

When a Woman Is the Boss

DILEMMAS IN TAKING CHARGE

CAROL WATSON

Rutgers University, Graduate School of Management

This study explored the possibility that encouraging women to behave more dominantly in leadership situations will undermine their effectiveness rather than increase it. As predicted, women who enacted a dominant approach were found to be somewhat less influential overall than women who enacted a considerate, problem-solving approach and significantly less influential when they supervised male rather than mixed-sex subordinates. Women in subordinate roles gave dominant female supervisors slightly higher ratings of effectiveness than considerate ones. Overall, however, women subordinates disliked their female bosses more than men did and judged them more negatively no matter which approach they enacted. It is concluded that women who wish to be effective leaders should be encouraged to behave considerately and to improve their participative management skills, not to act more like men.

Our society harbors significant doubts about whether women are, or can be, tough enough to handle difficult leadership situations. Questions were raised in the 1984 presidential election, for example, about whether the Russians might think they could take military advantage of a President Geraldine Ferraro. These kinds of doubts about women's competence to lead seem to emanate from our culture's identification of effective managers with the masculine image. Men and managers are perceived to be more competent, more dominant-aggressive, and to have more ego strength than women, but to be less warm and expressive than women (Bass, Krusell, & Alexander, 1971; Bowman, Worthy, & Greyser, 1965; Massengill & DiMarco, 1979; O'Leary, 1974; Schein, 1973). Whether these beliefs reflect reality or not, they continued to be held as

recently as the early 1980s (Babladelis, Deaux, Helmreich, & Spence, 1983). Thus it should not be surprising that doubts about women's capability to lead also persist. The question is, Do women require special training to be effective leaders, and if so, what kind of training should it be?

If it is true that women are less competitive and dominant than men, and that these qualities are necessary for effective leadership, then women probably ought to be encouraged, and trained, to behave more like men. This seems to be the rationale behind assertiveness-training for women. In support of this view, there is evidence that women are less task oriented, more submissive, and less likely to emerge as leaders in leaderless groups (e.g. Megargee, 1969; Piliavin & Martin, 1978; Strodbeck & Mann, 1956).

However, a consensus is emerging that, contrary to our stereotypes, women are not less dominant, less goal directed, or less confident than men when they attain or are given leadership positions (Bartol & Martin, 1986; Catalyst, 1986; Dion, 1985; Hollander & Yoder, 1980; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987). In fact, there is evidence that women must take care not to behave too dominantly. Several studies have found, for example, that women who use "masculine" influence techniques such as issuing threats, offering rewards, or claiming expert power, are viewed as less effective (Haccoun, Sallay, & Haccoun, 1978; Rosen & Jerdee, 1973; Wiley & Eskilson, 1982) and have less satisfied subordinates (Petty & Lee, 1975; Petty & Miles, 1976; Roussell, 1974) than men who behave the same way. The real dilemma for women leaders, then, may be that they must somehow learn to be strong enough to inspire confidence without violating society's proscriptions against aggressiveness in women. From this perspective, encouraging women to behave more assertively when in leadership positions may be very poor advice indeed. It is probably unnecessary in the first place, and it may cause them to be resisted, rejected, and disliked. The study described here examined the possibility that advice to "act more like a man" will undermine a woman's effectiveness as a leader rather than increase it.

To explore the impact of a woman's approach upon her effectiveness as a leader in an interactive situation, data were collected using a managerial simulation. Maier's Change-of-Work-Procedures case was used (Maier, Solem & Maier, 1975). This case creates a simulated encounter between a supervisor and three

subordinates. The supervisor is given data that indicate the workers could increase their productivity substantially by changing their current work procedures. The subordinates do not wish to change, however, given that they developed the current work procedure to meet their personal needs for variety in their jobs.

Situations like this, in which supervisors are asked by upper management to enact changes that are unpopular with their subordinates, occur frequently in organizations. If the supervisor forces her subordinates to make a change they do not wish to make, she may undermine her relationship with them. If she sympathizes with them and does not ask them to change, she is likely to be viewed as weak and ineffective by her own superiors. This would seem to be exactly the kind of management situation in which it would be most difficult for women to be forceful and to succeed in carrying out management's wishes (e.g. Larwood, Wood, & Inderlied, 1978).

The specific question of interest here is whether encouraging women supervisors to adopt a more "masculine" dominant approach will help them to be more successfully influential in such a situation (more able to get the workers to change), or whether a softer, more considerate approach might actually work better for them. Because dominant behavior is not acceptable behavior for women according to society's sex-role stereotypes, it was hypothesized that:

Women who are encouraged to behave dominantly will be less influential (obtain less change) and will be less well liked by their subordinates than women who are encouraged to be considerate.

Furthermore, because there is evidence that men are particularly likely to react negatively to sex-role reversals (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975), and to a lone woman in their midst (Eskilson & Wiley, 1976; Webber, 1976; Wolman & Frank, 1975), it was also hypothesized that:

Women who are encouraged to enact a dominant approach with all-male groups of subordinates will be less influential and less well-liked than women who are encouraged to be considerate.

The outcomes that groups produce in this role-play can be classified in terms of their effectiveness, thus permitting an additional hypothesis about the quality of the group's decision. The

outcomes are first classified in terms of whether they demonstrate leader influence (workers change work procedures completely or partially) or an absence of leader influence (workers make no change in procedures). It is then possible to differentiate between higher and lower quality influential solutions. Those outcomes in which a modification is worked out (integrative solutions) are considered better than ones in which the workers completely change their work procedures (Hoffman, Harburg, & Maier, 1962). The integrative solutions are better because they capitalize on the workers' strengths (such as rotating between their two best positions) and at the same time, meet the workers' needs for job variety.

In several previous studies, mixed-sex groups tended to produce more of the higher quality integrative solutions than same-sex groups (Hoffman & Maier, 1961; Hoffman et al., 1962). All of the groups in the present study were mixed-sex groups, though in some the supervisor was the only woman present. Thus one might expect a high proportion of integrative solutions in all conditions of this study. However, it is anticipated that the role reversal of women in the dominant condition will interfere with the synergy that seems to occur when there is only one woman in the group who also happens to be supervisor (e.g. Eskilson & Wiley, 1976). Therefore, it was further hypothesized that:

Women supervisors who are encouraged to enact a dominant approach will produce fewer integrative solutions than women who are encouraged to enact a considerate, problem-solving approach, especially when they supervise groups of male subordinates.

To summarize, this study examines the viability of arguments that women should be encouraged to behave more like men in order to develop the toughness Americans tend to assume is necessary for effective managerial action. It is hypothesized that such encouragement will actually undermine women's ability to be influential, especially when they supervise all-male groups of subordinates.

METHOD

PROCEDURE AND SUBJECTS

The role-play was administered by the author as a classroom exercise in several organizational behavior classes at a northeastern

graduate business school. A total of 188 students took part in the role-play over the course of two terms. Students were asked to form into four-person groups. A woman was given the supervisor's role in each of the 47 groups. Approximately 40% of the women supervised groups of three male subordinates, and 60% supervised groups of two male and one female subordinate.

Students were given 5-10 minutes to read over their roles and 20 minutes to complete the role-play. All groups in a given class carried out the role-play simultaneously. Each participant was asked to fill out a questionnaire immediately upon completion of the role-play.

Despite the rather informal nature of this administration, students typically took the role-play episode quite seriously. Students in the role of the supervisor found themselves confronting a situation frequently faced by supervisory personnel in organizational hierarchies—namely, being asked to implement a management directive with little clear authority save the title “supervisor” for doing so.

One important drawback of this approach to data collection was the absence of video- or audiotaping of the interaction or of trained observers who could code leader behavior. Consequently, it will not be possible to examine the actual interactions that transpired. We shall be confined to an analysis of the outcomes achieved and to self-reports of intentions, expectations, and behavior.

EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT

Two different sets of instructions were used for the supervisor to create the two primary experimental conditions. In the considerate (sex-appropriate) condition, the supervisor was given performance data that explained that worker productivity would increase 20% if they stopped rotating jobs, and she was instructed to treat this as a problem to be discussed with her subordinates. In the dominant (sex-inappropriate) condition, the supervisor was given the same information but was instructed to announce the decision to stop rotation. She was provided with ideas she might use to “sell” the change to her subordinates (e.g., that they would be able to make more money).

Subordinates were given role instructions that highlighted the monotony of their jobs to ensure that they would be strongly committed to maintaining rotation and would play their roles

strongly (e.g., Hoffman et al., 1962). The subordinate roles were designed by Maier so that one subordinate would be faster and strongly committed to rotation (Walters), another would be good but less strongly committed to rotation (Jackson), and the third (Stevenson), would be slower and not especially committed to rotation. In order to keep the situation as consistent across groups as possible, in mixed-sex groups, men were always given the roles of Walters and Stevenson and women were always given the role of Jackson.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The dependent variables consisted of the outcome of the meeting conducted by the supervisor and responses to questionnaires completed at the end of the role-play by all participants. As discussed in the Introduction, the outcomes were categorized first in terms of whether they indicated leader influence or not. The influential outcomes were then differentiated in terms of quality. Solutions that allowed for a modified rotational system (integrative) were considered higher quality than those that had the workers stop rotating completely.

The post-role-play questionnaire included questions about satisfaction with the outcome, influence over the decision, resistance to the leader's ideas, liking for the leader, effectiveness of the leader, and perceptions of the leader's decision-making style. Responses to all but the last of these were obtained from the supervisors as well as from each of the workers. The supervisors were also asked to indicate their commitment to ending rotation, their confidence that the workers would go along with such a decision, and how comfortable they felt playing the role of supervisor.

RESULTS

MANIPULATION CHECKS

Several types of participant judgments provide evidence that women supervisors in the dominant condition attempted to enact a more dominating approach than those in the considerate condition, but were rebuffed by their subordinates.

Following the role-play, participants who enacted the subordinate roles were asked individually whether their supervisor had (a) made

the decision herself, (b) used group decision making to reach a decision, or (c) given in to worker demands. The data in Table 1 show that the subordinates perceived significant differences in the behavior of their supervisors by experimental condition. As hypothesized, women who were encouraged to engage in dominant behavior were described as less influential rather than more influential. Supervisors in the dominant condition were more likely than those in the considerate condition to be described as having given in to worker demands and less likely to be described as having made the decision themselves.

Of course, one might argue that the subordinates' judgments actually indicate that the women in the dominant condition simply refused to enact their roles. Without tapes or observations of the sessions this possibility cannot be ruled out. However, a number of factors argue against this interpretation. First, the participants made their judgments immediately following the role-play. Thus they were probably reacting more to the way the leaders ended the meeting than to the way they started it. In addition, the dominant supervisors reported significantly less acceptance of their ideas ($M = 2.87$) than the considerate supervisors ($M = 3.90$; $F[1, 42] = 4.64, p < .05$). Their subordinates agreed. Subordinates in the dominant condition reported significantly less willingness to accept their supervisors' ideas ($M = 2.93$) than subordinates in the considerate condition ($M = 3.46, F[1, 43] = 5.08, p < .05$). Thus dominant women supervisors seem to have been resisted more than considerate women supervisors, as predicted. Because the only difference between these experimental conditions was the supervisor's role instructions, the greater resistance of dominant supervisors must have been elicited by their behavior. These data support the likelihood that dominant supervisors started out aggressively but were forced to back down.

The women supervisors themselves provided a final source of evidence that they tried to behave dominantly in the dominant condition but were forced to back down against their will. Several of the women in the dominant condition who acquiesced provided written comments that they had agreed to let their subordinates continue rotating reluctantly, and only after extracting promises of higher productivity and issuing threats if those promises were not upheld.

TABLE 1
 Worker Perceptions of Leader Decision-Making Approach
 (proportion of workers who assigned their leaders to each approach)^a

| Experimental Condition | (n) | Leader's Approach | | | | |
|-------------------------|------|------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| | | Directive ^b | (n) | Participative ^c | (n) | Acquiesced ^d |
| Considerate supervisors | (23) | 35.0 | (36) | 55.0 | (6) | 9.0 |
| Dominant supervisors | (14) | 19.0 | (42) | 57.0 | (18) | 24.0 |

NOTE: $\chi^2 = 8.102$; $df = 2$; $p < .025$.

a. Missing data from one subject in each condition.

b. Leader made the decision herself.

c. Leader used group decision-making by including worker ideas, needs, and so on.

d. Leader acquiesced to worker demands.

Taken together, then, this pattern of reactions by supervisors and subordinates provides evidence that women leaders in the dominant condition did behave differently than women leaders in the considerate condition. And there is reason to believe that the dominant women leaders did try to enact more dominant behavior and were resisted as a consequence. Let us turn now to an examination of the outcomes obtained by leaders in the various conditions of the study to see whether the leaders' behavior affected their ability to influence, how much they were liked, and their ability to reach the more effective integrative solutions.

LEADER INFLUENCE

Table 2 shows that a somewhat greater proportion of considerate supervisors than dominant supervisors obtained influential outcomes, as predicted, but the difference did not reach an acceptable level of significance ($\chi^2 = 1.86$, $df = 1$, $p < .17$). When the groups with male workers were analyzed separately, however, the hypothesized difference did occur and was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.11$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). Dominant female leaders were significantly less likely to be influential than considerate female leaders when they interacted with groups of male subordinates. Dominant women were as influential as considerate women when their subordinates consisted of both men and women, however.

TABLE 2
Proportion of Influential Leaders by Experimental Condition and Group Composition

| Experimental Condition | Male Workers ^{a,e} | | Mixed-Sex-Workers ^b | | All Groups ^{c,d} | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| | (n) | No Influence | (n) | No Influence | (n) | No Influence |
| Considerate supervisors | (8) | 0.0 | (14) | 28.5 | (22) | 18.0 |
| Dominant supervisors | (10) | 40.0 | (15) | 33.0 | (25) | 36.0 |
| | | | | | | 82.0 |

a. Male worker groups: $\chi^2 = 4.114, p < .05$.

b. Mixed-sex worker groups: $\chi^2 = 0.077$.

c. All groups: $\chi^2 = 1.857, p < .17$.

d. Test of difference in percentage of influential leaders for all groups: $z = 1.38, n.s.$

e. Test of difference in percentage of influential leaders in male worker groups: $z = 2.11, p < .05$.

LEADER EFFECTIVENESS

To evaluate the extent to which the leader's approach affected her ability to help her group solve problems effectively, the proportion of influential outcomes that were integrative versus nonintegrative was evaluated. Contrary to the prediction, considerate women leaders were no more likely to obtain integrative solutions than were dominant women leaders overall ($\chi^2=0.50$, n.s.) or with groups of male subordinates ($\chi^2=0.22$, n.s.). Thus the hypothesis that a considerate, problem-solving approach would allow women leaders to capitalize on the potential synergy of mixed-sex groups was not supported. In fact, the overall percentage of integrative solutions obtained in this study seems low (only 25% of all solutions were integrative).

SUPERVISORS' POST-ROLE-PLAY REACTIONS

As discussed earlier, dominant women supervisors felt their ideas were significantly less likely to be accepted than did considerate supervisors. As Table 3 shows, dominant supervisors also tended to be less satisfied than considerate supervisors with the outcome of the meeting. And dominant supervisors tended to be least comfortable supervising groups of male subordinates, whereas considerate supervisors tended to be most comfortable supervising male subordinates. This is consistent with the fact that dominant supervisors tended to feel less accepted by groups of male subordinates, whereas considerate supervisors felt especially well accepted by male subordinates. Even so, however, all the women supervisors tended to doubt their ability to successfully influence groups of male subordinates.

Although these results are not terribly robust, they are consistent with each other, with the outcome data, and with the hypotheses. They suggest that women who tried to be dominant felt unaccepted, uncomfortable, and unsure of themselves, especially when they had to supervise groups of male subordinates. In contrast, women who were encouraged to take a considerate, problem-solving approach seemed to feel more comfortable with and accepted by groups of male subordinates, though they too doubted their ability to successfully influence the men.

TABLE 3
Supervisors' Responses to Post-Role-Play Questionnaire by Condition and Group Composition

| Questionnaire Item | Considerate Supervisors | | | Dominant Supervisors | | | F-Values | |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | Male Subordinates (n = 14) | Mixed-Sex Subordinates (n = 8) | Mixed-Sex Subordinates (n = 10) | Male Subordinates (n = 15) | Mixed-Sex Subordinates (n = 10) | Supervisor Style (A) | Group Composition (B) | Interaction (A X B) |
| Felt workers were willing to accept her ideas | Mean (SD) 4.38 (1.06) | 3.43 (1.45) | 3.14 (1.46) | 2.60 (1.26) | 3.14 (1.46) | 4.64** | 0.14 | 3.27* |
| Felt confident workers would change | 2.88 (0.99) | 3.43 (1.55) | 4.14 (1.23) | 3.30 (1.25) | 4.14 (1.23) | 2.42 | 3.19** | 0.13 |
| Felt comfortable as supervisor | 3.83 (1.60) | 3.31 (1.65) | 4.07 (1.44) | 2.90 (1.45) | 4.07 (1.44) | 0.11 | 0.94 | 2.96* |
| Felt satisfied with solution | 4.63 (1.41) | 4.71 (1.38) | 4.36 (1.28) | 3.40 (1.58) | 4.36 (1.28) | 2.81* | 1.70 | 1.04 |
| Believed nonrotation was best solution | 2.88 (1.46) | 2.93 (1.27) | 3.43 (1.28) | 2.30 (1.34) | 3.43 (1.28) | 0.05 | 2.46 | 1.80 |
| Influence over decision | 4.38 (0.92) | 4.36 (1.01) | 4.14 (1.23) | 3.70 (0.95) | 4.14 (1.23) | 1.58 | 0.51 | 0.52 |
| Liked her subordinates | 5.25 (0.46) | 5.00 (0.55) | 4.93 (0.83) | 4.90 (0.74) | 4.93 (0.83) | 0.44 | 0.06 | 0.19 |

NOTE: Scale-1 = low acceptance, confidence, and so on, 6 = high acceptance, confidence, and so on. * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$.

SUBORDINATES' POST-ROLE-PLAY REACTIONS

Table 4 shows that, as discussed earlier, subordinates of dominant supervisors reported significantly less willingness to accept their leaders' ideas than subordinates of considerate supervisors. Subordinates of dominant supervisors also felt they had significantly more influence over the decision than those of considerate supervisors. Both of these results are consistent with the hypothesis that a dominant approach would undermine a woman's influence rather than increase it.

Surprisingly, groups with all male subordinates were significantly more accepting of their female bosses than mixed-sex groups. This appears to be due to the fact that male groups were especially accepting of considerate female supervisors. Male groups also credited their female bosses with greater effectiveness than mixed-sex groups and tended to report greater liking for their supervisors. Because the only difference between these two types of groups was that a woman took Jackson's role in the mixed-sex groups, it seemed possible that the women subordinates were actually less accepting of women supervisors and harsher critics of them than men. This possibility was explored by performing analyses of variance on the responses of participants in Jackson's role by gender.

The data in Table 5 show that women in Jackson's role gave their female bosses significantly lower ratings of effectiveness, reported significantly less liking for them, and tended to be less accepting of their ideas than men in that role. The women subordinates gave slightly higher ratings of effectiveness to dominant female supervisors than to considerate ones. With groups of male subordinates, then, women were more likely to win favor when they enacted a considerate, problem-solving approach. With mixed-sex groups, however, women who behaved dominantly were more likely to win respect from female subordinates, though not their liking or acceptance.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine the question of whether women ought to be encouraged to behave more like men in order to enhance their leadership effectiveness. The results generally sup-

TABLE 4
Subordinate Responses to Post-Role-Play Questionnaire by Experimental Condition and Group Composition

| Questionnaire Item | Considerate Supervisors | | | | Dominant Supervisors | | F-Values | |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------|--|
| | Male Subordinates (n = 8) | Female Subordinates (n = 14) | Male Subordinates (n = 10) | Female Subordinates (n = 15) | Supervisor Style (A) | Group (B) | Interaction (A × B) | |
| Willingness to accept supervisor's ideas | Mean (SD) 4.08 (1.04) | 3.11 (0.99) | 2.93 (0.61) | 2.90 (0.97) | 5.08** | 4.04** | 3.37* | |
| Supervisor's effectiveness | Mean (SD) 4.50 (0.93) | 3.70 (1.13) | 3.87 (1.14) | 3.73 (0.76) | 0.02 | 4.42** | 1.50 | |
| Liking for supervisor | Mean (SD) 4.58 (0.73) | 4.35 (0.67) | 4.43 (0.74) | 4.29 (0.84) | 0.70 | 3.00* | 0.47 | |
| Influence over decision | Mean (SD) 3.29 (1.02) | 3.36 (0.91) | 3.57 (1.10) | 3.80 (0.76) | 4.48** | 0.00 | 0.29 | |
| Satisfaction with solution | Mean (SD) 3.71 (0.93) | 3.62 (1.18) | 3.57 (1.36) | 4.18 (0.79) | 2.24 | 0.28 | 1.68 | |

NOTE: Scale-1 = low acceptance, effectiveness, and so on; 6 = high acceptance, effectiveness, and so on.
 * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$.

TABLE 5
 Subordinate Responses to Post-Role-Play Questionnaire by Gender (Jackson's role only)

| Questionnaire Item | Considerate Supervisors | | | Dominant Supervisors | | | F-Values | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--|
| | Male Subordinates (n = 8) | Mixed-Sex Subordinates (n = 14) | Male Subordinates (n = 10) | Mixed-Sex Subordinates (n = 15) | Supervisor Style (A) | Composition Group (B) | Interaction (A X B) | |
| Willingness to accept supervisor's ideas | Mean (SD) 4.38 (1.60) | 3.14 (1.41) | 3.44 (1.43) | 3.07 (1.53) | 0.78 | 2.92* | 0.87 | |
| Supervisor's effectiveness | Mean (SD) 5.13 (0.64) | 3.71 (1.43) | 4.10 (1.45) | 3.87 (0.92) | 0.73 | 4.73** | 2.72* | |
| Liking for supervisor | Mean (SD) 5.25 (0.47) | 4.64 (0.93) | 5.00 (0.94) | 4.40 (1.05) | 0.83 | 4.78** | 0.00 | |
| Influence over decision | Mean (SD) 3.38 (1.60) | 3.64 (1.28) | 3.80 (1.23) | 3.67 (1.23) | 0.18 | 0.03 | 0.22 | |
| Satisfaction with solution | Mean (SD) 3.63 (1.85) | 3.64 (1.65) | 3.20 (1.62) | 4.00 (1.51) | 0.05 | 0.89 | 0.75 | |

NOTE: Scale—1 = low acceptance, effectiveness, and so on; 6 = high acceptance, effectiveness, and so on.
 * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$.

port the hypothesis that this kind of encouragement will undermine women's effectiveness rather than enhance it. Dominant female supervisors were significantly less influential than considerate ones with groups of male subordinates, and there was a trend for them to be less influential overall. This seemed to occur because, as hypothesized, a dominant approach was strongly resisted, especially by groups of male subordinates. Consequently, dominant women supervisors were sometimes forced to abandon their preferred solution and give in to worker demands, especially when they interacted with groups of male subordinates.

In spite of the women's difficulties with male subordinates, they actually received higher effectiveness ratings from men than from women, and the men said they liked their female bosses more than the women did. Men were especially receptive to women bosses who employed the considerate, problem-solving approach. Women who were encouraged to be considerate were more accepted by men, were more influential, and were rated as being more in charge than women who tried to act tough. The rub, however, is that women subordinates reacted to their female bosses somewhat differently than men subordinates did. Women subordinates seemed to feel their women bosses should act tough, but they reacted negatively to a female boss no matter which approach she tried.

The prediction that women who enacted a considerate, problem-solving approach would reach better solutions to the conflict with their subordinates was not supported here. Rather, as noted before, only 25% of all solutions were the more effective, integrative solutions. This suggests that the women may not have known how to enact a truly participative approach in which both sides of the issue are explored and a mutually satisfactory solution is reached.

Overall, the results from this study are not as robust as would be desirable. This may be in part because of the relatively small sample size. The results may also have been weakened because participants in the supervisor's role were not always willing or able to enact their role instructions appropriately. Some women in the dominant condition may have been reluctant to behave dominantly, for example. And women in the considerate condition may not have known how to enact a participative approach effectively without prior training. Nevertheless, the findings are provocative and suggest that this would be a fruitful area for further work. It is

important to identify what kinds of behavior will maximize women's effectiveness when they interact with male and female subordinates, peers, and superiors. Strategies have been suggested by Larwood and Wood (1977) and more recently by Morrison et al. (1987). The results from this study argue in favor of a considerate, problem-solving approach, but more work is needed to clarify how women can be tough without being too tough.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a practical perspective, the results highlight several areas in which women may benefit from leadership training. First, women may need special training in how to deal with male subordinates. The women in this study who tried to enact a stereotypically masculine approach with male subordinates met great resistance, suggesting that this is not an optimal way for women to handle men. Yet several studies of Fiedler's (1967) contingency theory of leadership suggest that women may normally become more directive when dealing with male subordinates (e.g. Chapman, 1975; Offerman, 1984). These studies found that as the number of male subordinates increased, the Least Preferred Co-worker scores of female managers declined. According to Fiedler, a low LPC score indicates a preference for a more directive, task-oriented approach. Thus it is possible that women are especially inclined to reverse roles when they deal with men, though the results from the study reported here suggest that this is exactly the wrong approach to take. Women who were instructed to take a considerate, problem-solving approach were more influential with male subordinates and much more positively received.

A second area in which women might benefit from training concerns participative leadership skills. This is suggested by the fact that women supervisors in this instance were rarely able to reach the more effective integrative solutions. This was true even though they had the advantage of being in mixed-sex groups.

This is an important issue because our sex-role stereotypes lead us to believe that women have already mastered the skills that characterize the participative or democratic leadership style. Yet, in fact, recent reviews (Bartol & Martin, 1986; Catalyst, 1986; Dion, 1985; Hollander & Yoder, 1980; Morrison et al., 1987) agree that women leaders do not appear to have greater interpersonal skills

than men. Similarly, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) concluded more than a decade ago that existing empirical studies do not show girls to be reliably more sensitive to social cues, more dependent, more affiliative, more nurturant, more altruistic, or more empathetic than boys. Nevertheless, Jago and Vroom (1982) did recently find that both women students and women managers showed a stronger preference for participative decision styles than men. Women in their study were more likely than men to choose participative decision styles when presented with descriptions of managerial problems. Because women did not choose participative styles for situations in which they would have been considered inappropriate, their decision choices were actually more effective than men's. However, though women may prefer participative approaches, the data from the study reported here suggest that they probably do not know how to enact such approaches effectively.

To sum up, the results from this study suggest that women ought to be encouraged to behave considerately and to be trained in participative leadership skills, not encouraged to be more dominant or to act more like men. Perhaps it is not women who need to change so much as our culture's implicit assumption that effective leaders must be tough, competitive, and unfeeling. Recent contributors to the managerial leadership literature seem to be calling for such a change in our assumptions about effective leadership (e.g. Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1987). The transformational leader these authors describe is more like the democratic, participative leader recommended by Maier as long ago as 1952 rather than like an autocratic, directive one. Given women's apparent preference for participative approaches, they might actually need less help than men in becoming the transformational leaders so many scholars and practitioners believe are desperately needed by U.S. business organizations.

REFERENCES

- Babladelis, G., Deaux, K., Helmreich, R. L., & Spence, J. T. (1983). Sex-related attitudes and personal characteristics in the U.S. *International Journal of Psychology, 18*(1-2), 111-123.
- Bartol, K. M., & Martin, D. C. (1986). Women and men in task groups. In R. D. Ashmore & F. K. Del Boca (Eds.), *The social psychology of female-male relations*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Bass, B. M., Krusell, J., & Alexander, R. H. (1971). Male managers' attitudes toward working women. *American Behavioral Scientists*, 15, 221-236.
- Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Bowman, G. W., Worthy, N. B., & Greyser, S. A. (1965). Are women executives people? *Harvard Business Review*, 43, 14-17.
- Catalyst. (1986, April). *Female management style: Myth and reality*. New York: Author.
- Chapman, J. B. (1975). Comparison of male and female leadership styles. *Academy of Management Journal*, 18, 645-650.
- Costrich, N., Feinstein, J., Kidder, L., Maracek, J., & Pascale, L. (1975). When stereotypes hurt: Three studies of penalties for sex-role reversals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 11, 520-530.
- Dion, K. L. (1985). Sex, gender, and groups: Selected issues. In V. E. O'Leary, R. K. Unger, & B. S. Wallston (Eds.), *Women, gender and social psychology*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Esilson, A., & Wiley, M. G. (1976). Sex composition and leadership in small groups. *Sociometry*, 39(3), 183-194.
- Fielder, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Haccoun, D. M., Sallay, G., & Haccoun, R. R. (1978). Sex differences in the appropriateness of supervisory styles: A nonmanagement view. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63(1), 124-127.
- Hoffman, L. R., & Maier, N. R. F. (1961). Quality and acceptance of problem solutions by members of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 62, 401-407.
- Hoffman, L. R., Harburg, E., & Maier, N. R. F. (1962). Differences and disagreement as factors in creative group problem-solving. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 64, 206-214.
- Hollander, E. P., & Yoder, J. (1980). Some issues in comparing women and men as leaders. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 1(3), 267-280.
- Jago, A. G., & Vroom, V. H. (1982). Sex differences in the incidence and evaluation of participative leader behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 67, 776-783.
- Kushell, E., & Newton, R. (1986). Gender, leadership style, and subordinate satisfaction: An experiment. *Sex Roles*, 14(3/4), 203-209.
- Larwood, L., Wood, M. M., & Inderlied, S. D. (1978). Training women for management: New problems, new solutions. *Academy of Management Review*, 3, 584-593.
- Larwood, L., & Wood, M. M. (1977). *Women in management*. Lexington, MA.: Lexington Books.
- Maccoby, E. E., & Jacklin, C. N. (1974). *The psychology of sex differences*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press.
- Maier, N.R.F. (1952). *Principles of human relations*. New York: John Wiley.
- Maier, N.R.F., Solem, A. R., & Maier, A. A. (1975). *The role-play technique*. San Diego, CA: University Associates.
- Massengill, E., & DiMarco, N. (1979). Sex-role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics: A current replication. *Sex Roles*, 5, 561-570.

- Megargee, E. I. (1969). Influence of sex roles on the manifestation of leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 53*, 377-382.
- Morrison, A. M., White, R. P., & Van Velsor, E. (1987, Spring). The narrow band. *Issues & Observations, Center for Creative Leadership, 7*(2).
- Offerman, L. R. (1984). Short-term supervisory experience and LPC scores: Effects of leader sex and group sex composition. *Journal of Social Psychology, 123*, 115-121.
- O'Leary, V. E. (1974). Some attitudinal barriers to occupational aspirations in women. *Psychological Bulletin, 81*, 809-826.
- Osborn, R. N., & Vicars, W. M. (1976). Sex stereotypes: An artifact in leader behavior and subordinate satisfaction analysis? *Academy of Management Journal, 19*, 439-449.
- Petty, M. M., & Lee, G. K. (1975). Moderating effects of sex of supervisor and subordinate on relationships between supervisory behavior and subordinate satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 60*, 624-628.
- Petty, M. M., & Miles, R. H. (1976). Leader sex-role stereotyping in a female dominated work culture. *Personnel Psychology, 29*, 393-404.
- Piliavin, J. A., & Martin, R. R. (1978). The effects of the sex composition of groups on style of social interaction. *Sex Roles, 4*(2), 281-296.
- Rosen, B., & Jerdee, T. H. (1973). The influence of sex-role stereotypes on evaluations of male and female supervisory behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 57*(1), 44-48.
- Roussell, C. (1974). Relationship of sex of department head to department climate. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 19*, 211-220.
- Schein, V. E. (1973). The relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 57*, 95-100.
- Strodtbeck, F. L., & Mann, R. D. (1956). Sex role differentiation in jury deliberations. *Sociometry, 19*, 3-11.
- Tichy, N. M., & Devanna, M. A. (1987). *The transformational leader*. New York: John Wiley.
- Webber, R. A. (1976). Perceptions and behaviors in mixed sex work teams. *Industrial Relations, 15*(2), 121-129.
- Wiley, M. G., & Eskilson, A. (1982). Coping in the corporation: Sex role constraints. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 12*(1), 1-11.
- Wolman, C., & Frank, H. (1975). The solo woman in a professional peer group. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 45*, 164-171.

Carol Watson is Assistant Professor of Organization Management at the Graduate School of Management, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ. She is also a private consultant to middle- and upper-level managers of local business firms. She specializes in teaching, research, and consulting in the areas of group effectiveness, leadership, negotiation, conflict management, and feedback practices. She has a Ph.D. in social psychology from Columbia University, an M.A. in personality psychology from Stanford University, and a B.A. in economics from the University of Akron.