let the natural strengths of women show through. She suffers from a lack of approachability, warmth, and softness" (Adler, et al., 1993,p. 7).

Another example of a woman candidate displaying masculine traits is given by a campaign worker who participated in political analyst, Celinda Lake's study "Campaigning in a Different Voice": "Mary was more male than female. I mean she was aggressive, she was a fighter, she was all of these things...our opponent was a nice guy, the family man...And I think that probably people didn't like such an aggressive woman" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992, p. 27). Lake claims that "ambition is not a good thing for a woman to have. If voters can sense ambition, they won't like it. It is the exact opposite for male candidates" (Cantor & Bernay 1992, p. 27). This excerpt is particularly

interesting because the trait of aggression is typically associated with masculinity. Hence, if women display aggression or assertiveness they are viewed as unfeminine or threatening to others around them.

Gender Differences Between Men and Women

Loden conducted a study of values and discovered the following differences between men and women. "Men are motivated for rational truth (theoretical) and practicality and the utility of ideas and things (economics). They have a strong desire for power and influence (political); men place value on the ability to observe and reason objectively. They also enjoy finding useful purpose in their work and in their lives. Men want to be influential and admired by others" (Loden, 1985, p. 67).

Loder found distinctive differences in the results of her study of women's values. "Women place a high priority on form and harmony (aesthetic) and have a high concern for people (social), unity and spirituality (the religious). Women show concern for beauty and creative expression. They are motivated by a desire to help and care for others" (Loden, 1985, p. 67).

In her article, Sandra Lipsitz Bem refers to Parsons on the issue of masculinity, femininity and the labels placed on these domains. According to Parsons, "masculinity has been associated with an instrumental orientation, a cognitive focus on getting the job done or the problem solved, whereas femininity has been associated with an expressive orientation, an affective concern for the welfare of others and the harmony of the group" (Walsh, 1987, p. 207). Bem also quotes Eric Erikson on the issue of masculinity vs. femininity:

> *Erikson makes an anatomical distinction between "inner" (female) and psychological distinction between a masculine "fondness for what works and for what man can make, whether it helps to build or destroy" and a more "ethical" feminine commitment to "resourcefulness in peacekeeping and devotion in healing (Walsh, 1987, p. 207).*

In addition, Bem constructed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory which consists of twenty masculine characteristics and twenty feminine characteristics. Some examples of the masculine characteristics include: "acts like a leader, aggressive, ambitious, independent, makes decisions easily, willing to take a stand, and having a strong personality" (Walsh, 1987, p. 211). The feminine characteristics include: "being affectionate, cheerful, compassionate, gentle, sensitive to the needs of others, understanding, and warm" (Walsh, 1987, p. 211). Bem stated that "armed with this demonstration of sex-role stereotyping also constricts the individual's ability to function in more profound domains as well. Is the masculine male deficient in the domains of expressiveness and communion? Does the feminine woman have but limited access to the domains of instrumentality and agency" Bem inquires (Walsh, 1987, p. 211).

The Leadership Equation

In their book, Women in Power: The Secrets of Leadership, Dorothy W. Cantor and Toni Bernay define "The Leadership Equation". This equation combines the elements which are "critical and guaranteed to add up to leadership" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992, p. 24). These elements include: the Competent Self, Creative Aggression, and Womanpower (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). The first essential element, the Competent Self, "defines a woman who knows who she is at all times and does not feel defined by situations, people, or events" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992, p. 25). The competent woman doesn't feel she has to change the way she acts to please the people around her; the concept of a Competent Self enables a woman to see the possibilities instead of the obstacles" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

The second element of the Leadership Equation is called Creative Aggression. This is an interesting element because "women's aggression is considered unaccepted, unfeminine, and dangerous in today's culture" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992, p. 25). Creative Aggression is defined as taking initiative, leading others, and speaking out (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

12

Karen Horney gives a description of "adequate aggression" that is also cited in Women in Power: The Secrets of Leadership:

> Capacities for work...taking initiative; making efforts; carrying through to completion; attaining success; insisting upon one's rights; defending oneself when attacked; forming and expression autonomous views; recognizing one's goals and being able to plan one's life according to them
> (Cantor & Bernay, 1992, p. 27).

The term assertiveness has been used frequently in place of aggression for a more politically correct climate as if aggression were overloaded with destructive connotations (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). On the contrary, aggression can be creative, constructive, and can be used in the service of life and growth. (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

The final element of the Leadership Equation is WomanPower. "WomanPower is used to make society a better place. It is not power for its own sake or for manipulating others" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). The terms "woman" and "power" seem incongruous because not enough people are likely to connect women and power in the same thought (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). "The classical stereotype of women and femininity just doesn't include the idea of power:" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Therefore it is not surprising that women do not think of themselves as powerful in the male definition of the term and that society doesn't attribute power to them (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). "This is because feminine qualities such as compassionate, sensitive to the needs of others, warm, tender, and being soft-spoken are the exact opposite of those traditionally used to define power" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

Women and Power

The term power can be defined as "the ability to do or act; capability of doing or accomplishing something; strength; might; force...the possession of control or commend over others; authority (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Having force over others or getting to do people what you want them to do have never been associated with femininity or women in general. "The emphasis is on strength, authority, decisiveness, getting things done,

and running other people's lives--all considered masculine traits" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

Not only doesn't society attribute power to women, but women themselves have not been comfortable with using power as long as it is defined in the classic terms (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). They don't think of themselves as powerful, and when women try to act in the realms of male-style power-force and strength, completely void of the feminine caring aspect-they frequently feel extremely uncomfortable (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). "Our culture has maintained the myth that women should not have power because its deviant and unacceptable if they want to be loved. To get what they want, women have had to learn how to exercise power in ways that were not obviously masculine" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Women have learned to utilize their own forms of power: (1) the power of manipulation, (2) personal power, and (3) the power of helplessness (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

Women who are straightforward are at risk of being labeled as "tough," "bitchy," or "overbearing". (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). "According to Congresswoman Jolene Unsoeld, this happens because 'the public does not know what the proper image of a woman with power is'" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Unsoeld also stated that both men and women automatically assume men are effective simply because they are men (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). "It is assumed by both men and unfortunately women, too, that women are not--and they have to prove it" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Therefore, the power of manipulation allows women to effect the way others act as if they person being influenced doesn't know what's happening (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

"Personal power is a capacity that causes people to do things for you because they know and like you" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Unlike men, women have been more comfortable using personal power. It feels better to them than to men because it depends on interpersonal connection. The power of controlling resources such as money, hasn't satisfied women because it doesn't convey love and good feelings in addition to the tangible reward (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). The power of helplessness simply has enabled women over the years to control their worlds. Those who lack concrete resources and

also think they lack competency, the ability to do a certain task, often rely on helplessness to get their way (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

"Although power and nurturance have been viewed as contradictory, in truth Mother is an extremely powerful figure in the household. Raising children is a powerful position, and a mother's power has both obvious and hidden dimensions" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). A mother wields obvious power in her direction of the household in preparing meals, planning vacations, and directing the children's activities (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Companies such as IBM believe that the time women spend working at home bringing up their children gives them a depth of experience and social training men do not receive (Bengston, 1990). On the other hand, a mother's hidden power lies in her ability to foster her children's growth (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). She is able to do this as a caretaker and in the process, empowers others and vicariously finds the measure of her success in their success (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). "Mothers are powerful figures; society tolerates mothers' power, but neither society nor mothers themselves define what they have as truly powerful because its sphere of influences seem so small" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992).

Congresswoman Pat Saiki of Hawaii believes that women have a caring kind of power. "It's not self serving; instead it's directed toward advancing an agenda. It's what we mean as Womanpower" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Womanpower integrates typically female qualities with some male characteristics, and it values both kinds of attributes equally (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). These authors also state, "For those who still see aggression and nurturance as incompatible qualities, we reply that it is possible to be assertive and achievement-oriented while at the same time owning maternal strengths and power. The key is in recognizing that there is strength rather than weakness in tenderness and caring" (Cantor & Bernay, 1992, p. 56).

The literature examines the differences between men and women, the role of communication in Leader-Member Exchange, female stereotypes as well as the differences between masculine and feminine leadership styles. Qualities of effective leaders and the Leadership Equation for effective female leadership are also included in

the literature review. Although the research on femininity in leadership does exist, the extent to which women who maintain femininity has not been closely examined.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the qualities of effective leaders, and to also reinforce the idea that women who possess feminine qualities can also be perceived as effective leaders. The study will entail collecting qualitative data from ten participants through individual interviews. The research will be based on the hypothesis that the participants will list similar qualities of effective leaders. In addition, the study will be based on the hypothesis that the examples of effective male and female leaders provided by the participants will not vary according to gender or position.

METHODS

The study was conducted at a large Southern University. The total student population is 26,000 including 19,000 undergraduate students and 7,000 graduate students. The campus administration consists of a Chancellor and 5 Vice-Chancellors who oversee the areas of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Research, Information Infrastructure, and Development/Alumni Affairs. The student population is 51% female and 49% male; approximately 19% of the students are from out-of-state. There are over 300 student organizations and, as a result, most students are members of at least one student organization.

Participants

The participants were selected because of the positions they hold as leaders on both the student organization level and the administrative level. The ten participants represent a diverse population and a wide range of areas on the campus. The areas which are represented in the present study include: the Dean of Students Office, Office of the Chancellor, the Panhellenic Council, Senior Gift Committee, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, College of Arts and Sciences, Emerging Leaders Class,

and the Department of Residence Halls. The present study entailed a personal interview of the 10 participants. Five of the interviewees were administrators, three females and two males; The remaining five interviewees were student leaders, two females and three males.

Procedure

Prior to the interviews, the participants were contacted by phone and a time was set up for the interview at their convenience. An interview guide was developed from the current literature and the guiding research questions so that the essential information needed for the study was collected (See Appendix A). The interview guide includes the 6 questions that each interviewee was asked. Follow-up questions from the specific answers given by the participants were also implemented when appropriate. The questions were specifically designed to be open-ended, and to encourage the participants to elaborate on their answers.

Each of the ten participants were interviewed individually in thirty to forty-five minutes sessions. The interviews took place in an office setting. The offices were quiet and comfortable for the participants. The interviews were audiotaped with the permission of all ten participants. In previous studies (Walsh, 1987) an adjective checklist is often provided for the purpose of describing masculine or feminine characteristics. For the present study, an adjective checklist was not provided for the purpose of allowing the participants to provide their own descriptions of effective leaders. After the completion of the interviews, the data was compiled. The audiotapes were reviewed and the written notes taken during the interviews were carefully examined to determine if distinctive differences existed among the male and female subjects, the students and administrators, and the overall effectiveness of the female and male leaders whom the subjects identified.

RESULTS

The first research question on the interview guide produced mixed results. When asked "Who among your teachers would you consider to be a leader and what did that teacher do to be effective?, six of the participants named female teachers and the remaining four named male teachers. The five subjects that named female teachers were female; only one male subject named a female teacher. The female subjects described these female teachers as energetic, caring, considerate, and supportive. They also stated that these teachers were independent, open to students, patient, understanding, and respected their students. Virtually all of the subjects used the words "understanding and energetic" to describe these individuals.

Three of the four male teacher responses were given by male subjects. Only one female subject named a male teacher that was a leader. She described him to be "encouraging, thoughtful, not bitter or sour, and positive". The male subjects who named male teachers described them as "encouraging, knowledgeable, loving, caring, worldly, stubborn, and outgoing. Most of the male subjects referred to male role models who shaped their behavior as boys. In contrast, one of the male subjects described a female teacher who "you could count on and lead you in the right direction. She had the ability to motivate others and was able to be calm and put others at ease in a crisis situation." In addition, although male teachers were mentioned when asked about an effective leader, these male examples had stereotypically feminine qualities. For example, one male teacher was described as "thoughtful, encouraging, and had a positive feel." Another male teacher "lead by example and was loving, outgoing, and caring." The listing of these qualities in male teachers directly relates to the inherent qualities women possess and if they are perceived as effective leaders. Finally, one subject stated, "A good teacher IS a good leader."

The answers to the question, "What qualities do you believe a leader should possess in order to be effective" were extensive and very similar among all ten subjects. The most frequently name qualities included:

Qualities	Frequency of Response
should be able to deal with people well	4
must have good communication skills	4
should have a vision	3
a good listener	3
share in responsibility-delegate	3
organized	3
be empathetic	2
know when to lead and when to follow	2
personable	2
lead by example	2
understand values of the group	2

The other qualities that were named only once or by one subject included: being assertive, being a risk-taker, standing up for what one believes in, being willing to sacrifice, having a sense of humor, knowing how to handle conflict, and having integrity. A similar response was given, "people cannot be lead by people who just say things...they have to get down in the dirt with their group and work." Another subject stated, "Nobody can do everything...a good leader should know his/her strengths and weaknesses, and have good people to advise them." "Leaders should know when to pat people on the back and when to kick 'em in the ass," one subject stated. In contrast, " A good leader is a servant" another subject replied.

When asked is the subjects had ever worked under the supervision of a man or a woman, all ten had worked under male leadership, and only eight of the ten subjects had

worked under female leadership. The subjects listed eight examples of effective female leaders and four examples of ineffective female leaders. The characteristics of the ineffective female leaders included: being too emotional, having no passion for the group, being too business oriented, not setting realistic goals, not participating, and being too collaborative. In addition, these women were not qualified for the positions they held and/or had no experience. The male leaders that were ineffective were described as "playing favorites, concerned about himself, and not others," one subject stated. "He was ineffective. He was domineering and used people...they gave in to him." Another subject said that one male leader wit whom he worked "wasn't willing to go the extra mile." On the whole, the results of the questions which examined ineffective leaders were basically the same, regardless of the gender. If the leader was a man or a woman, all ten subjects eluded to the same characteristics which made the individual ineffective. For example, showing no concern for the group, not being qualified the positions, or being too domineering.

Eight of the ten subjects had worked under female leadership. However, the remaining two subjects could hypothesize the effectiveness of working under the leadership of a woman. Effective female leaders must be qualified, self-assured, and not abrasive. A subject that had never worked under female leadership stated, "she must have accomplishments prior to holding a leadership positions." "In addition, she must achieve a balance between showing too much emotion and being effective." Effective female leaders make others feel comfortable; they are energetic, caring, and supportive. These women are patient, independent, innovative, and mild-mannered. A student subject elaborated on a female leader she admired and respected: "She wasn't afraid to be very frank, but at the same time she was loving and understanding." Another female leader was "always willing to listen; everyone had a lot of respect for her. She had great morals and stood up for what she believed was right or correct, while at the same time she encouraged others to find the best in themselves."

An extremely feminine leader one subject spoke about said, 'It is really amazing how she gets her viewpoint across without saying very much. She is able to listen and actually make other people say what she wants them to say. It's really interesting to watch her. She is soft-spoken, and very effective." Curiously enough, the same individual was mentioned by another subject as an example of a female leader. "She is compassionate and a strong leader. She gave great guidance, was able to delegate well, and was even willing to give up ownership of her ideas so that others could take credit."

A female student subject said that "being soft can be an asset. A corporation is made up of people and should be operated for those people." A male administrator subject said he could not remember ever working under the leadership of a woman who was ineffective. He also said that all the women he worked with maintained professionalism and had the ability to care about the people who worked for them. These women "held people accountable but were not abrasive." A female supervisor gave a great deal of support and an "amazing amount of praise to her subordinates : "No matter how hard I worked," a male administrator said, "she always did twice as much."

The characteristics of effective male leaders were virtually identical to those listed as effective female leaders. For instance, the qualities given by subjects included being sensitive, sympathetic, loving, caring, knowledgeable, personable, and observant. A subject described a male leader who "exhibited thoughtfulness and was connected to the group with whom he worked." "He was a good man," she said. the men who were listed as effective leaders all seemed to be encouraging, had the ability to excite their groups, and were strong role models for both the male and female subjects who participated in the study.

The subjects were asked if they felt as though women had to alter the feminine side of their personalities in order to be effective. The answers from the subjects varied according to their own personal experiences. One female administrator said, "It's probably true. Women must earn the respect of men and in the process they are hard,

decisive, and arrogant." "Women have certain boundaries they must conquer such as societal pressures and also a self-confident factor." A male administrator subject comment that "women are trying to fight history and their traditional roles in the family. Society has told women that they have to "be more like a man in order to be successful."

.   A female administrator that participated in the study said that she herself was competitive, abrasive, scholarly, and argumentative. "I was the only girl in a family of four boys and have always been this way." This particular subject is also fairly tall and attributed some of her success as a leader to her height. "Being tall has always been an advantage." A female student subject commented when asked if women had to become masculinized to be effective, "No! I do not believe women have to conform to be successful." Another female subject said that "effective women leaders do not necessarily play to the part of a woman, but to the part of a leader." This student also added, "Women can be successful and still maintain femininity. For example, Liz Dole understands the network and can get her point across without being tense. In contrast, Hillary Clinton it too aggressive and is always on the defensive. We shouldn't have to change ourselves."

A female administrator felt very strongly about the issue of women becoming masculinzed:

> I think the positions women hold reinforce how they already are and where their natural tendencies are. If you have those tendencies in you and a particular job calls for that, then those you would find as strengths. If you do not have any of those tendencies, the position toughens you up a bit. I don't have many of those characteristics (being competitive, using abraisve language) and there have been times when you wish you were like that --except that you're not. When it comes right down to it, it's just not me. I have no trouble making decisions or doing the hard things. I'm just not very aggressive or operate in terms of "turf", but I'm not afraid to make decisions and probably there's a strength when you're not so concerned about your turf. I have been like this for 55 years and I'm probably not going to change...I just won't do it!

The literature examining the role of femininity in leadership suggests that women in leadership positions have altered their communication styles, personal images, and styles of leadership in the past 25 years to conform to a masculine style of leadership. Although women have been viewed as effective leaders for quite some time, the feminine qualities of these women seem to be eliminated in their leadership. Researchers such as Cantor and Bernay have examined women in the political sector and the power they possess in addition to the feminine characteristics they possess or do not possess.

DISCUSSION

The following items were tested using data gathered from the participants. The first question was designed to explore the qualities that an effective leader should possess. A second research questions investigated participants' perceptions of effective leaders with whom they have worked. In addition, the study examined how perceptions of leadership vary between males and females as well as students and administrators.

The study revealed that all ten participants could define an effective leader and specific qualities he or she possessed. All ten participants had either served in a leadership position or had served as a member/subordinate under another individual's leadership.

Review of Current Literature

The results of this project support the most recent research in this area. For example, Marilyn Loden's study which examines the feminine and masculine styles of leadership and prescribes "How to Succeed in Business Without Being One of the Boys."(Loden, 1985). Additional research that supports the present study was conducted by Bengston on what companies are doing to recruit women for higher positions and how to utilize their unique skills and talents (Bengston, 1990). Both of these sources provide

23

insight on the strength of woman as leaders and how to encourage their feminine styles of leadership, communication, and dealing with people.

Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with previous research. Taken together, the results suggest that women do sometimes possess masculine qualities; these qualities could be inherent to their personalities or could be acquired when in leadership positions. However, the results also suggests that women are viewed as effective leaders if they maintain feminine characteristics throughout their leadership styles and interactions with subordinates. The research states that masculinity is often equated with leadership (Gurman, 1993). Although this theory has held true for the past 25 years, the study uncovered the strength feminine leaders who the subjects had encountered.

Consistency of Participants' Responses

The qualities listed by the participants for effective leadership such as "being able to deal well with employees, having clear objectives, being organized, being a good communicator, and having the ability to motivate subordinates" were consistent with current research (Loden, 1985; Bengston, 1990; Adler, et al., 1993). The responses from all ten participants, both male and female, student and administrator, did not vary to a great degree. However, two of the administrators placed more emphasis on having a strong work ethic and being qualified for the job rather than on a more personable style of leadership. On the whole, all ten participants named the same basic qualities that an effective leader should possess.

The examples of effective male leaders and female leaders given by the participants all seemed to possess the same traits, behavioral styles, and characteristics. The student participants appreciated the softness, encouragement, and care which leaders displayed to them as subordinates or students. The administrators also preferred the subjectivity and understanding of male and female leaders, but also appreciated the leaders that were authoritative, rational, and direct yet effective in their leadership. The

administrators could attest to the masculinity of female leaders either having worked under their direction, or came into contact with such women.

The age difference and generation gap between the administrators and the students is a possible factor in the perception of effective leadership. The administrators, who have been part of the educational and corporate sector for at least a decade, could relate to women who felt it necessary to be masculine. In contrast, each of the students disagreed and did not believe that women should conform to be effective leaders, nor would the female students conform in their own personal leadership styles. They believed it was possible to remain feminine and still be perceived by others as a good leader.

Mothers and Teachers as Effective Leaders

An interesting result of the study was to find that four of the subjects listed their mothers as effective leaders. Two males and two females from the interview pool described their mothers as caring, energetic, considerate, and supportive. "My mother could tackle the world," a male subject said. "My mother was calm, nurturing, and was always inclined to explain why things happened." The research on the power mothers have over their children is consistent with these findings (Cantor & Bernay, 1992; Bengston, 1990).

Our mothers are the first dominant women with whom we come into contact. They direct our behavior, our thinking patterns, our feelings, and our opinions. These important figures in our lives are the first leaders we experience. We take directions from them, we listen to them, we trust them, we respect them, and above all, we expect our mothers to love and care for us while they enable to experience life. A truly effective leader accomplishes his/her goals and maintains a close relationship with those he/she leads. Mothers have an amazing amount of power that is hidden to us as children. Yet, we begin to slowly realize that our mothers have taught us so much and have shaped who we are today as adults.

In addition, the participants referred to female teachers when asked about an effective leader. These teachers possessed many of the same matronly qualities we admire and appreciate in mothers. Therefore, it is easy to recognize the similarity in mothers and teachers as effective leaders in the participants lives. When asked to name effective male leaders the participants named qualities that were consistent with the qualities of female leaders. For example, being understanding, sensitive, caring, and supportive. The results of the study show that the ten participants have the same basic idea of what an effective leader is--regardless of their gender.

The male participants did name male leaders with whom they had positive experiences. However, the qualities these male leaders possessed were stereotypically feminine. In a study such as this, one could conceptualize the strong possibility of male subjects, both students and administrators, naming men who display stereotypically male characteristics such as aggression and competitiveness as effective leaders. Therefore, the results are consistent with the hypothesis that the responses would be similar for effective male and female leaders.

Limitations of the Study

The data for this study was collected through individual interviews with ten participants. The interviews allowed an intimate discussion of leadership between the interviewer and the participant. This method was particularly useful in collecting personal experiences and first-hand knowledge from the participants. However, the use of a written survey for the study would have provided a greater amount of information in a short amount of time. Each interview lasted approximately 35 minutes, therefore, ten was a reasonable number of interviews to complete for the study.

Additional limitations for the study apply to the participants. All ten of the participants were white and had received/almost received a college degree. The

socioeconomic status for each participant appeared to be very similar, in conjunction with their educational levels.

A final limitation could be attributed to the educational setting where the study was conducted. Participants in the corporate sector or in a political arena might have different perceptions of effective leaders and therefore, the results would be different. Therefore, caution should be used when generalizing the results from this particular study.

Rationale for Further Study

The present study examines the perceptions of student leaders and administrators regarding the effectiveness of women in leadership who maintain feminine qualities. Although the results of the study show that there is little variance among the participants' responses, further research should be conducted in this area. For example, participants in additional studies might include student members of organizations and individuals who have only worked as subordinates. The study should also be taken outside the educational realm into the corporate world. It would be interesting to examining the perceptions of younger vs. older executives regarding female leadership. In the political arena, male and female politicians should be interviewed to discover their notions of leadership and femininity.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to uncover the strength and power of feminine women in leadership positions. Communication styles and different views of the world categorize women in ways that are often discriminatory in the corporate world because they are viewed as "different" or "foreign" according to a masculine scale to which our culture is committed. The aspects that make women different from men such as being emotional, sensitive, and having the ability to share power and information are the very qualities members would like for their leaders to possess. The current research

women. If we can enlighten others about the marvelous balance of personality traits and qualities men and women can complement one another, the organizational workplace will be an equilibrium of ideas, thoughts, communication, and shared success.

Through interviews conducted, the participants identified leaders that did not fit the traditional, masculine model of leadership. By asking the participants to recall the characteristics of teachers and mothers, the study uncovered the fact that women are and can be successful leaders in various positions. The present study also recognized that women do not have to assume masculine personalities or become masculine in order to be perceived as effective leaders or to reach top-level management positions within an organization. It is possible for women to maintain their femininity and also be effective leaders.

APPENDIX
Interview Guide

This section of the project entails a personal interview of ten participants. (To be read aloud by the interviewer) "This data collected for this interview will be used in a Senior Research Project on the topic of leadership. Please answer the questions completely and as descriptively as possible. Your answers will be documented, but will remain confidential throughout the research and upon publishing of the results. Again, thank you for volunteering to assist in the completion of this research project."

1. Who among your teachers would you consider to be an effective leader? What did this teacher do to be effective?

2. What qualities do you believe a leaders needs to be effective?

3. Have you ever worked under the supervision of a man? If yes, was this individual effective? Can you give an example of a male leader who was ineffective?

4. Have you ever worked under the supervision of a woman? If yes, was this individual effective: Can you give an example of a female leader who was ineffective?

5. Do you believe that women sometimes feel it necessary to adopt masculine traits in order to be effective in leadership? Why or why not?

6. Do you have any additional questions about leaders with whom you have worked that would be useful for the purpose of this study?

REFERENCES

Adams, Jerome & Janice D. Yoder (1985). Effective Leadership for Women and Men. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Adler, Sue, Jenny Laney, & Mary Packer (1993). Managing Women. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Borisoff, Deborah & Lisa Merrill (1985). The Power to Communicate--Gender Differences as Barriers. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Cantor, Dorothy W. & Toni Bernay. (1992). Women in Power: The Secrets of Leadership. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Fairhurst, Gail T. (1993). "The Leader-Member Exchange Patterns of Women Leaders in Industry: A Discourse Analysis." *Communication Monographs*, 60, 321-352.

Gurman, Ernest B. & Keith Long (1992). "Emergent Leadership and Female Sex Role Identity". *The Journal of Psychology*, 126, 309-317.

King, Kay Quinn (1996). "Women Vs. Men--Do Women Lead Better or Just Differently?" *Student Leader*, Fall, 9.

Loden, Marilyn (1985). Feminine Leadership or How to Succeed in Business Without Being One of the Boys. New York: Times Books.

Walsh, Mary Roth (1987). The Psychology of Women--Ongoing Debates. New York: Yale University Press.

Willett, Roslyn S. (1971). "Working in a Man's World. The Woman Executive." Exploring Contemporary Male/Female Roles: A Facilitator's Guide. Eds. Clarke G. Carney & Sarah Lynn Mahon. California:UniversityAssociates,Inc.

Williams, Marcille Gray (1977). The New Executive Woman. Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Co.