

BALANCING BEING A WOMAN AND
A LEADER IN ORGANIZATIONS

by

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Abstract

As the “Me To” Movement continues to grow, society is talking about women receiving equal treatment. There are also more women graduating college, yet there is still a discrepancy between the number of men and the number of women leading organizations. Because more women are entering leadership positions, this paper focuses on how women determine what it means to be a leader in their organization. Thirteen women were selected and interviewed regarding their leadership experience. The interviews were analyzed, and three major themes emerged: the idea of a “superwoman,” the differences in communication between women and men, and the idea these differences may be sector driven. Women feel like they have to be good at their job and have the perfect family, so they are working hard to meet both these expectations. The communication difference may stem from their different interests and the expectations of society. These differences are sector driven because in female-dominated sectors, including nonprofits, women experience less of these differences than those working in for-profits.

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Balancing being a Woman and a Leader in Organizations

More women are attending college and receiving degrees than ever before; however, there is a gap between the percentage of women and men leading organizations (CCAP, 2017). Women, in the United States, are more represented in leadership roles than ever, but less than 5% of women are CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (Zarya, 2018). Today, society has expectations for being a leader, expectations which generally align with masculine traits such as dominance and assertiveness (Mumby, 2016). However, as more women enter workplaces and take more active roles, others are noticing their abilities as leaders (Rothwell, 2016). Because women are becoming more prominent in the workforce, this thesis analyzes how woman balance being a woman when they enter new leadership roles.

Communication and Gender

Early research focused on the differences in communication surrounding biological sex because it was believed this was the sole reason for the differences between men and women (Canary & Hause, 1993). In the 18th century, Chesterfield believed there were differences in communication because men and women had different vocabulary. He believed, “[Women’s] vocabularies are not more extensive than men’s, but on the contrary, so impoverished that they must resort to making up words by jumbling syllables together” (as cited in Cameron, 2008, p. 25). Women are socialized to be more relational, and research on styles has suggested that women tend to focus more on relational communication and building trust, while men tend to focus more on task communication and gaining status (Tannen, 1993). From this perspective, women might be seen as more cooperative and men as more directive. Because women tend to be more relational, they tend to put the team’s needs above their own needs (Coates, 1996). Women also utilize cooperative leadership when they focus on teamwork and listening to

everyone's input, or when they do not want any individual to feel left out. Women may have to be more cooperative than directive because they are sometimes seen as "bossy" or "rude" when they take charge. In regards to more conversational communication, Martin found, "Not only do women use humor frequently, they also are mindful of the types of humor they use and its effects on humor targets and others" (Martin, 2004, p. 155), demonstrating women have to be more conscientious when they work in a male-dominated environment, in order to prevent themselves from being despised or hated in the organization.

Others working from a gendered communication styles approach have noted that, in some instances, men may use feminine communication styles while women may use masculine communication styles (Cameron, 2008). Ashcraft (2004) contrasted a gendered communication approach where gender produced communication with other frames of reference that complicate the relationship between gender, discourse, and organizations. For instance, societal discourses impact how men and women communicate in organizational settings. Therefore, the expectations society has for men and women may matter more than gendered styles of communication. Women are expected to be nurturing and supportive, causing them to communicate in this manner (Kendall and Tannen, 2015), which might suggest careers that require cooperation and care (Fishman, 1983). Women then begin to communicate cooperatively because society expects such behavior. But other discourses may not recognize cooperative and nurturing behavior as leaderly, creating conflict. The next section examines discourses that prescribe "good" leaders before the intersection of these discourses are discussed.

Leadership

Leadership can be defined as, "a leader-follower influence process, directed to positive change that reflects mutual purposes of group members and is largely accomplished through

competent communication” (Rothwell, 2016, p. 169). Aritz, Walker, Cardon, and Li quote Northouse (2007), “most approaches agree that several components are central to the phenomenon called leadership: (1) it is a process, (2) it involves influence, (3) it occurs in a group context, and (4) it involves goal attainment” (as cited in Aritz, Walker, Cardon, and Li, 2007, p.163). These four requirements are necessary for leadership to occur in organizational settings. Without any one of these things, a leader lacks the requirements to demonstrate their competence to others.

What defines a “good” leader has changed throughout history. Many people used to believe people were born leaders; they had traits that would lead them to be more successful (Carlyle and Carlyle, 1908). Some people believe there are different leadership styles which people encompass based on their concern for followers and for the organization. Finally, there is a situational approach, which describes leaders in terms of their follower’s ability (Fiedler, 1997). The situational approach describes leaders as adaptable, as they will always have a different group of people to lead.

Recent work in transformational leadership has again redefined what “good” leadership is. For example, this research differentiates between managers and leaders (Mumby, 2013). Managers are assigned a role, and they are evaluated based on accomplishing the job, as they are focused on maintaining the organization. Leaders want to change the norm. “Good” or transformational leaders are characterized by charisma, relationships with followers, and a willingness to challenge followers to achieve their potential (Mumby, 2013, p. 265).

Discourses about good leadership also focus on efficiency and goal achievement. Ashcraft (2004) discusses four views of discourse and leadership. The first view states that gender creates communication. This is an outdated view because it views masculine and

feminine communication as two separate entities, when there are people who communicate across gender lines. It also assumes that gender is the sole reason for the communication and leadership difference. Her second view assumes communication styles affect how we view gender. Again, this assumes there are masculine and feminine communication styles that everyone adapts to. This is insufficient because there are not explicit masculine and feminine styles, as some men and women communicate and lead across gender lines. Her third view of discourse analyzes how individual organizations impact communication and leadership styles. This view argues that people adapt their communication to their respective organizations. It also points out that individual organizations can be defined as masculine or feminine based on the communication style their employees utilize. This has some validity as communication is variable. Because we communicate with many different people from many different backgrounds, we often have to adapt our communication style to each person. Her final view of discourse looks at society's impact on people's communication. Society has views of how men and women should interact and most people conform to these norms. Employees then take these styles into their organizations and communicate with one another, creating gendered organizations. These discourses of leadership often cause women to lead organizations that value nurturing environments (Rosener, 1990).

Gender, Leadership, and Communication

While the relational aspect of good leadership is consistent with feminine discourses, expectations of efficiency and goal achievement appear to be more consistent with masculine communication. Men's communication styles, characterized as directive and efficient, are more valued in the workplace because we live in an environment where we like to get things accomplished quickly and efficiently (Walker and Aritz, 2015). Those who have more power

influence these organizational values, and “historically men have largely shaped the gendered identities available to both women and men” (Mumby, 2016, p. 220). Because of this, many organization’s values align with men’s values. People turn to men to accomplish tasks because society has expectations that they are strong enough to conquer tasks that may arise. Men are also valued more as leaders as they age because they are “viewed as more experienced, distinguished, and powerful” (Mumby, 2016, p. 220). Men are perceived as more powerful because they have held leadership positions for a longer period of time.

Ashcraft (2005) provides an example of gender and leadership discourses and the ways in which these discourses’ intersections have influenced organizational practices. Ashcraft focused on airline pilots, an industry dominated by men. The participants described airline pilots as fatherly, leading their family through the skies. Now that a depiction of a good captain is slightly more democratic than autocratic, the captain’s roles may have been emasculated, as the intersection of gender and leadership changed. This change caused pilots to alter their discourse to allow input because of their benevolence, reaffirming their authority and masculinity.

Ashcraft’s work demonstrates the value in examining the intersection of gender and leadership discourses, but more work remains. Currently, only 23 women serve as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, and another 23 lead the next 500 largest organizations (Rothwell, 2016). This numbers are higher than they have been in the past, but when compared to the total population, they still demonstrate a disparity. Rothwell (2016) continues to state that women hold a minority of political seats in the United States. Therefore, men are making large decisions that affect men and women alike. However, there are cases where a woman’s opinion is more valuable, especially when decisions are more relational.

Research Question

How do women in new leadership positions perform what it means to be a “leader” and what it means to be a “woman”?

Method**Participants**

To conduct research, 13 women leaders in organizations were interviewed. I used snowball sampling. To do this, I contacted a few leaders in organizations based on faculty input and personal interactions with them. These women also recommended other female leaders who they thought would be willing to participate. During this process, I explained the research I was conducting to ensure they were comfortable participating. The participants were selected based on faculty input and prior relationship. The participants were in the non-profit, for-profit, or education sectors.

Participants

Name	Sector	Brief Description
Alice	For-Profit	COO Bank, Oklahoma
Beth	For-Profit	Small Business Owner, Texas
Christine	Education	Professor, Private Institution, Texas
Dorothy	Nonprofit	CEO Education Nonprofit, Texas
Ethel	Nonprofit	CEO Community Service Nonprofit, California
Georgia	Education	Administration, Private Institution, Texas
Helen	Nonprofit	COO Veteran Nonprofit, Texas
Judy	Nonprofit	Previous CEO Community Service Nonprofit, California
Karsyn	For-Profit	Small Business Owner, Texas
Lauren	For-Profit	Small Business Owner, Texas
Marie	For-Profit	Small Business Owner, Texas
Nicole	For-Profit	Previous Healthcare Business Owner, California
Olivia	Education	Administration Private Institution, Texas

Interviews

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. I generated a list of questions including:

1. How did you get to where you are?
2. What experiences have most prepared you for this role?
3. Tell me about your leadership style. What does leadership mean to you?
4. Who have been some of the people who have influenced you most as you've developed as a leader?
6. What does it mean to be a woman in 2018? What are society's expectations of women?
7. What does it mean to be a women and a leader? What are some of society's expectations for women leaders?
8. What are some of the unique challenges you've faced as a woman in a leadership position that you wouldn't have faced if you weren't a leader?
9. Do you feel like people treat you differently than they would treat a man in your position?
10. How do you feel having family & a leadership role has affected your life?

The semi-structured method allowed me to add additional questions throughout the interview to inquire further about certain issues and determine the most prevalent themes. The interviews averaged 20 minutes in length. The shortest lasted 15 minutes while the longest lasted 25 minutes. Throughout the interviews, I took extensive notes, which resulted in 33 pages of data.

Analysis

I used a version of constant comparative analysis to look for themes in the interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Issues of gender and leadership served as sensitizing concepts during

the analysis, but I allowed themes around the larger issues to emerge inductively from the data. After completing all 13 interviews, I reviewed all material and generated a list of themes present throughout all the interviews. I then organized the interview responses into the different categories. Smaller categories were combined into broader groupings until themes emerged that captured the essence of the data. These themes served to answer the research question.

Results

After conducting the 13 interviews, I closely analyzed 6 of the questions asked to identify three major themes regarding women and leadership.

After analyzing all the responses, three major ideas of women obtaining leadership positions emerged are: the idea women feel like they have to “superwoman,” the difference in gendered communication and the expectations associated with it, and that these differences emerge differently in different sectors of the economy.

High Expectations

The most prevalent theme I found was the high expectations women feel like society has for them both in their professional and personal lives. Many of the women I spoke to have families and children to take care of, while maintaining leadership roles in their respective organizations. In the past, women have been expected to take care of the home and raise their children. Even though more women are entering the workforce, these expectations have not changed. Women are also challenged both about working and about staying home. Alice offered support to this idea and said she’s been asked why she is working and she knows other women have been asked why they are not working. Christine believed that women feel the need to justify their decisions about working or about staying home with their children because society holds different views for each position. This makes a women’s decision more difficult because

she may feel like she needs to justify any decision she makes. It could also make a woman feel guilty if she gets questioned for making a decision other people do not agree with, another thing she has to prepare for. Because society still maintains their belief that women need to take care of the children, and many of the women with whom I spoke felt like their day was never complete.

Working women have to find a balance between their personal and their professional life. Lauren recognized this and stated she felt like she had to be “superwoman.” At work she felt like she had to be “perfect and nice,” and when she went home she had to take care of her children and to support her husband. Marie felt like people expected her to do it all and that she was trying to find a work-life balance. She also said that she knows there is an expectation to be at home with children and to keep their home together. However, she recognizes society is changing so that men do not have to be the breadwinner anymore. Dorothy said she wore “multiple hats” throughout the day. She did not think this inhibits her but rather she believes these different hats enhance everything she does. She felt like society expects her to do everything at 110% all the time. While she believed this is society’s expectation, she knew it is not a reality. Karsyn echoed that idea of multiple hats because she said she tried to balance being a mom, a businesswoman, and a wife. She felt pressure to be perfect in all these roles, but she embraced them because she felt like it is a privilege to do what she does. Alice also stated she felt society expects women to be good at everything: a mom, a good cook, keep their house organized, and be good at their job. She said they expect a woman’s day to extend after work, taking away from their downtime. However, even with these societal views, Nicole believed that there is a greater shared responsibility between men and women to raise their children than there

has been in the past. Some women also experience a lengthened workday, especially if they have young children at home.

Some men have the ability to stop working when they get home. However, some of the women I spoke with stated they often had to work different hours to ensure their children are taken care of. While these are individual family decisions, they do fall in line with the generalizations society has. Christine said she had to stay home when her children are sick, or check email early in the morning to ensure she got everything done. She worked these hours to ensure she can take care of her children before and after school. She also stated that as a leader she is concerned about “face time” in the office, so she sometimes brought her children to work to ensure her presence is known. Ethel stated that she had been asked about having children because she does not currently have any. However, she is proud of her success and she felt like you do not need to have children to validate it. While women feel the pressure to maintain their home and take care of their children, they also felt like they have to work hard to maintain their status at the office.

Some of the women I spoke to said they felt added pressure at the office. Dorothy stated she felt like she had to work harder to make a case for her decision than a male counterpart might. She also said she had to be careful about wording things. Georgia felt like she was challenged more and that she had to be careful about how she dressed to ensure people do not think she was dressed inappropriately. Alice stated that she felt extra responsibility to “pave the way for the next generation of women leaders.” Men do not have this responsibility, as there are currently more males in leadership roles than females. Christine also felt like it is easier for a man to fix a mistake and if she makes a mistake she could be done.

However, even though women experience some of these pressures, many of the women whom I spoke to recognized these stigmas are changing. Women are making strides in organizations to make their presence known and they recognized they need to continue to help other women to increase their presence in the workforce.

Difference in Gendered Communication

A second major theme throughout the interviews surrounded the idea that women felt people communicated with them differently than they did with men. The women I interviewed felt that male co-workers communicated with them differently, they were treated differently in meetings and email chains, and that customers communicated with them differently.

At the workplace people have different expectations about communicating with men versus communicating with women. Men also have topics they consider “safe” for communicating with women, such as sports and family, because they want to avoid anything that makes women feel uncomfortable. Men also have an easier time engaging in small talk with each other because they have similar interests. Alice felt like she missed out on the “water cooler talk” at the office because she did not have the same interest as her male co-workers. This prevented her from building strong relationships with the people she was working with preventing her from developing trust. Beth stated that the office sometimes felt like a “boys’ locker room” because the men had an easier time bonding with one another. Christine stated gender differences prevented her from having lunch with her male colleagues, especially before she was married. Because women often have different interests than men, it may have been more difficult to find topics of conversation that both parties to engage.

While these women felt there was a difference in “small talk” communication, they also felt there was a communication difference during meetings. Dorothy stated she felt like she had

to seek approval rather than inform in meetings, causing a greater difficulty when sharing ideas. She also stated that she had to work harder to make a case for her decision, requiring greater confidence and a greater effort when choosing her words. Ethel felt she had to prove she was capable. This required her to have strong communication skills because she had to be more effective when communicating her ideas. Beth also felt like her peers had talked her down to, communicating a message of inferiority towards her. Georgia echoed this idea because she felt her colleagues used coded language to describe women. For example, she stated he had been called “honey” or “sweetie,” inappropriately. This could stem from the idea that men do not know how to communicate in gender-neutral ways with women or that they are trying to only engage in safe topics. She continued to state that she has been dismissed during meetings. Men may not feel like they have been dismissed because their presence is known and they are seen as more powerful.

Women also experienced communication differences when communicating over email. Helen stated that she noticed some women were not included in original emails. She often caught these errors and added the necessary people to the conversations. This may have been the result of an oversight, especially if the woman was new to the role; however, it still made women feel excluded. Men may not have experienced this because they have been in the position longer, so their presence is known. The women I interviewed have also seen communication differences outside of the office while interacting with customers or clients.

When women interacted with clients, customers, or business partners they often felt like they were communicated to differently. Some of these people may have thought women are not as firm in their opinion, so they are more easily persuaded. Judy stated that she felt people complained to her more and were more negative than they would when communicating with a

man. Karsyn believed that people would be more likely to buy a low price food item from a woman than they would a man. Beth and Lauren experienced gendered communication when working with business partners. For example, when she interacted with her small business' landlord, Beth felt the conversation shift towards their family and children, rather than the business. Lauren felt like she was treated differently when organizing her store. She continued to state that people were surprised when she was building something.

These communication differences are important because we communicate with female business leaders and employees daily. Also, more women have been entering the workforce, organizations need to ensure they feel included and valued both during business meetings and while building relationships with coworkers.

Sector Driven

After talking to women in three different industries: for profit, non-profit, and education; I discovered some of these biases or perceptions people hold are sector driven. The women who worked in these different industries had different leadership and communication experiences. Some of the women I talked to are small business owners and they felt like they had more support because there was a strong community of local female business owners who offer support to each other.

The non-profit industry tends to be more female dominated than the for-profit industry. This led to divisions in my analysis because I talked with roughly the same amount of women in both sectors. Ethel confirmed that women in different sectors are treated differently when she said the "nonprofit world is more women." Many other women I spoke to, including Olivia and Karsyn, believed that society's expectations for women leaders also depend on the sector. Judy, a woman who works in a nonprofit, felt like the people she worked with had not treated her

differently, even though she is a female leader. This could stem from the fact that she mainly worked with other women, so they want to treat her like they would want to be treated or understand her more easily. They recognized some people who believe they should not be leaders, but there are others who recognize they need to be treated equally.

However, some of the women in the non-profit industry still felt like they were treated different than a man would. Dorothy felt this could occur because she took on her role after a male left. This may have led to different treatment because society is not ready to change their ideas about leadership. Judy also felt like customers treated her differently, especially if it was another woman complaining to her. She felt like people are not as comfortable going to a man with complaints as they are with a woman. This relates to how people view them as less powerful and more easily persuaded. While she did not elaborate further, Ethel also recognized that even though the nonprofit is mostly women, there is still a difference in the expectations people have.

There are other areas of female dominated areas of society where women do not feel like they are treated differently. Some of the women I spoke to are small business owners in Fort Worth, Texas. They all mentioned there is a large organization for female business owners where they can ask each other questions and offer support. This helped them feel less isolated as the organization offered them a space to voice their experiences with one another. Lauren stated that they made her feel like she was not treated different than a man would in her role.

While there are differences based on the sector of society women work in, many of the women I talked to still experienced some unequal treatment or felt like they were subject to different societal expectations.

Hope for the Future

Finally, the women I talked to are hopeful about the future. Many of them have seen women make strides since they began working. Organizations are beginning to accept that while women have different skillsets, they are able to take on leadership roles in their organization. Olivia stated that even though women have made strides they still have to keep fighting to achieve success. Karsyn recognized this as she has seen more women running for office and taking leadership roles in organizations. Judy believes that the only barriers for women to become leaders are in their head. Georgia also believes that society's expectations are being challenged, making it an exciting time for women professionals.

While these women experienced some challenges in their leadership role, they recognized they lead differently than men, so they need to embrace it. Some of them recognized these skills allow them to be successful in their role than a man would be. As women continue to take on leadership roles in organizations, the women I talked to believe that organizations need to alter their perceptions in order to make women successful. They lead differently than men as they are more relational, but this does not hinder their ability to lead their organization in a positive direction.

It is important to note there were some differences among the women I spoke to. Some experienced more unequal treatment than others, so these experiences cannot be generalized to the entire population of women leaders.

Discussion

Based on my research, three major themes emerged surrounding women and leadership in organizational settings. The first major theme is the idea that women feel like they have to be good at everything or a "superwoman" because they feel like they always have to be perfect.

They try to be the best they can in the office and return home and be a perfect mother to their children. The second is the difference in communication at the office in meetings, in general office communication, and with clients. Women often feel like they may have to seek approval rather than inform in meetings. Men and women also have different interests which can make it harder to find a common topic of conversation across gender lines, causing women to feel left out. When talking with clients, some of the women I spoke with felt the conversation shift towards family life rather than business. The third difference is that women experiences these differences based on the sector of society. Women in nonprofits do not experience as strong of differences because this field is heavily female dominated. These findings support previous research regarding women as more nurturing, supportive, and relational.

When it comes to leadership style, the women I interviewed best aligned with the team leader approach found in Blake and Mouton's (1964) managerial grid because they felt like they had to adapt and be "superwoman," and be perfect in every aspect of their life. They always have a high concern for others and a high concern for productivity. In addition to those traditional dimensions of team leadership, they also perceived the need to have a high concern for their family. They feel like they have to give 100% in all aspects on their life demonstrating the qualities of a team leader. Women have to adapt to leading at the office and to leading in their home because they have to communicate differently in these environments. They also have to adapt their daily schedules in order to accomplish everything. The women I interviewed said they often had to rearrange their work schedule to take care of their children so they can be a great mom, while being a great leader.

Women are continuing to work to achieve both organizational and personal success. They know people have high expectations of them and they continue to work hard to meet and exceed

them. This directly translates into their leadership because they can adapt to the differences they face, maintain their composure, and complete exceptional work. As women continue to obtain higher education degrees and eventual leadership roles in organizations, society may continue to change their views of women leaders to be more in-line with their views of male leaders and efficiency (Walker and Aritz, 2015). While women may be treated differently, the idea of a female leader as a “superwoman” shows that women are prepared for anything and they are ready to lead their organization to successful attainment of their goals.

While women are still working to achieve leadership success in organizations, there is room for growth. There is still a difference in the type of communication: cooperative versus directive in organizational settings. When I approached the interviews, I had a mindset that communication was not distinctly male or distinctly female, however, the women I interviewed best resonated with this idea. Women place a greater emphasis on inclusion and relationship building as they place a greater emphasis on the group rather than the individual (Coates, 1996). The women I interviewed supported this idea. For example, Helen said she is more relational and tends to be more inclusive, especially when she adds people who are not included in emails. Alice also focuses on inclusive communication when she makes efforts to pave the way for the next generation of female leaders to make sure they do not feel like they are treated differently and so women can come together to build each other up.

Because women tend to be more relational and nurturing, they perceive their coworkers and clients often communicate differently with them. This relates to Ashcraft’s (2004) research that organizations can affect how we communicate. If a woman is working in an environment with more men, the organization’s communication style may align more with a men’s style. When interacting with men, women may perceive a communication difference because they may

see their male coworkers communicating in a different manner with one another than with themselves. They may also perceive a communication difference if men tend to only discuss “safe” topics with women to avoid any negative backlash. For example, some women I spoke with felt like the conversation also shifted to their personal and family life. This stems from the idea that men consider family a “safe” topic to discuss that does not make women feel left out. Some women felt like they had to choose their words carefully and seek approval during meetings. While not directly related to meetings, Martin (2004) discussed the idea that women are conscientious when choosing words while using humor, something women continue to do in general workplace communication. They may be careful about choosing their words because they want to avoid having others thinking them they are “bossy” or “rude,” as some of the women I interviewed mentioned.

Women’s relational communication could also explain why many of the women I spoke with felt excluded from office communication. Women and men often have different interests so it can be hard for them to engage in conversation with one another. This can be difficult for women because they tend to use relational communication and they have a desire to form strong relationships.

Many of these communication differences are sector driven. Rosener (1990) found that women may take the communication discourses of leadership that society holds and lead organizations that place a high value on helping others. Society has gender norms for how women and men should communicate that most people conform to. Employees take their individual styles into their respective organization, which can create gendered environments. Kendall and Tannen (2015) stated that society expects women to be nurturing and supportive, something many nonprofits place a high value on, drawing more women to work in this field.

This may be a reason the women working in the nonprofits experience a smaller difference in workplace communication than those in for-profits. This aligns with Ashcraft's (2004) third view of communication in which people adapt their communication to their respective organizations. With nonprofits as a more nurturing and supportive field, women do not have to adapt their communication as much, as their natural communication style tends to focus on inclusion and helping others. Some researchers suggest that nonprofit organizations are more equitable towards women than businesses (Xie & Pang, 2018). Yet even among nonprofit organizations, where they make up 75% of the workforce, women only account for 21% of leadership roles (as cited in Xie & Pang, 2018). While this is a higher percentage than the rest of society, it demonstrates there is still progress to be made in this field. It also explains some of the negative experiences of the women I interviewed, as they are still a minority in the workforce. Judy felt like people complained to her more quickly than they would a man. This may arise from the fact women are still underrepresented as CEOs, so society feels like they are not as firm. This also led to Dorothy's mistreatment since she became CEO after a male stepped down. She felt like following a male predecessor caused people to treat her differently because they were used to the styles of the former CEO. However, these differences are often smaller in nonprofits because there are more women working together. With more women in the office, they may have an easier time finding common interests with one another, leading them to perceive less of a communication difference. However, they still have to communicate with customers, which may cause them to perceive a difference in communication from others, like the women in for-profits. Both the women and Pang interviewed and the women I interviewed, experienced both positive experiences working with other women, while still experiencing some perceived communication differences.

Limitations

Because this research was conducted through interviews, the sample size is very small. These findings represent only 13 women, many who reside in a single geographical community, so their experiences cannot be generalized to the entire population of female leaders. Most of these women also had families, and their experiences and decisions about family are based on individual discussions they have in their own homes. Because half the women worked in the nonprofit sector and half worked in the for-profit sector there is not enough data to make conclusions on either sector. This information is only used to make comparisons between the women I spoke to, not generalizations about society as a whole. Lastly, these interviews were not recorded so all statements are summaries of my discussion with each woman.

Conclusion

Women are more represented in leadership roles than before, but there are still differences they experience in both their professional and personal lives. These differences arise from society's expectations of a good leader, which tend to be more aligned with men's of being more dominant and assertive (Mumby, 2016, p.223), while women tend to be more relational and inclusive. As more women are entering the workforce and gaining leadership positions, they feel like they have to be the "perfect mom" and the "perfect leader" because it is what society expects them to do. Women and men also tend to have different interests, inhibiting women from bonding and forming strong relationships with some of their colleagues. Some women also experience difference in communication in meetings, as they feel like they have to seek approval instead of informing. However, many of these communication differences occur more in the for-profit sector than in the nonprofit sector. There tend to be more women working in the nonprofit sector, leading women to feel more empowered and supported in the workplace.

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