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GENDER DIFFERENCES AND LEADERSHIP

A STUDY

by

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Preface

Gary Smally and John Trent, Ph.D. write about gender communication styles to maximize communication, insight, and understanding in interpersonal spoken relationships. Their review and analysis of research on gender differences is fascinating and valuable in understanding communication issues between men and women. The brain lateralization studies they cite (Harvard Preschool and Boston Children's Hospital studies) are particularly captivating—specifically the hormone research identifying differences in male/female brain development and impact upon behavior and communication.

According to this research, gender differences are evident before birth and throughout childhood. Studies characterize little girls as spending “a great deal of time talking to other children—and nearly as much talking to themselves! As for little boys, only 68 percent of their words were understandable words! The remaining 32 percent were either one syllable sounds like “uh” and “mmm” or sound effects like “Varoom” “Yaaaah!” and “Zooooom!.” As one can imagine, these basic dissimilarities continue through growth and development posing real challenges in female/male dialogue.

Determining how men and women in leadership positions differ and, thus, how to communicate, discuss issues, make formal presentations, and relate successfully within a male dominated environment, as the military is valuable to operations at any level.

Instruction in leadership, strategic leadership and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator at Air War College rekindled an interest in these issues and a renewed awareness that gender impacts behavior, communication, and leadership styles. This certainly has merit and applicability to future leadership issues in a military environment.

It is in this vein, I chose to research and study gender differences in leadership. I am thankful to the Air War College, Colonel Frank Goldstein, my advisor and Lieutenant Colonel Mike McGee at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), who provided me extensive data and analysis regarding female ICAF students and leadership type.

It is refreshing to realize the military institution allows an open forum for study in the human element. This is flexibility—I believe the key to survival in any organization.

Abstract

Does gender style adaptation detract from attributes increasingly required for successful leadership in future operations? Specifically, do women occupying leadership positions (military and civilian) adapt, exhibiting traditionally male leadership styles and attributes and downplay traits customarily considered more feminine, but potentially vital to creative thought and analysis in future operations? If so, what is the cost to future development of theory, strategy, and operations? This study analyzed gender differences in leadership as inferred from current research and literature on leadership derived from comparisons of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator testing, leadership surveys, and related research in the area of communication. The author gathered data from numerous sources to include military sources, current research using psychological abstracts, and interviewed authors including Otto Kroeger and Lt Col Mike McGee, USA, a recent Air War College guest speaker, who presented information pertinent to strategic leadership. Data from both the military and the civilian sector were gathered and analyzed as military data was thought to be skewed based upon characteristics of a male-dominated profession which primarily attracts individuals inclined to a specific leadership style.

Chapter 1

Introduction

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently...

—Romans 12; 6-8

As Isabel Myers-Briggs realized in her work with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, people have different preferences which are frequently reflected in their chosen friends, recreation, work, and leadership style.¹ If diversity and flexibility are essential to survival and growth of an organization, then, differing attributes and preferences must play an important role in the operation of an efficient and effective organization.

Although there is no agreement that one leadership style is uniquely the best or most effective, there is evidence that those occupying leadership positions tend to share characteristics and preferences and restrict participation or put great pressure upon those who are dissimilar.² In response, most people, including women, either self-select for the career field, adapt behavioral orientation, or change to career fields in which their preferences may be more fully realized.³

In this study, the author will examine those leadership characteristics and preferences as they relate to gender, specifically women occupying leadership positions in the

military. Creativity and strategic thought necessary to preparation for future military operations in peace, crisis and war require taking advantage of all potential talent rather than cloning one style of officer leadership. Do successful women simply clone men's leadership styles? Or are there distinct differences in leadership styles for men and women? Are these same phenomena applicable to military leadership? If military women self select or adapt, the loss in diversity necessary to maintain a lead in a vision for future military operations may exact a high price somewhere down the road.

Presentation of Data

The author will review data regarding biological gender differences, the impact of culture on gender differences, behavioral differences as communication, and differences as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a scale identifying personal preferences. From this foundation, a review and analysis of gender differences as related to leadership will further explore gender issues to include the roles of self-selection and adaptation and the resulting impact for organizations. Based upon analysis of information presented, the author will extrapolate unique characteristics women contribute to leadership positions and then discuss costs of cloning, adaptation, and self-selection versus integration of unique feminine leadership capabilities. Finally, the paper will address actions which may be useful in assisting unlike types to adapt to leadership positions in a healthy manner, basically broadening their horizons without detracting from unique abilities they offer to an institution.

Within this framework, the next chapter will examine available data regarding the most fundamental differences between the male and the female—biological and genetic

differences. These are subjects of controversy in many circles and will serve as the foundation for further assertions regarding communication differences and different leadership styles in later chapters. Comparison with respect to status (i.e., better, best) is not the goal or intent, but rather, to identify differences which may predispose individual abilities or strengths that are important contributions to the organization.

It is important to note that within this study, the focus is specifically upon women and gender differences in leadership styles. However, inferences and conclusions may also apply to other minorities and men working in career fields traditionally dominated by women or men having dissimilar preference types from the majority in the military work environment.

Notes

¹ Isabel Myers-Briggs, *Introduction to Type* (Palo Alto, CA.: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1980).

² Bill Knowlton and Mike McGee, *Strategic Leadership and Personality: Making the MBTI Relevant*, (Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces National Defense University, August 1994), 49-54.

³ Janet M. Theusen, Otto Kroeger Associates, telephone interview with author, 9 December 1996.

Chapter 2

Genetic And Biological Differences

Biological/genetic sexual differences impact gender orientation significantly. Although researchers have directed considerable debate towards the nature/nurture question, certain differences in biological sex are well defined and accepted as factual. How these differences influence perception, interaction, and ultimately leadership styles is an interesting area of study and somewhat more difficult to define. A review of such differences serves as a starting point in the study of gender differences in behavior and leadership and why women may offer unique strengths essential to healthy growth and operation in an organization

According to Gelman et al, studying hormones and biological dissimilarities, men and women experience the world differently based upon hormones. These researchers do not deny the impact of culture, but resolutely state: “Men and women seem to experience the world differently, not merely because of the ways they were brought up in it, but because they feel it with a different sensitivity of touch, hear it with different aural responses, puzzle out its problems with different cells in their brains.”¹ He believes implicitly that hormones are the basis for such differences, and play a role far greater than simply contributing to external sexual characteristics.²

This research is collaborated by numerous other studies. In studying genetics and hormones, Jo Durden Smith writes “that the brain not only produces hormones but is also acted upon by those same hormones.” She states “ Hormones, including sexual hormones have been found in the brain. And it’s become clear that in important respects the brain is itself a gland: a thinking gland, even a sex gland.”³ She says sex hormones have been found in parts of the brain other than the hypothalamus, inferring true genetic differences in brain functioning. “...this implies a sexual stamping, a genetic one and I think, its becoming increasingly plain that the sexual stamping I’m talking about does indeed start in the fetus. It is reinforced and magnified by our cultural institutions. But it is genetically based. It us part of our biological inheritance, and it is mediated by hormones.”⁴

Conducting brain lateralization studies over the last number of years, researchers generally believe the female brain is organized to function more symmetrically allowing integration of left and right brain functions more readily than the male brain. Recent studies suggest “There’s also evidence, not yet confirmed, that male and female brains may be somewhat differently structured with the two cerebral hemispheres being more specialized and less well interconnected in men than in women.”⁵ Smith speaks of this same phenomena describing differences as “the female brain which is more symmetrically organized and less highly structured...Their ability to shift between and use the two hemispheres is different .”⁶ And in a recent study at Yale University, Sally and Bennet Shaywitz (pediatrician and neurologist respectively) observed male/female differences in brain processing using magnetic resonance imaging. They noted women used both sides of the brain to process rhyming as compared to men.⁷ Another similar recent study

regarding word processing (solving word games) concluded that “men tended to use only the left half of the brain during the task while the women drew on both hemispheres.”⁸

Review of anatomical brain lateralization studies also shows differences are evident between male and female brains in the fetus. Females have a larger corpus callosum, the connecting nerves which may explain the ability to rapidly transition left and right brain functions.⁹ Describing the impact of hormones (testosterone) on brain development, Anne Campbell believes this hormone (most critical to male development in the womb) may actually impact brain development and connections in the brain. “Testosterone is the most important of the sex hormones that cause a baby in the womb to develop into a boy. (see Chapter 1) and male fetuses have higher levels of it than females. It might just be that a slight excess of testosterone at a crucial stage before birth causes the connections in the brain which underlie verbal ability to shift a bit from the left to the right side.”¹⁰

Similarly, Nicholas Wade reported in the New York Times magazine

In human fetuses, too, the sex hormones seem to mold a male and female version of the brain, each subtly different in organization and behavior. The best evidence comes from girls with a rare genetic anomaly who are exposed in the womb to more testosterone than normal; they grow up doing better than their unaffected sisters on the tests that boys are typically good at.¹¹

Other brain studies describe the process as follows:

Specifically, medical studies have shown that between the eighteenth and twenty-sixth week of pregnancy, something happens that forever separates the sexes. Using heat sensitive-color monitors, researchers have actually observed a chemical bath of testosterone and other sex-related hormones wash over a baby boy’s brain. This causes changes that never happen to a baby girl...The human brain is divided into two halves, or hemispheres, connected by fibrous tissue called the *corpus callosum*. The sex-related hormones and chemicals that flood a baby boy’s brain cause the right side

to recede slightly, destroying some of the connecting fibers. One result is that, in most cases, a boy starts life more left brain oriented.¹²

As is evident from the scientific evidence, the issue is decidedly more complicated than simply having left or right cerebral dominance associated with specific skills. But what seems clear is the connections in the male brain are significantly altered by testosterone prior to birth; females do not undergo a similar hormonal “wash” and consequently, they function more readily using both hemispheres of the brain to process information and respond.

Since hormone development is a function of genetics, evidence seems to point to a genetic difference which may, in fact, effect the way a person interacts with his surroundings. Females tend to rapidly transition from left to right brain functions. What are the implications for behavior and what are the implications for leadership behavior?

Studies have found differences in communication patterns and skills, which may be related to the anatomical and functional brain differences described previously. The next chapter will highlight gender differences in communication styles and describe those area in which women seem to excel and thus have advantage

Notes

¹ David Gelman, John Corely, Eric Gelman, Phyllis Malamud, Danny Foote, and Joe Canteros, “Just How the Sexes Differ,” *Newsweek*, (May 18, 1981): 72.

² *Ibid.*, 72.

³ Jo Durden Smith, “Male and Female—Why?,” *Quest 80—The Pursuit of Excellence*, October 1980.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁵ Nicholas Wade, “Method and Madness—How Men and Women Think,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 12 June 1994, 34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁷ Sarah Richardson, “S/he-Brains,” *Discover* 16, no. 6 (June 1995): 36.

⁸ “Science, Sex, Brains, and Word Games,” *Time Magazine*, 27 February, 1995, 16.

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⁹ Anne Campbell, *The Opposite Sex: The Complete Illustrated Guide to Gender Differences in Adults and Children*, Topsfield, Mass.: Salem House, 1989, 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹¹ Nicholas Wade, “Method and Madness—How Men and Women Think,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 12 June 1994, 34.

¹² Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph D., *The Language of Love* (Panoma, CA.: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1988), 35.

Chapter 3

Gender Differences in Communication

The biggest mistake is believing there is one right way to listen, to talk, to have a conversation—or a relationship

—Deborah Tannen, Ph.D.

Good communication is always one of the most difficult skills to master and probably a great source of friction and problems in any organization. Situation, time, cultures and customs, and gender styles affect and complicate communication. Having studied communication patterns for many years, linguists tend to agree upon gender differences, some of which may be a result of basic biological or genetic differences, and others a result of cultural behavioral expectations and training. No matter which theory is correct, gender differences in communication may pose problems in relating or interacting with one another. Examining these differences in the first step in gaining understanding of the issues involved and then moving towards better communication to enhance relationship building and organizational operations.

First, what do we know about how the biological differences described in the previous chapter impact a woman's style of talking, discussing, presenting data, and even arguing with others. And secondly, is this manner of interacting significantly different enough from men's communication styles to present opportunity for misunderstanding.

Most studies agree females are more verbal from the time they are very young. “Carol Jacklin reviewed more than 1,400 studies of sex differences and concluded that only four of them (sex differences) were well-established: verbal ability for girls and visual-spatial ability, mathematical excellence and aggression in boys.”¹

In her brain lateralization work, Anne Campbell says females’ brains are less lateralized with functions spread over both sides of their brains. In her analysis of what this means, she states:

The answer in a very general way, appears to be that the female brain is better organized for communication between its two halves...If we look at the activities girls excel in, we see there also seems to involve communication. Verbal skills are used to communicate with others and women on the whole use words more expressively than men...A picture therefore, emerges showing that women are better communicators than men, that is based at least partly on differences in the brains, and that these differences probably exist at birth.²

In describing gender differences believed to be related to genetics, Jo Durden Smith cites a study which concluded “Females, by contrast, are sensitive to context, good at picking up information that is incidental to a task that’s set them, and distractible. They have superior verbal skills.”³ In this vein, Christine Gorman asks the question “Are women innately better at reading words and understanding emotions or do they just get more practice?” and implies hormones may be involved.⁴ And Nicholas Wade agrees, relating that women’s innate skills may give them an edge in perceptual speed, verbal fluency, and communication skills.⁵ There appears to be a genetic connection to these skills and many seem to imply abilities akin to what has been termed “women’s intuition.”

Role of Intuition in Women's Communication

Intuition is defined by Carl Jung as "...an unconscious ability to perceive possibilities, to see the global picture, while addressing the local situation." ⁶ Intuition is defined in the Random House College Dictionary as "direct perception of truth, fact, etc. independent of any reasoning process." ⁷ For many years people have talked about the phenomena known as women's intuition, although there is not a great amount of hard research in the area. What is it?

According to Dr. Ashley Montagu, noted anthropologist, the reason women have developed intuitive abilities is because of the physical differences between the sexes. "The female's inability to cope with the physically stronger male obliges her from an early age, to develop traits, that will enable her to secure her ends by other means....From the earliest age, girls find it necessary to pay attention to nuances and small signs of which the male rarely recognizes the existence. Such small signs tell the girl what she wants to know, and she is usually ready with a plan of action, before the male has begun to react." ⁸

Referring to these same differences, Gelman, et al. write:

...from infancy on, males and females respond in ways that provide significant clues to later differences and behavior...McGuinness believes that girl infants are more alert to social clues. They respond more to people, read facial expressions better and seem better able to interpret the emotional content of speech even before they can understand words, a clue to the proverbial women's intuition. ⁹

Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* also references brain lateralization studies in *Scientific American* which reported the nerve center between the left and right sides of the brain as about twice the size in women

enabling more rapid transmission of information between left and right hemispheres of the brain. He states this is important because “management is basically a left brained logical approach toward controlling things: leadership is more a right brained, *intuitive* visionary approach towards building relationships with people. That enables women’s brains to transmit more information more rapidly between the left and right hemispheres.”¹⁰ Covey sees this as essential to leadership in future organizations. Note, also, his inference to intuition as being more typically a female characteristic.

In the book, *Unconventional Wisdom*, Ron Schultz cites twelve innovators in the business world today who speak of leadership and the important role intuition plays in their successful organizational leadership. Within this book, he quotes Judith Hall, an Assistant Professor of Psychology at John Hopkins University who reports” women are more sensitive to non-verbal communication (right brain) which of course includes the emotions, and “that they tend to be more attentive to visual cues such as facial expressions, body gestures, tone of voice, and the way people look at each other.”¹¹

Although merely being in touch with these traits is not necessarily synonymous with intuition, it seems to encompass a large part of what we call what we call intuition. Unfortunately though, Roberta Williams, creator on Sierra On-Line, an animated computer adventure game reports that when women trust their intuition men don’t.¹²

Margaret Loesch, president of the Fox Children’s network also feels strongly about trusting her intuition as she describes it “trusting an untested creative answer demands a confidence in the feel of things. This is the emotional side of intuition.”¹³ She feels women have an advantage in this way and “...absolutely responding to everything you are getting in a very honest way.”¹⁴

Summary

In summary then, it appears that intuition plays an important role in the communication process with women and serves a valuable purpose, so much so that current leaders in the world of business talk about intuition and recommend learning to trust your senses and intuition. Other aspects of communication also reflect gender differences according to current day linguists and psychologists.

Pop psychology as well as those more professionally documented sources write and talk about the gender gap in style of communication. Witness the success of Dr John Gray's *Men are From Mars and Women are From Venus*.¹⁵ Improved communication between the sexes not only benefits personal relationships away from work but has a significant impact upon building relationships in the work environment. Linguist Deborah Tannen has written several well documented books identifying these differences.

A Linguists Perspective--Gender Styles in Communication

Tannen writes that men and women have different, but equally valid styles of communication. She asserts men and women can interpret the same conversation differently, even when there is no apparent misunderstanding "Recognizing these gender differences frees individuals from the burden of individual pathology...If we recognize and understand the differences between us, we can take them into account, adjust to, and learn from each other's styles."¹⁶

She believes gender communication is based upon key elements which differ for the sexes. According to Tannen, women's communication is closely related to connectivity and men's styles reflect status type goals. The key element guiding female communication is intimacy, whereas the key element in male conversation is independence. "Intimacy is

key in a world of connection where individuals negotiate complex networks of friendships, minimize differences, try to reach consensus, and avoid the appearance of superiority, which would highlight differences. In a world of status, independence is key because a primary means of establishing status is to tell others what to do, and taking orders is a marker of low status. Though all humans need intimacy and independence, women tend to focus on the first and men on the second.”¹⁷

Further, Tannen asserts intimacy and connection are essentially symmetrical (people are the same, feeling close to each other) whereas independence and status are asymmetrical (people are unlike and placed in a hierarchy). These perspectives significantly impact communication in any realm to include how men and women relate within leadership scenarios. Men more frequently operate in mediums bound by hierarchy, status, rules and orders. In contrast, women normally function with connectivity and closeness as paramount. For women, status and hierarchy are not key, and women are not predisposed to giving orders, but rather express preferences and suggestions which are likely accepted.¹⁸

Imagine how these basic differences in communication (observed and studied from very young ages) can lead to confusion and misunderstanding. In leadership, when women lead and communicate using consensus, this may seem unnatural to men. These differences may also be responsible for observations that some women in professional positions “do not behave in ways appropriate to their positions.”¹⁹ This captures the downside of the differences for women employed in predominantly male dominated work environments as the military. Women do not strive for status or one-upsmanship.

Tannen states “Because they are not struggling to be one-up, women often find themselves framed as one down.” And probably worst of all for women, is they may be judged differently even when they communicate with the same style. “In other words, talking in ways that are associated with women causes women to be judged negatively, but talking the same way does not have this effect on men. So, it is not simply the ways of talking that has effect so much as the people’s attitudes toward women and men.”²⁰

The linguist also observes that women frequently report that comments made by them are ignored but later may be attributed to male participants in the group. Again, this may be a result of differences in communication style. Women tend to phrase their ideas as questions, take less time when phrasing questions, speak in a lower volume and higher pitch. These patterns do not emulate male styles of communication and thereby put women at a disadvantage in conversation with men. On the other hand, sometimes when women attempt to adjust to a more masculine style, they may be considered more credible, but less feminine, often stated in a less than complementary manner.²¹ Other studies seem to confirm Tannen’s work and assertions regarding communications.

Eagley studied women analyzing gender and the effectiveness of leaders and concluded:

Nonetheless, women fared poorly in settings in which leadership was defined in highly masculine terms, especially in military settings. Men fared slightly worse than women in settings in which leadership was defined in less masculine terms, especially in educational organizations and in governmental and social service organizations. Although these findings remain modest in size, they suggest a pervasive gendering of leadership roles that can operate to the disadvantage of women or men.²²

Eagley feels this gendering produces consequences which impact perceptions of leader effectiveness in organizations.

There is also some evidence that our language, the words available for describing men and women are different and frame thought. “And most damaging of all, through language, our images and attitudes are buttressed and shaped. Simply by understanding and using words of our language, we all absorb and pass on different and asymmetrical assumptions about men and women.”²³

Other contemporary linguists and psychologists support Tannen’s work. Suzette Hayden Elgin, a psycholinguist and founder of the Ozark Center for Language Studies, wrote the book, *Genderspeak* with the similar objective to improve communication between the sexes. She states “Male/female communication does not have to be either armed combat or endless mystifying tedium. It does not have to be the source of either rage or misery. It can and should be effective, efficient and a source of mutual satisfaction.”²⁴ Judith Tingley, a psychologist and business communication consultant states “When men and women adapt each others different communication styles in the same way they adapt to the language of another country, this will help alleviate communication barriers between the two sexes.”²⁵

Summary

In our society, men and women communicate differently and misunderstanding can easily occur. This impacts efficiency in the workplace. Ways of talking associated with leadership and authority tend to be masculine, which places females at a disadvantage. Of course, that is not to say that men who, like military women, may be in a nontraditional career field do not experience similar phenomena.

Review of biological/genetic and communication differences provides interesting information and a backdrop for the study of gender differences in leadership. Another tool commonly used in the military to understand personality types, preferences, and differences is the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. The next chapter will highlight what is known about type preferences, leadership, and gender.

Notes

¹ David Gelman, John Corely, Eric Gelman, Phyllis Malamud, Danny Foote, and Joe “Just How the Sexes Differ,” *Newsweek*, (May 18, 1981): 73.

² Anne Campbell, *The Opposite Sex: The Complete Illustrated Guide to Gender Differences in Adults and Children*, Topsfield, Mass.: Salem House, 1989, 90.

³ Jo Durden Smith, “Male and Female—Why?,” *Quest—The Pursuit of Excellence*, 1980. 17.

⁴ Christine Gorman, “How Gender May Bend Your Thinking,” *Time*, 146, no 3 (July 17, 1995): 51.

⁵ Nicholas Wade, “Method and Madness—How Men and Women Think” *The New York Times Magazine*, 12 June 1994, 32.

⁶ Ron Schultz, *Unconventional Wisdom—Twelve Remarkable Innovators Tell How Intuition Can Revolutionize Decision Making*, (New York, Harper Business, 1994), 3.

⁷ *The Random House College Dictionary*, Revised Edition, New York: Random House, Inc., 1980.

⁸ Ron Schultz, *Unconventional Wisdom—Twelve Remarkable Innovators Tell How Intuition Can Revolutionize Decision Making*, New York, Harper Business, 1994, 38.

⁹ David Gelman, John Corely, Eric Gelman, Phyllis Malamud, Danny Foote, and Joe Canteros, “Just How the Sexes Differ,” *Newsweek*, (May 18, 1981): 73.

¹⁰ Stephen R. Covey, “Transforming a Swamp,” *Training and Development*, 47 (May 1993): 44.

¹¹ Ron Schultz, *Unconventional Wisdom—Twelve Remarkable Innovators*, 38,39.

¹² *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

¹⁵ John Gray Ph.D., *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1992).

¹⁶ Deborah Tannen, Ph.D., *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, (New York: W. Morrow, 1990), 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 228.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 239-240.

Notes

²² Alice H. Eagley, Steven J. Karau, and Mona Makhijani, “Gender and the Effectiveness of Leaders: A Meta-Analysis,” 117, no. 1 (January 1995): 140.

²³ Deborah Tannen, Ph.D., *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men*, 243.

²⁴ Suzette Hayden Elgin, Ph.D., *Genderspeak—Men, Women, and the Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1993), xvi.

²⁵ Judith Tingley, “Communication: Bridging the Gender Gap,” *Healthcare Administration*, 71, no.4 (April 1994): 22.

Chapter 4

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Gender differences

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a questionnaire used to identify preferences and temperaments which can then be correlated with psychological type. More specifically, it “measures perception, judgment, interests, values, needs, and motivational preferences.”¹ The questionnaire is currently used in many settings to include business and military organizations to facilitate understanding of others communication styles, thus enhancing efficiency in operations.

History and Background

Isabel Myers-Briggs first published the MBTI in 1962 as an extension of her mother’s interest and study of theoretical psychological types in conjunction with Carl Jung’s work. Isabel firmly maintained that theory must have a practical application; development of the MBTI provided such a tool useful in highlighting personality differences to enhance better understanding and communications among people.²

Description of MBTI and Applicability

Psychologists and typologists use the MBTI to quantify individual preferences for perception, judgment, interests, values, needs, and motivation as applied to four

preference scales: Extroversion (E) /Introversion (I), Sensing (S)/Intuition(I), Thinking(T)/Feeling (F), and Judgment (J)/Perception (P).

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ

The EI index (or scale) is designed to reflect whether the person is an extrovert or introvert...The SI index is designed to reflect the person's preference between two opposite ways of perceiving, i.e., whether he relies primarily on the familiar process of sensing...or primarily on the less obvious process of intuition...The TF index is designed to reflect the person's preference between two opposite ways of judging, i.e., whether he relies primarily upon thinking...or primarily upon feeling...The JP index assigns a preference to one of the other two mental functions themselves. That is, either the perceiving (SN) function or the judging (TF) function is said to be dominant in one's dealings with the world.³

From these preferences, sixteen combinations or personality types emerge, each having unique traits and behavioral preferences:

Each type has preference implications which may predispose certain behaviors. For a detailed description of the preference types, recommend reading Isabel Myers-Briggs' *Introduction to Type*.⁴ Within the military, the most representative type is the ISTJ. Based upon years of research, Otto Kroeger and Janet Theusen believe ISTJs are attracted to the military.⁵ Considering preferences and associated demonstrated behaviors, ISTJs could be described as: *Introverted*, attending to infrastructure and conceptualizing problems; *Sensing* knowing the facts, understanding planning stages and working implementation details; *Thinking* discussing issues in a logical way, weighing the pros and cons of alternatives, and spotting inconsistencies; and *Judging*, generating systems, organizing and acting with decisiveness.⁶

It is no wonder the ISTJ is attracted to the military because of its structured environment, penchant for structured plans, traditionalism, and logical systematic approach. However, Knowlton and McGee, professors at National Defense University (NDU) feel these things which attract persons to the military may be inconsistent with leadership at the strategic level. ISTJs may not be best suited for strategic level military leadership.⁷

Comparison of MBTI Types to Leadership Data

Knowlton and McGee conducted studies comparing the MBTI with personality preferences and characteristics deemed important to strategic leadership and personality. Their work concluded ENTPs and ENFPs are best suited to meet future challenges of strategic leadership. Referring to leadership skills and analyses of associated preferences: “Based on that simple and direct analysis, it appears as if ENTPs and ENFPs naturally possess the preferences most compatible with leadership requirements at the strategic level.”⁸ The key components identified in their concept as compatible with strategic leadership included having well developed frames of reference for identifying cause and effect; ability to integrate and synthesize concepts; the ability to communicate clearly and persuasively; negotiation and consensus building; and the ability to envision the future. In this analysis, the authors identify the ENF as having the best type combination for communication and negotiation and consensus building.⁹

This data is not analyzed or broken down by gender. In fact, very little has actually been published regarding gender differences as demonstrated on the MBTI. What is evident is a female preference for the F or *feeling* preference and a male preference for T

or *thinking* preference.^{10 11} Additionally, some studies have identified a slightly higher percentage of Es in female populations.¹² It is interesting to note that women don't score higher on the N scale (intuition) as "women's intuition" is an attribute frequently discussed in management and leadership literature.¹³ Other research, however, indicates women do score a little higher on other measures of intuition.¹⁴

What are the implications with respect to gender differences and leadership? Both communication and negotiation/consensus building favor ENF, F being a strong female preference with some evidence E and N preferences may also exist, although they are not as definitive of female preferences. These skills are also those described by Covey as "the key to survival and success "to think in terms of building relationships and high trust cultures."¹⁵

Comparative data at NDU for female Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) students indicates they are less introverted, less sensing, less thinking, and less judging than their male counterparts. However, because of the small sample size, these results are not significant. It appears that as the sample size increases, with the current pattern being consistent over the years, females ICAF students will be less ISTJ and more ENFP.

Additionally, female ICAF students were found to score higher on conceptual ability, abstract reasoning, verbal reasoning, and possess a disposition to work at higher organizational levels. Again, this data is not currently statistically significant because of the small sample size.¹⁶

In contrast to this, the Air War College does not maintain data by gender, however interview (by author) with current female class members (small sample—only 19 US female students in the 1997 class) indicates 5 ISTJs, 5 ESTJs, 2 ENTJs, 1 ISTP, 1 ENFP,

1 ESFJ, 1 ISTP, 1 WNTJ, 1 ISFJ, and 1 INFJ. Broken down by predominant traits, there were 11 STs, 3 SFs, 3 NFs, and 2 NTs. Additionally, 13 preferred T, whereas only 6 preferred F. Also, there were 9 preferring introversion and 10 preferring extroversion.

However, three of those identifying themselves as ESTJs or ENTJs were quick to note that they had probably manipulated the test somewhat knowing what type is predominant and favored in the military. This manipulation is consistent with data suggesting that successful women in male-dominated career fields tend to adapt to survive. It would be interesting to compare these MBTI scores to early promotions to see how far one could carry the adaptation thesis. Review of MBTI types for nurses in this group indicates (somewhat surprisingly) these individuals scored as either ESTJs or ISTJs. Presuming those in health care professions, to include nursing, are more nurturing (F) and intuitive, it is also interesting that those women selected to attend Air War College do not reflect those qualities, but rather the typical officer type. Again, this can probably be explained by the desire to adapt, fit in and survive. Finally, it is curious that the Air War College data seems inconsistent with that data collected for female students at ICAF. Are the populations of female students at ICAF versus the Air War College different in some way or are test data and results presented in a manner which is more likely to identify true type versus adaptive type?

Summary

In summary then, the challenges of strategic leadership highlight a need for preferences and characteristics associated with the ENF type. MBTI data for females, and specifically those females in leadership positions in the military, has not been

collected and analyzed by gender on a routine basis, so it is somewhat difficult to generalize about gender differences in the military population. NDU established a program to analyze and compare this data, and based upon this collection has noted trends towards the ENFP type for female students at ICAF. Although the sample size is currently small, it is expected that the trend will become significant as the sample grows.

Evidence suggests minorities, to include women, attempt to “fit in” and adapt or self-select as some women indicated they had done when taking the MBTI. The next chapter will delve into these issues in much greater detail and provide some insight into contemporary problems which plague the military as sexual harassment and unprofessional behavior.

Notes

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² Isabel Myers-Briggs, *Gifts Differing*, (Palo Alto, CA.: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1980), x, xi.

³ Isabel Myers-Briggs, *Manual: The Myers Briggs Type Indicator*, (Palo Alto, CA.: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1962), 1-2.

⁴ Isabel Myers-Briggs, *Introduction to Type*, (Palo Alto, CA.: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1980).

⁵ Bill Knowlton and Mike McGee, *Strategic Leadership and Personality: Making the MBTI Relevant*, (Washington D.C.: National Defense University, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1994), 49.

⁶ *MBTI Team Building: Leader’s Resource Guide* (Palo Alto, CA.: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1992), 69.

⁷ Bill Knowlton and Mike McGee, *Strategic Leadership and Personality: Making the MBTI Relevant*, (Washington D.C.: National Defense University, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1994), 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-16.

¹⁰ William C. Jeffries, *True to Type—Answers to the Most Commonly Asked Questions About Interpreting the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, (Norfolk, VA.: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 1990), 50.

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¹¹ Isabel Myers-Briggs and Mary McCaulley, *Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-BriggsType Indicator*, (Palo Alto, CA.: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1985), 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³ Ron Schultz, *Unconventional Wisdom—Twelve Remarkable Innovators Tell How Intuition Can Revolutionize Decision Making*, (New York: Harper Business, 1994), 38, 82-83.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁵ Stephen Covey, “Transforming a Swamp,” *Training and Development* 47 (May 1993): 15.

¹⁶ Mike McGee, LTC, US Army, Professor of Behavioral Science at National Defense University, computer interview with author, 13 December 1996.

Chapter 5

Gender Differences in Leadership and the Military

Men who wish to stay employed, take heed!

—Tom Peters

As addressed in the previous chapters, men and women operate in the work environment in somewhat different ways based upon genetic/biological differences, cultivation, communication styles and to some extent, the characteristics of the particular career field chosen. In today's world, the leadership culture seems to favor women's leadership styles and the unique capabilities women contribute to the work environment. In this chapter, the author will focus more specifically on how these differences manifest themselves in the leadership arena and upon applicability to military leadership styles, including military women's leadership styles.

The data available indicates men and women tend to lead in different ways and make different contributions to the organization. Each style contributes to diversity offering unique capabilities essential to holistic organizational effectiveness. With the understanding that gender may, in fact, play a big role in leadership style, a review of leader characteristics current experts consider essential to highly effective organizations and comparison with women leaders' styles is in order.

Leadership—Today and Tomorrow

Over the years, there has been much discussion revolving around what differentiates leadership and management and how critical good leadership (versus management) is to any institution. There seems to be agreement that leaders have strategic vision, good communication skills, creativity, and the ability to trust and empower subordinates. Current leadership philosophy stresses many characteristics commonly viewed as feminine attributes (or advantages) frequently employed by women occupying leadership positions in an organization.

Perry Smith, Major General (Ret) discussed long term planning as a critical element in leadership style, similar to the concept of vision.¹ Stephen Covey (principle centered leadership guru) believes that a dominant trend of the future, long term thinking, favors the natural abilities and talents of women. He also identifies leadership as “more of a right-brained *intuitive*, visionary approach toward building relationships with people.”² This infers women have the edge in today’s leadership challenges.

John Naisbett and Patricia Aburdene, co-authors of *Megatrends for Women*, state “The balance has finally tipped in favor of women...It is not about women taking over, but women and men together expressing their full potential—neither superior or inferior.”³ Nicholas Wade seems to agree: “If Martians arrived and gave job interviews, it seems likely they would direct men to competitive sports and manual labor and staff most professions, diplomacy, and government with women.”⁴

Rianne Eisner, as quoted by Naisbett and Aburdene describes two basic types of societies—dominator or partnership. She believes women’s leadership styles tend to employ a partnership model, a way to structure human relationships based upon linking.⁵

This linking is similar to the phenomena discussed by Tannen as intrinsic to female communication in chapter three of this paper.

In a briefing to the Air War College, Dr Christine McNulty, described what is needed for successfully depuzzling the world of the future as analyzing and synthesizing data and the ability to use both sides of the brain, left and right.⁶ This appears natural for women, consistent with the ability to rapidly transition from left to right brain functioning.

In another briefing, John Warden (Col, Ret), an architect of the Desert Storm air campaign, stated the military needed an organizational structure different from the current hierarchical order which limits effective communication from either the top echelon to the bottom or vice versa.⁷ Women leaders tend to operate in a dissimilar manner placing more emphasis on connectivity and consensus. Corporations lead by women seem to be organized differently to encompass the connectivity and closeness women prefer.

According to Sally Hegelsen, author of *The Female Advantage*, womens' organizational structures reflect more of a web, where the most senior women (leader) inserts herself in the middle of the web or organizational structure to maximize communication and connectivity.⁸ Howes and Stevenson, co-authors of *Women and the Use of Military Force* also support this position:

Sociological studies indicate that women's management styles differ significantly from those of men. Women are less hierarchical. They organize on a broader base and prefer structures that are less like pyramids. Women in groups are less prone to self-assertion and more prone to compromise...If women follow the trend shown by the sociological data and become a large minority of military personnel, their presence can be expected to change the organizational structure in which they participate.⁹

Tom Peters endorses these innovative female leadership structures in Sally Hegelsen's book stating "*The Female Advantage* gets management off to a rousing start in the 90s. Sally Hegelsen has done a first-rate piece of research, and captures it in a very provocative book. Men who wish to stay employed take heed."¹⁰ Although John Warden did not have a solution for the hierarchical status driven organization, it just may be that the web type structure preferred by women is a good alternative.

Naisbett and Aburdene describe future management styles saying they "uncannily match those of female leadership. Consultants tried to teach male managers to relinquish the command-and-control mode. For women it was different: it just came naturally."¹¹

Finally, Edward Moldt of the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Finance and Management says many men still "act like master sergeants. That is not working nearly as well as it used to." This is because women tend to involve people in the decision making process and are successful with people who "don't want to be bossed around."¹²

These women's leadership style elements reflect most of the same elements previously reviewed in the studies on communications and strategic leadership requirements deemed necessary for the future. Peter Drucker describes women's leadership style as "over time women have evolved a successful leadership style that rejects the military model in favor of supporting and empowering people." Drucker endorses it because he says it works better!¹³

Do men and women in military leadership positions reflect similar gender differences or is the military unique, maintaining dissimilar concepts regarding leadership and unique requirements inconsistent with goals and benefits of a diverse organization? Do military

women as leaders employ these same new “female” leadership techniques and contribute so effectively to the organization?

Military Leadership—Any Similarities?

If currently held leadership techniques are dissimilar to a military style, are they incompatible with military operations and are the natural abilities which women can contribute not applicable? Although the military is a traditionally male dominated environment (and in some combat scenarios may require strict command and control), future challenges require strategic vision and leadership. McGee and Knowlton (referencing US Army manuals) list the following as key components of strategic leadership: capability to use multiple frames of reference, capability to integrate and synthesize, ability to communicate effectively, ability to negotiate and build consensus, and the ability to envision the future.¹⁴ As such, many of the previously discussed leadership styles, which embody those characteristics and capabilities attributed as being more “feminine” are also necessary to complement military leadership. Do military women reflect those same “female leadership styles” or do their styles reflect the “command and control military style?”

Role of Self-Selection and Adaptation

There is some evidence that women who chose the military as a career tend to self-select or adapt to leadership, communication and even MBTI types most typical of the majority (men) in the military. Adaptation and self-selection produce a more uniform organization, which although advantageous in some respects (as with combat teams who may need to communicate and clearly understand each other during a moment of crisis),

forfeits the benefits of diversity. There may be other hidden costs of adaptation which negatively impact morale and the efficiency/effectiveness of the operation in the long run.

Research indicates women in the male-dominated career fields (to include the military) frequently *self-select* for those career fields. In other words, they choose careers which reflect their own preferences and styles. Speaking of the impact of self-selection, Howes and Stevenson say that, “As long as the number of women admitted to the inner circle is small, the few who self-select and are chosen will tend to share the dominant perspective of those already in place.”¹⁵ As further evidence of self-selections these same authors quote Segal who “...implies that women and men who pursue military service are of like mind; this position is supported by a study comparing female and male cadets at West Point.”¹⁶ and Bstydzienski, writing about women and politics “The few who achieve high-level positions are likely to be selected for their counterstereotypical characteristics.”¹⁷

From this data, it can be inferred that women who self-select for military careers may prefer communication styles more prevalent in male-dominated environments, have MBTI preferences similar to the predominant male military officer (ISTJ), and favor phenomena associated in current day society (although this may be changing with continued integration of men and women into non-traditional career fields) with masculine styles as aggressiveness, status orientation, competitiveness, athleticness, etc.¹⁸

Further, research demonstrates women tend to *adapt* to male oriented behaviors and job requirements in order to survive or fit in as previously described in sections on communication and the MBTI. McGee (Chapter four of this paper) discussing MBTI data for female ICAF students indicates the role adaptation and trying to “fit in” plays in

potentially altering the type data for the MBTI. Similarly, Howes and Stevenson describe adaptation as even applying to women who make military policy saying they:

...tend to protect themselves by adapting the attitudes of their male colleagues. They “go native in order to survive.” Additionally, most research on women in contemporary male-dominated organizations suggests that women develop two major patterns of adaptation: cooption and segregation. The first applies to those structures and occupations where women accept male definitions of the situation and try to blend into the male organizational culture. The second pattern manifests itself in groups of female workers who become effectively isolated from the organizational mainstream and cultivate female friendship, support, and cooperation in order to cope with low status and poor working conditions. Both patterns preclude women as a group from having an independent effect on the structure and culture of mainstream organizations.¹⁹

Judy Rosener, a professor at the University of California’s Graduate School of Management in Irvine, writing in Harvard Business Review details two generations of women in leadership. She says “The older conformed to male standards. The second, younger group broke new ground “by drawing on the skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experiences as women.” She believes most of these “new” women never learned the military style of management and naturally gravitate to their own more feminine roles and styles.²⁰ Consistent with this, Janet Theusen says women self-select, adapt, leave, or, if strong enough, forge ahead with their own distinct styles.²¹

Analysis of all research and data herein presented attests adaptation and self-selection are prevalent for women leaders in male-dominated organizations to include the military. Why and what is the impact? Why do some minorities and women choose to adapt versus being themselves and employing their own unique leadership and management styles? One explanation, previously discussed; adaptation or “fitting in” is safe. In the military, a male-dominated environment, considerable evidence exists suggesting women are subject to misogyny or a hatred of women.

Although initially, this position may sound extremist, a review of literature regarding women and military organizations provides an interesting perspective to the situation. Howes and Stevenson report “Elements of the male role are exaggerated in the military, including misogyny and homophobia” “to the extent that military service is equated with manhood, the mere presence of women is problematic.”²² Quoting Susan Borchert, in an article from *Men’s Studies Review*:

The armed forces continue to use the traditional perspective of masculinity as an integral part of their resocialization process...For many young men historically, entering the military is a means of proving one’s status as an adult man...Misogyny is an integral value in this process. Ironically, while the value of male supremacy is being espoused, the recruits are treated as subordinates, “as women.” Women are regarded as inferior, subhuman beings....Thus to be a man is to be a soldier, not a woman.²³

Carl Builder, of the RAND Corporation, and author of *The Icarus Syndrome*,²⁴ references studies on the Icarus Complex describing the ego of the male airman in which “in general he was contemptuous of women but wanted them to admire him. These two additional characteristics, a craving for immortality and a conception of women as objects to be used for narcissistic gains....The second characteristic, he points out, is usually accompanied by some homosexual tendencies.”²⁵ Further the author describes flight fantasies in which he states Icarians show an underlying fear of women.²⁶

Likewise, an article in *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military* regarding the captivity of Rhonda Cornum during the Gulf War states: “Women in wartime and in military culture provide a ready test for male dominance and a ready target of anger: women become the object of male violence just for being there. They violate the male terrain of war and fraternity of power. Tailhook is an excellent example of male terrain, where the women “had” to have it happen. Similarly, the female

captivity can't be over until there is a rape.”²⁷ Finally, a review of Jeanne Holm's book, *Women In the Military, An Unfinished Revolution* details the struggles for equal opportunity and participation which women in the military have endured.²⁸

These accounts highlight the extent of the battle of the sexes and the difficulties for women in male-dominated environments. Although such studies and writing may seem biased to persons who are not members of this minority, brief discussions of misogyny with male class members at Air War College did not produce denial of existence of the phenomena. These studies and articles by well-respected persons suggest misogyny is a factor to which women in the military are subjected and probably a very good reason why many choose to adapt, keep quiet about inequities, and fit it.

The author asserts recognition of this adaptive behavior is important for a couple of reasons. First, adaptation and self selection limit the diversity required for future strategic leadership, and secondly, it may just be that adaptation plays a role in the sexual harassment which continues to plague organizations to include the military. If women (or men) try to “fit in” at any expense, they may send signals indicating they are not offended by the abusive behavior to which they are being subjected. These mixed signals, in turn, can reinforce the inappropriate behavior of the offender. It is important to clarify that adaptive behavior is not an excuse for sexual harassment and the offender or harasser is ultimately responsible for his/her behavior. However, it may well be a factor, especially if the adaptive person is a female leader—this even more dramatically would give mixed signals to subordinates, some of whom may be predisposed to abuse of power for various other reasons.

For this reason, encouraging men and women to communicate clearly “this behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated” versus acceptance or adaptive behavior is a must. Harassment disturbs the work environment and results in inefficiency in operations and adaptation may, unbeknown to the perpetrator, contribute some what to this phenomena.

As espoused by Air Force Secretary, Sheila Widnall, strength through diversity in the workplace and recognizing the changing demographics of the US military population is essential to future success.²⁹ Diversity therefore is not only a goal in strategic leadership, but also a factor which military must take into account in order to operate efficiently and effectively in the future. It’s time to get on the train and take whatever actions are needed to assist people in being themselves versus adapting to fit in!

Summary

In summary, many leadership attributes reported as essential for leaders of today and in the future are characteristics shared by women and some at which they excel. Current and future leadership requires strategic vision, effective communications, organizational structures amenable to negotiation and consensus, and the ability to synthesize data. Women excel at these. These leadership characteristics are not the exclusive domain of civilian leaders, but, in many cases may be extended to military leaders. The military is a traditionally male-dominated organization. Women who choose careers as military leaders generally adapt or fit in to survive, become isolated with the organization (generally ineffective members), or they leave. Adaptation creates a more homogenous organization, but predisposes harassment and limits diversity. The US Air Force forfeits

benefits and advantages which women would normally contribute; those very attributes considered essential to strategic leadership of the future. The cost is high!

If indeed, we understand diversity as the direction American society and the world are headed, then what will we do to ensure the work environment is not a threatening, demeaning experience for minorities and women, but rather a place where productivity abounds?

Notes

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³ Patricia Aburdene and John Naisbett, *Megatrends for Women*, (New York: Villard Books, 1992), xxii.

⁴ Nicholas Wade, “Method and Madness—How Men and Women Think,” *New York Times Magazine*, 12 June 1994, 32.

⁵ Quoted in *Megatrends for Women* (New York: Villard Books, 1992), xxvii.

⁶ Christine McNulty, Ph.D., “Applied Futures,” lecture, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL., 11 December 1996.

⁷ John Warden (Col, Ret)., lecture, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL., 20 December 1996.

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¹¹ Patricia Aburdene and John Naisbett, *Megatrends for Women*, (New York: Villard Books, 1992), 88.

¹² *Ibid.*, 92-93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, xx.

¹⁴ Bill Knowlton and Mike McGee, *Strategic Leadership and Personality: Making the MBTI Relevant* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1994), 9-10.

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¹⁹ Ruth H. Howes and Michael Stephenson, *Women and the Use of Military Force* (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc., 1993), 44.

²⁰ Judy Rosener, *Harvard Business Review*, November/December 1990, 119.

²¹ Janet Theusen, Otto Kroeger Associates, telephone interview, 9 December 1996.

²² Ruth H. Howes and Michael Stephenson, *Women and the Use of Military Force* (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc., 1993), 209.

²³ Quoted in *Women and the Use of Military Force* (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc., 1992), 210.

²⁴ Carl Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 231.

²⁵ Daniel M. Ogilvie, "The Icarus Complex," *Psychology Today*, 1, no.11 (December 1968): 31.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁷ Elliot Grumer, "Women as POWs—Forgetting the Rhonda Cornum Story," *MINERVA: Quarterly Report of Women and the Military* xiv, no.1 (Spring 1996): 12.

²⁸ Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution* (Novato, CA.: Presidio Press, 1992).

²⁹ Capt Becky Colaw, "Team Air Force: Strength through Diversity," *Airman* 38, no 6 (June 1994): 36-48.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

The NF types...postulated to be the most skilled in communications and most likely to be inspiring leaders are underrepresented in leader samples...

—Mary McCaulley
MBTI and Leadership

Within the context of this study, the author reviewed available data and literature regarding gender differences implied by genetic/biological differences, communication differences, preference differences as measured by the MBTI, and unique leadership style differences in organizations and businesses. Within this framework, the paper further compares leadership attributes to styles identified predominantly as traditionally feminine and thereafter, closely focused upon women in military leadership roles.

Self-selection and adaptation are factors common to female leadership in male-dominated environments—factors which ultimately limit diversity, hamper creativity, and may even play a role communicating mixed signals to men on issues which can escalate to harassment.

Does this mean men and women are unable to successfully work together, to communicate effectively, and contribute equally to the work place unlimited by inflexibility and homogeneity? The author contends this is an extreme perspective which does not fairly include the development and full capability of the human being.

According to Gelman, et al, “Human behavior exhibits a plasticity that has enabled men and women to cope with cultural and environmental extremes and has made them—by some measures—the most successful species in history. Unlike canaries, they can sing when the spirit, rather than testosterone moves them.”¹ Likewise, Roger Gorski states “Human beings have learned to intervene with their hormones—which is to say that their behavioral differences are what make them less, not more, like animals.”² Human flexibility combined with cultural experiences allow men and women the ability to do more or less what they choose versus being locked into stereotypical behaviors. For example, men are capable, although maybe not comfortable, working within organizations with beaurocratic structures currently identified with women’s styles. Also, women can and do adapt to military leadership styles when required (e.g. combat command and control scenarios).

Along these lines, McGee and Knowlton discuss the importance of individuation (development of expertise and understanding in areas which are not MBTI preferences) for growth of future leaders in the organization.³ Both men and women leaders can and should develop their non-preferences to become more balanced as leaders. This development requires conscious effort and work.

Men and women are not locked into one style of leadership and behavior preventing effectiveness in the workplace. The more serious problem appears to be organizational inflexibility in accommodating dissimilar personality types. In the military, the ISTJ preference type is predominant. Since this is the majority type, discrimination towards other preference types (natural preference types of some women) may lead to self-selection and adaptation, limiting benefits of variance or diversity and creativity critical to

a flexible growing organization. The cost of harassment, investigations, communication problems and disrupted daily operations is unacceptable. If you don't believe this, ask the Navy what the total impact and cost of Tailhook is to its members and ask the Army how much they have spent (dollars and manpower) on the current series of harassment charge and investigations. What must the military do?

Military organizations should continue to *actively* encourage and support minorities and women to fully integrate unique abilities and assets they can contribute. To do this effectively (versus only giving lip service), the author recommends the military (in this case the US Air Force) undertake the following:

Integrate gender differences instruction and education into professional military education (PME) leadership studies from the very earliest time a person enters the military—the new Airmen and Basic Course, Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and Air War College. This instruction should include, as a minimum, topics as differences in communication, leadership styles, preference types, individuation growth and development and fully emphasize the compounded value added through diversity and the complementary contributions of both genders. Ensure instructors in these classes believe what they are teaching. Fathers and spouses of women in the military are excellent in this realm as they have a vested interest. A smirking male instructor sabotages the entire program and intent. *As the majority, supportive men are absolutely critical to success!*

Instructors would benefit from gender diversity training and conferences. Such courses are widely recognized as critical to operational effectiveness by civilian and

commercial entities. One such organization is the National Association of Gender Diversity Training in Phoenix, Arizona.⁴

Continue classes as Principle Centered Leadership which provide guidance at maximizing potential and are valuable in the individuation process as core curriculum for strategic leaders of the future. Maximizing growth potential and using all faculties, both left and right brain functions should be a goal for all strategic leaders.

Invite specialists (to include pshycholinguists) who understand communication differences to speak to classes. Judith Tingley, Ph.D. provides consultations and recommends the following thought processes and exercises in her presentations to groups on understanding different gender communication: adjusting your attitude, acknowledging differences without judging, adjusting attitude again, choosing techniques for response, and generalizing from the specific response to your technique.⁵

The Air War College should also organize to collect data on both females and males in the interest of diversity. There seems to be some fear currently that such data will be used erroneously to the detriment of persons or careers. The author believes it is more important to review personal traits and potential contributions honestly, and to assist people to understand that all don't have to be the same to contribute to an organization effectively. Senior service schools and organizations utilizing the MBTI to identify differences and preferences should also encourage individuality (and thus diversity) by providing support and where appropriate counseling as at ICAF to affirm unique different preferences and leadership characteristics and styles are okay. The importance of this type support is confirmed by studies on burnout and commitment among men and women in the Canadian Military Force.⁶

Establish special counseling and support groups at bases, wings and PME. Programs at institutions of higher learning should be created along the line of programs at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, wherein counseling for women with dissimilar MBTI types assists them to accept differences and appreciate value added versus trying to adapt or clone others typical behavior. Additionally, support groups of peers or superiors might be effective in assisting females in positions where stress is generated as a result of being different or a minority. Being the only one in a classroom unable to communicate a valuable idea because others are reluctant to consider the content based upon gender or communication style is stressful and a situation in which a senior officer can intervene and assist. Men at the senior officer level play a critical role in supporting and encouraging women as they set the example for other males in a male-dominated environment. Integration of minorities requires organizational adjustments, not just talking about the issue at a staff meeting.

Senior officers *must be sincerely involved* for the military to be all it can.

Gender differences exist—humans can adapt when it is in the interest of the organization, but these differences can be complementary and add dramatically to holistic operations. Men and women offer unique and complementary contributions to the military. To effectively employ its members, the military and the Air Force must continue to educate personnel and ensure growth environments exist or their may be a high price in the future. So far, the military has done a mediocre job as evidenced by continued adaptation, self-selection, and harassment.

Notes

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² Ibid.

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⁴ Leslie Jenness, National Association of Gender Diversity Training, 2 pages,; on-line, Internet, 29 March 1997, available from <http://www.primenet.com/~gender/>.

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