

## SEX DIFFERENCES, ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL, AND SUPERIORS' EVALUATION OF MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP

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Leadership in a business context has been under scrutiny as a research topic for almost 30 years. Fiedler's (1967) least preferred coworker contingency model, Hersey and Blanchard's (1972) situational leadership theory, and Mintzberg's (1973) landmark observations of the nature of managerial work are mainstays in leadership literature. Although these and other managerial leadership theories differ in their approaches, they have a masculine perspective in common. This phenomenon reflects the organizational reality of the time; the number of female executives in the workforce when those studies were conducted was minimal and certainly not significant. Given the current and projected influx of women in management, it is imperative to refine theory in order to better understand how gender and/or sex differences influence managerial communication.

When women began entering the workforce in significant numbers in the 1970s, scholars initiated research on every imaginable aspect of managerial life, including such workplace phenomena influenced by sex differences or gender as leadership (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Komives, 1991; Statham, 1987; Trewatha & Vaught, 1987; Wmther & Green, 1987), leader emergence (Dobbins, Long, Dedrick, & Clemons, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Goktepe & Schneider, 1989; Petzel, Johnson, & Bresolin, 1990), use of power (Hirokawa, Kodama, & Harper, 1990), negotiation and conflict management (Chusmir & Mills, 1989; Infante & Gorden, 1985; Nadler & Nadler, 1987; Papa & Natalie, 1989; Rossi & ToddMancillas, 1987), problem solving (Craig & Sherif, 1986; Wheatley, Amin, & Maddox, 1991), and job satisfaction (Pincus, 1986). However, the research is replete with inconsistent findings and conflicting conclusions. In addition, a review of the literature reveals areas in which further study is needed, namely, superior evaluations of male and female managers and the effect organizational level has on evaluation. The purpose of this study was to explore superiors' evaluations of the leadership skills of their managers to determine if sex differences exist. Although the perceptions of a manager's peers and subordinates are important to career success, the manager's superior is often the person who holds ultimate control over his or her professional development, visibility, rewards, and promotions.

### ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL AND MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION

Three studies highlight the research exploring managerial communication and organizational level. Cowan, Wilcox, and Nykodym (1990) discovered that women managers were more

cooperative, timid (unable to speak out in conflict), and nervous than men, but there were no differences for aggressiveness or shyness. An interaction effect with organizational level showed fewer differences between male and female managers in managerial communication when the managers were at the same level in the organization.

Morley and Shockley-Zalabak (1985) suggested that sex differences and organizational level differences exist in the content of managerial communication. They analyzed the communication of male and female managers and their superiors, peers, and subordinates and discovered that women were more regulated and informed by superiors than their male counterparts. In communication with peers, female managers also sent more regulative and informative messages than did men. Finally, women sent fewer innovative messages to subordinates than men. A study by Athanassiades (1974) suggested that female subordinates tend to distort their communication to their superiors more than men.

### SEX DIFFERENCES IN THE EVALUATION OF MANAGERS

Although research (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Powell, 1993; Wilkins & Andersen, 1991) now clearly shows that there are no statistically significant differences in male and female managers' leadership behavior, sex differences have been found to have an effect on the perception and evaluation of a leader by subordinates. As Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) demonstrated, the differences in the perceptions and evaluations of male and female managers by their subordinates exceeded the actual reported differences. This is an extremely important point to consider because people often communicate and make decisions based on perceptions rather than reality. Although some findings are contradictory, most studies have found that male managers are evaluated more favorably than their female colleagues (Nieva & Gutek, 1980). Studies exploring sex differences in perceptions of leadership style (Eagly et al., 1992), management style (Berryman-Fink, Heintz, Lowy, Seebohm, & Wheelless, 1987; Berryman-Fink & Wheelless, 1987), and communication style (Fine, Johnson, & Foss, 1991; Wheelless & Berryman-Fink, 1985) have all drawn the conclusion that the leadership skills of women are generally rated lower by their subordinates than are those of male managers.

Ragins (1991) theorized that power had a greater influence on evaluation of managers than did gender. Her study controlled for gender and perceived and positional power. The results indicated that the power of the leader exerted greater influence on subordinate evaluations than did the gender of the leader. Evaluations of masculine and feminine leaders did not significantly differ. In the absence of a power cue, Ragins hypothesizes that subordinates will rely on sex role stereotypes rather than sex of the person per se in making evaluations. Thus the sex of a leader may only be a factor as it relates to how male and females obtain power in an organization.

Only one study examined the evaluations of female managers by their supervisors (Staley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1986). One hundred twenty-two female managers and 80 of their direct superiors were asked to rate the managers' communication proficiency on 15 scales. On 12 of the 15 scales, the supervisors rated the managers lower than the managers rated themselves. Staley and Shockley-Zalabak (1986) concluded that the results of this study have detrimental implications for women's promotability and career progress.

Because very little is known about superior evaluations of male and female managers, the present research was designed to examine superiors' evaluations of the skills of male and female managers to determine if sex differences exist. The effect of the manager's position in the organizational hierarchy was examined as well, because managers at different levels in organizations have been found to exhibit different behaviors (Cowan et al., 1990; Hirokawa et al., 1990). To that end, the following research questions were posed:

*Research Question 1:* Are there differences in superior evaluations of a manager's leadership skills and perspectives based on the sex of the manager being evaluated?

*Research Question 2:* Does the organizational level of the manager being evaluated affect the superiors' evaluation?

*Research Question 3:* Do sex differences and organizational level interact to influence superiors' evaluations of managers?

## METHOD

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 400 male and female upper and middle level managers from both manufacturing and service industries who had participated in one of several leadership programs at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), a nonprofit international educational institution for leadership and creativity research and training. The majority of CCL's clientele is composed of middle to upper level managers in Fortune 500 companies, with additional representation from small businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and the military.

Although organizational levels are defined differently from organization to organization, "middle manager" and "upper manager" were operationalized as follows: Middle management includes the first level of managers who have managers reporting to them through major functional or product managers; upper management includes executive level managers, executives in charge of subsidiaries, and corporate officers.

As part of a CCL training program, each of the participants and his or her superior completed the Benchmarks managerial assessment instrument (Lombardo & McCauley, 1992). Participants constituted a stratified sample extracted from the population of all business sector managers who had completed Benchmarks between 1987 and 1993. The sample was stratified according to sex and organizational level of the manager in order to create four equal cell sizes for analysis. The sample was predominantly Caucasian and primarily represented managers from the United States.

### INSTRUMENTATION

Benchmarks (Lombardo & McCauley, 1992) is a managerial assessment instrument based on research identifying lessons learned from experience over the course of a career. The Benchmarks instrument provides managers with a profile of their strengths and developmental needs in those areas. Benchmarks' 148 items cover three sections pertaining to skills and perspectives learned through challenges and assignments, potential flaws that may derail a career, and the ability to handle different management assignments.

Items for the first section of the test, the section used for this study, were derived from the identification of 34 categories of lessons learned from key events in the participants' lives. The end result of empirical clustering, review and revision by additional researchers and human resource professionals, and psychometric evaluation, was 106 items that were further categorized to the first 16 scales of the instrument. The 16 scales are identified in Table 1 along with reliability estimates (Cronbach, 1951) for each of the scales.

## PROCEDURE

Prior to attending a CCL program, the participant received nine copies of Benchmarks. The manager evaluated himself or herself via the 148 Likert-type items and distributed up to eight copies of the instrument to coworkers for their evaluations of the managers. Superiors, peers, and subordinates were asked to evaluate the manager using similar test forms with an identical rating system and identical items. The completed tests were returned to CCL, where the information was scored via computer and compiled. The participant received his or her feedback during the course of the program. Only data from the superiors' evaluations on the first 16 Benchmarks scales were used to test the research questions posed for the present study.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSES

Superiors' evaluations of the Benchmarks skills and perspectives of the subjects were analyzed using a 2 (male, female) x 2 (upper level, middle level) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Follow-up analyses consisted of univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's multiple comparison procedure. An alpha criterion of .05 was selected.

**TABLE 1: Benchmarks Scales and Reliability Estimates**

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>
Resourcefulness	0.93
Doing whatever it takes	0.92
Being a quick study	0.92
Decisiveness	0.75
Leading employees	0.92
Setting a developmental climate	0.85
Confronting problem employees	0.93
Work team orientation	0.81
Hiring talented staff	0.97
Building and mending relationships	0.93
Compassion and sensitivity	0.84
Straightforwardness and composure	0.88
Balance between personal life and work	0.88
Self-awareness	0.82
Putting people at ease	0.85
Acting with flexibility	0.85

## RESULTS

The results of the MANOVA detected no significant interaction effect between sex and the level of the manager for superior evaluations, Hotelling-Lawley Trace = 0.069,  $F(15, 313) = 0.85$ ,  $p < .062$ . Table 2 presents the means and descriptive statistics for the 16 scales in each of the four cells.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS

The first series of main effects analyses indicated that female managers were evaluated significantly higher than their male counterparts on one scale, putting people at ease,  $F(1, 307) = 5.23, p < .023$ . On a scale of 1 (*lowest*) to 5 (*highest*), the mean score evaluations of women managers by their superiors was 4.048, whereas the mean of men's evaluations was 3.846. Means and descriptive statistics for superior evaluations of male and female managers are found in Table 3.

**TABLE 2: Means and Descriptive Statistics for Superior Evaluations of Female Middle, Female Upper, Male Middle, and Male Upper Level Managers on the Benchmarks Scales**

<i>Benchmarks Scales</i>	<i>Female</i>		<i>Male</i>	
	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b>Resourcefulness</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.588	3.761	3.588	3.822
<i>SD</i>	0.543	0.400	0.513	0.523
<i>N</i>	89	55	93	71
<b>Doing whatever it takes</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.699	3.891	3.637	3.885
<i>SD</i>	0.528	0.437	0.540	0.541
<i>N</i>	89	55	93	71
<b>Being a quick study</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.829	3.985	3.918	3.940
<i>SD</i>	0.611	0.541	0.697	0.552
<i>N</i>	88	54	91	72
<b>Decisiveness</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.470	3.676	3.328	3.731
<i>SD</i>	0.712	0.695	0.828	0.778
<i>N</i>	89	55	94	72
<b>Leading employees</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.635	3.773	3.560	3.727
<i>SD</i>	0.525	0.465	0.533	0.620
<i>N</i>	84	53	86	69
<b>Setting a developmental climate</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.743	3.881	3.545	3.810
<i>SD</i>	0.609	0.461	0.612	0.606
<i>N</i>	84	52	84	67
<b>Confronting problem employees</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.342	3.523	3.166	3.549
<i>SD</i>	0.657	0.686	0.739	0.663
<i>N</i>	68	43	75	61
<b>Work team orientation</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.476	3.647	3.569	3.722
<i>SD</i>	0.717	0.588	0.728	0.698
<i>N</i>	87	54	88	72
<b>Hiring talented staff</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.596	3.820	3.610	3.790
<i>SD</i>	0.625	0.592	0.572	0.599
<i>N</i>	72	51	68	69
<b>Building and mending relationships</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.747	3.790	3.666	3.758
<i>SD</i>	0.680	0.489	0.652	0.615
<i>N</i>	89	55	94	73

**TABLE 2: Continued**

<i>Benchmarks Scales</i>	<i>Female</i>		<i>Male</i>	
	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b>Compassion and sensitivity</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.816	3.930	3.757	3.741
<i>SD</i>	0.735	0.602	0.669	0.652
<i>N</i>	83	51	90	66
<b>Straightforwardness and composure</b>				
<i>M</i>	4.152	4.205	3.999	4.076
<i>SD</i>	0.596	0.680	0.646	0.615
<i>N</i>	89	55	94	72
<b>Balance between personal life and work</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.954	3.788	3.935	3.768
<i>SD</i>	0.683	0.894	0.646	0.786
<i>N</i>	85	52	85	66
<b>Self-awareness</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.672	3.771	3.610	3.588
<i>SD</i>	0.683	0.620	0.676	0.633
<i>N</i>	88	54	91	67
<b>Putting people at ease</b>				
<i>M</i>	4.037	4.065	3.845	3.847
<i>SD</i>	0.772	0.678	0.774	0.842
<i>N</i>	89	55	94	73
<b>Acting with flexibility</b>				
<i>M</i>	3.692	3.826	3.616	3.735
<i>SD</i>	0.607	0.480	0.652	0.583
<i>N</i>	89	55	93	72

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MIDDLE AND UPPER LEVEL MANAGERS

On each of the scales in which superior evaluations of managers exhibited significant differences, upper level managers were rated higher than middle level managers. As can be seen in Table 4, upper level managers were evaluated significantly higher than middle level managers for resourcefulness,  $F(1, 304) = 12.13, p < .0006$ , doing whatever it takes,  $F(1, 304) = 13.23, p < .0003$ , decisiveness,  $F(1, 306) = 11.85, p < .0007$ , leading employees,  $F(1, 288) = 5.57, p < .019$ , setting a developmental climate,  $F(1, 283) = 8.16, p < .005$ , confronting problem employees,  $F(1, 243) = 10.58, p < .001$ , work team orientation,  $F(1, 297) = 3.93, p < .048$ , and hiring talented staff,  $F(1, 256) = 7.28, p < .007$ .

**TABLE 3: Means and Descriptive Statistics for Superior Evaluations of Male and Female Managers**

<i>Benchmarks Scales</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		F	p
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Resourcefulness	3.689 (N = 164)	0.53	3.654 (N = 144)	0.49	0.27	0.602
Doing whatever it takes	3.744 (N = 164)	0.55	3.772 (N = 144)	0.50	0.30	0.582
Being a quick study	3.928 (N = 163)	0.63	3.888 (N = 142)	0.59	0.10	0.754
Decisiveness	3.503 (N = 166)	0.83	3.549 (N = 144)	0.71	0.24	0.624
Leading employees	3.634 (N = 155)	0.58	3.688 (N = 137)	0.51	0.89	0.346
Setting a developmental climate	3.662 (N = 151)	0.62	3.796 (N = 136)	0.56	3.65	0.057
Confronting problem employees	3.338 (N = 136)	0.73	3.420 (N = 111)	0.67	0.89	0.346
Work team orientation	3.638 (N = 160)	0.72	3.541 (N = 141)	0.67	1.07	0.301
Hiring talented staff	3.701 (N = 137)	0.59	3.689 (N = 123)	0.62	0.01	0.912
Building and mending relationships	3.706 (N = 167)	0.64	3.764 (N = 144)	0.61	0.61	0.437
Compassion and sensitivity	3.751 (N = 156)	0.66	3.859 (N = 134)	0.69	2.33	0.128
Straightforwardness and composure	4.032 (N = 166)	0.63	4.172 (N = 144)	0.63	3.69	0.056
Balance between personal life and work	3.862 (N = 151)	0.71	3.891 (N = 137)	0.77	0.05	0.826
Self-awareness	3.601 (N = 158)	0.66	3.710 (N = 142)	0.66	2.49	0.116
Putting people at ease	3.846 (N = 167)	0.80	4.048 (N = 144)	0.74	5.23	0.023
Acting with flexibility	3.668 (N = 165)	0.62	3.743 (N = 144)	0.56	1.44	0.231

## DISCUSSION

This study answered the three research questions posed regarding how superiors evaluate managers' leadership skills and perspectives based on sex differences and/or organizational level of the manager. The analyses of superior evaluations of the subjects

**TABLE 4: Means and Descriptive Statistics for Superior Evaluations of Middle and Upper Level Managers**

<i>Benchmarks Scales</i>	<i>Middle</i>		<i>Upper</i>		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Resourcefulness	3.588 ( <i>N</i> = 182)	0.52	3.795 ( <i>N</i> = 126)	0.47	12.13	0.0006
Doing whatever it takes	3.667 ( <i>N</i> = 182)	0.53	3.888 ( <i>N</i> = 126)	0.50	13.23	0.0003
Being a quick study	3.874 ( <i>N</i> = 179)	0.66	3.960 ( <i>N</i> = 126)	0.55	1.53	0.218
Decisiveness	3.397 ( <i>N</i> = 183)	0.78	3.707 ( <i>N</i> = 127)	0.74	11.85	0.0007
Leading employees	3.597 ( <i>N</i> = 170)	0.53	3.747 ( <i>N</i> = 122)	0.56	5.57	0.019
Setting a developmental climate	3.644 ( <i>N</i> = 168)	0.62	3.841 ( <i>N</i> = 119)	0.55	8.16	0.005
Confronting problem employees	3.250 ( <i>N</i> = 143)	0.70	3.546 ( <i>N</i> = 104)	0.67	10.58	0.001
Work team orientation	3.523 ( <i>N</i> = 175)	0.72	3.690 ( <i>N</i> = 126)	0.65	3.93	0.048
Hiring talented staff	3.603 ( <i>N</i> = 140)	0.60	3.803 ( <i>N</i> = 120)	0.59	7.28	0.007
Building and mending relationships	3.706 ( <i>N</i> = 183)	0.67	3.772 ( <i>N</i> = 128)	0.56	0.86	0.355
Compassion and sensitivity	3.786 ( <i>N</i> = 173)	0.70	3.823 ( <i>N</i> = 117)	0.63	0.36	0.548
Straightforwardness and composure	4.074 ( <i>N</i> = 183)	0.63	4.132 ( <i>N</i> = 127)	0.64	0.78	0.378
Balance between personal life and work	3.945 ( <i>N</i> = 170)	0.66	3.777 ( <i>N</i> = 118)	0.83	3.50	0.062
Self-awareness	3.641 ( <i>N</i> = 179)	0.68	3.670 ( <i>N</i> = 121)	0.63	0.25	0.618
Putting people at ease	3.939 ( <i>N</i> = 183)	0.78	3.941 ( <i>N</i> = 128)	0.78	0.03	0.868
Acting with flexibility	3.653 ( <i>N</i> = 182)	0.63	3.775 ( <i>N</i> = 127)	0.54	3.36	0.068

revealed no interaction effect for sex and organizational level of the subject (Research Question 3). Superiors rated women managers significantly higher than men on one scale, putting people at ease. None of the analyses of these evaluations revealed scales in which men were rated higher than women (Research Question 1). In light of the research supporting gender differences in superiors' evaluations of managers, it is interesting that the present study found a difference on only one scale, putting people at ease. Furthermore, women were rated higher than men on the scale, contradicting the host of studies reporting significantly higher evaluations for male managers.

Examination of the same evaluations for differences between organizational level indicated significant differences on 8 of the 16 scales (Research Question 2). Upper level managers were rated higher than middle level managers on resourcefulness, doing whatever it takes, decisiveness, leading employees, setting a developmental climate, confronting problem employees, work team orientation, and hiring talented staff.

The findings of this study regarding the general lack of sex differences lend support to Ragins's (1991) power theory. Ragins has suggested that the effect of position power on coworker evaluations of managers is often overlooked, and differences in evaluations due to managerial power may be misattributed to the sex of the manager. An alternative explanation arises from the research showing that superiors tend to rate all managers, whether male or female, higher than do the managers' peers and subordinates (Henemann, 1974; Waldman & Thornton, 1979). Many superiors are evaluating a person whom they have hired or promoted; to acknowledge weaknesses in the manager's skills may be to acknowledge potential flaws in the superior's judgment. Also, because disagreement is typical between self-perception and superior ratings (Fahr, Werbel, & Bedeian, 1988; Mabe & West, 1982), managers may find giving negative feedback difficult (Wohlers & London, 1989) and overrate to avoid confrontation.

Superiors rated upper level managers significantly higher than middle level managers on 8 scales; however, middle level managers were not rated higher than upper level managers on any of the 16 scales. As was discussed earlier, Benchmarks is a measure of whether a manager has learned certain skills and perspectives that are important to successful careers, and to what degree the manager has learned them. Intuitively, it is logical that upper level managers scored higher than middle level managers, in that a preponderance of upper level managers have been in their careers longer and have had more experiences from which they could learn skills and perspectives than have their mid-level counterparts. These results support the theory that sex differences are not salient in distinguishing managerial leadership ability once the manager has crossed a threshold of experience in the organization. Based on prior literature reviewed for this study, it appears that up to a threshold point, perceptions of sex differences increasingly make a difference in evaluation of managerial performance; however, as the manager reaches a stage of experience somewhere between middle and upper level management, experience rather than sex of the manager determines superiors' evaluations.

The results of this research have implications for understanding the manner in which managers develop and communicate leadership. Upper level managers were rated higher on the Benchmarks scales that indicate high levels of technical experience. Resourcefulness, doing whatever it takes, and decisiveness are indicative of the manager who knows how to make good decisions, prioritize, do homework, strategize, and take action, and who understands management and organizational values. Likewise, leading employees, setting a developmental climate, confronting problem employees, orienting work teams, and hiring talented staff are all reflective of a manager who knows the task and can work effectively with the people he or she manages to get the job done. The overall profile that emerges reflects the kind of experience that is crucial for achieving organizational goals, and it is this type of leadership experience that clearly comes through in the perceived talents of upper level managers.

There were no significant differences between upper and midlevel managers that coincide with interpersonal communication skills. There were no differences in building and mending relationships, compassion and sensitivity, straightforwardness and composure, self-awareness, putting people at ease, acting with flexibility, and balance between personal life and work. From these data, it appears that task experience propels a manager to the higher ranks. Indeed, McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison (1988) have documented that employees on a management track tend to be promoted as a result of technical expertise. However, McCall et al. also found that

managers who are *derailed* (e.g., fired, demoted, or reach a plateau) are managers who have problems with interpersonal relationships.

A further point on sex differences is warranted. In the present study, women were rated higher than men on putting people at ease, clearly an interpersonal skill. A complication arises when we examine McCall et al.'s (1988) discovery that men obtained experience from challenging assignments, whereas women often derived experience vicariously from role models or other people in the organization. That is, men were provided hands-on experience, whereas women learned technical leadership from interpersonal relationships. Given what we know about the glass ceiling effect (Morrison, White, & VanVelsor, 1987) and barriers to advancement for women and people of color (Morrison, 1992), the results of the present study support the notion that lower and middle level female managers must be provided opportunities for solid, technical management experience if they are to reach the upper ranks and cultivate their own talents above and beyond "people skills." Obviously, upper level management requires sensitivity to people, but this study indicates an emphasis on task skills for those managers who aspire upward. Our results are in line with a study of Fortune 100 executives ("Study: 'Glass Ceiling,' " 1996), which showed male CEOs blaming women's lack of advancement on significantly less management or line experience, whereas women charged that their own advancement was hampered by inhospitable working environments and blocked access to informal networks.

In the IABC Excellence Study involving over 4,600 participants, Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) discovered that the "most excellent" organizations provided women with nondiscrimination policies, a supportive climate, and advancement activities to cultivate management potential. Women in upper management demonstrated parity with men in regard to demographics and skills but, interestingly, played technical roles significantly more than management roles compared to their male counterparts. Dozier et al. concluded that women with technical skills not only worked harder to achieve promotion, but were given more technical work even after becoming a department head. The IABC study raises important questions about potential double binds that diminish women's position power even when their organizations are committed to dismantling the glass ceiling.

There are limits to the conclusions that can be drawn from the results of this study. First, the sex of the evaluator may have affected the subjects' evaluations; however, that data could not be collected and included in this analysis because evaluators were guaranteed anonymity as part of the feedback process in the training sessions. Second, the majority of participants in Center for Creative Leadership programs are identified by their organizations as superior performers and high potential managers. Many program attendees, in fact, attend CCL programs as part of a "grooming" process for top leadership positions in their organizations. To depict the sample as a random sample of average managers would be a misrepresentation. Although it is true that this was a sample of high achievers, it is also possible that men and women converge in conformity to the evaluator prototype (Nye & Forsyth, 1991) of what makes a good manager by the time a manager has reached the upper ranks in the organization. Indeed, Dozier et al. (1995) found male and female department heads to be virtually identical in the overall excellence ratings of their departments. The convergence explanation would account for the absence of sex differences in our results and reinforce the notion that experience, as measured by Benchmarks, is reflected in the performance and evaluation of the upper level manager, regardless of the manager's sex.

Ultimately, this study has demonstrated that in the evaluation of managerial leadership, sex differences may play only a partial role in the overall picture of how evaluations are made by superiors, subordinates, and peers. Based on prior literature, it appears that sex differences may be a more salient factor in managerial evaluation when the manager is at the entry level of his or her career. Our results suggest that after a manager enters the upper level ranks, experience is the salient predictor of evaluation of performance. If this is true, then there are compelling reasons for businesses to manage diversity (Dozier et al., 1995; Morrison, 1992) and see to it that women break the glass ceiling so that their performance and leadership experience can effectively contribute to successful competition in the global market.

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