

THE PHYSICAL REPRESENTATION  
OF FEMALE LEADERS  
IN THE MEDIA

by

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## ABSTRACT

In the modern area, female leaders are still underrepresented within the highest levels of leadership within business organizations. The largest explanation for this phenomenon is that there is a misalignment in the expectations for CEOs and female leaders. Due to the existence of differing perceptions and expectations for female leaders, a content analysis was done on three business publications to determine whether or not the same expectations for female leaders were mimicked within the confines of the media. Through analysis, it was found that females were underrepresented within business publications when compared to their male counterparts. In addition to underrepresentation, females were also physically presented in a differing manner. Female subjects' body language was closely aligned to communal, feminine attributes and their physical appearance confirmed that there were more stringent beauty standards placed upon females. As the gatekeeper, the media has the ability to reshape the narrative around female leaders by exhibiting a more inclusive and representative picture of female leaders.

In recent years, our society prides itself on moving towards a more inclusive model of leadership. Females have started to infiltrate positions of power within business organizations. Women such as Mary T. Barra (GM), Safra A. Catz (Oracle), Indra K. Nooyi (PepsiCo, Inc.), Marissa Mayer (Yahoo Inc.), Sheryl Sandberg (Facebook), and Virginia Rometty (International Business Machines Corp.) provide salient images of the new generation of female leaders that is “breaking the glass ceiling”. Although there have been significant strides in expanding female leadership, Fortune points out that representation of female leaders within business organizations may not be as strong of a force as anticipated. According to 2016 figures of leadership for Fortune 500 companies, female leadership is actually declining.

“The 2016 Fortune 500 list includes just 21 companies with women at the helm— compared to 24 last year and in 2014. Women now hold a paltry 4.2% of CEO positions in America’s 500 biggest companies” (Zarya, 2016).

Over the last thirty years, there have been large decreases in the gaps between education levels of genders. According to Census Bureau data, from 1970-1990 the percentage of males that had received bachelor’s degrees (and above) was traditionally between 6%-7% higher than females (Ryan & Bauman, 2016); however, in 2014 a new trend emerged for the first time in United States history. Since 2014, a higher percentage of females in the United States have received Bachelor’s degrees (and above) when compared to men (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). While advancements towards equality have been made within the classroom, the same cannot be said about the boardroom. In 2017, the prototypical business leader is still male.

The lack of female leadership in our modern age poses an interesting question: what expectations and standards are put upon female leaders that keep them from attaining the highest levels of leadership within organizations? Gender and leadership have been a point of contention for many years now. A multitude of academic studies have been done that search to understand

what underlying biases shape the individual and organizational view of female leaders. The largest finding from these studies is that females, even within the highest positions of leadership, are expected to act in a way that represents communal and feminine attributes, such as kindness, emotional connectivity, and a nurturing spirit (Bakan 1966). However, these attributes are contrary to the skills necessary to establish oneself as a business leader (Schein, 2001). These studies have created a strong baseline argument that seeks to explain what keeps female leaders from attaining the same level of power and view of competency as their male counterparts. In addition, in recent years, researchers have started to study the impact that physical attributes, attractiveness, and grooming can have for progressing this minority group into leadership positions (Peck, 2017, Wong & Penner, 2016).

Although there is a large wealth of studies that seek to understand the standards and perceptions that are put upon female leaders, there are large gaps in research that seek to understand how the media plays into the representation of female business leaders. The portrayal of females in the media within the context of advertising and sports endorsements is an area with a formidable amount of research; however, research with a business media focus is scarce.

Media is the gatekeeper that informs and shapes the general public's perceptions. Young business professionals look to the media to help shape their opinions of their self-worth and future potential in a similar way that young girls look to magazines and movies to assign their aspirations. With such immense power in shaping perceptions, it is important to see if the media is portraying female leaders in a way that is synonymous with gendered stereotypes previously established by academic study. This leads to the central, most pivotal question of this paper: *will female business leaders be portrayed in a more traditional and feminine manner than male business leaders within the context of business magazines?*

In order to gain insight on this topic, a content analysis of the covers of three magazine publications was completed to help create an understanding of the representations of male and female leaders on business magazines. Data was collected and categorized in four hypothesis categories. Each hypothesis category is related to different prescribed expectations of female leaders that have been supported by previous research. After data collection, data analysis was completed to compare the representation of female leaders and male leaders. The analysis supported hypotheses that female leaders would be presented in a way that is linked back to traditional stereotypes and expectations for the gender.

### **Gender Stereotypes**

The most fundamental explanation for the differing perceptions of male and female leaders can be linked back to gender stereotypes. Stereotypes are “category-based traits or attributes that are often applied to a group of people as a result of accepted beliefs about the members of the group” (Agars, 2004; Welle & Heilman, 2007). While stereotypes exist across many varied groups, gender stereotypes are some of the most common and easily activated stereotypes.

It has been found that the mere act of inserting gender into a conversation can elicit strong, automatic stereotypical judgements (Banaji & Hardin, 1996). The most common gender stereotypes fall in two categories: agentic attributes and communal attributes (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkratz, 1984). Agency is related to an individual’s journey towards mastery. It is linked back to characteristics such as achievement, power, competition, and competence (Bakan, 1966). In contrast, communion has to do with the desire to bring harmony and peace (Bakan, 1966). It is generally associated with characteristics such as kindness, openness, and emotional-expressiveness (Bakan 1966). Agentic attributes are commonly

connected with to male subjects, while communal attributes are linked back to female subjects (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

These stereotypes are not just attributions about who males and females are, but they also are expectations for who males and females should be (Eagly, 1987). Stereotypes are made of a mix of descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Descriptive norms have to do with what a group of individuals actually does, while injunctive norms relate to what that group of people ought to be doing, in an ideal world (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

### **Role Incongruity and Backlash**

Eagly's role congruity theory is perhaps one of the most informative theories in the realm of female leadership. This theory seeks to explain how the above attributes (communion and agency) can seek to cause prejudice and bias towards female leaders. Role congruity theory explains that a leader will be positively evaluated when the characteristics of their assigned job match with their corresponding gender roles. Conversely, role incongruity explains that bias occurs when a person's assigned gender role does not match the prescribed characteristic for a position (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In nature, many leadership positions, especially CEO positions, are linked back to more agentic attributes such as command, competition, and dominance (Schein, 2001). This dichotomy leads to role incongruity and creates the fundamental argument for the lack of female leadership. Females are expected to act in a more communal manner; however, the top leadership positions require and expect more agentic properties. Because of this misalignment in female attributes and the expectations for upper management, bias is likely to occur.

Not only does gender have an impact on role incongruity and bias, it also creates backlash towards the subject, which can create real world consequences. Backlash, which is

greatly linked to role incongruity, is the negative view that one has of an individual when they deviate from their assigned gender roles (Rudman, Rasusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Backlash is often experience by female leaders trying to gain power within business organizations. In order to get to the highest levels of leadership, female leaders must establish their competency and intelligence. In addition to proving their worth, females must demonstrate their overall fit for the role, which often requires agentic properties. Because of the lack of congruity between feminine attributes and the attributes required for leadership, backlash can occur. Females who exhibit agentic attributes are viewed by their peers in a more negative light because of the lack of fit with their assigned gender roles. An agentic female vying for a leadership position can be viewed as intelligent and competent; however, she will likely simultaneously be viewed as deviant and unlikeable. These negative reviews can result in a hiring bias and a barrier to upward mobility. Not only is there backlash put upon female leaders, there is also a penalty for exhibiting dominance.

“In addition to a tendency for women in leadership roles to be evaluated negatively, their behavior may be regarded as more extreme than that of their male counterparts — that is, as more dominant and controlling, and, in general, as embodying a higher level of prototypical leadership qualities.” (Manis, Nelson, & Shedler, 1988).

All in all, the combination of role incongruity and backlash create a compelling argument for the lack of female representation in top leadership positions. The lack of fit between female stereotypes and the expectations of CEO positions create strong implications on female leaders’ likeability and competency. Simply put, female leaders face a no-win situation. If a female seeks to reach the top levels of leadership, it will be a necessity for her to act in an agentic manner; however, those very actions will result in backlash and negative reviews.

## **Backlash Mechanisms: Disarming Mechanisms**

Although there is backlash for female leaders who deviate from their assigned gender roles, there are ways for this minority group to reduce bias placed upon them. Role incongruity can create a perceived lack of fit for any leader that deviates from the prescribed prototype of leadership. A multitude of studies have been completed that seek to understand the physical makeup of a prototypical leader. The culmination of years of studies have established that the traditional leader is tall, physically strong, has a deep voice, and has a “mature face” (Graham, Harvey, & Puri, 2010, Limbach & Sonnenburg, 2015, Gladwell, 2005). In addition, a traditional leader is often white males (“Women CEOs of the S&P 500”, 2017). According to the principle of role incongruity, any leader who strays from the typical expectations of leadership will be viewed as less competent and less fit for the role.

White females are far from the only minority group that faces backlash in leadership positions. Black males face larger bias and underrepresentation within the context of business organizations when compared to white females. According to 2015 CDC data, only five Fortune 500 companies had a black leader at the helm of their company (Berman, 2017). In 2017, similar levels of representation are reported. Five African American CEOs represent only 0.8% of top executives. For comparison, females held 4.8% of CEO positions at Fortune 500 companies in 2015 (“Women CEOs of the S&P 500”, 2017). Black CEOs are a perfect illustration of lack of fit and role incongruity. Black CEOs are underrepresented because their physical demeanor runs contrary to people’s normal associations of leadership (Livingston, & Pearce, 2009). The darkness of African American’s skin provides a blatant antithesis to the traditional whiteness of the CEO position.

When analyzing black CEOs, a fascinating phenomenon arises. While traditional leaders have a mature face, because of the linkage to competency, black CEO's overwhelmingly have youthful, "baby faces" (Graham et al., 2015, Livingston, & Pearce, 2009). This is not because having a baby-face is linked to connotations of competency, but instead because this trait is linked to underlying cognitive associations with warmth (Livingston, & Pearce, 2009). An African American man's "baby face" serves as a disarming mechanism for generalized stereotypes about this minority group. Disarming mechanisms are "physical, psychological, or behavioral traits that attenuate perceptions of threat by the dominant group" (Livingston, & Pearce, 2009). Therefore, a "baby-face" seeks to disarm the perceiver away from underlying cultural stereotypes that black men are threatening (Livingston, & Pearce, 2009). The above disarming mechanism, known as the "Teddy-Bear effect" allows this minority group to overcome underlying negative associations and gain power. While the creator of the Teddy-Bear effect argues that females do not need disarming mechanisms, since their physical demeanor is already non-threatening, recent research seems to argue a contrary point. In fact, recent research that looks into the physical characteristics of female leaders seems to point to a multitude of disarming mechanisms that can help female leaders curb negative perceptions and backlash.

The most compelling argument for the existence of female disarming mechanisms comes in the form of the "Blonde Effect", coined by Jennifer Berdahl and Natalya Alonso (Peck, 2017). In their study, they found that a disproportionate number of female leaders were blonde. Specifically, 35% of female senators and 48% of female business executives had blonde hair (Peck, 2017). Contrary to preliminary thought, this phenomenon cannot be linked back to perceptions of intelligence and competency. In fact, blondes are typically viewed as more attractive, but they are also viewed as less intelligent (Johnston, 2010). In addition, studies have

shown that people subconsciously think that blondes are less capable and competent than brunettes (Kyle & Mahler, 1996). If blondes are viewed as less competent and intelligent, how is it that a disproportionate amount of blondes are in the highest leadership positions?

The answer is simple. Blondes are linked back to traditional, feminine stereotypes such as “the dumb blonde” or “the girl next door”. Blonde females are a physical representation of communal properties (Peck, 2017). This feminine package seems to act as a disarming mechanism that counteracts the agentic behaviors that a female must engage in to gain positions of power, which is contrary to the hypothesis that disarming mechanisms are not applicable for female leaders. Emily Peck, a Huffington Post contributor, summed up the power of “The Blonde Effect”.

“Blonde hair has an association with youth, attractiveness, dependence, and warmth. These are counter-active to the dominant male traits that are seen as necessary to run a company. If the package is feminine, disarming and childlike, you can get away with more assertive, independent and [stereotypically] masculine behavior” (Peck, 2016).

Blonde hair acts as a disarming mechanism to attenuate stereotypical perceptions that powerful, agentic women are harsh, rude, or “bossy”. In their research, Berdahl & Alonso give factual evidence to the existence of this disarming mechanism and its power to curb backlash (Peck, 2016). Through a study conducted among 100 men, the pair found that less backlash and negative reviews were attributed to blonde females expressing an agentic or dominant point of view. When men were showed two women, one blonde and one brunette, and a quote, such as “my staff knows who’s boss”, brunettes were viewed as much more harsh and unlikeable (Peck, 2016). Blondes were viewed as more warm and friendly, simply because of the color of their hair. Berdahl & Alonso seem to argue for the inherent existence of disarming mechanisms for female leaders. Simple genetic markers, such as blonde hair, can serve to decrease backlash for females by showing a physical or non-verbal confirmation of communal principles.

## **Beauty Standards and Implications for Leadership**

Not only are genetic markers a criterion by which female leaders are judged, but beauty standards such as grooming can play a large part in how female leaders are perceived. It is a well-known fact that attractive people are often afforded greater career opportunities than their less-attractive counterparts. Hamermesh and Biddle (1993) concluded that there was a pay premium awarded to attractive individuals. Specifically, they concluded that “individuals with above average looks typically receive premiums in pay of 5% or more, and that less attractive individuals suffered a salary penalty up to 9%” (Hamermesh & Biddle, 1993). While the pay premium seems to be equivalent for men and women, the appearance of females was judged more harshly than their male counterparts. Hamermesh and Biddle (1993) cited that “the ratings of women were more dispersed around the ‘middle’ category”. This can be linked back to the strong reaction, both positive and negative, that women’s physical appearance can evoke. While their study did not prove that there was a significant premium paid to attractive females, Hamermesh and Biddle laid a foundation to prove that appearance is a large category by which females are evaluated.

The premium for attractiveness isn’t the only pay premium that exists within the working world. In 2016, Jaclyn Wong and Andrew Penner sought out to further validate the financial returns on attractiveness. They stumbled on an interesting insight that further validates the beauty standards put upon females. In their study, the pair interviewed over 14,000 individuals about aspects of their job from pay to education level. Subsequently, the subjects had to rate each other in terms of attractiveness and grooming. Through the study, Wong and Penner found the existence of a pay premium of 20% for attractive individuals compared to their peers of average attractiveness. However, they additionally found that for female subjects, the pay return could be

primarily linked back to grooming, specifically their hair, makeup, and style of dress (Wong & Penner, 2016). In contrast, only a small amount of the pay differential for men could be connected back to grooming.

A “halo effect” exists that accounts for people’s unconscious associations of attractive subjects with traits such as intelligence and trustworthiness (Moore, Filippou, Perrett, 2011). That halo effect seems to extend to well-groomed females, meaning that people unconsciously perceive well-groomed females as more competent and professional. Through studies, it has been proven that people subconsciously associate grooming mechanisms, specifically makeup, with competency (Etcoff, Stock, Haley, Vickery, House, 2011). When asked about his opinions on this phenomenon, Hamermesh, a research leader in the field, said that he was not surprised with the results because “we conflate looks and willingness to take care of yourself with a willingness to take care of other people” (Saint Louis, 2011).

Makeup does not seem to be the only part of grooming that has linkages to competency and upwards mobility. Although there is a lack of academic studies, many females, especially females of color, suggest bias based on the texture of their hair. In an interview with Business Insider, a female engineer described an instance where a male colleague told her that she “looked like she stuck her finger in a light socket” when she came to work adorned in her natural hair texture (Lepore, 2012).

The culmination of the studies discussed in the literature review suggest that there are differing expectations for female and male leaders. Female leaders are expected to act in a more communal, nurturing manner. Additionally, backlash and bias can occur if females act or represent themselves outside of their assigned gender roles. Not only are there stronger pressures for females to act and represent themselves in a communal manner, there are also more stringent

beauty standards placed upon females that can have real life implications on pay and upwards mobility in the business world. In order to delve into the gaps in research, it is essential to see if the media replicates these gendered standards in order to appeal to a mass audience. Will the media act as an allegory for unconscious human cognition, or will the media break the cycle and choose to portray diverse and powerful representations of female leaders?

In order to begin to derive insight on how the above theories play into the media's representation of female leaders, specific methodology was chosen to create optimal results. A content analysis was performed on three different magazines: *Entrepreneur*, *Fast Company*, and *Inc. Magazine*. These specific publications were chosen because of both the reach and the coverage of business related professionals on the cover. The cover shot was used as a proxy measurement for the representation of leaders, both male and female. While there might be more well established and notable publications, they pose unique challenges. Publications such as Forbes regularly feature non-business professions who in nature will be represented in a differing way than business professionals. Other magazines have a heavily male dominated cover supply and large numbers of photo-less covers. The combination of *Entrepreneur Magazine*, *Fast Company*, and *Inc. Magazine* allowed for a large sample size, reducing large amounts of statistic inaccuracy due to incredibly small representation of female business leaders.

The three publications were analyzed over a span of five years, from 2013 to the most recent 2017 covers. Time parameters were kept the same for each magazine to decrease bias due to changing representation of genders over time. Magazine covers were selected, sorted, and coded into a spreadsheet with a multitude of data points that correlated to the hypotheses that will be discussed below. The main areas of focus were demographic data (age, gender, and race), physical characteristics (hair color, hair texture, style of dress), non-verbal signals (eye contact,

pose, and amount of body shown in cover pose), and general cover observations (color of cover, color of background, attitude of cover). After the completion of the data collection there was a total sample size of 114 (n=114), made up of 84 male covers (n=84) and 30 female covers (n=30).

After the data collection phase, data analysis began. Because of the large difference in sample size between males and females, it was apparent that statistical percentages between the two genders would need to be computed to grasp differing representation in a comparative manner. For each data point, a system percentage was computed, that looked at the combination of males and females. In addition, separate percentages for males and females were computed. From there, data points were compared with hypotheses to see if the findings supported the research question of this thesis: whether or not there was differing representation between males and females in the business world.

The central hypothesis of this thesis is that there will be an underrepresentation of females on the cover of Business magazines. The fundamental underpinnings of this paper serve to suggest that there are differing standards put upon male and female leaders which holds women back from obtaining the highest levels of leadership. If the media is to act as an allegory for the pressures put upon female leaders, not only differing representation must exist, but also underrepresentation.

***Hypothesis 1:** A smaller percentage of female business leaders will be represented on the cover of business magazines when compared to males.*

Within the analysis, definitions were set to safe guard against coding mistakes. There were two applicable definitions for hypothesis 1, gender and “business professional”. Gender was defined as the subject’s personal assessment of their gender. A business profession was defined by someone whose primary job and source of notoriety comes from business successes.

People whose main source of income or acknowledgement come from being actors, artists, content creators, musicians, or other professions were coded separately.

The secondary hypothesis is that through body language and the media's artistic direction, females will be represented in a more communal, open, and accessible manner. Although magazine covers have artistic merit and varied artistic direction, the publication is still a business. In order to create an appealing cover, publishers must present a subject that is captivating and non-threatening to readers. Research shows that there is backlash for women who are presented in an agentic manner (Rudman et. al., 2012); therefore, in order to present a female leader in a way that is not alarming to readers the publication will hypothetically present them in a more communal light. To support this hypothesis, three sub hypotheses were analyzed.

***Hypothesis 2A:*** *Females will be shown in a higher percentage with direct eye contact with the camera. Conversely, a higher percentage of men will be characterized looking away from the camera.*

***Hypothesis 2B:*** *A higher percentage of females will be represented while smiling when compared to male counterparts.*

***Hypothesis 2C:*** *A lower percentage of females will be shown on the cover with their arms crossed when compared to male subjects.*

Eye contact is a fundamental way in which humans establish emotional connection. Eye contact is additionally linked back to nurturing and parental practices, often exhibited by mothers. Attunement, created through eye contact, helps establish a belief that the child can emotionally rely on the caretaker (Schore, 2015). Smiling can additionally be linked back to communal attributes, such as friendliness. Conversely, crossed arms are generally a sign of emotional distance. When asked in an interview with Forbes about the subconscious message that crossed arms give, Dr. Paulette Kouffman Sherman, licensed psychologist and author, said

that crossed arms are “a self-protecting behavior that reveals a defensive side to your personality” (Cassery, 2011). All in all, these three sub-hypotheses seek to hypothesize that females will be represented in a more communal, accessible, and friendly manner, consistent with the standards and expectations put upon female leaders.

The third and final hypothesis is that there will be more stringent beauty standards placed upon female leaders, specifically within the context of physical expectations and grooming practices. Since beauty and grooming are a standard by which competency and professionalism are garnered for females, it would seem that those same principles would translate to female leaders’ representation in the media. In addition, physical communal attributes, such as blonde hair can likely serve as disarming mechanisms for females who are being represented in a platform that is associated with dominant and agentic principles. Similarly to hypothesis 2, four sub-hypotheses were created to validate this claim.

***Hypothesis 3A:** A higher percentage of female leaders will have blonde hair when compared to male leaders.*

***Hypothesis 3B:** A higher percentage of female leaders will have straight hair compared to male leaders.*

***Hypothesis 3C:** A higher percentage of female leaders will be shown in formalized styles of dress compared to male leaders.*

***Hypothesis 3D:** A higher percentage of female leaders will be shown in a “full body” pose when compared to male leaders.*

As established by “the Blonde Effect”, blonde hair is a disarming mechanism that is unconsciously associated with more subservient and communal principles, which can seek to decrease bias towards powerful females. An over-representation of blonde females would

support previous studies that have found a correlation between female hair color and leadership. In addition to genetic markers, the final three sub-hypotheses speak to physical choices in grooming that are expectations for female leaders. The final three sub-hypotheses seek to support the claim that females' hair texture, manner of dress, and body presentation are all criteria by which female leaders are judged.

In summary, hypothesis 1, 2, and 3 propose that there will be both smaller and differing representations of female leaders compared to traditional male leaders. Because of the phenomenon of backlash, females will be presented in a more communal light in order to appeal to a mass audience. Additionally, because of the linkage between grooming and competency, females will be subject to more stringent beauty standards.

After statistical analysis was done, insights were garnered about the media's representation of female leaders. Through comparative analysis, hypothesis 1 was supported. There was in fact a lower percentage of female business leaders shown on the cover of the three selected business magazines. Of all 114 covers, only 30 had a female subject on the cover, meaning that the remaining 84 covers had a male subject. In total, only 26% of business magazine covers had a female on the cover, while 74% of covers had a male on the cover. Even though 26% is a smaller number relative to the male percentage, it seemed large in comparison to the reported representation of female leaders within organizations.

According to 2016 Catalyst Data, only 5.8% of CEOs at S&P 500 companies are females ("Women CEOs of the S&P 500", 2017). This number is not a fair number to benchmark against, seeing that the levels of seniority on the recorded magazine covers varied from CEO to board member to top manager. A more comparable number would be one that is more inclusive of a multitude of roles. For instance, the same Catalyst study states that only 19.9% of Board

members at S&P 500 companies are female ("Women CEOs of the S&P 500", 2017). The existence of this gap between reported representation within organizations and representations within the context of the media brought up an additional question. Are the majority of “female leaders” represented on business publications actually from business backgrounds?

In order to understand this nuance, deeper analysis was done on the professions of each cover subject. Further research showed that although the majority of female subjects came from traditional business backgrounds, a higher percentage of females came from non-business backgrounds, such as acting, singing, and blogging, when compared to their male counterparts. In fact, 37% of female subjects came from a “non-business background”. Although some cover stars, such as Jessica Alba have established themselves as “business-women”, they come from a non-traditional business background and are chiefly known for their contribution within a differing industry. In contrast, only 25% of male subjects came from “non-business” backgrounds. This bias towards business professional women brings the representation of female “business” leaders down to 16% of the system total, which is much more comparable to the actual representation of female leaders within business organizations.

While it is clear that representation of female business leaders is lower within the context of business publications, a less clear picture is painted about whether female subjects’ body language and presentation is in a more communal and accessible manner. Despite strong support in some sub-hypotheses, analysis revealed a deviation from an expected hypothesis. With regards to hypothesis 2, hypothesis 2A and 2B, which related to eye contact and facial expression, were supported; however, hypothesis 2C, which related to pose, was not supported.

In general, both genders were more likely to be shown looking directly into the camera; however, when comparing genders, females were more likely to be shown making eye contact

when compared to men, validating hypothesis 2A. 83% of female subjects were shown looking into the camera, while only 77% of males were shown looking into the camera. Conversely, men were more likely than women to be characterized looking away from the camera. Only 17% of females were shown looking away from the camera, while 23% of males were shown looking away from the camera.

Of men looking away from camera, the most common pose was looking up and to the right (See Exhibit 1). For males, this stance seems to illustrate a deep and imaginative thinker. However, for females broken eye contact can evoke feelings of distance and unlikability, which can hold emerging female leaders back from the highest levels of leadership. The right to break eye contact was reserved chiefly to women who had attained a certain level of status that surpasses gender, such as Oprah Winfrey and Beyoncé (See Exhibit 2).

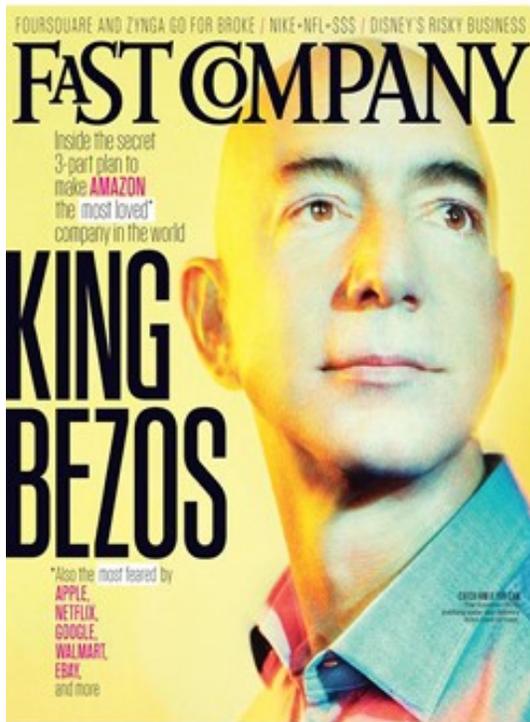


Exhibit 1



Exhibit 2

In addition to eye contact, females were more likely to be characterized smiling on the cover, supporting hypothesis 2B. For reference, smiling was defined as both soft smiles without teeth and full smiles displaying teeth. 57% of females were characterized on the cover with a smile, while only 43% of males were shown smiling, meaning that the majority of men were shown with a straight face. For females, a simple disarming smile can work to establish views of warmth and openness, making the cover a more accessible and inviting image. Unlike their male counterparts, female leaders don't seem to be afforded the same subconscious views of likeability and competence. Publications must thoughtfully position a female in a way that is non-threatening, which is easily accomplished through eye contact and facial expression.

While the first two parts of hypothesis 2 were supported, hypothesis 2C was not supported. It was originally hypothesized that females would be less likely to be characterized on the cover with their arms crossed; however, analysis revealed the opposite to be true. While there are a multitude of poses shown on the covers of magazines, one of the most common was a subject with their arms crossed. Because of the high availability of alternative poses, only a minority group of males and females were shown with their arms crossed; however, female subjects were more likely than their male counterparts to partake in this pose. 33% of females were shown on the cover with their arms crossed, while only 26% of males were shown with their arms crossed. Because this pose is generally associated with distance, especially for female subjects, this result was surprising. However, the emergence of the notion of "power poses," due to the work of influential psychologist Amy Cuddy, has begun to establish dominant poses as a mechanism for leaders to establish a view of their dominance and competency, both to themselves and those around them. As more discussion around this phenomenon takes place, less

rapid cognition leading to bias will likely occur. It seems as if typical “power poses” are a way in which females can create an air of competency and power, without pushing the boundaries too far in a way that creates backlash and negative implications (See Exhibit 3).



Exhibit 3

While results for Hypothesis 2 were varied, the confirmation of all four sub-hypotheses for hypothesis 3 supports the claim that there are more stringent beauty standards placed upon females when compared to their male counter parts. First and foremost, a higher percentage of females shown on the cover had blonde hair, supporting hypothesis 3A. While blonde hair is an incredibly rare genetic marker, 37% of female subjects on business magazines had blonde hair. This number equals the percentage of female subjects with brown hair, a much more common genome. In contrast, only 6% of males had blonde hair, the second lowest percentage behind red hair at 4%. The distribution of male subjects' hair colors is much more indicative of the

prevalence of hair colors within society at large, with brown hair being the most common (56%), followed by black hair (13%) and then baldness (13%). Grey hair (8%), blonde hair (6%), and red hair (4%) were the last common hair colors for male subjects.

Due to the overrepresentation of blonde females, a clear partiality towards blonde female leaders seems to exist even within the confines of the media. This is most likely caused due to the unconscious association with bloneness to communal attributes. If blondes are proven to make more money (Johnston, 2010) and attain the highest levels of leadership (Peck, 2016) due to the disarming mechanism of their hair color, it is no surprise that the same phenomenon is replicated in the media.

Not only did the hair color analysis show that there was an overrepresentation of blondes, but it also showed that females were much less likely to be shown with “undesirable” characteristics such as grey hair. Zero percent of female subjects were shown on the cover with grey hair, while 8% of men were shown with grey hair. For men, grey hair can be a sign of maturity; however, the same perception is not applied to females. This un-hypothesized insight seeks to support the claim that females are judged based upon their buy-in into female beauty standards.

This idea is further supported by hypotheses 3B, 3C, and 3D. As hypothesized in 3B, there was a higher percentage of females with straight hair when compared to their male counterparts. 63% of female subjects had straight hair, where as 37% of men had straight hair. In addition, male subjects were much more likely than females to have more texturized hair, with 26% of men having curly hair. This is 16% higher than the rate of curly hair for female subjects, 13%. For females, straightened hair seems to equate to a more professional portrayal. A multitude of ethnically diverse females all appeared on the cover with a common denominator,

straight shiny hair. Whether due to artistic direction or personal preference, powerful women who typically adorn natural hair, such as Venus Williams, were shown with perfectly straightened locks (see Exhibit 4). This facet of grooming is a standard that seems to be put chiefly on females. The rapid cognition that frames females with curly hair as unruly and wild does not extend past the boundaries of gender. Some of the most influential businessmen of our generation, from Mark Zuckerberg to Brian Chesky, graced the covers of business magazines with curly and untamed tresses (see Exhibit 5), yet their competency and intellect is not judged by the texture of their hair.



Exhibit 4



Exhibit 5

Stringent grooming standards exist not just in females' hairstyle, but also in their style of dress. Overall, females were more likely to be shown in a more formalized manner of dress,

meaning structured dresses, pants, and jackets, validating hypothesis 3C. In fact, 33% of females were shown in formal attire, while 25% of males were shown in formal dress. Males were much more likely to be shown in casual dress (43%) when compared to females (13%), with a 20% difference between the genders. This large difference was characterized by the stark juxtaposition between the multitude of male cover stars wearing relaxed shirts and tennis shoes and the females pictured in fitted structured dresses and heels (See Exhibit 6). Whether from personal choice or artistic direction, pressure is put upon females to present themselves in a more formalized manner in order to prove their competency and worth.



Exhibit 6

The conjunction of Hypotheses 3B and 3C supports the notion that there are more stringent beauty standards placed upon females when compared to their male counterparts. Hypothesis 3D gives continued support in showing that females' body and physical choices are more important than their male counterparts. Females were more likely to be shown in a shot that featured a greater amount of their body. The majority of females were shown from their waist up, a pose that features a multitude of physical factors that account for physical grooming and professional representation. In fact, 80% of female covers featured a subject showing at least 50% of her body length (See Exhibit 7). In contrast, only 61% of male covers featured a subject that was showing at least 50% of his body length. This difference can be attributed to the larger percentage of men who were featured from their shoulders up, a pose that is more about the subjects' facial expression than their body (See Exhibit 8). 39% of males were shown from their shoulders up, which is 19% higher than females. This contrast emphasizes the importance that females' physical demeanor plays in "looking like a leader".



Exhibit 7

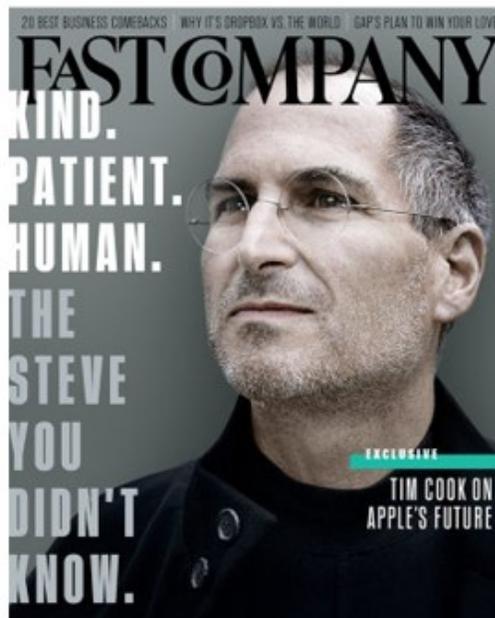


Exhibit 8

The content analysis provided multiple insights into the physical representation of female leaders within the media. The results of the study supported the notion that the same standards that are put upon females while progressing into the highest levels of leadership are mimicked within the confines of the media. While it cannot be proven whether these choices are made by the individual on the cover or through the magazine's artistic direction, it can be concluded that there are different standards and representations of males and females on professional business magazines.

Firstly, while females are being represented in business magazines, they are being represented at much lower rates than their male counterparts. In addition, female business leaders' representation is further muted because of the sizable representation of professionals in the entertainment industry. The large underrepresentation of females within business publications serves as a microcosm for the large inequities that exist in top leadership within the real business world. A large driver of this factor could be the simple existence of a supply shortage of female leaders to be featured on the cover of magazines. How can top female executives be featured frequently if there simply aren't many to begin with?

Females are not only underrepresented, but they are also represented in different ways in regard to their body language. On a whole, the results of hypotheses 2 showed that females were more likely to be shown in a more communal manner; however, not in a way that compromises the consumer's view of their competency. While the existence of eye contact and friendly facial expressions among females shows the necessity for females to be represented in a more communal and disarming manner, the most interesting and surprising results came from the likeliness of females to be shown with their arms crossed. This phenomenon likely occurs to help females establish dominance in a way that is not off-putting or detracting to the viewer. In order

to incentivize sales, business magazines are likely to characterize a woman as kind and approachable in order to disarm viewers from negative backlash from their powerful and salient placement; however, the cover star must also appear intelligent and competent enough for the reader to trust them. This pose can serve to establish power in a way that limits negative implications for female subjects' likeability and magazine sales.

The final insight garnered from the content analysis is that stricter beauty standards do in fact exist for female leaders. Additionally, these physical choices and attributes can help to disarm and mediate backlash. Female leaders are more likely to be blonde compared to male leaders because of the unconscious associations that the hair color has with communal and traditionally female attributes. This over-representation provides another strong example for the media's ability to mirror the standards created out of unconscious bias. Not only can physical traits play a role in females' representation, but so can actual physical choices such as grooming. Unlike males, grooming, such as hair style, hair texture, makeup, and dress can have large implications on pay, career mobility, and even general perceptions of competency. While a male may be viewed as a free spirit for dressing in sneakers and sweat-pants, the same grace is not extended to females who deviate outside of the strict beauty standards set before them. All in all, the conclusions gathered from the content analysis highlight and provide real life examples for the bias and expectations that are put upon female leaders.

While this study does provide many new and novel insights, it is not without error. The largest limitation to the study is the small sample size of covers with a female subject. While additional statistical analysis was run, deep statistical significance was hard to garner because of the small sample size. This limitation however was a fundamental hypothesis of the paper; the paper rested on the assumption that there would be an extremely small representation of females.

In order to supplement this analysis, non-statistical methods and literature were used to a great degree in order to give relevance and weight to the claims of the paper.

In addition to the small sample size, another limitation to the study was defining abstract concepts such as hair texture or color. While there are scientific definitions of many genetic markers, most coding had to be done with a human eye and personal opinion, which creates opportunities for bias. What might seem blonde to one viewer might be brown to another. In order to combat bias and improper coding, strict definitions were set from the onset of the coding process to guarantee a consistent and reliable data set.

The final limitation is the gap between representation and perception. While there might be differing representations of males and females on business magazine covers, this does not inform the reader on how this impacts a viewer's perception of competency. In order to gain deeper insight on this topic, future studies could be completed. The best way to approach the question of perception is to run quantitative analysis in the form of a survey.

In the survey, respondents could be shown two pictures, one at a time. The first of which could be a "female leader". The cover would be found through the content analysis described above and would be representative of a "prototypical female leader". In the first part of the survey, there could be a series of questions that search to see if the leader is viewed as competent. The survey could have questions such as:

1. How competent is this leader?
2. How likeable is this leader?
3. How well is this leader likely to respond to crisis?
4. Would you like to work for this leader?
5. How compassionate is this leader?

Secondarily, the respondents could repeat the process; however, the cover would now represent a “prototypical male leader”. By having the respondent rank the female leader first, they would be less likely to realize that it is a gender based study, decreasing biased results.

Although the survey could provide insight on the differing perceptions between male and female leaders, equally important information could result from comparisons between differing female leaders. For instance, the same survey could be administered comparing females with distinct physical features, such as blonde hair and brown hair. This secondary survey could seek to validate that proposed standards placed upon females, such as communal body language, blonde hair, and grooming, have actual impacts on respondents’ perceptions of female competency.

The findings of this study have implications for media publications, female leaders, and business organizations as a whole. The largest implications come from acknowledging and addressing the standards and differing perceptions of female leaders. Unconscious bias can start to be understood and remedied by opening up conversations about their mere existence. Exposure and conversations about diversity can start to bridge perception gaps about female leaders. However, one of the first places that change and exposure can be implemented is within the media, especially within the context of business magazines.

Although this paper does not serve to argue that it is wrong for females to be represented communally, it does argue that it is inherently wrong for it to be a necessity for women to be represented communally in order to be found credible or likeable in a business context. In the media’s current representation, females are still being bound by traditional and archaic expectations. As the gatekeeper, the media has the power to begin to start breaking the mold of the traditional representation of females and begin a new narrative.

Just as there is a call for better, more accurate representation of females within the fashion and beauty industry there must be agency put towards giving the next generation of business professionals strong and salient images of female leaders. Young, aspiring, female business professionals must not see an outdated and gendered representation of their role models. However, publications must search to fill the next generation of female leaders with images of female leaders of every shape, size, color, hair texture, background, and race. The media, which acts as a mirror to the world beyond it, has a unique opportunity to start opening up conversations about diversity and to take the next step in breaking traditional narratives that surround females.

Beyond the media, the implications of this study can help provide understanding to a marginalized group of aspiring and current leaders. Specialized words, such as the word “bossy”, have been created to stigmatize females who act outside of their assigned gender roles. For young girls with strong leadership potential, words and actions from peers and elders can have strong implications on their self-perception. When describing her childhood experience as an opinionated woman, Sherly Sandberg, the COO at Facebook said that

“From a very young age, I liked to organize—the toys in my room, neighborhood play sessions, clubs at school. When I was in junior high and running for class vice president, one of my teachers pulled my best friend aside to warn her not to follow my example: “Nobody likes a bossy girl,” the teacher warned. ‘You should find a new friend who will be a better influence on you.’” (Archer, 2014.)

Sandberg’s experience is not isolated; there are a multitude of young women growing up without access to strong role models. The first step is explaining why this phenomenon and perception exists, explaining the relevant implications, and arming women with the knowledge to start to have intelligent and thoughtful conversations with peers and stakeholders.

Not only must these conversations be undertaken by female leaders, but conversations of bias and sexism must begin to enter the narrative inside of companies. Companies must begin to address the systematic constructs that might exist in their companies that hold females back from the highest levels of leadership. By addressing bias and unfair standards, especially the ones that were emphasized through the media, companies can begin to invest in female leadership, a choice that could return great dividends to the company. A study performed by MSCI called “Women on Boards” found that “companies in the MSCI World Index with strong female leadership generated a Return on Equity of 10.1% per year versus 7.4% for those without” (Eling Lee, Marshall, Rallis, Moscardi, 2015). All in all, these implicit biases and perceptions must be addressed at an individual and personal level to begin to change the narrative about female leaders. With the media’s predisposed power, publications can become the first movers to start to shape a new narrative that features strong, competent, and diverse leadership among both genders.

Because of the differing attributes that are assigned to each gender, a paradox between power and perception is created. In order to gain power, females must act in traditionally masculine ways. But, if females act in masculine ways there are negative implications of bias imparted upon their character. These negative perceptions can serve as strong stumbling blocks for female leaders in their pursuit of the board room.

In this paradox lies the main issue; how are females expected to progress into leadership if there is systematic and unconscious bias that has negative impacts upon them? While bias exists, there are ways to curb and decrease bias for people acting outside of the confines of their gender. This notion is explained in the form of disarming mechanisms, traits that seek to disarm the majority group. Perceptions of competency and likeability can be predicated on genetic traits

such as blonde hair, providing unique access to leadership to a small group of people with a rare genetic marker.

Not only is females' leadership potential judged upon their actions and physical makeup, but it also is arbitrated based off of physical choices in grooming. Female must represent themselves as a put-together, clean package to prove their already questioned competency. The same skepticism is not imposed on their male counter parts. While portraying leaders, the media has a large role in confirming or changing the unconscious beliefs and associations held about males and females. The main goal of this paper was to investigate whether the media, especially media publications, was continuing the traditional representation of females as communal beings based on their physical representation.

Results of the content analysis showed that business publications characterize female subjects on covers in a manner that correlates to traditional standards and stereotypes. Representation of female business leaders paled in comparison to that of male business leaders. In addition, female cover stars on business magazines were more likely than males to be from non-business backgrounds. The women who were shown were represented with more communal body language, such as eye contact and a friendly facial expression, to make the female subject in power look more approachable and kind. However, females' body language deviated from hypotheses because of the existence of more females engaging in traditionally masculine poses, like crossing their arms. It seems as if females must establish power and competency in a way that is non-threatening in order to create credibility for the cover. On top of body language, female leaders had more stringent beauty standards placed upon them in the manner of grooming, such as hair, makeup, and style of dress. It seems that physical traits and choices can seek to attenuate negative bias that is placed on female leaders in power.

In this paper, the media acts as a microcosm for the standards that hold women back from the highest levels of leadership. Addressing and understanding the differing expectations for male and female leaders is the first step to changing the narrative. With wide audiences in the business professional world, business publications can be the first line of attack in tackling how females are represented. Young female must be exposed to anecdotal evidence of powerful females in order to inspire the next generation of leaders. It has been shown that diversity and female leadership can have positive financial impacts for a company's profitability (Eling Lee, Marshall, Rallis, Moscardi, 2015). The differences and unique skills brought by women must start to be validated and talk about in order to harness the full potential of what women have to offer.

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