ABSTRACT
        A study compared male and female managers'
preferences for using communication-based as opposed to
power-centered strategies for resolving employer-employee disputes.
Subjects, 40 male and 40 female middle and upper level managers, were
interviewed and asked to report their preferred manner of resolving
four different personnel problems: (1) an employee reluctantly
complies with a manager's order to do a task not included in his or
her job description, (2) an employee goes beyond boundaries of
authority and violates chain of command, (3) an employee challenges a
manager's competence to give correct instructions on how to do an
assigned task, and (4) a high level employee's authority is
challenged by other high level employees/managers. In general, the
results support previous research showing that females may be more
communicative in their management styles than males. Specifically, no
significant difference emerged between males and females when dealing
with personnel problems involving a disagreement about whether a
given task complied with an employee's job description. Differences
did emerge in the other three situations, however, with males
reporting greater tendencies to rely on power and females reporting
greater tendencies to use communication as a means of resolving
problems. (Descriptions of each problem situation and extensive
tables of data are appended.) (FL)

Gender Differences in the Management of Four

Different Personnel Disputes with Male and Female Employees

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Abstract

This study compares male and female managers' preferences for using communication

versus power-centered strategies for resolving employer/employee disputes.

Middle- and upper-level managers (80--40 men, 40 women) were interviewed and

asked to report their preferred manner of resolving four different personnel

problems. In all but one of the instances, differences emerge between men's

and women's preferred response style, with men reporting greater tendencies to

rely on organizational power and women reporting greater tendencies to use

communication as means of resolving the problems. These results are interpreted

as consisistent with Baird and Bradley's findings that female managers are

perceived as more likely than male managers to use communication to resolve

personnel problems.

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Gender Differences in the Management of Four

Different Personnel Disputes with Male and Female Employees

In recent years, attention has focused on the behavior of women in managerial and supervisory positions in organizations, not a surprising trend since the number of women classified as managers and officers in organizations doubled during the 1970s.[1] ꞏ This migration of women into top-level management positions has generated a great deal of interest in evaluating their ability to serve effectively in management positions.[2]

Concern about the increasing number of women in top-level management positions has led to an abundance of self-help literature on how to be a successful female manager.[3] Two basic assumptions underlie much of this literature, which, as yet, have not been adequately supported by systematic research. One of these assumptions is that men's and women's managerial styles differ substantially from one another. Specifically, women are thought to exhibit less of a "take-charge" managerial style presumably requisite to successful management. The second assumption is that women must adopt the "take-charge" management style if they are to succeed and compete successfully with male managers.

Unfortunately, only a few studies have attempted to determine whether, in fact, men's and women's managerial styles really differ from one another. Probably the best-known study is by Baird and Bradley.[4] They used a questionnaire developed by Norton assessing different communication styles and then administered it to 150 employees, who were instructed to assess their perceptions of the management styles of their male and female managers.[5] Employees were also asked to evaluate their degree of satisfaction with their jobs. From this study, two findings emerge which are interpreted to mean

that female managers might be superior to male managers. One finding
indicates that employees generally perceive female managers as more likely to
express sensitivity for the needs of their employees and to communicate with
them about themselves and difficulties encountered in the job than male
managers, who are perceived as significantly less likely to engage in these
"humanistic" interactions and more likely to use organizational protocol
(power and structure) as a means of resolving differences with employees.

The second major finding of the Baird and Bradley study is that employees
are significantly more satisfied with their jobs when they are encouraged to
communicate openly with their employers about difficulties on the job. Taken
together, these findings suggest that female managers, because they are more
likely to engage in a style of communication more closely related to job
satisfaction, are superior to male managers. With increased job satisfaction,
one would presume increased job performance and fewer difficulties in management.

A principal limitation of the Baird and Bradley study is that its data
base consists entirely of employees' perceptions of management style. No
attempt is made to assess actual or self-reported management behavior. Further,
Baird and Bradley do not report whether these respondents are distributed
equally between male and female employees or whether managers of one gender
are represented more than managers of the other gender. Rossi and Wolesensky's
research holds promise for helping us understand how we might resolve some
of the questions left unanswered by Baird and Bradley.[6] They interviewed
forty female managers from seventeen different organizations and asked them to
describe ways in which they would resolve six different personnel problems.
Among their results is the finding that female managers use essentially three
different response styles and that they do not appear to predominate in the
use of any one of these styles when dealing with male versus female employees.

The three response styles consist of using interpersonal communication, organizational power, and a mixed approach incorporating both communication and power. Though communication is not the most frequently occurring response style, it is sufficiently widespread to suggest that many female managers use considerable communication in their handling of personnel difficulties.

However, because male managers were not interviewed, Rossi and Wolesensky are unable to confirm Baird and Bradley's findings that employees perceive male and female managers as differing in their use of organizational power and communication. Accordingly, the present study was done. In interviews, forty male managers were asked to respond to the same scripts as used in the original Rossi and Wolesensky study. By comparing the results of these interviews with the results of previous interviews, it is possible to answer the following research question: Under what conditions, if any, do male and female managers differ significantly from one another in their use of communication and organizational power in coping with personnel problems?

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

Interviewees

All eighty managers (forty male, forty female) participating in this study work in middle- and top-management positions in _____, a medium-size Midwestern city.

Data Collection Procedure

In the interviews, all of which were conducted by the first author, each manager was asked to read a packet of six scripts describing various problems that a manager might have with an employee or other manager. These scripts had been developed previously in a study of critical incidents identified by managers as representative of commonly occurring management problems.[7] Two of the six scripts were deemed inappropriate for the purposes of this study

and therefore were disregarded. The remaining scripts deal with four

distinctly different types of management problems: in Script A an employee

expresses reluctance to do a task not included in his/her job description (see

Appendix A); in Script B an employee goes beyond the boundaries of his/her

authority and violates a chain of command (see Appendix B); in Script C an

employee challenges the manager's competence to give correct instructions on

how to do an assigned task (see Appendix C); and in Script D a newly hired

high-level employee and other high-level employees (managers) challenge the

former's authority to introduce a change in termination policy (see Appendix

D). Script D does not clearly define the authority of the newly hired high-

level employee to impose changes in personnel policy on the managers.

By interchanging gender names, four versions of each script were utilized,

matching all possible combinations of male and female managers with male and

female employees. After reading the scripts, interviewees were asked to explain

how they would resolve the problems. This information was recorded by the

interviwer and subsequently coded for analysis.

Coding Procedures

The responses were read and assigned to one of three classifications:

communication, implying that the primary means of resolving the personnel

difficulty is to discuss the matter with the employee, taking into consideration

his/her concerns and attempting to persuade the employee to adopt an alternative

frame of reference (see Appendix E); organizational power, implying that the

respondent simply indicate that he/she will advise the employee what the

appropriate organizational procedure is and insist that the employee follow

that procedure (see Appendix F); and mixed approach, consisting of open

communication coupled with explicit reference to appropriate and necessary

organizational structure (see Appendix G).

Using these three definitions, both authors coded each of the eighty

transcripts and agreed in all but five instances on the appropriate coding. It should be noted that half of these transcripts (those obtained from interviews of female managers) had been coded previously in the Rossi and Wolesensky study and that the results of that coding agreed with the results of the coding in this study. Thus, it may be presumed that the transcripts were coded at a high level of reliability.

<u>Data Analysis Procedures</u>

After the responses were coded into communication, organizational power, and mixed approach categories, 2 X 3 contingency tables were constructed preliminary to the analysis of the data using X^2 tests (see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4). A series of X^2 tests were conducted on the data obtained for each of the four scripts (see Tables 5, 6, 7, 8). First, 2 X 3 X^2 tests were conducted separately for male and female managers to determine whether they responded differently to male employees than to female employees. If both tests were nonsignificant and, therefore, it appeared that male and female managers responded similarly to both male and female employees, the data for male and female employees were combined and a X^2 test was conducted to determine whether male managers differed from female managers in their responses. If it appeared that male and female managers did not differ in their response profiles, then the data for male and female managers were combined and a one-way (1 X 3) X^2 test was conducted to determine whether one response type was preferred over the others (see Table 9, 10, 11, 12). In general, significant X^2 tests were followed up by simpler X^2 tests to tease out the conceptually meaningful relationships between response style, gender of manager, and gender of employee.

All X^2 tests were considered significant if the obtained X^2 exceeded 5.99, the critical X^2 needed at the .05 level of significance, with df=2.[8]

Results

Script A: Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description

Analysis of the data indicates that male and female managers reported similar preferences for resolving a dispute with an employee who thought she/ he was being asked to do something outside her/his current job description. Both male and female managers reported statistically significant preferences for interaction styles using communication or, to a slightly greater extent, communication combined with organizational power (see Table 9; $X^2=6.46$).

Script B: Employee Goes beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command

Male and female managers differed significantly in their preferred manner of dealing with male and female employees when the personnel problem concerned the employee having violated a chain of command. Whereas female managers seemed equally divided in their preference for using communication or power strategies for both male and female employees, male managers exhibited a statistically significant preference for using power when dealing with female employees, but communication when dealing with male employees (see Table 2; $X^2=7.84$).

Script C: Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task

Statistically significant differences also emerge between male and female managers attempting to resolve conflicts with employees challenging their competence in giving instructions. Whereas male managers preferred the use of power strategies, female managers preferred the use of communication or communication combined with power strategies (see Table 7; $X^2=17.89$). Gender of employee appeared not to affect the preferred interaction styles of either

male or female managers.

Script D: High-Level Employee's Authority Is Challenged by Other High-Level

Employees (Managers)

In this instance, male/female differences approach but do not quite meet

statistical significance (X^2=5 11, minimum X^2 for significance=5.99). Inspection

of Table 8 indicates that male managers reported a greater tendency to use

power or power combined with communication than did female managers. Conversely,

female managers were somewhat more likely to avoid the use of power in any form

and instead to attempt to resolve the dispute through communication. Gender of

employee appears not to make any differences in male and female managers'

preferred response styles.

Discussion

In general, the results of this study lend further support for Baird and

Bradley's findings that women may be more communicative in their management

styles than men. Although no significant differences emerge between male and

female managers when dealing with personnel problems involving a disagreement

about whether a given task complied with an employee's job description, differ-

ences do emerge when analyzing the data obtained from the three other contexts.

First, male managers had a much greater preference for using power for

disciplining female than for male employees when the circumstance involved the

employee's having violated a chain of command. Female managers, on the other

hand, exhibited no such similar tendency to treat female employees differently

than male employees. Possibly, then, when a female employee violates a chain

of command, and her immediate supervisor is a man, that man is more likely to

take personal affront to the violation and to respond more defensively than

if the employee were a male.

Second, when resolving disputes with employees challenging a manager's

competence, male managers were particularly prone to use power, regardless of whether the employee was a male or a female. Conversely, female managers were more prone to use communication or communication coupled with power, indicating a greater tendency to discuss with the employee the basis of the dispute.

Third, when attempting to resolve disputes with other high-level employees (managers), male managers exhibited a tendency to use more power than communication, whereas female managers exhibited just the opposite tendency. Thus, in three of the four scenarios used in this study, interesting differences appear in male and female managers' self-reported preferences for resolving disputes. For the most part, female managers were more prone to use some form of communication in gaining their employees' and peers' acceptance of their policy change, whereas male managers were more prone to insist that the employee adopt the change as a function of their lesser authority or status in the organization. In general, then, these findings are supportive of Baird and Bradley's earlier findings that women tend to be more communicatinve in their management style.

Although these findings suggest differences in male and female managers' interaction styles, it remains for future research to determine whether, in fact, managers actually behave in these ways. When this additional information is obtained, we will be able to make clearer and stronger statements about real differences in women's and men's management styles.

Endnotes

[1] U. S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Women in Management (Washington, D. C.: Govt. Printing Office, 1980), p. 2.

[2] See, for instance, Kathryn M. Bartol and D. Anthony Butterfield, "Sex Effects in Evaluating Leaders," Journal of Applied Psychology, 61 (1976), 50-67; Kay Deaux and Janet Taynor, "Evaluation of Male and Female Ability: Bias Works Two Ways," Psychological Reports, 32 (1973), 261-262; Gerald L. Rose, "Sex Effects on Effort Attributions in Managerial Performance Evaluation," Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 21 (1978), 367-378; Benson Rosen and Thomas H. Jerdee, "The Influence of Sex-Role Stereotypes on Evaluations of Male and Female Supervisory Behavior," Journal of Applied Psychology, 57 (1973), 44-48; George E. Stevens and Angelo S. DeNisi, "Women as Managers: Attitudes and Attributions for Performance by Men and Women," Academy of Management Journal, 23 (1980), 355-361.

[3] See, for instance, Margaret Fenn, In the Spotlight (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1980); Betty L. Harragan, Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women (New York: Ronson Assoc. Publ., 1977); Margaret V. Higginson and Thomas L. Quick, The Ambitious Woman's Guide to a Successful Career, rev. ed. (New York: American Managements Assoc., 1980); Irene Place and Sylvia Plummer, Women in Management (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1980); Letty Pogrebin, How to Make It in a Man's World (Garden City, N. J.: Doubleday, 1970); Bette Ann Stead, ed., Women in Management Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1978).

[4] John E. Baird and Patricia Hayes Bradley, "Styles of Management and Communication: A Comparative Study of Men and Women," Communication Monographs, 46 (1979), 101-111.

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[5] Robert Norton and Larry Miller, "Dyadic Perception of Communicator Style," Human Communication Research, 2 (1975), 50-67; Robert Norton and Loyd Pettegrew, "Communication Style as an Effect Determinant of Attraction," International Communication Assoc. Convention, Chicago, 1976.

[6] Ana M. Rossi and Bobette Wolesensky, "Women in Management: Different Strategies for Handling Problematic Communication Interactions with Subordinates," American Business Communication Assoc. Convention, New York, 1983.

[7] Bobette Wolesensky, "Communication Problems Encountered by Supervisory and Managerial Women in Their Interactions with Subordinates," Independent Graduate Research Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dept. of Speech Communication, Dec. 1981.

[8] Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956).

Appendix A

(Script A)

Employee Relunctantly Complies with Manager's Order
to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description

Mario (Marge) is the supervisor of several employees in the stock room at an

organization. Just recently, the position of inventory control clerk was

eliminated. Mario's (Marge's) employees are now responsible for controlling and

monitoring the amount of inventory on hand. Mario (Marge) says, "When an

order came in, I assigned the task of doing the inventory work to one of the

clerks. She appeared angry, but did do the work. I found out later, via

the grapevine, that the clerk felt she should not have had to do the

inventorying. She felt that it was my responsibility to do it with her.

The communication problem in this situation was persuading her, after the

fact, that it was now her responsibility to inventory the stock she unpacked.

I was met with lots of resistance, because it was her expectation that this

was my responsibility and vice versa."

Appendix B

(Script B)

Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority
and Violates Chain of Command

Joseph (Jean) is the supervisor of a senior clerk and several entry-level clerks in an organization, but he (she) and the senior clerk have experienced difficulties in defining the boundaries of authority in the department. "For example," Joseph (Jean) says, "he had been given responsibility for calculating the statistics of a report that is published by another department. When he encountered an error in some of this data, rather than coming to me with it, he went to the other department manager. This angered the other manager, since he felt that my subordinate should have checked with me before coming to him. I also felt that this was the case, so it was very difficult for me to support my subordinate when the angered department manager contacted me to complain about my senior clerk's uppity behavior. If he (the senior clerk) had just come to me first, we could have gone together to the department manager, and none of the anger would have occurred, and lots of time would have been saved in clarifying the error."

Appendix C

(Script C)

Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give
Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task

Kathy (Ken) was hired by a local company not only to manage the office, but also to check the accuracy of the work being done by the employees. In this capacity, she (he) not only instructs people in the office about how certain procedures are to be carried out, but also is responsible for giving them feedback when they make mistakes. One of the female employees in the office repeatedly made the same mistake in completing a form. When Kathy (Ken) went to her, for the third time, to explain how the form was to be completed, she "told me that she didn't think I was right. She suggested that I call the head office and make sure that my instructions were correct. I walked away knowing that I was right, but I called the office anyway. As I suspected, I was right. Only after she had seen me call the head office and get their confirmation did she accept the fact that she was doing something wrong and that my suggestions were right. My feedback alone was not enough, though."

Appendix D

(Script D)

High-Level Employee's Authority

Is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees (Managers)

Jane (John) was hired by her/his employer to develop personnel policies and procedures. The organization had tripled in size since its creation, and the need for someone in this capacity was apparent to her employer. As Jane (John) familiarized herself (himself) with the organization, she (he) realized the need for reports which specified a supervisor's reason(s) for terminating an employee. All of the supervisors in the organization were men. They reacted to Jane's (John's) procedure by telling her (him) that the forms were unnecessary, and since they hadn't done this type of reporting before, why did they need to now. Jane (John) said, "I had to persuade them of the importance of this type of documentation. Two of the supervisors even went to my boss and asked about the necessity of such reports. It was fortunate that my boss endorsed me. However, a great deal of time was wasted in persuading the supervisors. I felt as if I had to defend not only the creditibility of the reporting, but also my credibility."

Appendix E

Examples of Communication

as the Predominate Response Mode

Male Manager

Mario should have stated his confidence in the employee's ability to do the

job and should have explained about the elimination of the inventory control

clerk's position. I would try to make her understand what her position

involved and to motivate her right at the beginning of the project. I would

sit down and see what people resource I had available and try to find someone

who had special interest in nat position.

Female Manager

Since the position wasn't replaced and someone had to do it, I'd call my

group together and try to improve our efficiency. I'd brainstorm with my

group, so we'd all be thinking about solutions and it would be easier to

have a consensus for the decision to be adopted.

Appendix F

Examples of Organizational
Power as the Predominate Response Mode

Male Manager

This is reason for termination. If I'm responsible for the accuracy of the
work in the organization, the person couldn't question my instruction.

Female Manager

The first rule of being a manager is never letting subordinates see your
faults or question your own skills. If they don't think you're sure of
yourself, they will never be sure of you. In this case, I most certainly
would not have called. I'd have laid down the law hard. Even if I have
questioned the policy myself, I would not have checked in front of him.
I'd have dropped hints that, if he didn't want to do it the way I was
requesting, we would find someone else who would.

Appendix G

Examples of Combined Use of Power
and Communication as Predominate Response Mode

Male Manager

I think the problem here is lack of job description. The line of reporting
isn't well laid out and the clerk wasn't correctly informed. I'd write a
memo to all employees explaining their role in the organization, and I'd
also meet with the senior clerk saying that it was my fault that things
happened that way, but that from now on we have another procedure. I also
would have supported the clerk with the other manager. However, if the clerk
did it intentionally, then it would be another reason for dismissal.

Female Manager

I don't like people who do end runs, running around the situation instead of
dealing directly with it in a direct manner. I'd try to explain to my
people the importance of the chain of command and let them know what happens
when lines of communication are violated. I'd try to make my clerk feel that
he learned a lesson and I'd try to prevent the other manager from getting
angry next time.

Table 1

Script A

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order
to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Male Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	7	3	10
Female Employees	9	5	4

Female Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	6	3	11
Female Employees	6	5	9

20

Table 2

Script B

(Employee Goes beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Male Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	5	5	10
Female Employees	1	13	5

Female Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	1	9	8
Female Employees	2	9	7

Table 3

Script C

(Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give
Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task)

Male Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	3	15	2
Female Employees	2	13	5

Female Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	3	5	12
Female Employees	6	4	9

Table 4

Script D

(High-Level Employee's Authority
Is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees: Managers)

Male Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	3	5	12
Female Managers	6	4	9

Female Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	7	4	9
Female Managers	10	7	3

Table 5

Male Managers Contrasted with Female Managers--Script A

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order
to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	16	8	14
Female Managers	12	8	20

Table 6

Male Managers Contrasted with Female Managers--Script B

(Employee Goes beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	6	18	15
Female Managers	3	18	15

25

Table 7

Male Managers Contrasted with Female Managers--Script C

(Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give
Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	5	28	7
Female Managers	9	9	21

Table 8

Male Managers Contrasted with Female Managers--Script D

(High-Level Employee's Authority

Is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees: Managers)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	9	9	21
Female Managers	17	11	12

27

Table 9

Data from Male and Female Managers Combined--Script A

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order
to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Response Style

Communication	Power	Mixed
18	16	34

Table 10

Data from Male and Female Managers Combined—Script B

(Employee Goes beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Response Style

Communication	Power	Mixed
9	36	30

Table 11

Data from Male and Female Managers Combined--Script C

(Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give
Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task)

Response Style

Communication	Power	Mixed
14	37	28

Table 12

Data from Male and Female Managers Combined--Script D

(High-Level Employee's Authority
Is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees: Managers)

Response Style

Communication	Power	Mixed
26	20	33