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## Full Length Research Paper

# The Effect of Sex and Gender on Perceptions of Leaders: Does Situation Make a Difference?

**Michelle T. Violanti and Linda Pysher Jurczak**

Michelle T. Violanti is an associate professor of Communication Studies  
 University of Tennessee at Knoxville  
 E-mail: [Violanti@utk.edu](mailto:Violanti@utk.edu)

Linda Pysher Jurczak is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Arts  
 Valdosta State University  
 E-mail: [lpjurczak@valdosta.edu](mailto:lpjurczak@valdosta.edu)

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**Relatively little research has been done focusing on feminine and masculine communication styles in leadership. This study seeks to fill in some of the gaps. The quantitative design of this study is based on Goldberg's (1968) experimental paradigm and used an Internet-linked survey consisting of Renzetti's (1987) Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory, a brief description of a leader (one of four different sex and gender combinations), and a Likert-type scale with 20 items that rated leaders on several dimensions. A factor analysis resulted in combining these into three factors: task/dynamism, relationship/organizational ID/qualifications, and an overall item. Participants were selected using a snowball approach. Expectation states theory was the foundation for this study. The results suggest that the expectation of leaders is changing with a feminine communication style preferred across the board, regardless of situation or sex of the leader.**

**Key words:** expectation states theory, sex-role attitudes, communication style, leadership

### Introduction

More than three decades after women began pursuing careers in earnest, the "glass ceiling" remains intact. According to the 2000 United States Census, women in the United States account for approximately 36% of all managers (U. S. Census, 2002). It would seem that women are making significant progress in the world of work compared to their predecessors. Women are now in positions of power; they are managers and supervisors and they are business owners. However, of those women and men in "management of companies and enterprises" men are making approximately 87% more annually than women (U. S. Census, 2000). In the top 1000 industrial firms and the 500 largest U.S. corporations, as ranked by *Fortune* magazine, women comprise only 3% to 5% percent of top management (U. S. Department of Labor, 1998). The presence of women is also lacking on corporate boards: 105 of 500 companies surveyed still had no women on their boards (Dobrynski, 1996). These numbers suggest that a problem continues to exist for women trying to break into upper management.

The problem can no longer be a lack of qualified women. According to the United States Census, slightly more women than men in the 25 to 29 age group were high school graduates in 2000: 89% of women, compared with 87% of men this age. Thirty percent of women in this age group held a bachelor's degree or better, compared with 28% of men. More women than men have enrolled in college since 1979 (U.S. Census, 2000). These findings are not limited to the United States; similar numbers are found in Great Britain. Statistical data show a significant growth from 1991 to 1996 in the number of women and men between the ages of 20 and 34 earning degrees: approximately 23% for women and 22% for men (Central Statistics Office, 2003). If it is not a lack of academic qualifications keeping women out of boardrooms and leadership roles, then what is keeping them out?

One possibility is communication style; more specifically, the relationship of sex and gendered communication style of those in leadership positions. The relationships among sex, gender, and leadership have not garnered much attention in communication studies, however deserving. A search of the

*Communication and Mass Media Complete Database* with leadership as the search term resulted in 1224 hits in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals. Combining the term with sex resulted in 39 articles, and combining it with gender resulted in 26 articles. Many of the articles listed in sex and gender were duplicates. The most current article in the search for leadership and sex was published in 2004 (Aldoory & Toth, 2004) and for leadership and gender in 2005 (Kinnick & Parton, 2005). Few articles can be found that study sex and leadership or gender and leadership in communication; virtually no studies sex, gender, and leadership. In addition to the lack of studies, it is particularly problematic that much of the literature uses sex and gender as interchangeable terms. This makes the study of sex, gender, and leadership particularly provocative due to the ways in which we communicatively construct our worlds (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). This study examines communication styles and their relationship to perceived leadership abilities within the theoretical frame of role expectations.

## Literature Review

### Communication Styles

Much has been written about the differences in communication styles. Males use a more assertive style while females use a tentative one. The assertive style has been said to be masculine and the tentative style feminine. Males communicate with greater volume, lower pitch, and greater inflection, which give power and passion to their ideas (Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Payne, 2001). Females, on the other hand, do not speak as loudly, have higher pitched voices, and are hesitant, which communicates weakness rather than strength. They often sound powerless due to frequent use of hedges, qualifiers, and tag questions (Mulac, Lundell, & Bradac, 1986). According to Crawford (1995), assertiveness training for women resulted from the idea that women were socialized to be meek, polite, and passive. The assertiveness training that was offered to women included behaviors that were considered to be masculine according to the *Bem Sex Role Instrument [BSRI]* (Bem, 1974), behaviors such as defending one's own beliefs, being willing to take a stand, forcefulness, self-reliance, and independence. The prototype for assertiveness is virtually synonymous with masculinity (Crawford, 1995). It should not be surprising then that women have been led to believe if they wanted to succeed, they had to be like men. Women, in an effort to sound more powerful and to combat stereotypical impressions of them as the weaker sex, have adopted more masculine speech styles, including lowering their pitch (Hoar, 1992).

Researchers of tentative versus assertive speech styles have found mixed results (see e.g., Baird & Bradley, 1979; Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Bradley, 1981; Lakoff, 1975). Both women and men judged women who spoke more tentatively as less competent and knowledgeable than women who spoke more assertively; there were no effects for judgments of men. However, men were more influenced by women who spoke

tentatively, and women found them to be less effective (Carli, 1990). Perhaps men preferred women in the appropriate gender-role of feminine female and women did not. This presents yet another quandary for women. These findings suggest that women in powerful positions should adopt an assertive, strong, and passionate style—masculine. However, to gain positions of power in the first place in a male-dominated, hierarchical system might require a tentative style that would be more influential with men. Clearly women in leadership roles need to adapt depending on where in the hierarchy they are located.

### Expectation States Theory

According to Berger & Fisek (1974), expectation states theory is about status characteristics and about roles that members of a group come to hold for themselves and others. Roles do not suddenly materialize out of nowhere; like other things, they are socially constructed, and they are socially constructed based on categories (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Status characteristics can be differentially evaluated as having high or low honor, esteem, and/or desirability. In other words, people with high status characteristics, such as men in leadership, are expected to be more honorable. They also are held in higher esteem and are more desirable in leadership positions. People with high status characteristics are also differentiated from other characteristics by having distinct performance expectations associated with the high and low states (Berger & Fisek, 1974). Not only do status characteristics lead others to have evaluations and expectations about people, but they also determine the distribution of action opportunities. Action opportunities are stabilized beliefs about how an individual possessing a given state of the characteristic will perform. Someone with a high perceived status characteristic will be expected to perform better than someone with a low perceived status characteristic.

Interestingly, one need not necessarily possess a status characteristic to be perceived favorably. One can actually possess the status characteristic leading to the expectation. For example, one could actually have an MBA, which would lead to expected possession of business sense. Or one could be similar in behavior to someone who has an MBA leading others to conclude that he or she can perform an expected task or function. There can be an expectation of possession based on similar tasks or similar individuals. There may have been no previous interaction with an individual, but based on previous experience with similar individuals others may associate him or her with organizing and defining cues in a particular situation (Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, & Rosenholz, 1986). People are deemed high-ability or low-ability based on past experiences with others. However, status characteristics can be relevant even if there is no previous association with the characteristic relevant to a particular task. Having an MBA is enough to lead others to expect someone to be able to read a spreadsheet, for example. More importantly, transfers of expectations to others with the same attributes are only blocked when cultural beliefs

suggest that the goal of the subsequent encounter is explicitly unrelated (Ridgeway, 1991).

If the goals are unrelated but there is no clear evidence that they are unrelated, the expectation will be transferred, meaning that those with high status characteristics will more often than not be expected to have the ability to perform the task at hand. This is one possible explanation for a lack of women in leadership positions—sex is a status characteristic and women have lower status leading to lower expectations. Similarly, expectations may also be linked: if an individual possesses a particular element, he or she is expected to have access to another element (Fisek, Berger, & Norman, 1995). There are also some situations in which status characteristics are insignificant. Basically, given status elements that are directly related to a task, the actor's use of them forms performance expectations for self and others.

Expectation states theory argues that a hierarchy develops based on interactions. Those with high status characteristics are more likely to offer goal-related suggestions within their local hierarchy because they are expected to do so. It is self-fulfilling that those with high status characteristics behave in ways in which they are expected to behave (Ridgeway, 1991). Once the expectation for high performance is formed, it is likely that others will positively evaluate and accept those suggestions. This is a problem for women in leadership positions because they have low status compared with men; women are not expected to perform as well (Fisek, Berger, & Moore, Jr., 2002).

Wagner and Berger (1997) suggested that gender is deeply entwined with social hierarchy and leadership and that rules for the gender system are at the core of status beliefs contained in gender stereotypes. Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) conducted a meta-analysis of 61 Goldberg-paradigm experiments. Goldberg's (1968) paradigm experiments are so named in honor of the man who first used identical articles written ostensibly by a woman or a man to test bias against women. This design allows researchers to manipulate the independent variable and assign the sexes randomly. Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) found that women in leadership positions were devalued more strongly, relative to their male counterparts, when leadership was carried out in a stereotypically masculine style. Women are devalued by being recognized as competent but not having the same leadership potential as men because prejudice is more likely to occur when female leaders violate their gender role by using an agentic, masculine style. Likewise, dominating or autocratic leadership behavior is less well-received from female than male leaders (Copeland, Driskell, & Salas, 1995; Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993). A meta-analysis of leadership studies from 1961-1987 revealed that styles were somewhat gender stereotypic in laboratory experiments with student participants and in assessment studies with samples of employees. Women tended to manifest more interpersonally oriented and democratic styles

and men tended to manifest more autocratic and task-oriented styles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

As previously noted, this study examines the relationships among sex, gender, and leadership. Research indicates that leaders' behaviors are important (e.g., Fleishman, 1973; Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004; Powell & Butterfield, 1984), but can the same be said about communication styles? What makes a difference in people's leadership expectations: biological sex, communicator style, and/or psychological gender? Work to date on masculine and feminine communication styles in leadership roles is limited. Much of the leadership research reflects an interest in the differences between the behavioral styles of men and women, but relatively little has been done with feminine and masculine communication styles. It is important for leaders to know how best to communicate with employees if they want others to follow.

Previous researchers found that sex-role orientation, not sex, was a predictor of leadership style with an initiating structure of leadership (task) significantly related to masculinity and a consideration style (relationship) significantly related to femininity (Korabik, 1982). Masculine communication is direct, succinct, and instrumental, while feminine communication is indirect, elaborate, and affective (Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001). Because it is direct, it would seem that masculine communication would be less time-consuming and appropriate for task-focused situations, such as meeting a deadline. Conversely, feminine communication would be time-consuming and therefore inappropriate for trying to complete a task, but appropriate for situations requiring more of an interpersonal, relationship-building goal. This leads to the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Masculine communication is preferred in situations that require a task focus.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Feminine communication is preferred in situations that require a relationship focus.

Communication competence has been of interest to communication scholars for a very long time. Chomsky (1965) focused on a message-centered approach while others were interested in an outcome-focused approach (e.g., Weimann, 1977). In other disciplines, relationships have been noted between communication and competence (e.g., Huber & Boyle, 2005; Tubbs & Schultz, 2006) and competence and performance (e.g., Powell, Lovallo, & Caringle, 2006). Powell, Lovallo, and Caringle (2006) noted a link between an organizations performance and competence of its people. Although it has been variously defined, this study simply defines competence as having the necessary or adequate ability or qualities to do a particular job. This study asks the following research question about competence in relationship to communication style.

**RQ1:** To what extent are women and men, using the same communication style, viewed as equally competent in leadership positions?

## Methods

### Participants

The sample included participants in various organizations and occupations. The only criterion for this sample was that participants had been employed for at least five years, not necessarily with the same organization. This study was interested in subordinate perceptions of leaders. Survey participants were selected using a snowball approach. The researcher sent an email to prospective participants with a link to an Internet-based survey. Prospective participants were contacted using a personal address book. The email included a brief statement about the research and a link to the survey. Recipients were asked to pass the email on to individuals whom they knew had worked for at least five years, regardless of position or length of time with any one organization. This sampling technique resulted in 213 usable surveys.

The sample consisted of 63% females and 37% males. Race was collapsed into two groups—majority (88%) and minority (12%) due to the overwhelming response of European American/White participants. Education was also collapsed into 4 rather than 9 groups, High School (25%), Bachelor's (32%), Master's (24%), and Doctorate or Professional (18%). The majority of participants, 54%, were in the 42-60 age range, 26% were 27-41, 15% were over 60, and 5% were 18-26. Given a choice between a Blue Collar or White Collar economic background, 21% identified as the former and 78% as the latter.

The on-line survey consisted of a measure of participant sex-role attitudes, a brief scenario of a leader in one of four conditions (feminine female, feminine male, masculine female, or masculine male), a measure of perceived leadership in five areas—task, relationship, organizational identity, qualifications, and dynamism, and demographic questions. The distribution of scenarios was good with 25% (N = 54) of participants answering questions for a feminine female, 26% (N = 55) answering those for a feminine male, 24% (N = 51) answering questions for a masculine female, and 25% (N = 53) answering for a masculine male.

### Instrument

A survey was used to gather preferences for leader communication style, situational style preferences, perceived leadership competence, participants' sex role attitude, and demographic information. Based on Goldberg's (1968) experimental paradigm, a survey consisting of four different sex and communication style combinations was used. A total of four surveys were used to test the interaction of each of the four possible sex and gendered communication style combinations. Considerable thought was put into the names of the leaders

used in this experiment. Kasof (1993) noted that in some Goldberg-paradigm experiments naming bias occurred when male stimulus persons were given more positive names than female stimulus persons. Care was taken to use generic names that would give the impression of European American/White leaders to avoid confounding the sex/gender variable with race. Borrowing from Fine, Johnson, & Foss (1991) the following abbreviations are used: masculine female (MF), feminine female (FF), masculine male (MM), and feminine male (FM). Two surveys used a feminine communication style and two used a masculine communication style (available from the first author). The feminine and masculine descriptions were exactly alike except that one was Julie and one was John and one was Mary and the other David. Each of the four versions described a hypothetical leader, female or male, communicating in either a feminine or a masculine style. The leader's background and education were briefly described. No mention was made of the level of leadership (i.e., supervisor, manager, chief executive officer). Items were used to measure his or her perceived leadership with a Likert-type scale. A variety of sources were used for the survey items. Multiple questions were asked, in different forms, to measure variables of interest and combined into a scale (Cronbach, 1951; DeVellis, 1991).

First, nine items from Renzetti's (1987) adapted *Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory (SRAI)* were included to measure sex-role attitudes of participants. Renzetti reported inter-item correlation for each index (Pearson's *r*, significance level was at least .05) (1987). The reliability for this study was .837 (general sample). Next, six items were adapted from the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (*CSQ*) (Downs & Hazen, 1977). The items were chosen based on their representativeness of the task-focused and relationship-focused dimensions of leadership. The task-related items included: 1) "I would expect this leader to offer guidance in solving job-related," 2) "I would expect this leader's meetings to be well organized," and 3) "I would expect this leader's written communication and directives to be clear and concise." Reliability for this scale was .66. Relationship-related items included 1) "I would expect this leader to know and understand the problems faced by subordinates," 2) "I would expect this person to listen and pay attention to me" and 3) "\_\_\_\_\_'s communication would make me identify with the Organization and feel part of it." Reliabilities reported for the eight dimensions of the *CSQ* range from .72 to .96 (Downs & Hazen, 1977; Taylor, 1997). In general, the *CSQ* has been widely used in the United States, as well as in other countries. However, the instrument is normally used in its entirety, not in pieces. Reliability for this scale was .90.

Four items were also adapted from the Organizational Identification Questionnaire (*OIQ*) (Cheney, 1983). The items used were 1) "I would probably continue working for this leader even if I didn't need the money," 2) "I would be very proud to be an employee of this leader," 3) "I would describe myself to others in the organization as 'I work for Julie Jones,'" and 4) Mary's communication makes me identify with the

organization and feel part of it. This instrument also consistently has high reliability; Cheney (1983) reported a Chronbach alpha of .94, Bullis and Tompkins (1989) reported an alpha of .95, and Sass and Canary (1991) reported an alpha reliability of .94. Again, the reliabilities reported are for the entire instrument, not for three items. In this study the reliability was acceptable at .83.

The final questions were adapted from the Source Credibility Scale (*SCS*) (Berlo, Lemert & Mertz, 1970). Two dimensions were used in their entirety: qualifications and dynamism. The *SCS* is a semantic differential instrument and was used in items designed for a Likert-type scale for this study. The items used were: 1) trained, 2) experienced, 3) qualified, 4) skilled, 5) informed, 6) aggressive, 7) empathic, 8) bold, 9) active, and 10) energetic. Kaminski and Miller (1984) reported alpha reliabilities for the *SCS* of .72 for the Qualification factor and .85 for the Dynamism factor. Dynamism had an unacceptable reliability and one item, "I would describe this person as aggressive," was deleted bringing the reliability to .69. The qualification scale had a good reliability at .87.

The surveys were accessed via an Internet link and each time the link was used a different survey was opened to insure equal distribution of the four different versions and random sampling. However, when a survey timed-out it was not counted and the next survey opened was the next in rotation, which accounted for the unequal distribution of scenarios.

### Definitions

Sex of the leader is an important independent variable; it is purely biological in nature. Male and female are based on obvious outward physical characteristics and leaders were defined as male or female. Unlike sex, gender is not automatic, but is socially constructed; it is the meanings that societies and individuals ascribe to female and male categories (Eagly, Johannsen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003). One is not born masculine or feminine; one becomes masculine or feminine through socialization. Other independent demographic variables of interest in this research include those of the participants: sex, age, socioeconomic background, race, and education level.

### Data Analysis

Alpha reliabilities for the questionnaire subscales ranged from .69 (dynamism and task with one item deleted) to .89 (relationship), which were deemed acceptable (See Table 1 for alpha reliabilities for all study scales). Also, the items loaded on two factors in a factor analysis. The task and dynamism items loaded onto one factor, which was labeled *TD*; relationship, organizational identity, and qualifications loaded onto a second factor labeled *ROIQ*. A factor analysis of the *CSQ* items, the *OIQ* items, and the *SCS* items loaded onto two factors, with the exception of one task item and one dynamism item, which were deleted. The two new variables were combined to create a third variable—*TDROIQ*, which was the

overall leadership score. The alpha reliability for sex-role attitudes was also acceptable at .82. (See Appendix A)

### Results

Hypothesis 1 focused on the use of communication in a situation that requires a task-focus. Specifically it tested that masculine communication is rated more positively than feminine communication in situations that require a task-focus. Results do not support this hypothesis ( $df = 211, t = -6.32, p = .000$ ). Leaders communicating in a masculine communication style ( $M = 9.07, SD = 3.11$ ) are rated less positively than leaders communicating in a feminine style ( $M = 11.36, SD = 2.11$ ) in a situation requiring a task-focus.

Hypothesis 2 focused on the use of communication in a situation that requires a relationship focus. It was posited that feminine communication would be rated more positively than masculine communication in situations that require a relationship-focus. Results of a *t*-test support this hypothesis ( $df = 211, t = -23.77, p = .000$ ). In situations requiring a focus on relationships, a feminine communication style ( $M = 17.39, SD = 2.43$ ) is rated more positively than a masculine communication style ( $M = 7.04, SD = 3.80$ ).

Research Question 1 asked to what extent women and men, using the same communication style, were viewed as equally competent in leadership positions. Results of *t*-tests partially support this hypothesis ( $df = 102, t = -2.18, p = .031$ ). Females using a masculine communication style ( $M = 73.39, SD = 17.97$ ) are perceived more positively than males using a masculine communication style ( $M = 66, SD = 16.49$ ). However, there was no difference in ratings of feminine females and feminine males ( $df = 211, t = -.792, p = .430$ ).

### Discussion

Expectation states theory is about status characteristics and about roles that members of a group come to hold for themselves and others (Berger & Fisek, 1974). Status characteristics are characteristics that can be differentially evaluated as having high or low honor, esteem, and/or desirability. The theory argues that a hierarchy (social or professional) develops based on interactions. The interactions are based on roles into which people are socialized. Deaux and Major (1987) explained this as a dynamic process in which each person's gender belief system influences his or her own behavior as well as that of the other interactant. Tying this back to expectation states, those with high status characteristics are expected to offer more goal-related suggestions, which they do. It has also been noted that people are expected to behave consistently with societal gender roles (Eagly, 1987). This is problematic for women in leadership because woman and leader are conflicting roles. To be a woman, one must act like a woman. She needs to be nurturing, relational, and other-centered. To be a leader, one must act in a stereotypically masculine manner: direct, autocratic, and task-focused.

It was expected that masculine communication would be rated more positively than feminine communication in situations requiring a focus on tasks, and feminine communication would be rated more positively in situations requiring a focus on relationships. Previous researchers found that sex-role orientation, not sex, was a predictor of leadership style with an initiating structure of leadership (task) significantly related to masculinity and a consideration style (relationship) significantly related to femininity (Korabik, 1982). This research did not support the supposition that masculine communication would be rated more positively in task-focused situations. In fact, the opposite was true—leaders communicating in a feminine style were rated more positively than those communicating in a masculine style in task situations. This could be explained by a description being given rather than an actual task being done, as in previous studies in which a masculine style was preferred in task situations (e.g., Bartol & Butterfield, 1976; Riggio et al, 2003). It could be that a polite, considerate style (more feminine than masculine) is preferred regardless of the situation (Eblen, 1987). This would seem to be a logical assumption based on the evidence that suggests social skills are important in leader behavior (e. g., Jablin, 1979; O'Reilly & Pondy, 1979; Whetten & Cameron, 1984).

Social skills, such as knowing when to talk and when to listen, using the appropriate language and tone for a situation, and knowing what to say are important considerations for leaders. This research confirmed previous findings that a feminine communication style would be rated more positively in relationship-focused situations (e.g., Boumans & Landeweerd, 1993). Relational practice is a strategy for performing gender, regardless of the sex of the leader, and contributes to the construction of feminine or other-oriented social identity (Holmes & Marra, 2004).

Of interest in this study was the extent to which women and men using the same communication style were viewed similarly. It was expected that men in leadership positions would be rated more positively if both men and women used the same communication style, either masculine or feminine. This was expected due to the role of leader being associated more with males and masculine individuals. As with previous studies, there were mixed results. This study supports findings that there are no differences based on sex (e.g., Brown, 1979; Donnell & Hall, 1980), but only with feminine communication. Women and men who both used a feminine communication style were rated similarly. However, women using a masculine communication style were rated more positively in this study than men using a masculine communication style. These findings contradict previous findings that men and women using a masculine style are perceived similarly and those using a feminine style are perceived differently (Rosenfeld & Fowler, 1976). This seems strange considering that women who use an autocratic, direct leadership style have been less well-received than men who use the same style (Copeland, Driskell, & Salas,

1995; Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993) and that women using a masculine leadership style are devalued compared to their male counterparts (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992).

It is possible that women using a masculine communication style are rated more positively due to the expected use of non-verbal reinforcers and paralanguage behaviors. Perhaps in our social hierarchy we have different expectations of women and men (Berger & Fisek, 1974), and because women have been socialized to use more positive non-verbal reinforcers and paralanguage to downplay directness (Payne, 2001) we expect them to do so. Although men and women say the same thing, they may say it in different ways. Men may be expected to be direct—"have the schedule done by Sunday" and women may be expected to say "have the schedule done by Sunday, okay?" Although there were no differences between the masculine male and masculine female in this study, these differing expectations may have led to a more positive rating for women using a masculine communication style. Another possibility is that women in supervisory positions are perceived to focus more on the task and others, while men in similar positions are perceived to focus on themselves (Statham, 1987). Women may be perceived as other-centered, even if they use a masculine communication style, while men may be seen as self-centered, which lowers subordinates' evaluations of them.

#### **Limitations and Future Research**

As with all research, this study has limitations. Several limitations in particular, deserve further discussion: instrumentation, sampling, sample and definition of leadership. Instrumentation limitations include the Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory (Renzetti, 1987), descriptions of leaders, and adapting parts of previously-used scales. Sampling issues include convenience and snowballing. Limitations of the sample include demographics of participants and diversity. The definition of leadership in this study was left purposely ambiguous.

#### **Instrument**

First, although Renzetti (1987) reported good inter-item reliability for the *Sex Role Attitudinal Inventory (SRAI)*, it is a dated instrument. Unlike the *BSRI* (Bem, 1974), which has been consistent over time, the *SRAI* has not. Both instruments were developed at a time when cultures were in flux. The *SRAI* was created to measure the way participants perceived feminism and sex-role attitudes. The basis for the instrument was feminism and the questions on the attitudinal scale were loaded by today's standards. For example, one item in particular speaks to the negative perception of women and work—"career women tend to be masculine and domineering." This is also one example of several items on the instrument that are double-barreled.

Future research needs to develop a new instrument to measure sex-role attitudes that is more reflective of the changes in our culture and other cultures. Because the world is becoming

smaller and more cultures are being blended, it is important to include the differences in any new measure.

A second limitation of the instrument is in using sections of validated instruments rather than creating a new instrument. Although previous studies have had success with the instruments used, they were used in their entirety, not in bits and pieces (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Kaminski & Miller, 1984; Sass & Canary, 1991; Taylor, 1997). The items adapted from the Source Credibility Scale (SCS) (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1970) may have been particularly problematic because they were attributes written in question form. For example, qualified became "I would describe this leader as qualified." Not only were the lists translated into questions, the questions did not follow the form of those adapted from other scales. The other scales started with "I would expect this leader to..." Future researchers using this instrument should change the form of the questions to "I would expect this leader to. . ." Although each of the subscales had acceptable reliabilities, there is a need for additional items. The dynamism subscale had only two items after one item was deleted to make it more reliable. One instrument is needed that captures a variety of communicative dimensions of leadership. It would be very helpful, for example, to have one instrument that measures communication and character, communication and competence, and communication and qualifications.

The third issue with the instrument is the written description of leaders. Although communication styles were built into the descriptions of leaders, written descriptions cannot capture true communication. One of the missing ingredients was non-verbal communication behaviors. Future researchers who want to use written descriptions and hypothetical scenarios should include non-verbal behaviors to balance the communication style. It is possible that the masculine leadership scenario itself was problematic. Masculine leaders could have been perceived as rude; however, this was not tested. Additional pilot testing needs to be done to tease out masculinity versus rudeness. The masculine leadership scenarios may also have been more negative, and therefore prejudicial. Many leaders are nice people with a symbolic veneer of politeness in certain situations who then make a decision (e.g., Jack Welch). It would be interesting to look at what happens with leadership in a variety of situations (e.g., crisis). Do people in crisis situations maintain the same leadership style? Do leaders who typically use a feminine communication style change to a more masculine style as a crisis would warrant?

It is necessary and important that future studies include qualitative methods to capture differing realities of leadership. Focus groups would allow participants to discuss leadership in their own words and identify concerns with leadership. They would also help to flesh out preferences for communication styles and effectiveness of different styles in different situations. Observing communication within organizations would allow researchers to see first-hand similarities and

differences between non-verbal behaviors that may impact effectiveness rating. It would also allow researchers the opportunity to determine if there are actual observable differences or if the differences are in the perception of the subordinates.

### **Sampling and Sample**

There were also some limitations with the sampling. Snowball sampling via the Internet was used because it was an expedient and inexpensive way in which to collect data. However, people who do not have access to the Internet would not have the opportunity to participate. Also, homophily suggests that people generally only have significant contact with others like themselves (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). The survey link was sent via the Internet to people in the primary researcher's address book and to frequently-used listservs. Although attempts were made to control sampling bias, it is possible that those who received the survey were similar to the researcher and that those people sent it to people who by extension were also similar to the researchers. This would be expected to limit the diversity of the sample.

The sample in this study was not diverse. As previously mentioned, the sample consisted of mostly White, middle-aged, upper-class, educated, women. Racial diversity was almost non-existent. Only about 13% self-reported as being from a minority or mixed race. Caution should be used in generalizing these findings. Future studies need to make a more concerted effort at including diversity. It would be interesting to see how preferences would change with a more diverse sample.

### **Definition of Leadership**

Mintzberg (2006) noted that leaders have to be managers and managers have to be leaders. In this study, no distinction was made between leader and manager. Likewise no distinction was made between different kinds of leaders or in leaders in different kinds of organizations. Leadership was left purposely ambiguous to allow participants to define it themselves. No mention was made of the level of leadership within the organization; the only indication that these people were leaders was the label. Leadership is one of those murky concepts that everyone perceives differently. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Lee (2003) examined measurement models in three leading journals that publish leadership research (*The Leadership Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Academy of Management Journal*). They found 47 studies that examined 138 leadership constructs. According to them, many of the studies examined the same constructs using different measures and, in many cases, the wrong kinds of measures. Future research needs to be more specific about different aspects of leadership. How is leadership constructed in different kinds of organizations? What effect does organizational culture have on leadership? What does a leader need to do to adapt to a situation, followers, or superiors? How might a political leader differ from an organizational leader? What role does motivation and inspiration play in leadership?

## Conclusion

It is important when engaging in research to remember why it is being done in the first place. It is not solely for the pleasure of the researchers or on a whim. Research is conducted to contribute in some meaningful way to what we already know. This study was expected to contribute in meaningful ways to expectation states theory, leadership literature, and the notion of sex and gender similarities and differences. The following contributions are offered.

Expectations states theory suggests that we are evaluated based on categories to which we belong (Berger & Fisek, 1974). Characteristics may be high status or low status depending on our particular category and we may be judged differently depending on which roles we fill. Studies have suggested that men have higher status than women (e.g., Ridgeway, 1987), which would be expected to place men at an advantage. Neither general expectation states nor specific expectation states had an effect on the perception of women and men in leadership in this study. There was not the expected preference for a male leader based on the higher status placed on male; in fact, the opposite was true, with females being evaluated more positively. Nor was a male who used a masculine communication style preferred over one who used a feminine communication style (in this study androgynous).

Sex and gender are also very different things. Much of the previous work in leadership studies conflated the two, which causes confusion. In addition to being confusing, it makes findings questionable. This study seeks to differentiate between sex and gender; treating the two separately makes sense. Gender is a continuum; most people are not either feminine or masculine, they are somewhere in between. It is unrealistic to compare men and women in leadership solely on the basis of sex. Comparisons need to be made with both sex and gender being measured. We do not have enough information at this point to make any generalizations about sex, gender, and leadership. What we do know is that sex and gender matter. The results of this study suggest that there are few differences in the ways in which women and men in leadership are perceived based on their communication style. In most cases, women and men were rated similarly, with feminine communication being the preferred style across the board. These results were unexpected; previous research suggested that masculine communication was preferred in task-oriented situations and feminine communication was preferred in relationship-oriented situations. This study does not confirm this. Perhaps this says more about the followers than it does the leaders; we may be more willing to accept a feminine style of communication. In spite of the limitations of this study, it makes a contribution to the discipline. Much of the research in communication studies and leadership studies looks at either sex or gender. This brings the two together to get the bigger picture. Not all women are feminine and not all men are masculine, and they cannot be studied as if they are. Feminine/masculine is a continuum on which we all fall; some

are more in line with their sex and others are not. What remains to be seen is how quickly effective leaders, both male and female, with a feminine communication style can break through the glass ceiling.

Although most of the findings in this study were contrary to what was expected, it is not a good idea to shout from the rooftops that women and men are finally equal. This study lends credence to the notion that the inequity in our culture is not due to communication style and it is not due to sex. Of course, this is not results-based, but a conclusion instead. If not qualifications, what? What does that leave? It leaves structure and tradition. In other cultures restrictions are more obvious. Americans were shocked when we discovered that the Taliban required women to wear a burka and cover themselves from head to foot. Yet little mention is made of Saudi women covering themselves, many from head to foot, not attending school, and not going outside without a male member of the immediate family (AlMunajjed, 1997), a husband, father, grandfather, or brother. Little, if any, thought is given to Saudi women wearing black, which holds the heat, from head to toe in temperatures that sometimes reach 145 degrees, while Saudi men wear white, which reflects the sun. In our culture it is subtle, not obvious. A scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1963) shows the embarrassment Scout deals with when wearing a dress for the first day of school. Scout had never worn a dress before but girls had to wear dresses to school. Girls and women are no longer required to wear dresses, but it was not so long ago that they were. The restrictions are no longer visible, but they are there.

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Appendix A  
Correlations and Alpha Reliabilities for Study Variables

		Task	Relationship	Org ID	Qualifications	Dynamism	TD	ROIQ	TDROIQ	Reliabilities
Task	Pearson Correlation	1								.69
	Sig. (2-tailed)									
	N	213								
Relationship	Pearson Correlation	.505**	1							.89
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000								
	N	213	213							
Organizational ID	Pearson Correlation	.532**	.880**	1						.83
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000							
	N	213	213	213						
qualifications	Pearson Correlation	.555**	.783**	.841**	1					.87
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000						
	N	213	213	213	213					
Dynamism	Pearson Correlation	.560**	.500**	.586**	.658**	1				.69
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000					
	N	213	213	213	213	213				
LeadershipTD	Pearson Correlation	.807**	.563**	.634**	.695**	.941**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				.84
	N	213	213	213	213	213	213			
leadershipROIQ2	Pearson Correlation	.565**	.932**	.957**	.939**	.624**	.675**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	213	213	213	213	213	213	213		
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.679**	.854**	.904**	.920**	.829**	.868**	.950**	1	
TDROIQ2	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	213	213	213	213	213	213	213	213	