

LC WHITE PAPER SERIES

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES IN REACTIVE AND CREATIVE ORIENTATIONS BETWEEN FEMALE AND MALE LEADERS

Cynthia Adams

Global President of Products, Certification, & Community

Lani Van Dusen, Ph.D.

External Director

LEADERSHIP
CIRCLE®

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	4
KEY FINDINGS	5
CONTEXT SETTING - WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS	5
Gender Differences in Leadership Style	5
Gender Differences in Leadership Skills and Effectiveness	7
Limitations of Past Research	8
METHODOLOGY - STUDIES USING THE LCP DATABASE	10
The Leadership Circle Profile	10
Creative and Reactive Orientation Context	10
Description of the Assessment	10
Reliability and Validity	12
Leadership Effectiveness and Qualitative Feedback	13
Characteristics of the LCP Database	13
Analyses	17
Quantitative Analyses	17
Qualitative Analyses	18
FINDINGS	19
Differences in Female and Male Leadership Profiles	19
Creative Competencies	21
Reactive Tendencies	23
Differences in Leadership Effectiveness	27
Differences Among Highly Effective Leaders	28
Leadership Effectiveness Development Trajectories	34
Pervasive Differences	41
Influence of Management Level	41
Influence of Age	43
Influence of Culture	43

Differences in How Leaders Rate Themselves	46
CONCLUSION - PUTTING THE FINDINGS IN CONTEXT	49
Why are there Gender Differences in Leadership?	51
Hypothesis 1: Females have innate and/or socialized skills that provide an advantage in leadership as it develops.	51
Hypothesis 2: Female leaders are more demanding of their performance and so work harder at development.	52
Hypothesis 3: Males are promoted to leadership positions even if less skilled and thus are at a comparative disadvantage.	53
Developing Leaders toward Higher Effectiveness within an Organization	54
Coaching and Developing the Average Male Leader: The Forceful Knower	55
Coaching and Developing the Average Female Leader: The Exhausted Hero	55
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	59
APPENDIX - DESCRIPTIONS OF THE LCP SUB-DIMENSIONS	60
REFERENCES	62

ABSTRACT

As more females assume leadership roles in organizations, it becomes increasingly important to understand orientations to leadership, the skills they bring, the challenges they face, and the impact they have as compared with leaders who identify as male so that gender norms, expectation, and bias do not restrict opportunity. Unfortunately, current research is often contradictory and/or the methodology is too simplistic to capture the complexity of gender differences, leaving room for multiple interpretations of the findings. Many studies have drawbacks or limitations that restrict the insights that can be gleaned. Studies often employ non-standardized measures, conducted with small or narrowly focused samples. There is an over-reliance on self-assessments without any correlation to how leaders actually perform. Further, most studies focus on only one aspect of leadership and very few assess both style and effectiveness.

What is needed is a comprehensive study that measures multiple aspects of leadership and can shed light on which of the previous findings most accurately describes the differences between the leadership of females and males. Enter the *Leadership Circle Profile* (LCP), a scientifically developed and validated instrument that has been administered to tens of thousands of leaders around the world. By mining the LCP database, we were able to analyze all of the variables that previous studies indicate play a role in gender leadership and draw conclusions that resolve past inconsistencies, answer many of the questions that have not previously been well-addressed and extend the current research in new and meaningful ways.

For this research study, the categorization of male and female leaders was based on self-identification. The authors acknowledge that not all leaders identify with these two gender categories; however, within our database most leaders did select these two identifiers.

Our findings reveal that there are meaningful differences in how female and male leaders show up in the workplace. Further, these differences favor female leaders, who have developed a more Creative orientation allowing them to positively influence relationships and goal achievement, rather than simply reacting to external expectations, rules, or conditions. We also found interactions between leader characteristics and gender differences, and when we compared and contrasted leaders' self-perceptions with their actual performance as viewed through the eyes of co-workers, we found gender-related variations in the levels of self-awareness and the demands that leaders place on their leadership.

This paper concludes with a summary of our findings and how they explain inconsistencies in past research. We also present three leading explanations for why gender differences in leadership exist and the evidence from our findings that lend support or counter each hypothesis. We close the paper with recommendations for how organizations can use our findings to create the best development pathways forward for both female and male leaders.

KEY FINDINGS

- Female leaders more often lead from a Creative orientation and less often from a Reactive orientation compared with male leaders.
- Female leaders express more developed competencies in *Relating, Authenticity, and Systems Awareness* than male leaders. Female leaders show up noticeably different from male leaders in terms of building caring connections, mentoring and developing others, and showing concern for the community.
- Female leaders are perceived to be more effective than male leaders. The difference in effectiveness is less about different types of skills possessed by female and male leaders and more about the elevated development level for female leaders, creating a feminine leadership advantage.
- Gender differences related to several Creative leadership competencies and Reactive tendencies change as leadership effectiveness changes.
- Female leaders show up more Creatively than male leaders at every management level, age level, and across cultures.
- Female leaders underestimate their skills and influence to a greater extent than male leaders.

CONTEXT SETTING – WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS

Female and male gender differences in leadership have been studied for years, beginning in the 1950s and with a significant upsurge in the new millennium. Throughout the two decades since, there has been a steady stream of position papers, anecdotal evidence, and formal research studies.

This summary is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the literature but rather to lay out the critical findings with a focus on the most recent research. For a more complete understanding of the studies that have been conducted and the resulting outcomes, we direct the reader to the comprehensive reviews found in the following articles: Vecchio, 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2007; and Jonsen, Maznevski, & Schneider, 2010.

Gender Differences in Leadership Style

Much of the literature on differences in leadership between female and male leaders has focused on the different ways in which they lead, their orientations to leadership, and the specific traits each gender relies on to lead – what may loosely be defined as style. Across studies, there have been some consistent stylistic differences, but also wide variations in the traits that various studies purport distinguish feminine and masculine leadership. The table below (and continuing on to the next page) provides a sampling of the categorizations of leadership style attributed to female and male leaders with accompanying traits. (More detailed descriptions of the varying leadership styles and traits can be found in Wharton, 2005, Levy, 2010; and Eklund, Barry, & Grunberg, 2017.)

Feminine Leadership Styles

Communal

- Caring / compassionate
- Sensitive & understanding
- Empathetic
- Flexible
- Concern for the welfare of others
- Nurturing
- Gentle

Participative

- Cooperative
- Democratic
- Open & fair
- Interaction-focused
- Interpersonal connections
- Efficient problem solver
- Copes with uncertainty

Transformational

- Interpersonally sensitive
- Role model
- Gain followers through trust & inspiration
- Mentor and empower others
- Enthusiastic / passionate
- Focused on group success

Social Expressive

- Personal attention to subordinates
- Focus on creating good work environment
- Collaborative
- Provides emotional support / encouraging
- Feedback-oriented
- Affiliation-focused
- Energetic and enthusiastic
- High need for approval
- Passive / avoidant
- Conventional

Masculine Leadership Styles

Agentic

- Assertive
- Competitive
- Independent
- Risk taker
- Task-oriented
- Controlling
- Aggressive

Directive / Authoritative

- Goal / task-oriented
- Independently active
- Top-down decision-making
- Initiative / ambitious
- Aggressive / forceful
- Self-sufficient
- Self-confident / self-esteem

Transactional

- Establish give and take relationships
- Appeals to subordinates' self-interests
- Reward and punish orientation
- Focused on personal success
- Promotes compliance
- Conventional

Instrumental

- Focused on giving direction
- Command and control
- Goal / task-oriented
- Focused on productivity and efficiency
- Innovative / Creative problem-solver
- Strategic
- Composed
- Oppositional / aggressive
- Perfectionistic

Some articles and studies use the categorical descriptors interchangeably, and as the table indicates, there is a good deal of similarity in descriptors across frameworks (reading down the columns in the table). At the same time, some traits are dependent upon which framework you are using. For example, effective problem solving is associated with Participative leadership (ascribed to female leaders) and to Instrumental leadership (ascribed to male leaders). Being conventional (a defensive characteristic) is associated with Social Expressive leadership (ascribed to female leaders) and to Transactional leadership (ascribed to male leaders). These differences may help explain contradictory results in research studies (further described below). However, across these frameworks, there is a consistent feminine leadership style that might best be described as “relationship-oriented” and a masculine leadership style that can be described as “task-oriented.”

Numerous studies provide evidence that these two opposing styles exist and differentiate between the genders (e.g., Trinidad & Normore, 2005; Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Merchant, 2012; Chaluvadi, 2015; Radu, Deaconu, & Frăsineanu, 2017; Business News Daily, 2020). These studies predominately provide evidence from two sources: 1) self-report by leaders on what style they use; or 2) study participants ascribing leadership qualities to male and female leaders in general. Very few studies have looked in a more objective way at whether female and male leaders show up differently in the organization, nor do they ask participants to rate specific female and male leaders with whom they work. In fact, the methodology used may be greatly influencing results. For example, a study conducted by Cliff (2005) found that observed leadership practices of female and male business owners did not differ even though they reported their orientations in more gender-stereotypical ways.

Other studies have also failed to find differences in the leadership style of female and male leaders (e.g., Riggio, 2010; Kent, 2010; Anderson & Hansson, 2011). These studies reveal that female leaders exhibit many of the same traits as male leaders and vice versa. Further, in a large meta-analysis of 45 studies looking at Transformational and Transactional leadership, Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen (2003) found only small and not practically meaningful differences in the styles of female and male leaders.

Gender Differences in Leadership Skills and Effectiveness

Several researchers have focused on assessing gender differences in terms of managements skills and the overall effectiveness of female and male leaders. A good review of these studies can be found in an article by Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr (2014).

In a landmark meta-analytic review of multiple studies, Eagly, Karau, & Makhijan (1995) found small but statistically significant differences in effectiveness between female and male leaders, with female leaders performing higher than their male counterparts in most studies. However, they also found that the overlap in performance between genders is considerable and that there were almost as many highly effective male leaders as there were female leaders.

More recent research has produced inconsistent results. Several studies show female leaders outperforming male leaders; other studies show differences depending on the skills area, with some favoring female leaders and some favoring male leaders; and yet other studies show no gender differences in overall leadership effectiveness.

Studies that have reported a “feminine leadership advantage” are often based on the positive correlation between Transformational leadership (the style often attributed to female leaders) and

leadership effectiveness (e.g., Yukl, 2002; Burke & Collins, 2001; Rosette & Tost, 2010). These studies tend to rely on self-reported styles and self-reported performance. In contrast, other studies have shown that self-ratings of style and objective measures of performance are not correlated (e.g., Smith, Rosenstein, & Nikolov, 2018).

Studies that rely on participants rating female and male leaders in general (no reference to personally known leaders) have yielded mixed results. For example, Horowitz, Igielnik, & Parker (2018) found that there was “little difference between men and women on a range of specific competencies that may be required for effective leadership.” However, for the few exceptions where they found variations, the differences favored female leaders – like their finding that female leaders’ abilities in compassion, empathy, and working out compromises were rated higher than male leaders’ capabilities in these areas.

Other studies have used measures that assess leadership performance from a 360° perspective that look at multiple management skills and overall effectiveness from those working with the leaders. These studies often find that female leaders excel in a large preponderance of leadership skills. For example, in a study conducted by the Hagberg Consulting Group (cited in Kinicki & Williams, 2009), female leaders were ranked higher than their male counterparts on 42 out of 52 skills. Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) found that female leaders performed better than male leaders in all areas except vision. Zenger & Folkman (2019) found that female leaders were more effective than male leaders on 84% of the competencies they measured, although there were some areas that male leaders performed better, namely strategic perspective and technical / professional expertise. In addition, they found that female leaders were viewed as better overall leaders than male leaders.

Finally, some 3600 studies have found that both female and male leaders are effective but that the most effective skills of female leaders are different from the most effective skills of male leaders. For example, a Talent Innovations Assessment (as reported in Leadership, 2012) found that female leaders score higher on competencies related to planning, respect and empathy for others, and personal responsibility, whereas male leaders score higher on strategic vision, commercial focus, and personal impact.

Limitations of Past Research

Some of the contradictory evidence from past research may be an artifact of the differing methodologies and limited databases used. Vecchio (2002) was one of the first strong proponents arguing for the need of more robust research. He suggests that this research be based on measures that incorporate both leadership behaviors and leadership effectiveness and that do not presuppose stereotypic reasoning – for example, measures that are dependent on others choosing word descriptors that may have stereotypic connotations and result in outcomes consistent with the stereotype and not necessarily performance. He also argues that unreliable results can be obtained when evaluators are asked to rate imaginary people or leaders in general, and that research should be based on asking evaluators to rate a specific leader with whom they work to yield valid results.

Vecchio along with others also question the use of self-data to draw conclusion about gender differences, suggesting that self-report may be quite different than actual practice of leadership. For example, a study conducted by Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr (2014) found that “when other-ratings only are examined, women are rated as significantly more effective than men. In contrast, when self-ratings only are examined, men rate themselves as significantly more effective

than women rate themselves.” Further, in a large study, Hamori-Ota (2007) used regression analyses to triangulate self-reports from 5,000 leaders with the ratings of bosses, peers, and direct reports and found that both female and male leaders were not very accurate in perceiving their own leadership skill. In this study, she also found that age was a contributing factor to leadership effectiveness, which is rarely looked at in other studies.

Although there are some notable exceptions (e.g., Globe Study, 2004), most studies have looked at leadership performance within one culture or one country only. However, several theorists (e.g., Snaebjornsson, Edvardsson, Zydziunaite, & Vaiman, 2015; Madsen & Scribner, 2017) suggest that research needs to include multiple cultures and work settings to disentangle gender differences from other stereotypes or influences.

Further, in our brief canvas of the literature we could find only one study that incorporated both qualitative (e.g., word descriptions) and quantitative measures (e.g., rating scales). Yet studies that rely on only one method have often found results that are contradictory to studies relying on the other method. A mixed methods design could help answer questions that neither type of research in isolation can provide (Stentz, Clark, & Matkin, 2012).

Finally, the conclusions drawn from many studies may be questionable due to the limited sample size or the analyses employed. Several studies in the literature are based on the author’s personal experiences or anecdotal evidence from a single organization or group of leaders and thus the conclusions drawn may not be representative of leadership gender differences in the population. Interpretive insights drawn from studies that have used larger samples are sometimes constrained by the limited data analytic techniques they employ – for example, simple frequency counts within their data, which may lead to conclusions that are not statistically significant. Even when studies use more robust data analytic techniques, researchers often report only statistical significance or the probability that the difference occurred by chance alone. Although this latter method is a step in the right direction, the results can be greatly influenced by the size of the sample. That is, a “real” difference may be small and inconsequential in terms of leadership impact. Indeed, a meta-analysis of research on gender differences conducted by Hyde (2005) found that although most studies showed statistically significant differences between female and male leaders, the practical meaningfulness of these differences was very small or non-existent.

To better understand the true differences in leadership between female and male leaders, research is needed that utilizes a standardized (non-stereotypical) leadership instrument that:

- incorporates both quantitative and qualitative assessments
- measures leadership traits / skills / competencies as well as leadership effectiveness
- relies on evaluations from individuals working closely with the leader

Further, to address many of the past limitations of research and to provide depth of insight, the research should be conducted with a large sample of leaders from various backgrounds, cultures, and age groups, among other variables. The data analytics employed should test for practical meaningfulness as well as statistical significance.

METHODOLOGY – STUDIES USING THE LCP DATABASE

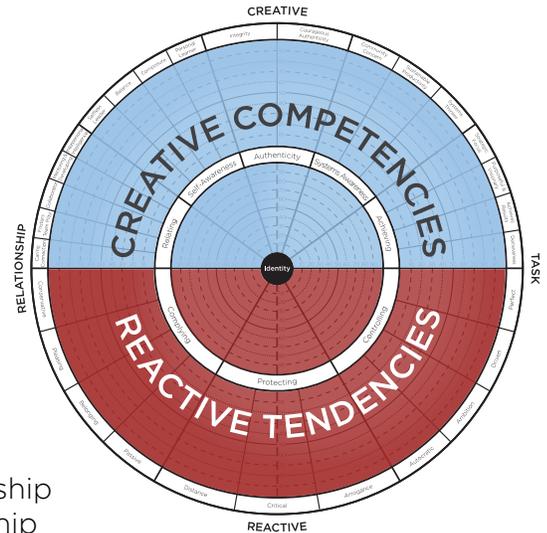
We conducted a series of studies over a three-year period from 2017-2019 looking into various aspects of gender differences in leadership. Based on secondary analyses of data collected from leaders around the world using the industry-leading comprehensive assessment of leadership, known as the *Leadership Circle Profile™*, we were able to explore many variables and hypotheses in greater detail than what has been accomplished in most previous research.

These studies are based on using a mixed-methods design in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from over a million evaluators who directly worked with the leaders they were rating (e.g., bosses, peers, and direct reports) in a variety of situations and industries. In addition, we collected self-perceptions of leadership traits and effectiveness from the leaders themselves. The validity of the instrument, diversity of the sample, and robustness of the analyses we employed are all described below.

The Leadership Circle Profile

Creative and Reactive Orientation Context

The Leadership Circle Profile assessment is based upon a Universal Model of Leadership. The assessment measures both behavior and meaning making assumptions at various stages of development and is built on an integrative model of leadership, or the Universal Model of Leadership. Bob Kegan’s Stages of Development framework forms the backbone of the model. Along the horizontal line exists two distinct core operating systems, namely, Creative and Reactive orientations utilized in leadership. When comparing Adult Development frameworks to this model, Creative leadership entails “post conventional” development and Reactive leadership reflects “conventional or socialized” development (see Appendix – Descriptions of the LCP Sub-Dimensions). There are popular language distinctions punctuating the differences: “play to win vs play not to lose,” “purpose-driven vs problem-focused,” “above the line or below the line,” “servant leadership vs self-focused.” “Creative and Reactive” distinctions utilize “more effective and less effective” leadership.



Description of the Assessment

The LCP is a comprehensive 360° assessment that includes quantitative rating scales aggregated into eight important leadership dimensions that assess both Creative and Reactive orientations to leadership. Creative and Reactive constructs are further specified as leadership competencies and Reactive tendencies, pointing to characteristic ways of thinking, and internalizing that drive meaning making and behavior patterns.

Creative leadership competencies contribute to leadership effectiveness. They measure key leadership behaviors and internal assumptions that lead to high fulfillment, high achievement leadership and greater capacity for complexity. Five Creative leadership competency dimensions

reflect greater development in Creative orientation where one's self-worth is configured from within rather than from external sources. This ability to lead more fully from purpose, unleashes energy in the system, authentic capacity, and produces greater levels of sustainable leadership performance, skills, knowledge, and behavior competencies.

- **The Relating Dimension** score reflects leaders' capabilities to relate to others in a way that brings out the best in people, groups, and organizations.
- **The Self-Awareness Dimension** score reflects leaders' orientation to ongoing professional and personal development, and the degree to which self-awareness can bring balance.
- **The Authenticity Dimension** score reflects leaders' capabilities to relate to others in an authentic, courageous, and high integrity manner.
- **The Systems Awareness Dimension** score reflects the degree to which leaders' awareness is focused on whole system improvement and on community welfare.
- **The Achieving Dimension** score reflects the extent to which leaders provide visionary purpose, create strategic focus, and set high performance standards.

Reactive orientation begins in formative years, developing deeper pathways as one matures both in adulthood and leadership, assisting us in making choices for how to safely navigate self into circumstance. Reactive tendencies are selected behaviors based upon early assumptions and underlying beliefs about how to maintain relevance and security, with reliance on external circumstances and others' validation of self-worth.

Since Reactive tendencies are built from an anxiety-containing, security-seeking orientation, they correlate with self-limiting leadership behaviors and reflect inner beliefs and assumptions that restrict leadership effectiveness, authentic expression and the experience of leadership that invigorates self and others. The three Reactive tendency dimensions can result in performance strategies that contain associated costs and limit leadership performance, skills, knowledge, and behavior. Higher scores in these dimensions interfere with leadership effectiveness.

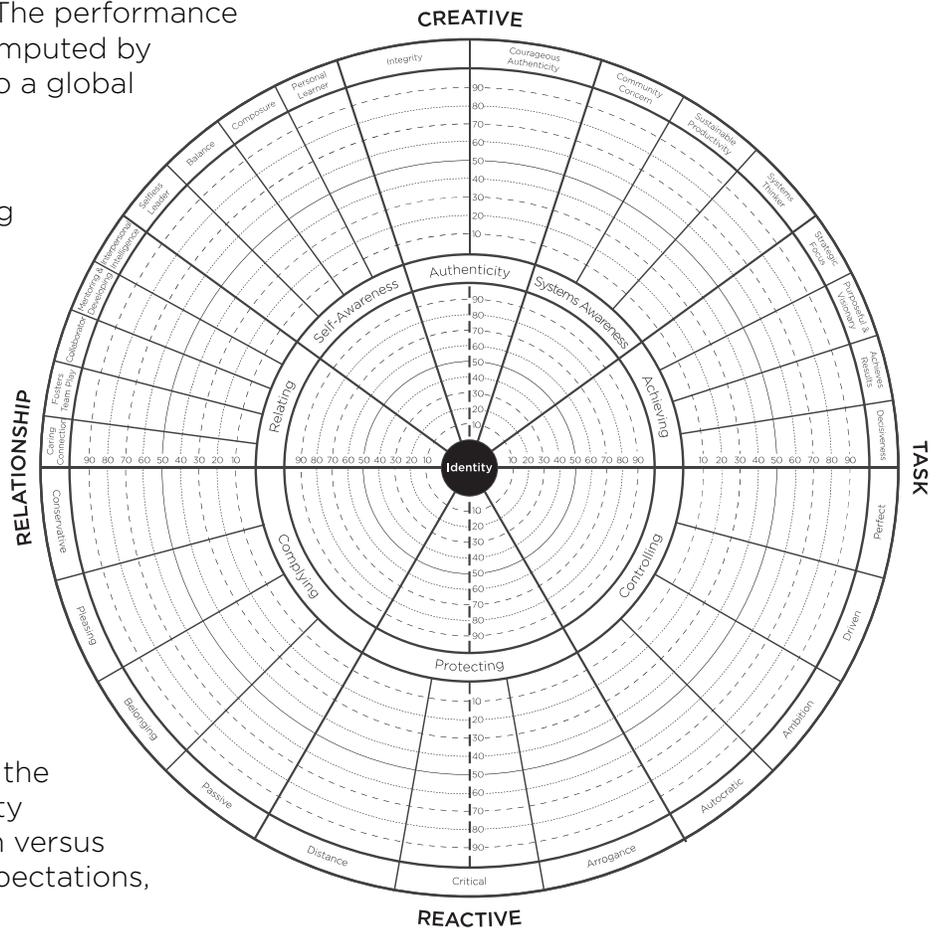
- **The Controlling Dimension** score reflects the extent to which leaders' sense of worth is derived through task accomplishments and personal achievements.
- **The Protecting Dimension** score reflects leaders' beliefs that they can protect themselves and establish a sense of worth through withdrawing, remaining distant, hidden, aloof, cynical, superior, and/or rational.
- **The Complying Dimension** score reflects the extent to which leaders' self-worth and security is attained through complying with the expectations of others rather than taking action on what they intend and want.

Each dimension is further broken down into sub-dimensions that provide detailed understanding of the specific skills and behaviors associated with each dimension. (A description of each of the sub-dimensions is provided in the Appendix.)

LCP results are captured in a circle graphic that shows the profile for a particular leader and provides a comprehensive look into the leader's developed abilities, as depicted in the illustration. The eight core dimensions are shown in the inner circle of the graphic and the sub-dimensions

are displayed in the outer circle. The performance level within each dimension is computed by comparing leader performance to a global norm group of leaders.

Results are also aggregated into two summary measures reflecting leadership orientation and correspond to the hemispheres of the graphic. The **Reactive-Creative Scale** measures the extent to which individuals lead from a Creative, as opposed to a Reactive, orientation. Creative (top half of the circle) is about bringing into being what the leader desires most. Reactive (bottom half of the circle) is about reacting to what the leader doesn't want, as opposed to creating what they do. This summary measure also indicates the degree to which a leader's identity and motivation come from within versus being determined by external expectations, rules, or conditions.



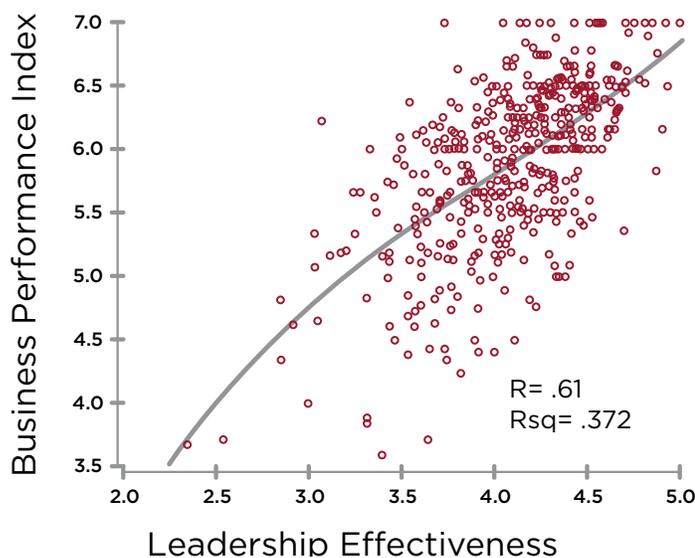
Relationship-Task Balance measures the degree of balance a leader shows between the achievement competencies (right side of the circle) and relationship competencies (left side of the circle). This summary measure indicates whether or not a leader favors tasks over people or vice versa, or is balanced in their approach, utilizing both simultaneously to create results.

Reliability and Validity

The LCP is based on an integration of theoretical models of management and human development, providing a synthesis of core constructs and higher-order constructs that attempt to approximate the complexity of leadership. The resulting multi-faceted framework of constructs has been examined using confirmatory factor analysis, which tests the fit of data with the predicted structure of the constructs. The results of these analyses show that the LCP is a reliable and valid assessment of leadership development. The reader is referred to the study conducted at Bowling Green State University (Dalal, Lin, Smith, & Zickar, 2008) for further information on the psychometric properties of this instrument.

In addition, because we are using this measure to study gender differences, it is important to establish that the assessment is free of bias with respect to gender (identified as male and female). A recent study (Van Dusen, 2020) has shown that the LCP shows no systemic bias for gender

or ethnicity. Based on the LCP model, we would predict that as a leader develops more Creative skills, their effectiveness should improve (positive correlation), and as a leader eliminates / reduces Reactive tendencies, their effectiveness should improve (negative correlation). The concurrent validity of these predictions is strong and consistent for all groups. For example, the correlation between Creative competencies and leadership effectiveness is high for female leaders ($r = .94$) and similarly high for male leaders ($r = .93$). [Note that r is the correlation coefficient and provides a measure of the strength of the correlation. The coefficient varies between 0.0 and 1.0, with 0 indicating no relationship and 1.0 indicating a perfect relationship.] This finding suggests that regardless of the gender of the leader, their development performance as measured by the LCP accounts for a significant portion of the variance in their overall effectiveness. Said another way, the LCP can be used to evaluate leaders' performance without bias toward male or female leaders.



Leadership Effectiveness and Qualitative Feedback

In addition to the measures of leadership development, the LCP also includes a scale of overall leadership effectiveness, known as the **Leadership Effectiveness Index (LEI)**, and **open-ended questions** that solicit feedback on leadership strengths and challenges in evaluators' own words. These additional measures provide further insight into how the leader is showing up within the organization. In particular, the LEI is highly correlated to business performance indices, including return on investment (ROI), employee job satisfaction, employee engagement, and productivity, among others. As the graph (from a study conducted by Anderson, 2009) reveals, the higher the LEI score, the greater the leadership impact on the organization.

Characteristics of the LCP Database

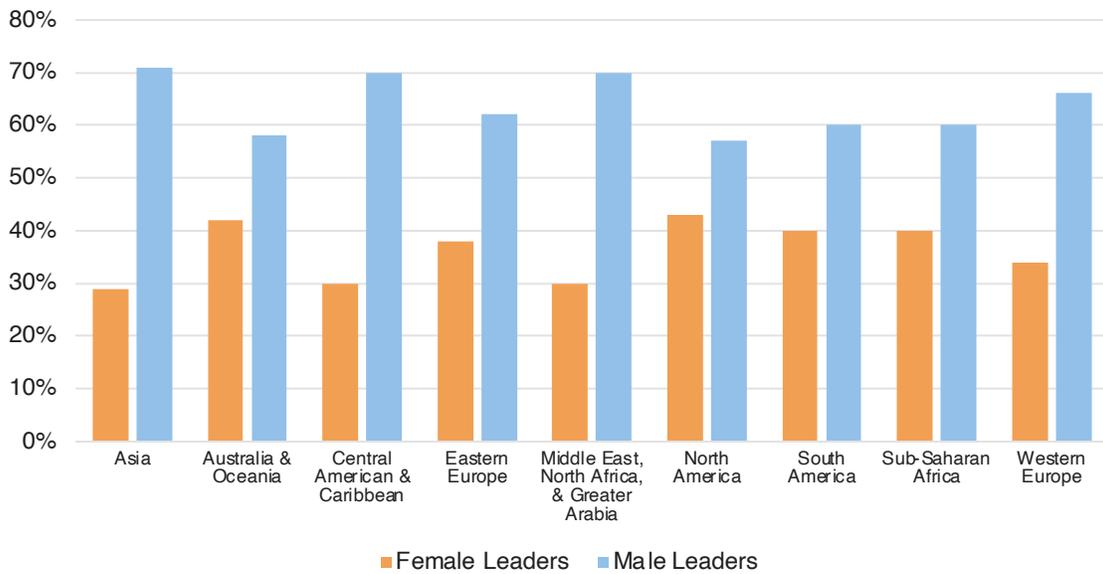
The LCP database includes profiles for over 130,000 leaders, and this continues to grow each year. Not all leaders in the database choose to identify their gender. As of 2019, 33,038 leaders identified themselves as female and 49,368 identified themselves as male.

Approximately half of the leaders in the database come from North America (the U.S. and Canada). The other leaders come from 196 countries around the world, with large representations from countries in Asia, Australia & Oceania, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe. The distribution of leaders who identified themselves as female and male varies some by region, as illustrated in the next graph.

Within the LCP database of North American leaders, females make up 43% of all leaders who provided a gender identification. This figure is very similar to the frequency of female managers (40%) reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020). The distribution of female and

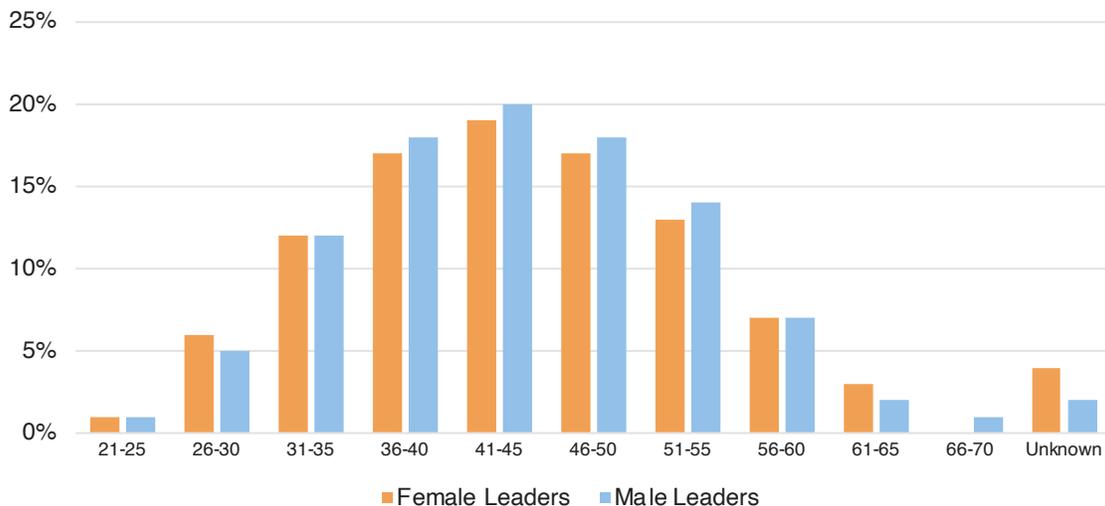
male leaders in the LCP database from other regions of the world tend to include fewer females, particularly for Asia and the Middle East, North Africa, and Greater Arabia. The lower frequency of female leaders in the LCP database for these regions, is again consistent with other findings showing that female leaders constitute less than 30% of leadership positions globally (Institute for Women’s Leadership, 2020).

LCP Gender Distribution by Region of the World



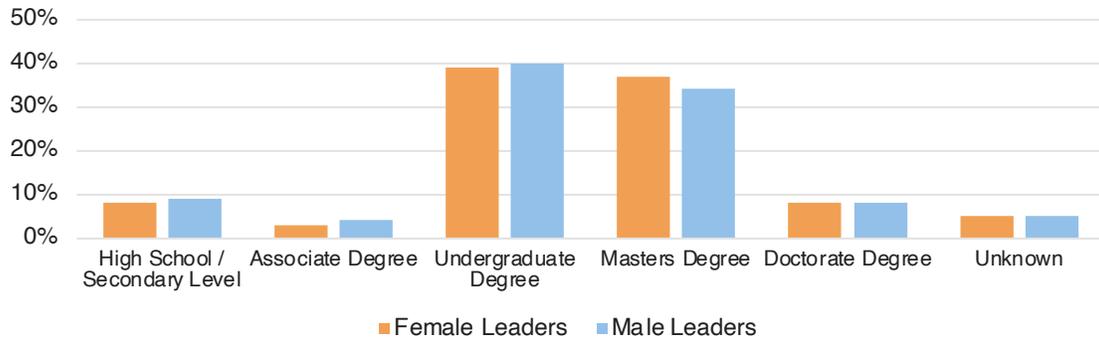
There is a lot of similarity in the ages of female and male leaders in the LCP database. The gender distribution at each age level is provided in the next graph. The greatest percentage of both female and male leaders fell in the 36-50 age range. Interestingly, female leaders were less likely to report their age than male leaders, but the frequency is small enough to not influence the overall distribution.

LCP Gender Distribution by Age Range



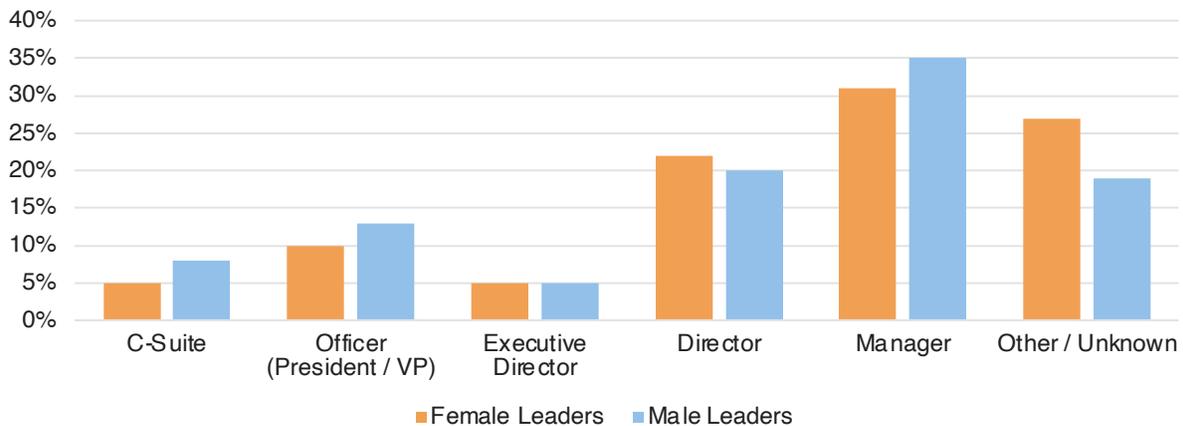
The next graph illustrates the education levels of leaders in the LCP database. Again, there are a lot of similarities between female and male leaders. However, female leaders are slightly more likely to have earned an advanced degree.

LCP Gender Distribution by Highest Level of Education Attained

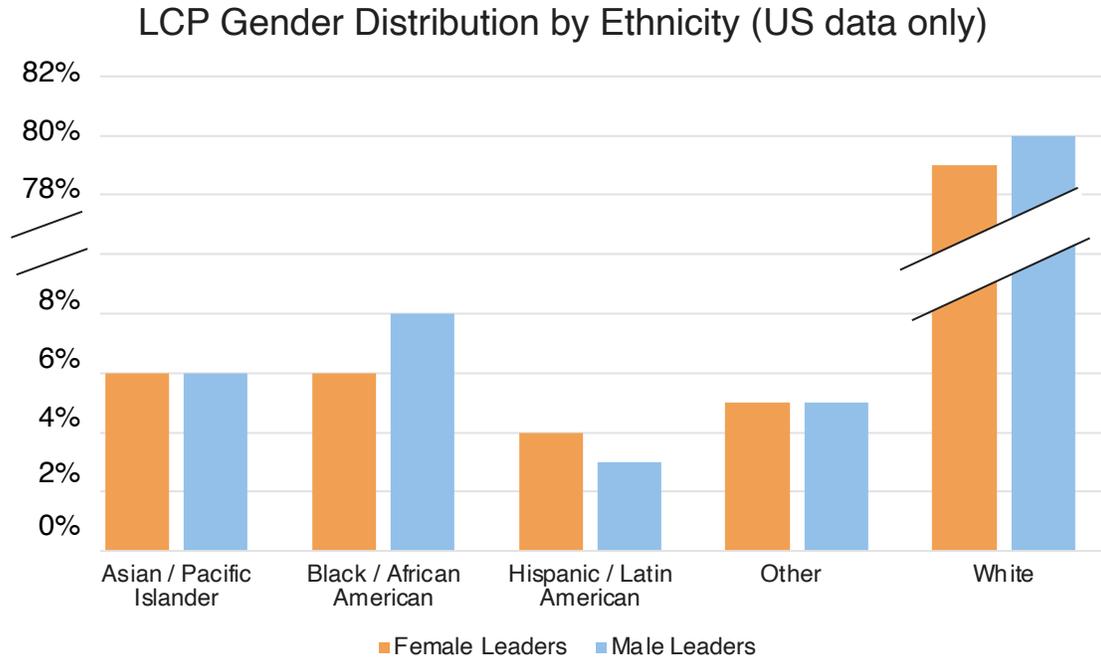


The distribution of female and male leaders at various management levels in the LCP database is provided in the next graph. There were some small but notable differences. First, female leaders were less likely to report their management level. It is unknown why this might be the case and whether that may have influenced the distribution in the other categories. However, the fact that male leaders tend to hold higher management levels with a greater frequency than female leaders in the LCP distribution is consistent with what is observed in the literature. For example, when considering just the CEOs in the LCP database, female leaders comprise 29% of these top leaders, which is exactly the percentage found in a global study of CEOs by Catalyst, as reported by Lynkova (2020).

LCP Gender Distribution by Management Level



The LCP database collected ethnicity for US leaders up until 2017. Most leaders (70%) did not report their ethnicity and is in part why these demographics are no longer collected. The gender distribution for leaders who did report their ethnicity is presented in the next graph. The distribution of leaders who report their ethnicity is consistent with what is traditionally found across the US. Although small in number, most minority groups had at least 800 leaders, which reflects a sufficient sample size for conducting an analysis of the interactive effects of ethnicity and gender on leadership.



In addition, female and male leaders in the LCP database come from 63 different industries. The most prevalent of these include:

- Consulting
- Education
- Energy
- Finance
- Government
- Healthcare
- Manufacturing
- Nonprofit / Charity
- Technology / Scientific

To be considered a prevalent industry, at least 5% of female and male leaders had to work in that industry. There were a lot of gender similarities, although female leaders were more likely to be employed in “helping” industries (e.g., Consulting, Education, and Healthcare) and male leaders are more prevalent in “hard core” industries (e.g., Energy, Manufacturing, and Technology/Scientific).

Both male and female leaders in the LCP database had a variety of professions, with more than 40 reported. The most prevalent professions include:

- Accounting professional
- Medical professional (Doctor/Dentist/Healthcare leader)
- Education professional
- Engineering professional
- Finance professional
- Human Resources professional
- IT professional
- Marketing professional
- OD professional
- Sales professional
- Training professional
- Leadership executives
- Business Consulting professional

There is a high percentage of females and males in all of the professions listed above. However, the three most prevalent professions of female leaders are Human Resources professional, Medical professional (Doctor/Dentist/Healthcare leader), and Marketing professional, whereas the three most prevalent professions of male leaders are Engineer, Finance professional, and IT professional.

Analyses

All analyses were conducted using “leader” as the unit of analysis. Evaluator ratings and feedback were aggregated for each leader before comparing performance between groups. Most analyses were conducted based on the 2019 database. Some analyses were conducted with earlier datasets from 2017 and 2018, partly depending on when the study was conducted and partly dependent on available data. For example, ethnicity was no longer collected after 2017 and so all data associated with those analyses come from the 2017 database.

Quantitative Analyses

The LCP presents findings in terms of percentile performance by comparing raw score data to a global norm group of leaders. While this presentation is effective in showing comparative differences with the global norm (and is used in this report when presenting profiles), it cannot be used in statistical analyses. Therefore, to conduct descriptive and inferential statistics that allow us to draw conclusions and present data in a format that preserves the magnitude of differences between female and male leaders, we used the standardized score from which the percentiles were generated. Standard scores, and in this case T-scores, represent the distance of a raw score from the global norm group mean in standard deviation units and allows for direct comparisons across dimensions of leadership.

We conducted tests of statistical significance to determine if the observed differences in performance between female and male leaders occur simply by chance or are representative of gender differences across the entire population. Significance is measured in terms of probability (represented as p-values). The lower the level of significance, the more likely the same results would be found again with other leaders. Most researchers accept any finding with a probability

of 5% ($p < .05$) or less to indicate a real difference and not one that simply occurs by chance. Many of the findings in this report have probabilities at much lower percentages (e.g., $p < .001$), indicating that similar findings would most likely result if the same research were to be repeated in any organization.

When using large samples, as in this study, even exceedingly small differences are likely to be statistically significant, because the sample is much closer in representing the entire population than with smaller samples. Whether or not these differences would result in a noticeable variation in the ways leaders show up is harder to determine from this statistic. Therefore, to test whether the differences between females and male leaders is not only “real” but “meaningful,” we employed an Effect Size statistic (noted as E.S.), sometimes referred to as Cohen’s D, which compares mean performance in relationship to the variance within each group. E.S. provides a measure of practical significance – and values tend to range from 0 to .75 (although higher values are possible). Cohen suggests that any result of .20 or above is notable, as it indicates that the majority of one group’s scores are different from the other group.

The Effect Size statistic can be positive or negative reflecting the direction of the difference. For our purposes, a positive result is one in which females perform notably higher than males and a negative result is one in which males perform notably higher than females. Most researchers accept the following key interpretation points based on the E.S. statistic:

- E.S. ranging from .20 to .34 reflect a small and slightly noticeable difference (like the difference one might note in the height between a 15-year-old and a 16-year-old on average)
- E.S. ranging from .35 to .49 reflect a moderate and more noticeable difference (like the difference one might note in observing the heights of a 15-year-old and 18-year-old on average)
- E.S. ranging from .50 to .74 reflect a strong difference that is very noticeable (like the difference one might note in observing the heights of a 12-year-old and an 18-year-old on average)
- E.S. of .75 or above reflect huge differences that would not escape anyone’s notice (like the difference one might note in observing the heights of a 6-year-old and an 18-year-old on average)

None of the findings in this report result in a huge effect size, and thus the differences reported between female and male leaders may not be immediately perceptible to the outside observer. However, the reader should look for moderate and strong (large) effect sizes as they indicate fundamentally different ways of leading and ones that result in different experiences with those closest to the leader.

Qualitative Analyses

We conducted a *Matrix Analysis* to identify the most prevalent core themes found in evaluators’ written responses to two open-ended questions included in the LCP:

- What is this person’s greatest leadership asset, skill, or talent?
- What is this person’s greatest leadership challenge or area for development?

Matrix analysis is a multi-step, time-intensive process that begins with manual encoding of the verbatim feedback (often consisting of multiple pages of comments) for each leader into rows of a thematic table. Because of the intensive encoding stage, we did not include the verbatim feedback for all 82,406 leaders in the gender-identified LCP database, but rather sampled from the database. We selected 150 female leaders and 150 male leaders using a stratified random sampling procedure in which female and male leaders were randomly pulled from three levels of leadership effectiveness until we had selected 50 female and 50 male leaders at each level.

As feedback is added into the matrix, terms and single phrases are merged into higher-level themes or winnowed out. At the same time, indicator codes are added within columns of the matrix that reflect the group to which that leader belongs. For our analyses, we grouped leaders in multiple ways: first by gender and then by their level of effectiveness.

Because a particular leader may have more evaluators than another leader, and thus more comments that contribute to a theme, a code is also added into the matrix that identifies whether this theme occurred only once across evaluators or multiple times. Thus, for each theme, the number of leaders for whom that theme was endorsed as well as the strength of endorsement (based on its prevalence in their feedback) is recorded.

Finally, we calculate a quasi-statistic known as the percentage of endorsement for each core theme and within each column of the matrix. The endorsement is based on a tabulation of the codes within each matrix cell that reflect both the number of leaders for which that theme was expressed and the strength of endorsement. This tabulation is then divided by the total number of leaders that make up the group (column) within the matrix providing a percentage of endorsement. The higher the percentage of endorsement, the more prevalent and noticeable the strengths and challenges that contribute to overall leadership effectiveness from the perspective of evaluators.

For this research, we report only core themes with a percentage of endorsement of 10% or higher (for either female or male leaders). The reader will want to pay particular attention to any theme with an endorsement score higher than 50%, as it indicates a prevalent leadership trait.

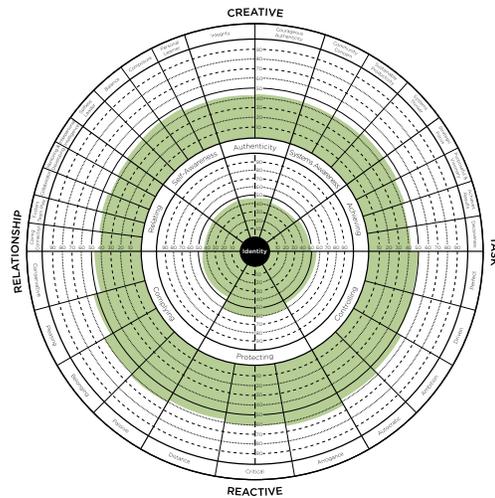
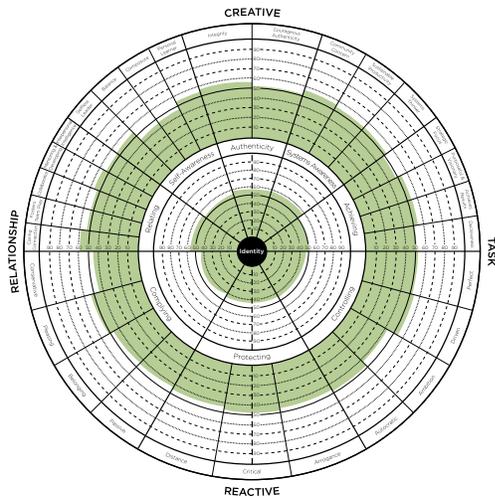
FINDINGS

Differences in Female and Male Leadership Profiles

The next graphic illustrates the aggregate profiles of female and male leaders, based on averaging the performance across all profiles in the LCP database. What is quickly evident, by looking at the shading in the graphics, is that female leaders have developed more Creative skills (upper half of the graphic) compared with male leaders. Further, male leaders are more challenged, orienting more strongly in Reactive tendencies than female leaders (see extended shading in the lower half of the graphic).

Profile of the Aggregate Female Leader

Profile of the Aggregate Male Leader



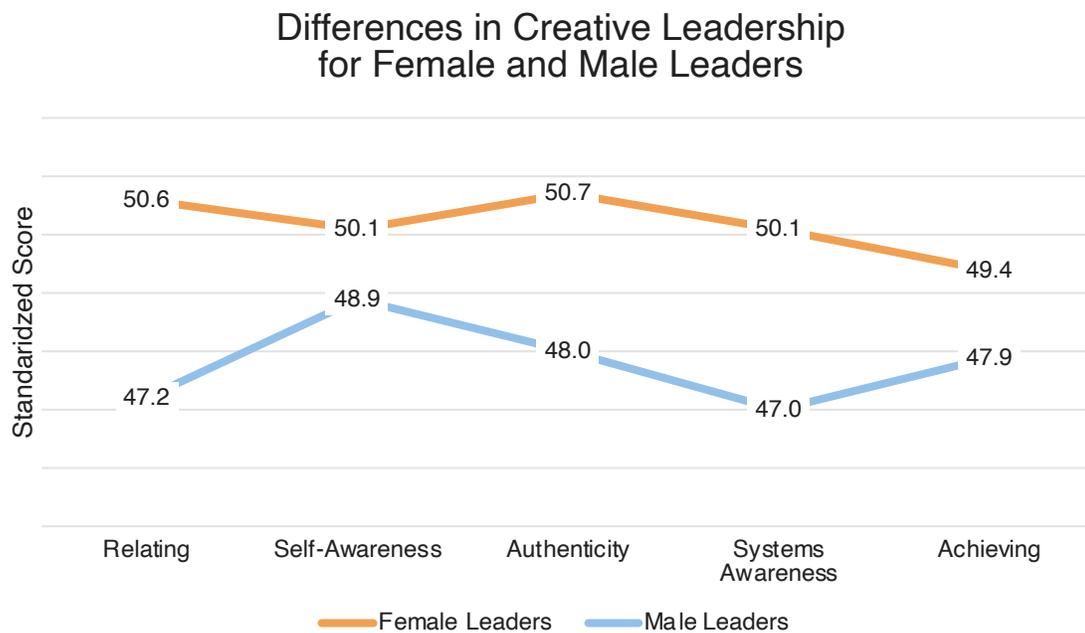
These differences are further clarified when looking at the Reactive-Creative summary measure for the two groups. The typical female leader scores at the 60th percentile, while the typical male leader scores at the 43rd percentile compared with all leaders. This difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$) and with a moderate effect size ($E.S. = .37$). This finding suggests that female leaders put more energy into Creative behaviors while male leaders put about the same amount of energy in both Creative and Reactive behaviors. Female leaders more frequently lead from a “playing to win” orientation focusing on their natural curiosities about, and commitment to, the future they are creating and moving toward. Male leaders may also lead from this orientation on occasion, but they are just as likely to lead from a “trying not to lose” orientation and may spend as much time moving away from what they don’t want as moving toward what they do.

Interestingly, when looking at the performance between the left and right hemispheres of the graphic for both groups, we see similar distributions from one side to the other - that is the left and right are nearly mirror images of each other (although female leaders’ scores are higher on both sides than male leader scores). This symmetry is further evidenced when computing the *Relationship-Task Balance* summary measure. Both female and male leaders score near the 50th percentile (51% and 49%, respectively). Although this small difference was statistically significant ($p < .001$), it is not meaningful in the way that leaders show up ($E.S. = .04$). This result suggests that both female and male leaders pour as much energy into relationships as they do tasks. This finding is consistent with some research that shows no differences between genders based on leadership style and is contrary to other studies that suggest female leaders are more relationship-oriented and male leaders more task-oriented. Our data may help to explain the contradictory results in past research. If we were to focus exclusively on significance testing, we might be inclined to see the difference in orientations as important; however, based on the effect size analysis we can conclude that the differences are not meaningful.

The two findings taken together suggest that there are gender differences in orientation, but this is less about relationship versus achievement styles and more about being predominantly Creative or Reactive. This conclusion is further supported when we look a little closer at the underlying competencies and behavioral tendencies associated with each orientation.

Creative Competencies

When we compared the performance of female and male leaders on each Creative dimension of the LCP (inner circle in the profile), we found that the typical female leader has developed more skills than the typical male leader on every dimension, as the next graph illustrates. This finding is consistent with other research which has suggested that there is a “feminine leadership advantage.” The advantage is found in the greater capacity to occupy expression in the Creative orientation.



Perhaps not surprisingly given previous research and conventional wisdom, we found that the largest advantage for females was in *Relating* ($p < .001$, $E.S. = .37$). Female leaders have a significantly higher capability to connect to others than male leaders.

Although slightly less robust, the differences in *Authenticity* ($p < .001$, $E.S. = .30$) and *Systems Awareness* ($p < .001$, $E.S. = .35$) are also meaningful. This finding suggests that not only are female leaders more effective at building relationships than their male counterparts, but these relationships are also typically more authentic and encompass the greater good beyond the leader’s immediate sphere of influence.

The gaps in *Self-Awareness* and *Achieving* also favored female leaders and were statistically significant (meaning that it is unlikely that it simply occurs by chance); however, the differences in these areas are less likely to influence the way female and male leaders show up in the organization. That is, the effect sizes are below the .20 threshold (.16 and .17, respectively).

The lack of feminine leadership advantage in *Achieving* is consistent with other studies that have shown that male leaders perform as well, if not better, in terms of strategy and vision – key competencies within the *Achieving* dimension. The lack of differences suggests that male and female leaders develop similar competencies in *Achieving*.

To better understand what is occurring in the *Self-Awareness* dimension and why there may be a lack of meaningful feminine leadership advantage, we conducted further comparative analyses of each of the sub-dimensions (outer circle scores in the profile graphic). The next table provides a summary of the results for all 18 Creative leadership competencies or sub-dimensions including the averaged standardized score for female and male leaders and the significance (both statistical and practical) of the differences between scores.

Dimension	Female Leader Mean	Male Leader Mean	Statistical Significance	Effect Size
Relating				
Caring Connection	52.6	47.2	p<.001	.55
Fosters Team Play	50.2	47.5	p<.001	.27
Collaborator	50.2	47.6	p<.001	.26
Mentoring & Developing	50.8	47.0	p<.001	.39
Interpersonal Intelligence	50.2	44.9	p<.001	.24
Self-Awareness				
Selfless Leader	52.0	49.4	p<.001	.27
Balance	48.4	48.2	N.S.*	.02
Composure	48.9	48.9	N.S.*	.00
Personal Learner	51.7	48.9	p<.001	.28
Authenticity				
Integrity	51.3	48.3	p<.001	.31
Courageous Authenticity	50.7	48.6	p<.001	.21
Systems Awareness				
Community Concern	51.0	46.7	p<.001	.43
Sustainable Productivity	50.1	47.6	p<.001	.26
Systems Thinker	49.2	47.6	p<.001	.17
Achieving				
Strategic Focus	49.4	48.8	p<.001	.06
Purposeful & Visionary	50.7	48.6	p<.001	.22
Achieves Results	51.6	48.4	p<.001	.32
Decisiveness	50.8	48.6	p<.001	.23

* N.S. = Not significant

The heat map in the last column of the table provides a visual index to the magnitude of the difference. Yellow shaded results reflect small and slightly noticeable differences; orange shaded results indicate differences that are more noticeable, at least to a leader's immediate co-workers; and red shaded results indicate differences in skills that would be noticeable even to those with whom the leader interacts less frequently.

Consistent with the overall dimension findings, we can see that the most noticeable differences in the competencies of female and male leaders involve female leaders' greater capacity and capability in forming warm, caring, and growth-enhancing relationships, both in service of the leader's own team and the greater community outside of the organization.

Equally interesting are the specific competency areas where there are no meaningful differences between female and male leaders. One of these areas is *Strategic Focus* (which is a large contributor to the overall lack of meaningful differences in *Achieving*) and suggests that there are no discernable differences in the abilities of female and male leaders to be visionary, think strategically, translate strategic thinking into rigorous and thoroughly developed business strategies, and ensure that the organization will thrive in the short- and long-term.

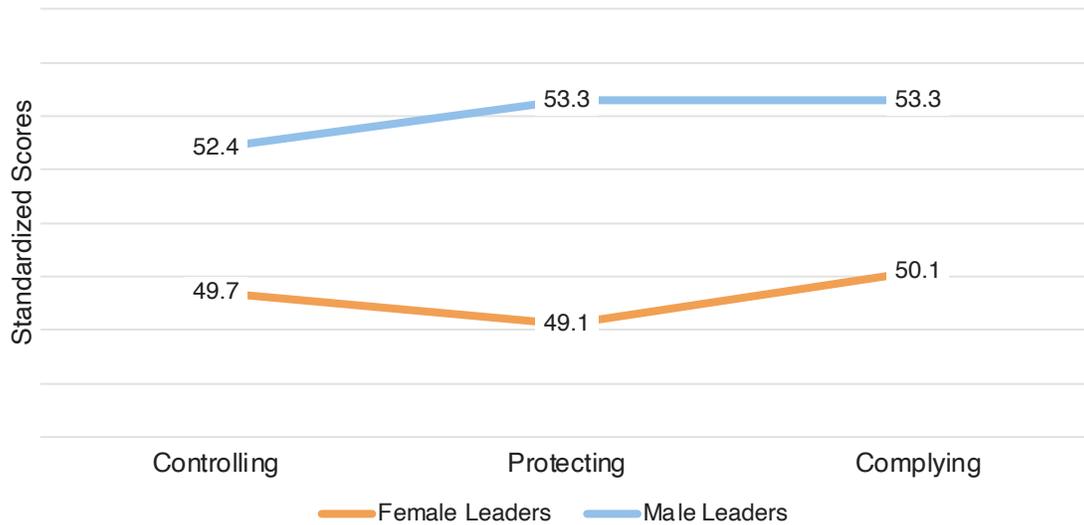
The lack of meaningful differences in *Self-Awareness* is predominately the result of no differences in the competency levels of male and female leaders in maintaining a healthy work-life balance and remaining calm and centered in the midst of conflict and high-tension situations.

The general finding that females develop and exhibit greater competency in most but not all areas of leadership is consistent with other 3600 research discussed previously in the literature review of this paper. In the areas where they do not exhibit greater competency, female leaders tend to show up equally well compared with male leaders.

Reactive Tendencies

When comparing the differences between female and male leaders on Reactive beliefs and behaviors, there were larger and more consistent gaps, as illustrated in the next graph. The reader is reminded that there is an inverse relationship between leading from a Reactive orientation and leadership effectiveness - the lower the prevalence of Reactive tendencies, the more sustainable and effective a leader's business performance. Thus, a higher score in the graph indicates behaviors driven by beliefs that limit a sustained "play on purpose" orientation, resulting in developmental challenges for leaders.

Average Differences in Reactive Leadership for Female and Male Leaders



Across all three dimensions, the average male leader is significantly more Reactive than the average female leader. Even with respect to *Complying* (the dimension with the highest average level of Reactive frequency for female leaders), male leaders exhibit a higher prevalence of these tendencies than female leaders on average. The largest gap occurs for *Protecting*, which is on average the most frequently employed approach for male leaders and the least frequently employed style for female leaders. Higher scores on *Protecting* suggest that male leaders are particularly challenged in this area. They are much more likely than their female counterparts to exhibit actions presenting as superiority, cynical jousting, hyper-rationalism and/or emotional distance. These tendencies are significantly inversely correlated to leadership effectiveness and may be the reason that male leaders are typically viewed as less effective than female leaders.

We next analyzed the frequency of dominant Reactive orientations for male and female leaders, based on which Reactive tendency was used most often by each leader in the LCP database. The next table presents the percentages that we found of those that had small to large results in each dimension. The result for female leaders may not be surprising, given previous research that suggests that female leaders can be focused on approval and likeability, especially when challenged. However, the result for male leaders is not what might be predicted based on the average performance mentioned above.

Most Dominant Reactive Style	Controlling	Protecting	Complying
Female Leaders	31%	23%	46%
Male Leaders	24%	31%	45%

It is possible that some leaders included in the above table have lower Reactive tendencies than the majority of leaders in our global database, thereby creating an artificial understanding of a predominant Reactive tendency. When we limit the analyses to only those leaders who demonstrated a high level of Reactivity overall (where their Reactive average score exceeds the

66th percentile), the results look quite different, as provided in the next table.

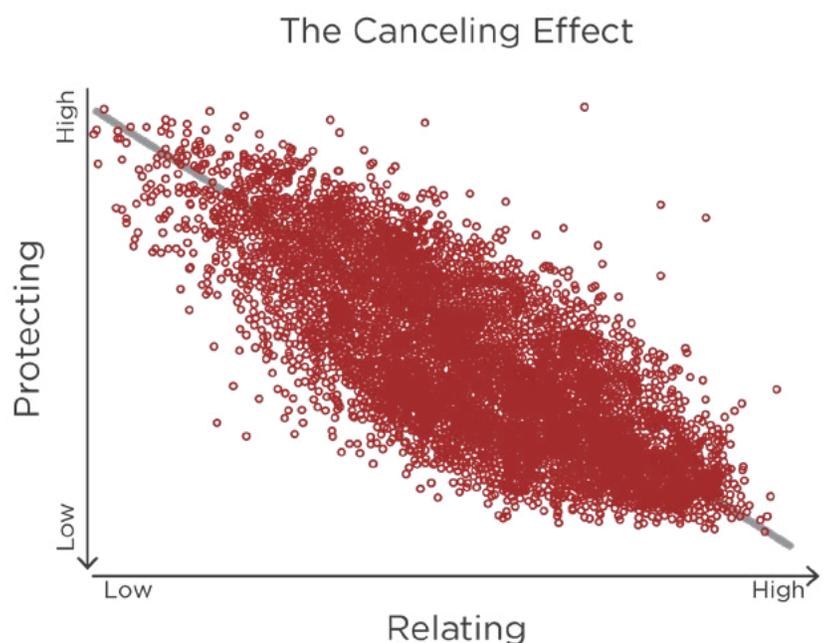
Predominate Style of Leaders Who Lead from a Reactive Orientation	Controlling	Protecting	Complying
Female Leaders	38%	37%	23%
Male Leaders	24%	49%	27%

The results from the second analysis suggest that highly Reactive male leaders are more likely to lean into *Protecting* types of behavior. And while there are considerably fewer highly Reactive female leaders, those who do lead predominately from a Reactive orientation may lean more heavily into *Controlling* or *Protecting* as opposed to *Complying* styles.

The differences in these two analyses may help explain contradictory findings in past research on differences in leadership style, where some studies showed female leaders being more complying than male leaders and other studies showing the exact opposite or no difference at all. As we found, the differences are greatly influenced by the overall Reactive orientation of the leaders and the evolution of development toward occupying a post conventional, Creative leadership orientation.

It is important to point out that fewer female leaders than male leaders take on *Protecting* styles regardless of whether they are not very Reactive overall or highly Reactive. Interestingly, the bottom of the circle, where the *Protecting* Dimension resides in the model, is also where the highest negative correlations exist for leadership effectiveness. This finding tends to suggest that leading from a *Protecting* orientation may be one of the key distinguishers between female and male leaders and may be a direct contributor to why male leaders have fewer exhibited leadership competencies, particularly in terms of *Relating*, which is required for full leadership performance to manifest. Support for this supposition comes from correlating the *Relating* and *Protecting* performance of male leaders.

There is an offsetting or canceling effect of these two dimensions based on the performance of all male leaders in the LCP database, as illustrated in the graphic. The more *Protecting* a leader is, the lower their expression of *Relating* skills ($r=-.78$). Indeed, *Protecting* tendencies account for 60% of the variance in male leaders' *Relating* scores. [Note that the same inverse relationship exists for female leaders ($r=-.77$); however, there are considerably fewer female leaders for whom *Protecting* is a significant issue.]



Further, when we look at the sub-dimensions of *Protecting* (included in the next table), we find moderately large differences between female and male leaders' use of *Arrogance* and *Distance* as a tendency of leadership. This finding, taken in conjunction with the previous finding, suggests that the average male leader's predisposition is in *Protecting*.

Protecting is a dimension that takes on slightly different aspects when sub-dimensions expand beyond its edges. The table below also indicates moderately large differences compared to women leaders in two sub-dimensions of *Controlling* and two sub-dimensions of *Complying*. These form two different slants of *Protecting*. *Protecting-Controlling*, including sub-dimensions of *Ambition* and *Autocratic*, tends toward slightly more aggressive superiority. *Protecting-Complying*, including the sub-dimension of *Passive*, tends to retain safety in emotional, mental, and physical withdrawal and self-sufficiency. Both *Protecting* leadership patterns impede leadership effectiveness and the ability to scale that leadership.

Note that women are not without these tendencies, they do display them, but to a much lesser degree than the male leader profile demonstrates.

Dimension	Female Leader Mean	Male Leader Mean	Statistical Significance	Effect Size
Controlling				
Perfect	53.0	52.3	p<.001	.06
Driven	52.5	51.6	p<.001	.09
Ambition	49.6	53.4	p<.001	-.39
Autocratic	49.7	52.4	p<.001	-.27
Protecting				
Arrogance	49.2	53.8	p<.001	-.47
Critical	51.2	54.1	p<.001	-.28
Distance	48.8	52.6	p<.001	-.39
Complying				
Passive	51.0	54.4	p<.001	-.35
Belonging	49.6	52.5	p<.001	-.29
Pleasing	51.4	51.3	p<.007	.01
Conservative	57.1	57.5	p<.001	-.05

* Note that negative effect sizes indicate that male leaders are more Reactive than female leaders and positive effect sizes are where female leaders are more Reactive than male leaders.

Another interesting finding coming from the analyses of Reactive sub-dimensions concerns the *Controlling* dimension. Although male leaders are more controlling than female leaders overall, the way in which the difference shows up further distinguishes between female and male leaders. Female leaders are more likely to exhibit controlling behaviors through being perfectionists or working in overdrive. Male leaders, on the other hand, are more likely to try and maintain control by more aggressive behaviors – being overly ambitious and/or domineering.

Many of the behaviors associated with the *Controlling* and *Protecting* tendencies overlap with what has sometimes been referred to in the literature as the “Masculine Leadership Style,” where leaders take a command-and-control approach to leading and demonstrate more aggression, competitiveness, and self-sufficiency than female leaders. Our findings support this stylistic difference, but also extend it to include elements of reactivity that are more often perceived of females, e.g., passivity, and a need to belong, which were also more prevalent in male leaders than female leaders. Thus, our data reveal that masculine Reactive leadership styles tend to exhibit *Protecting* tendencies with the potential for two different kinds of *Protecting*: *Protecting-Complying*, that includes *Passive* and *Belonging*; or *Protecting-Controlling* that includes *Autocratic* and *Ambition*. Both protecting patterns are observed more frequently for male than female leaders, but differences are slightly more pronounced for the *Protecting-Controlling* pattern.

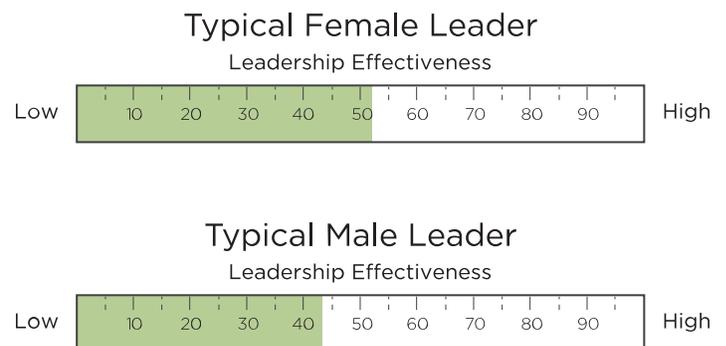
Differences in Leadership Effectiveness

We know from earlier research on the LCP that Creative leadership is positively correlated with leadership effectiveness and Reactive leadership is negatively (or inversely) correlated with leadership effectiveness.

So, it should not be surprising to find that male leaders, who as we have already seen are less Creative and more Reactive than female leaders, are also perceived to be less effective than female leaders. The difference in leadership effectiveness is illustrated in the bar charts included in the graphic.

The typical female leader scores higher on effectiveness than 52% of all leaders, whereas the typical male leader scores higher than only 43% of all leaders. This difference is small but meaningful ($p < .001$, $E.S. = .25$), and supports the general conclusion that there is a feminine leadership advantage.

The differences in effectiveness between female and male leaders is further clarified by looking at the frequency of both genders at various categorical levels of effectiveness. The percentages delineated in the next table were derived by determining each leader’s LEI score relative to the population mean. That is, “below average” leaders score at least a full standard deviation below the mean and “above average” leaders score at least a full standard deviation above the mean – all other leaders score similar to the mean. As the table indicates, there is greater prevalence of female leaders compared with male leaders who are rated as highly effective, while at the same time there is a higher prevalence of male leaders who are rated as not very effective. This finding is contrary to some research that suggests there are as many highly effective male leaders as there are female leaders.

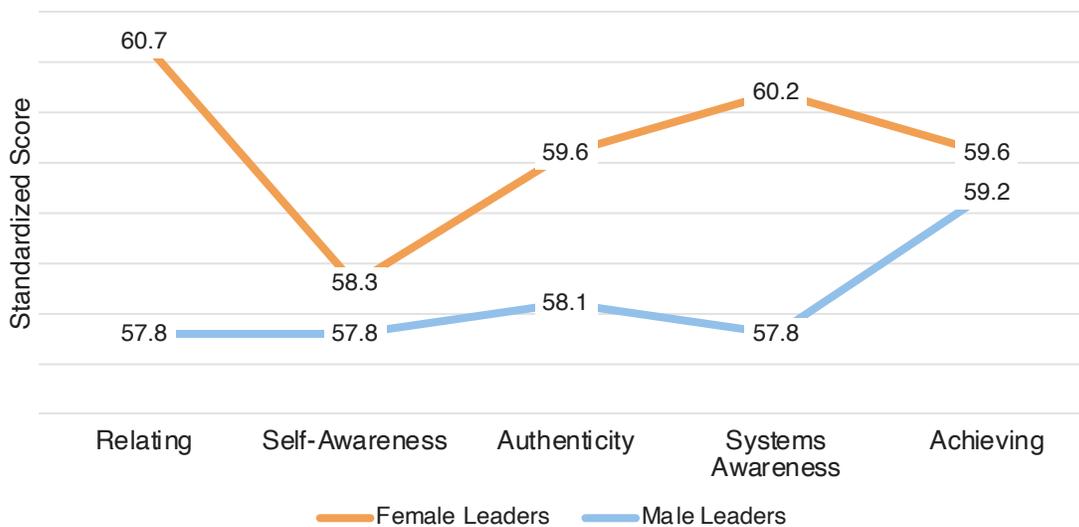


Effectiveness	Female Leaders	Male Leaders
Below Average	27%	34%
Average	36%	37%
Above Average	37%	29%

Differences Among Highly Effective Leaders

To better understand how gender differences in skills and styles contribute to gender differences in leadership effectiveness, we analyzed the performance of highly effective leaders, those scoring at the 67th percentile or above on the LEI. The trends among the highly effective leaders were similar and slightly more pronounced than the averaged findings already reported, as illustrated in the following two graphs.

Differences in Creative Leadership of Highly Effective Male and Female Leaders

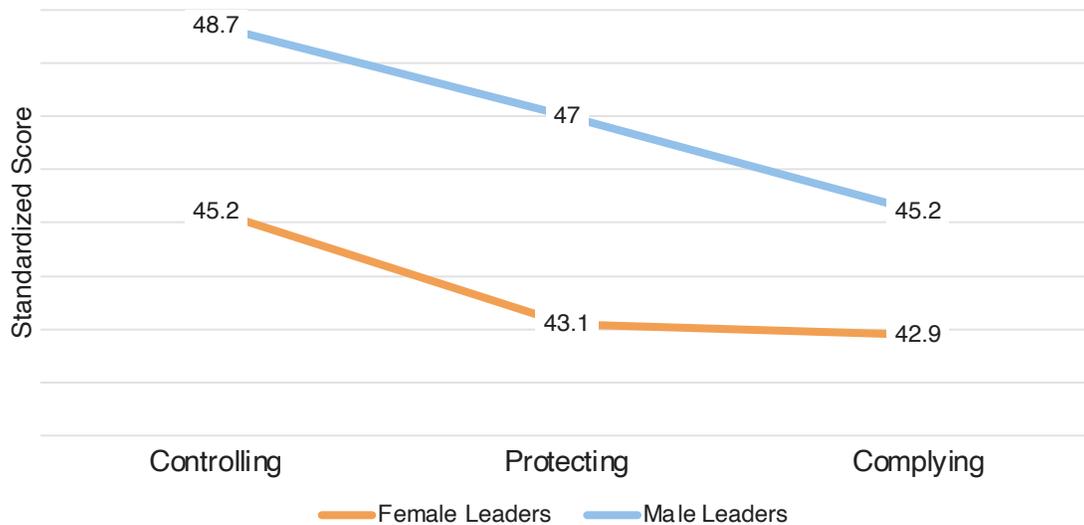


In terms of Creative leadership (the graph above), the previously observed small gaps that existed in *Self-Awareness* and *Achieving* have all but disappeared and suggest that there are not meaningful differences between highly effective female and male leaders on these dimensions. At the same time, the gap for *Relating* has widened, suggesting that highly effective female leaders have added skills to their already superior capabilities in building and maintaining relationships thus improving their performance compared to their male counterparts.

For highly effective female leaders, *Relating* has become a pronounced strength. Whereas for highly effective male leaders, *Achieving* is the pronounced strength. It may be these differences that sometimes lead to the perception that females are more relationship-oriented and males are more task-oriented.

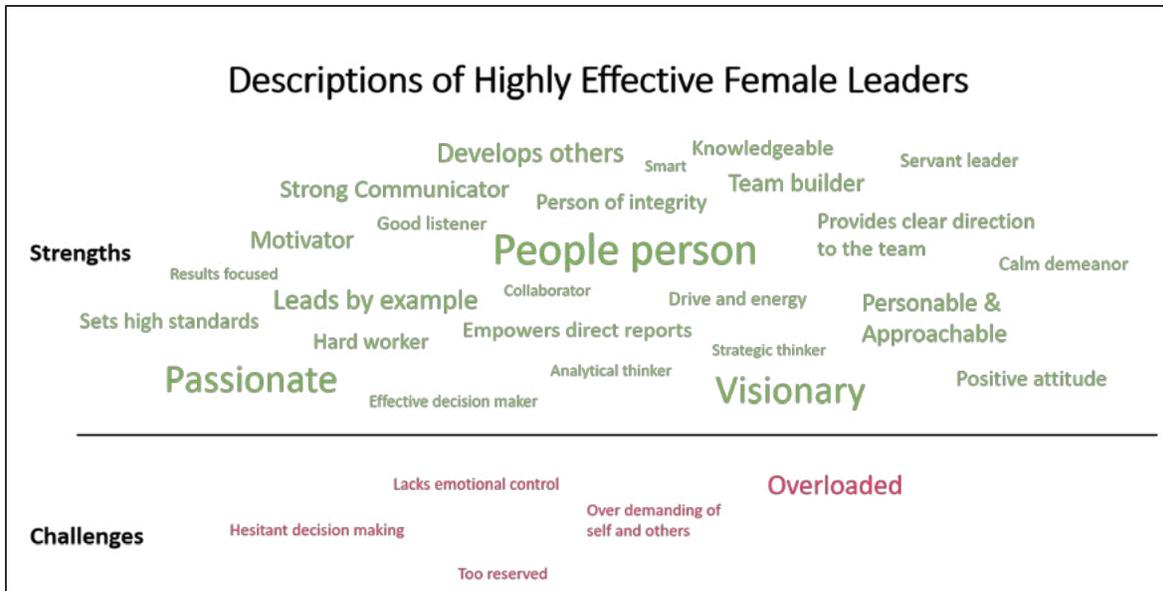
The differences in the Reactive orientations of highly effective leaders (noted in the graph below), reveal that male leaders are still more Reactive than female leaders in all dimensions of reactivity, consistent with the previously reported findings. Also, the largest gap still occurs within the *Protecting* dimension. Further, across all dimensions there were significant reductions in reactivity for the highly effective leaders compared with the average leaders, and this was true for both females and males. However, the most pronounced reduction occurred for the *Complying* dimension. As both male and female leaders grow in effectiveness, they are better able to step fully into their authentic leadership overcoming the tendency to remain passive or focused on others' expectations. This supposition is further tested in the next section of this report that looks specifically at the developmental trajectories for female and male leaders.

Differences in Reactive Leadership of Highly Effective Female and Male Leaders



When we analyzed the verbatim feedback given to the most effective leaders in our sample, there was a lot of similarity in the way evaluators described the male and female leaders they worked with but also some interesting differences.

The following illustration provides a capture of the key words (phrases) that are used most frequently to describe highly effective female leaders. It is quickly noticeable the volume of strengths compared to challenges. Strengths usually outnumber challenges in feedback, with a ratio of 2:1 on average, but for the highly effective female leaders this ratio is quite a bit larger. This is due in part to highly effective leaders having addressed their Reactive tendencies and subsequently experiencing fewer observable challenges. Indeed, for both highly effective male and female leaders the most prevalent feedback given in response to the question asking about leadership challenges was “This leader has no weakness that I can detect.”



The relative prevalence or magnitude of the strengths and challenges is indicated by the size of the descriptor used in the illustrated word cloud. As can be seen, highly effective female leaders are viewed as people persons, with evaluators reporting that they have good interpersonal skills, are relationship builders, connect well to people, are caring and compassionate, build trust, respect others, and earn others’ respect. Highly effective female leaders are also viewed as visionaries who see the big picture, effectively communicate the vision, and engage and motivate others around the vision and direction – leading by example. They are passionate, committed, and dedicated to others and to the work.

Also included among the prevalent strengths of highly effective female leaders is their ability to develop others and ensure their growth by providing mentoring / coaching and sharing from their own experiences. Evaluators report that the most effective female leaders encourage others to continuously improve and set the example for what this looks like, leading by example. They are authentic and can be counted on to “walk the talk.”

The biggest challenge for highly effective female leaders is being overloaded or overcommitted. Evaluators report that they can be spread too thin, have too much on their plate, and not always have the time required to respond to direct reports’ or others’ needs. The second most prevalent challenge (and this is considerably less frequent than the first) is the tendency for highly effective female leaders to be overdemanding of themselves and others. Evaluators report that these leaders can be perfectionists who push too fast for others to keep up or set unrealistic expectations for what others can accomplish given their skill sets.

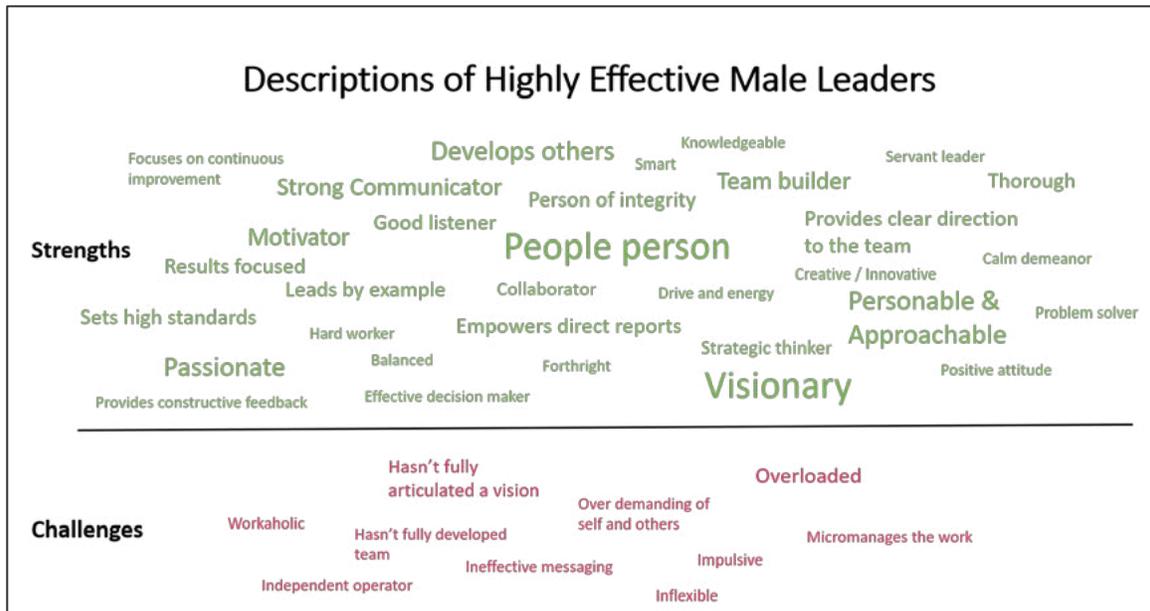
Interestingly, the two most prevalent challenges, being in overdrive and being a perfectionist, are hallmarks of the *Controlling* style and most likely contribute to highly effective female leaders’ elevated scores in this area of reactivity as compared with the other areas.

The following is an excerpt from the feedback given to one of the most effective female leaders. [Note the name was changed to protect anonymity.]

Sabine is very committed to our values as an organization and leads based on those beliefs; she instills a high level of trust, thus has strong relationships throughout the organization and has built a very supportive, motivated, and focused team. She leads by example, is very dedicated to her role as a leader, and holds herself and her team to high standards of values and accountability. She supports her team by challenging them to learn and take a different perspective; she allows her leaders to make mistakes and learn from them.

Because she is so capable, Sabine has a lot going on and sometimes her plate is too full. She needs to make sure that she maintains a good balance in her life and then sets that example for her team.

The descriptions used to delineate the strengths of highly effective male leaders is quite similar to that of the female leaders, as noted in the next illustration. This suggests that there are some characteristics that are important to be effective regardless of gender. However, there was less consistency among the highly effective male leaders, as evidenced by the less strongly endorsed strengths compared with highly effective female leaders. [Note the smaller font for most of the descriptors for highly effective males indicates less percentage of endorsement.] This finding corresponds to the rating data which suggests that it is less about different types of skills and more about greater development of the skills that differentiates female and male leaders.



Although the ratio of strengths to challenges is large in the feedback given to highly effective male leaders, it is a little lower than that observed for highly effective female leaders (3.9 vs. 3.4, respectively). The large prevalence of strengths compared with weaknesses for both genders is no doubt why these leaders are rated as highly effective. The lower ratio for the highly effective male leaders is due to the presence of several more challenges than were observed for the highly

effective female leaders. This finding echoes the earlier finding that highly effective female leaders are less Reactive than their highly effective male counterparts.

The following is an excerpt from the feedback given to one of the most effective male leaders. [Again, the name was changed to protect anonymity.]

Jeremy's greatest attributes as a leader are his innate ability to visualize solutions and quickly execute the necessary steps to arrive at that solution. He is not afraid of being wrong and makes bold moves that give his operation a competitive edge. He is personable and approachable and earns the support of his teams by winning their trust with honest communication and setting clear expectations.

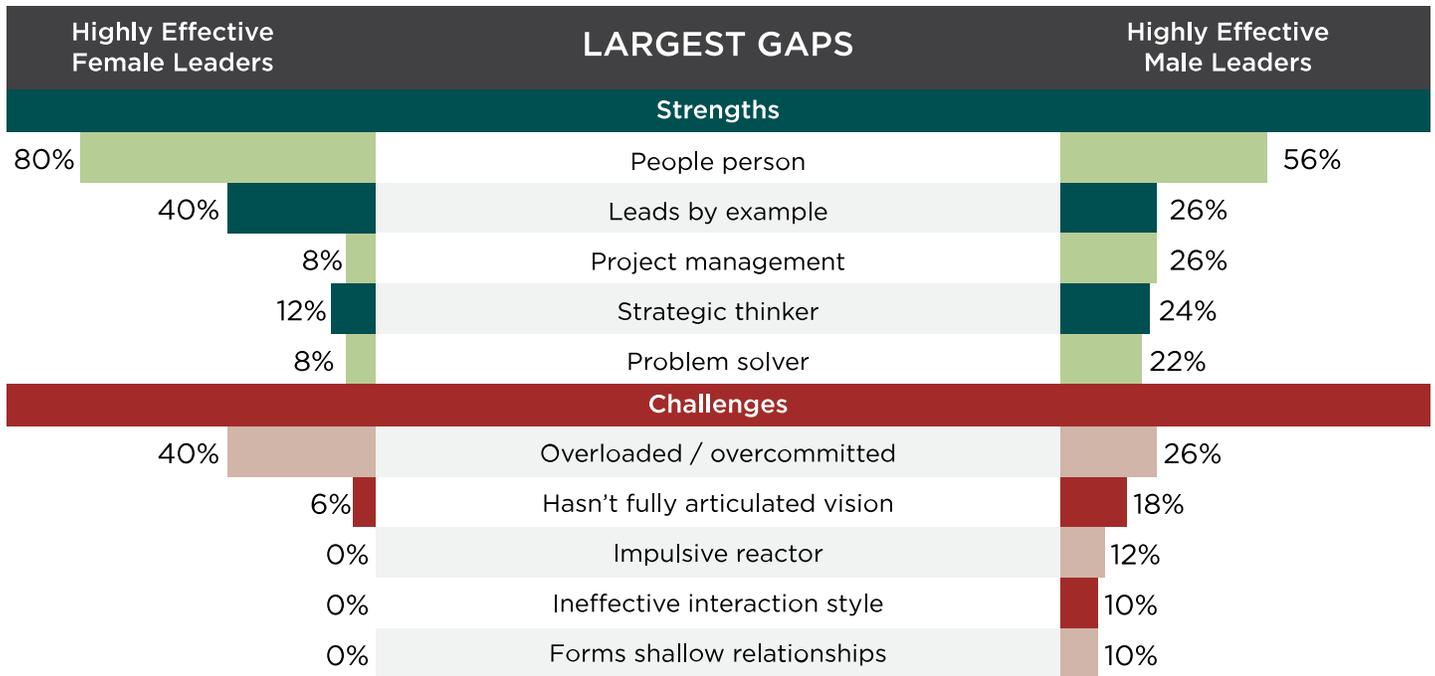
Jeremy is very ambitious and somewhat aggressive. He needs to continue to remember that this way of operating is not always well received by others. He needs to take a moment to evaluate his delivery. In today's marketplace, patience is something that will only serve him in achieving greater relationships, greater understanding, and ultimately greater results.

These findings suggest that highly effective leaders, regardless of gender:

- Continue to carry some Reactive tendencies, still to evolve. (There is always room for continued development.)
- Have an impact on others — working with a highly effective leader is empowering and appreciated.

Working with a highly effective male leader could have more Reactive impact challenges to deal with, navigate, accept, or address.

When directly comparing the biggest gaps in strengths and challenges between highly effective female and male leaders, we see similar results to the overall trend that shows that female leaders have a greater prevalence of Creative skills (e.g., being a people person, leading by example) and considerably fewer Reactive challenges than male leaders. However, as the next graphic illustrates, there are some exceptions to this overall trend.



Highly effective male leaders demonstrate a few stereotypically masculine traits with a greater frequency than was reported for highly effective female leaders. Namely, a significant proportion of evaluators report that the most effective male leaders are skilled at project management and driving projects to completion. These leaders are also viewed as strategic thinkers who take a strategic view of the business. They are good at business planning, have strong insights on system design, and create objectives that make it possible to achieve business strategy. They are also described as effective problem solvers, quickly grasping the root of the problem, and coming up with innovative solutions.

Although being overloaded is the most prevalent challenge for both highly effective groups of leaders, it is much more frequent for female leaders. There is some evidence in the written comments that suggest that the overcommitment is being driven by an excessive focus on meeting people’s needs and subsequently the tendency to avoid saying “no” to others. This finding suggests that overcommitment may be a fundamental blind spot that confronts highly people-focused leaders and because there are more highly people-focused female leaders than male leaders the challenge is also greater for female leaders. It also suggests that the Reactive tendencies found in the sub-dimensions of *Controlling*; *Driven* and *Perfect*, are still operating underneath, not yet fully evolved. Both of these Reactive tendencies have a smaller negative correlation scores to leadership effectiveness and the cost in these behaviors can be missed initially.

Further, the analysis of gaps clearly shows that highly effective male leaders have some (although fairly low prevalence) challenges that are not a problem at all for highly effective female leaders (0% endorsement). These challenges are all based on difficulties in interacting with others in a way that cancels out or negates efforts to build and scale through relationships. This finding corroborates the previous conclusion that one advantage highly effective female leaders have over their counterparts comes from a significantly lower level and number of Reactive behaviors that limit Creative potential in highly effective male leaders. It also explains why highly effective female leaders are more frequently endorsed as having strong people skills compared with highly effective male leaders; they do so with less limiters.

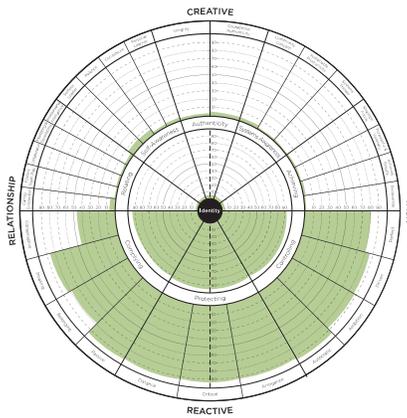
Leadership Effectiveness Development Trajectories

To investigate if there were gender differences in the developmental trajectories for increasing effectiveness, we compared the performance of all female and male leaders in the LCP database who scored at the 1st (least effective), 50th (moderately effective), and 99th (most effective) percentiles on the LEI. The aggregated profiles of female and male leaders at each of these levels of effectiveness are presented in the next graphic.

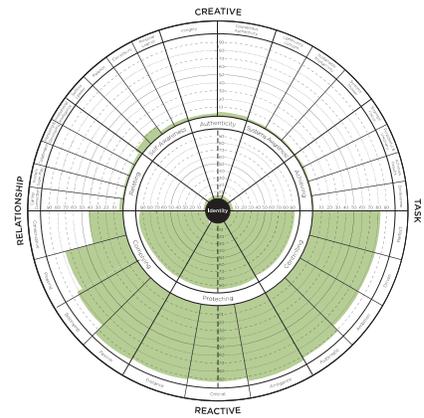
Levels of Effectiveness

1st Percentile

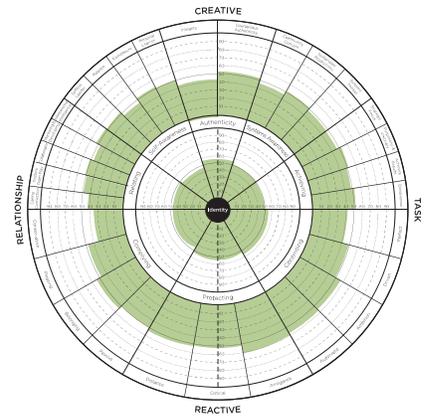
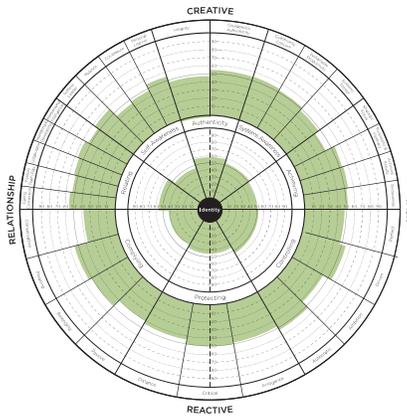
Profiles of Aggregate Female Leaders



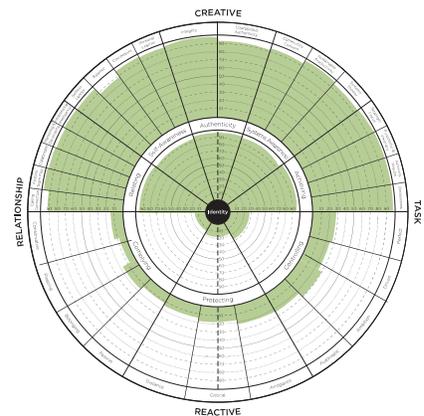
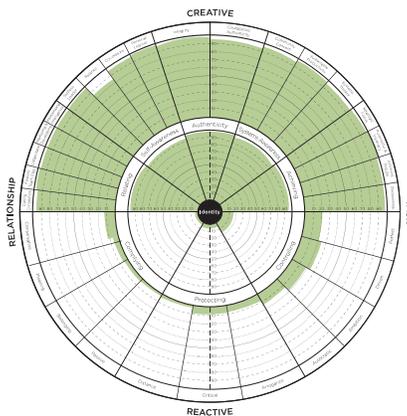
Profiles of Aggregate Male Leaders



50th Percentile



99th Percentile



For both female and male leaders, the developmental progression is from highly Reactive to highly Creative, as can be seen by looking at the changes in the shadings of the circles going down the columns. Both female and male leaders, when viewed from this lens, begin with having developed very few Creative leadership competencies and consistently lead from a Reactive orientation. Although neither the least effective female nor male leaders have well-developed Creative competencies, and there are no meaningful differences at the dimension level, there are slight but meaningful variations in some of the sub-dimensions, suggesting that the genders begin with slightly different skill sets. Female leaders begin with slightly better skills in building *Caring Connections* ($p < .001$, E.S. = .27) and male leaders are more effective in maintaining *Composure* ($p < .001$, E.S. = -.38). It may be that the least effective leaders have a possibility of acting from stereotypical gender patterns of performance that have been shaped through many lenses. For example, stereotypically, connecting is an early part of play and worth for females, while learning not to openly cry and emotional compartmentalize is part of play and worth for males. As leaders become more effective, they are able to build upon and expand the way in which they interact with others.

There are also slight variations on some of the Reactive sub-dimensions for the least effective leaders. Female leaders are more likely than male leaders to react from a *Driven* ($p < .001$, E.S. = .31), or *Pleasing* ($p < .001$, E.S. = .34) tendency. On the other hand, male leaders are more likely than female leaders to react from a *Passive* tendency ($p < .001$, E.S. = -.23).

By the time leaders have become moderately effective, both female and male leaders have developed significantly more Creative competencies and significantly reduced their Reactive tendencies. However, the magnitude of change is different for different dimensions and sub-dimensions for female and male leaders. These changes lead to a distinctive shift in advantages between the genders. The shifts can more easily be understood by noting where there are meaningful differences between the genders at each level of effectiveness. The next table illustrates these shifts. Each “F” included in the table indicates a leadership dimension or sub-dimension in which there was a meaningful difference that favored female leaders – either because they have more developed competencies or less Reactive tendencies. Each “M” indicates a leadership dimension or sub-dimension in which there was a meaningful difference that favored male leaders. (Meaningfulness was determined by a p-value less than .01 and an Effect Size greater than .20.)

Shifts in Advantage for Female and Male Leaders as Leadership Effectiveness Increases			
LCP Dimensions	Least Effective	Moderately Effective	Most Effective
Relating		F	F
Caring Connection	F	F	F
Fosters Team Play			
Collaborator			
Mentoring & Developing		F	F
Interpersonal Intelligence			
Self-Awareness			
Selfless Leader			F

Shifts in Advantage for Female and Male Leaders as Leadership Effectiveness Increases			
LCP Dimensions	Least Effective	Moderately Effective	Most Effective
Balance			M
Composure	M	M	
Personal Learner		F	F
Authenticity		F	F
Integrity		F	F
Courageous Authenticity			F
Systems-Awareness			
Community Concern		F	F
Sustainable Productivity			
Systems Thinker			
Achieving			
Strategic Focus		M	
Purposeful & Visionary			F
Achieves Results		F	
Decisiveness			
Controlling			F
Perfect		M	F
Driven	M	M	
Ambition		F	F
Autocratic		F	F
Protecting		F	F
Arrogance		F	F
Critical			F
Distance		F	F
Complying		F	F
Passive	F	F	F
Belonging		F	F
Pleasing	M	M	
Conservative		M	

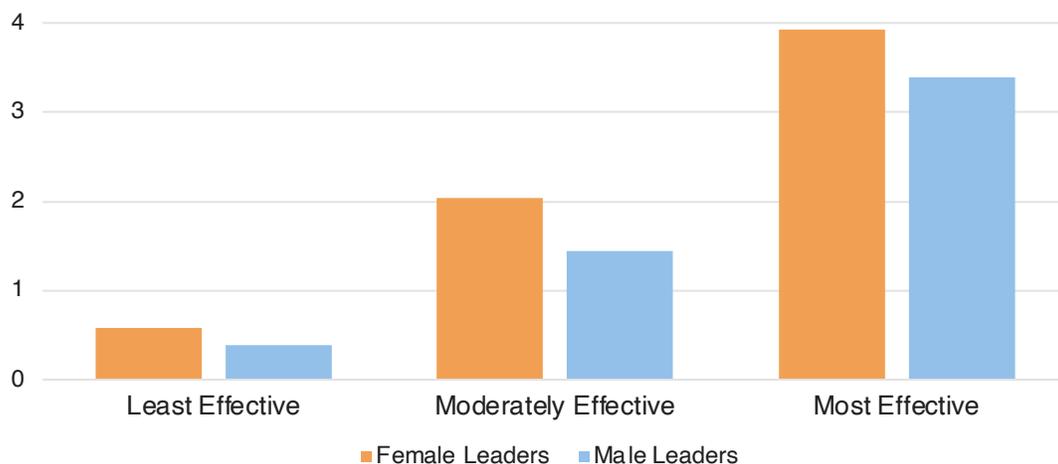
As the table illustrates, there are very few differences between the least effective female and male leaders and no one gender has a distinct advantage. There are more differences as effectiveness increases. Further, the number of differences that favor female leaders grows at a disproportional rate, and we begin to see an overall feminine leadership advantage by the time leaders have achieved a moderate level of effectiveness.

By the time leaders are highly effective, there is a clear and consistent feminine leadership advantage. At this point, most effective female leaders have closed the gaps in the Creative competencies where they lagged behind and have all but eliminated the Reactive tendencies that were once issues at lower levels of effectiveness. The most effective male leaders have also made considerable progress, but not to the extent of their female counterparts. Consequently, there are several differences in developmental performance that, with all but one exception, favor female leaders. These include notable differences in *Relating* and *Authenticity* as well as across all Reactive dimensions.

The findings related to shifts in advantage may help explain some of the contradictions in the literature where studies focusing on the same traits find widely varying results in terms of gender differences. It is possible that the different studies have used samples that vary in the leadership effectiveness of their female and male leaders. As we have seen, the differences in gender performance on several traits change as leadership effectiveness changes. The correlation shown above for Creative competencies and leadership effectiveness is meaningful to note: As individuals move toward the 50th percentile mark, female leaders gain more skill in Creative orientation at a faster pace than their male counterparts and continue toward a female advantage in leadership that is differentiating.

The same types of developmental trends are observed when we analyze the feedback given to female and male leaders at each level of leadership effectiveness. As the next graph shows, the ratio of strengths to challenges in the feedback increases as leadership effectiveness increases. At the least effective level, leaders exhibit more challenges than strengths (resulting in a ratio less than 1). This trend reverses at the moderate level of effectiveness, and by the time leaders are viewed as highly effective, strengths significantly outnumber challenges. Further, we see a significantly larger ratio for moderately effective female leaders compared with their male counterparts, and this difference remains consistent with the most effective leaders.

Ratio of Strengths to Challenges



When we looked at the most prevalent descriptors for male and female leaders at each level of effectiveness, we found some interesting variations, as depicted in the next table. [Note that the red highlighted descriptors reflect challenges as opposed to strengths.] The most prevalent traits of

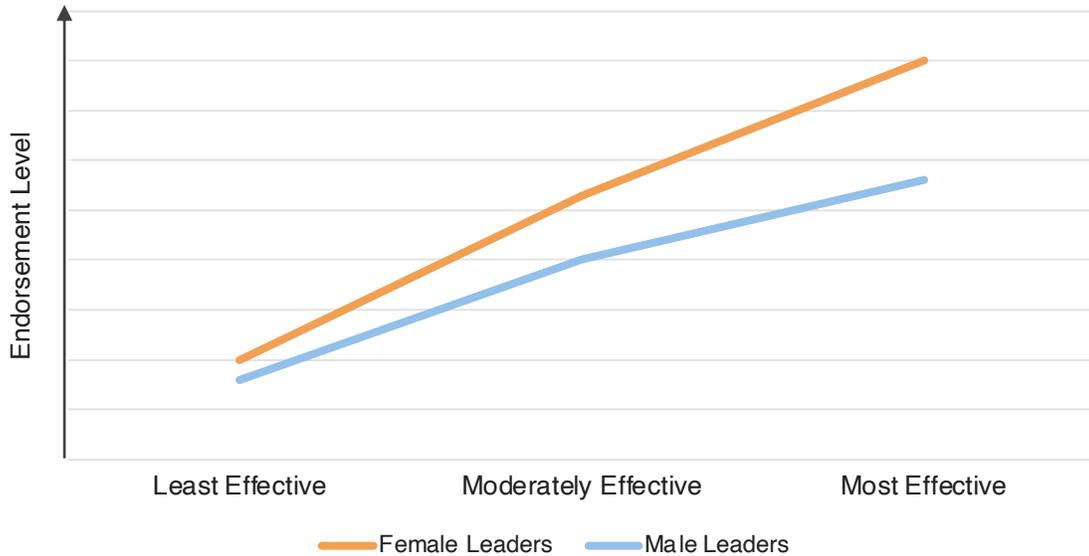
the least effective leaders were all Reactive challenges (which no doubt has contributed to others' ratings of these leaders as ineffective). Moderately effective leaders had fewer frequently observed challenges, and by the time leaders are rated as highly effective, their most prevalent traits include only strengths. With few exceptions, the most prevalent traits are similar for females and males at each level (although the order by strength of endorsement is slightly different). The notable exceptions are highlighted in bold print.

Least Effective Leaders		Moderately Effective Leaders		Most Effective Leaders	
Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Ineffectual communicator	Inattentive	People person	Ineffectual communicator	People person	Visionary
Inattentive	Ineffective interactions	Personable & approachable	People person	Visionary	People person
Inflexible	Micromanages	Micromanages	Knowledgeable	Passionate	Develops others
Ineffective interactions	Ineffectual communicator	Knowledgeable	Micromanages	Develops others	Passionate
Micromanages	Shallow relationships	Overloaded / overcommitted	Too reserved / passive	Leads by example	Personable & approachable
Shallow relationships	Operates independently	Team builder	Passionate	Personable & approachable	Motivator
Not enough background	Inflexible	Passionate	Personable & approachable	Team builder	Strong communicator

Interestingly, moderately effective male leaders have more prevalent challenges than their female counterparts. This finding is consistent with the developmental trajectories coming from the rating results that showed that female leaders transition to a higher level of Creative leadership by the time they are seen as moderately effective.

Consistent with the rating data, differences in the improvement of strengths between female and male leaders is less about which strengths improve and more about the magnitude of improvement. For example, consider the prevalence of People Person skills at each level of effectiveness for female and male leaders, illustrated in the next graph.

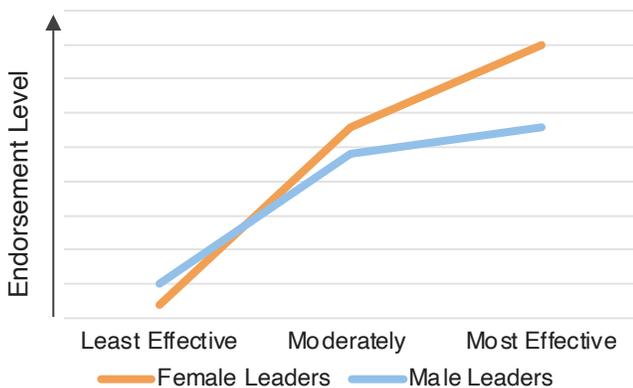
Development of the "People Person" Skill



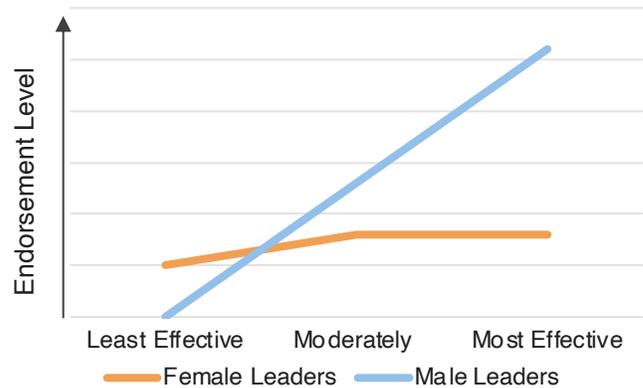
Both female and male leaders improve in this skill area as their effectiveness increases; however, the magnitude of improvement is greater for female leaders. The least effective female leaders begin with a slight advantage over their male counterparts in this skill area and that advantage grows as female leaders become more effective. Female leaders continue to deepen their relationships while male leaders continue to build connections but often at a more shallow (less emotionally vulnerable) level.

The development trajectories for most strengths follow the same pattern as observed for people skills. However, there were two notable exceptions as illustrated in the next side-by-side graphs. In the example on the left, the least effective male leaders are slightly more likely to lead by example compared with their female counterparts. However, this trend reverses as female leaders become more effective and the most effective female leaders lead by example much more frequently than their male counterparts.

Development of "Leading by Example"

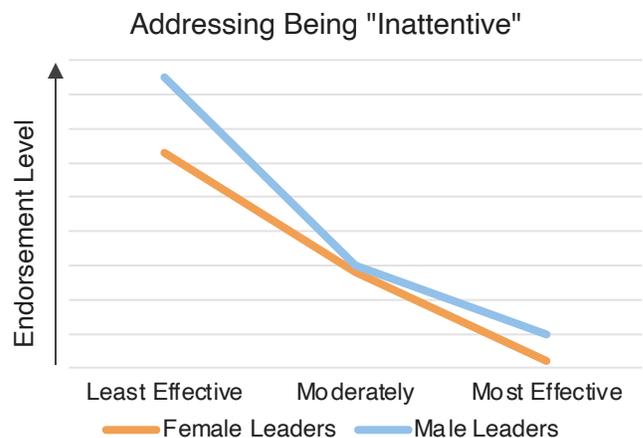
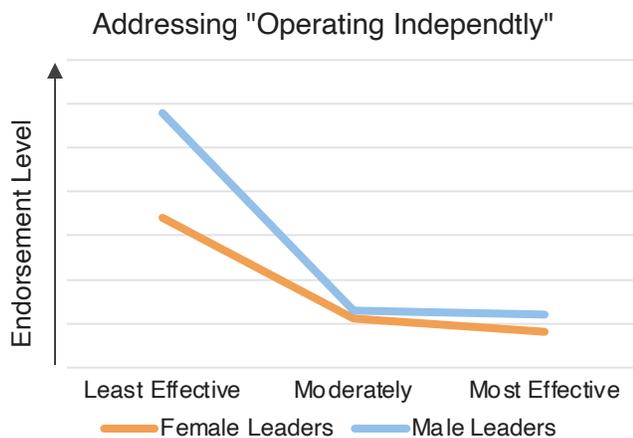
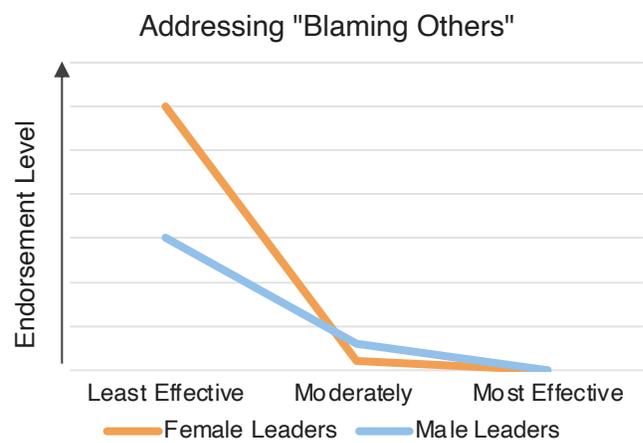
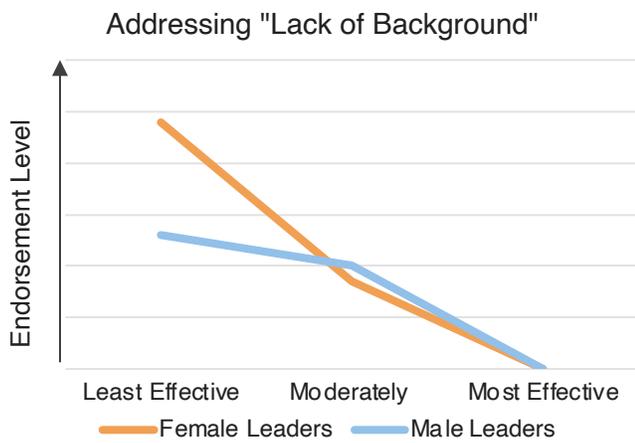


Development of "Project Management"

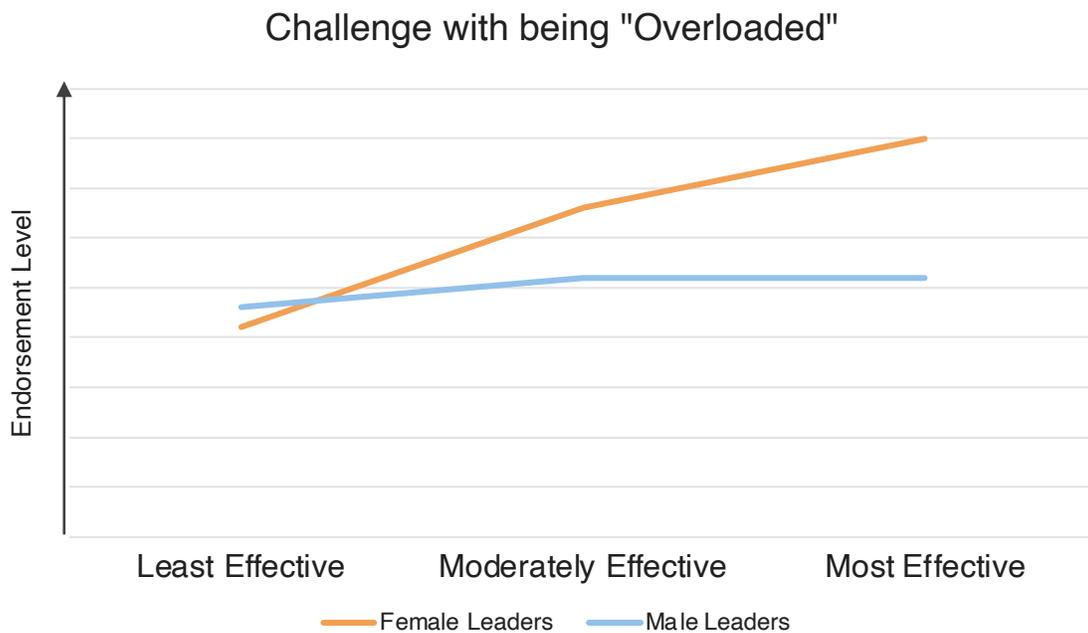


In the example on the right, the least effective female leaders demonstrate project management skills more frequently than their male counterparts, but they do not appear to focus on further development in this area. Whereas the prevalence of project management skills continues to increase as male leaders' effectiveness improves, resulting in an ever-widening gap in the strength of endorsement compared with their female counterparts.

When comparing the development trajectories for the areas with the greatest differences between the least effective female and male leaders, we found two distinct patterns, as illustrated in the next multigraph illustration. Either leaders quickly address the challenge, and it is nearly gone by the time they are moderately effective, or leaders make slow and steady progress reducing the challenge up through their transition to highly effective leaders.



The trajectories for most challenges fell into these two patterns. The one exception is for the challenge of being overloaded, illustrated in the next graph. This is the only challenge where the frequency did not diminish with increasing effectiveness. Indeed, for female leaders the challenge grows as their effectiveness grows. This finding supports the earlier supposition that there may be an inherent blind spot that challenges people-focused leaders. In an attempt to meet people's needs, leaders may be hesitant to say "no" to requests or take on too much. As female leaders become more and more focused on people (which also consistently increases with effectiveness), they may be more susceptible to this challenge. This may also affect male leaders as they become more people-focused, but as we have seen previously, their growth in people skills is not as large and this may be why there is a much smaller incremental increase in this challenge for male leaders.

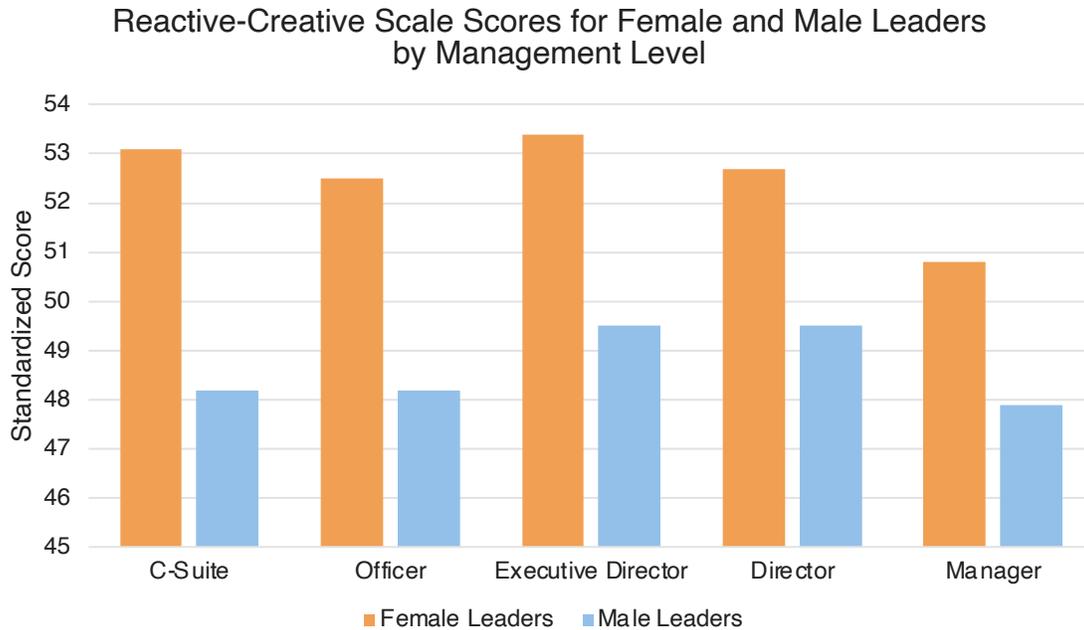


Pervasive Differences

To understand the extent to which gender differences occur, we conducted several analyses based on specific groups to which leaders belong. Although there were some interaction effects where the gap between female and male leaders was larger or smaller according to specific group membership, the overall direction of the differences remained consistent – female leaders were more Creative and less Reactive than male leaders.

Influence of Management Level

The first analysis we conducted compared the Creative and Reactive orientations of female and male leaders at different management levels. The results are presented in the next graph.



Female leaders show up more Creatively and less Reactively than male leaders at every management level. Female and male leaders are closest in performance at the lowest management levels and the difference is most pronounced for the top management levels.

When we break this score out into the gender gap for Creative and for Reactive (as has been done in the next table), we see that not only are female leaders becoming more Creative as they climb up the corporate ladder, their Creative advantage over their male counterparts is also increasing. [It should be noted that any gap above 2.5 reflects a meaningful difference. The positive or negative sign indicates whether female leaders score higher or lower than male leaders, with a high score in Reactive being less desirable.]

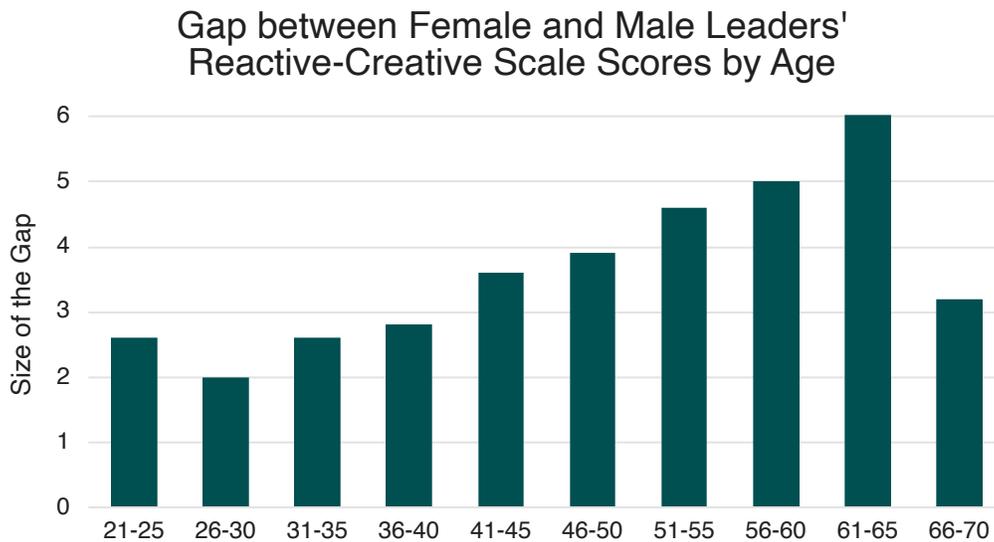
Management Level	Creative Gap	Reactive Gap
C-Suite	+3.4	-3.9
Officer (e.g., President, VP)	+3.0	-3.2
Executive Director	+2.8	-3.2
Director	+2.1	-2.9
Manager	+1.9	-2.7

Further, the gap in Reactive tendencies also widens with higher levels of leadership. Female front-line managers are already significantly less Reactive than male front-line managers, but female leaders continue to make progress in evolving Reactive tendencies as they move into higher leadership positions, whereas male leaders tend to remain fairly Reactive regardless of management level.

The pronounced feminine leadership advantage occurring at higher levels of management is consistent with at least one other study. Zenger & Folkman (2019) found that the higher the level of management, the wider the gap between male and female effectiveness, with females outperforming males.

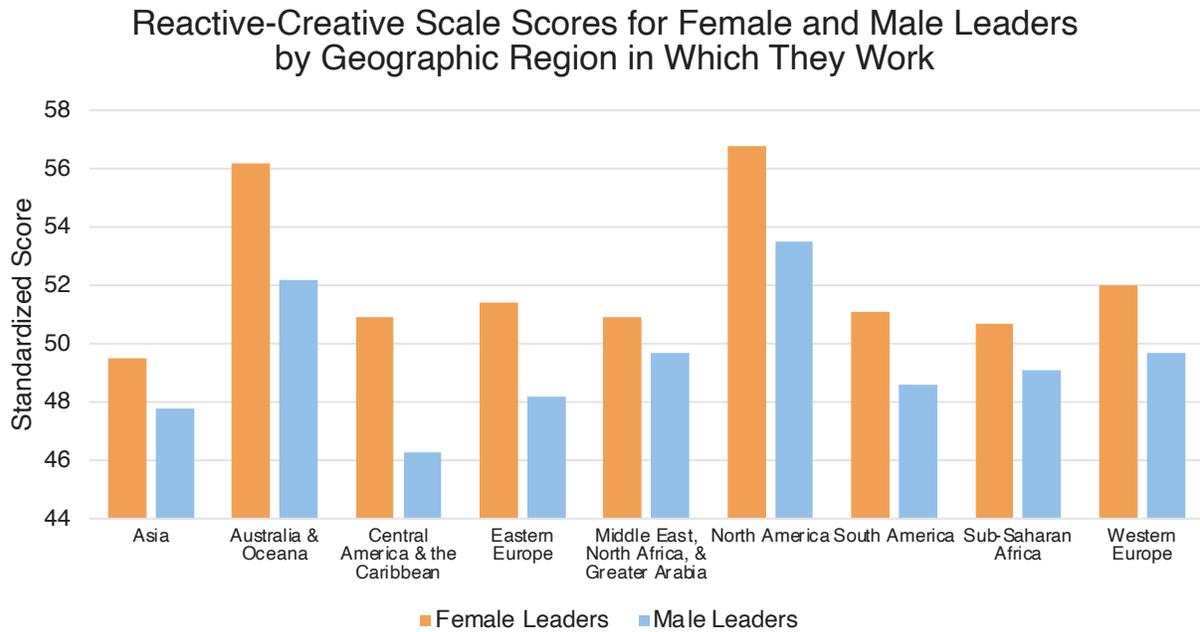
Influence of Age

Next, we looked at gender differences by age, which may be related to management level but is not a one-to-one correspondence. (Some senior leaders may be quite young as is often the case in start-up companies, while more established companies often have front-line managers who have been with the organization for years.) The trend for female leaders to be more Creative and less Reactive than male leaders holds true across all age groups. However, the size of the gender gap varies by age, as illustrated in the next graph. [The gap was determined by subtracting the Reactive-Creative Scale score for males from the score for females. Again, any gap greater than 2.5 is meaningful]. The general trend is for the gap to be greater, as age increases, particularly in the age range of 41-65.



Influence of Culture

We looked at gender differences by culture from two perspectives. First, we compared the Creative and Reactive orientations of female and male leaders living and working in different geographic regions. The results of this analysis are presented in the next graph.

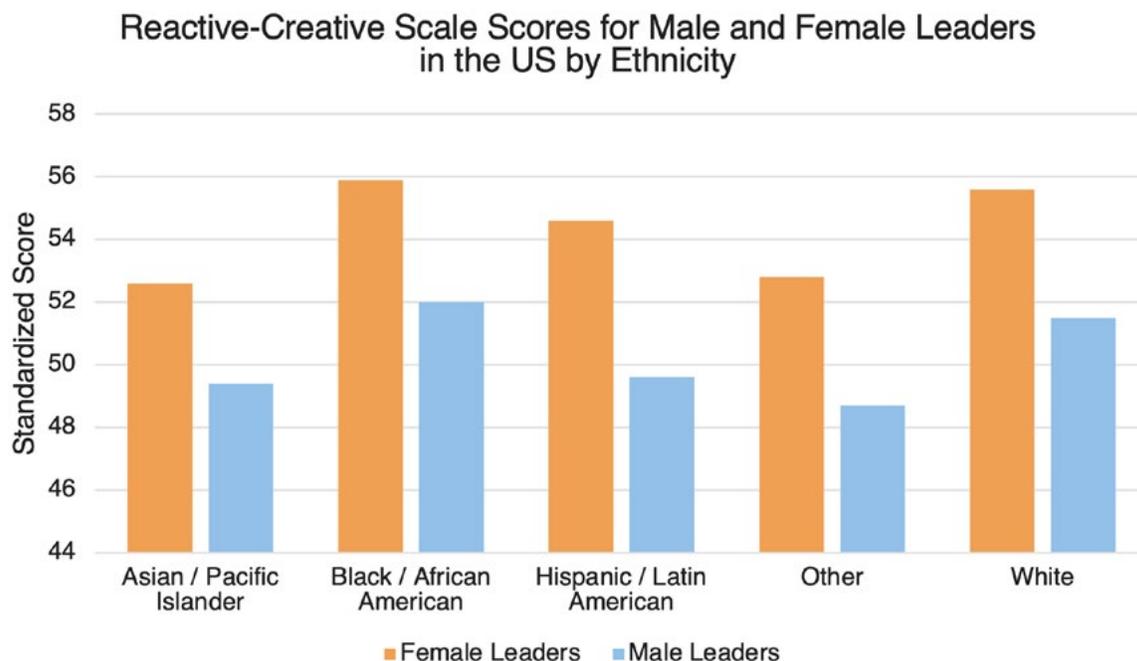


The differences between female and male leaders follow the same general trend as what was observed overall and suggests that the feminine leadership advantage is not restricted to a single culture. However, the differences are less pronounced for some regions. These differences can be further clarified by looking at the Creative and Reactive scores for each region, as have been provided in the next table.

	Creative Female Leaders	Creative Male Leaders	Reactive Female Leaders	Reactive Male Leaders
Asia	49.9	47.6	51.3	52.6
Middle East, North Africa, & Greater Arabia	53.7	52.3	53.1	53.7
Western Europe	50.7	49.4	49.0	51.4
Eastern Europe	52.1	51.0	50.8	54.3
North America	54.0	51.6	45.2	47.9
Central America & the Caribbean	52.0	49.3	51.6	55.8
South America	54.3	52.3	53.3	55.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	51.2	50.7	51.3	53.1
Australia & Oceania	53.1	50.0	45.1	48.4

Within some cultures, leaders may often lead from both a Creative and Reactive orientation (scoring high in both). For example, in the Middle East and South America regions, leaders (both female and male) have higher Creative scores than leaders in many other regions, but they also have higher Reactive scores. Whereas in North America and Australia, leaders have significantly higher Creative versus Reactive scores, thereby increasing their Reactive-Creative Scale score. Not only is the Reactive performance in the Middle East and South America higher than in many other regions, but the difference between females and males is less pronounced. This combination of factors results in a smaller feminine leadership advantage.

We also compared the Creative and Reactive orientations of female and male leaders belonging to different ethnic groups within the USA. As the next graph shows, there are variations in performance across ethnic groups, and the size of the gender gap differs. However, across all groups there is a feminine leadership advantage.



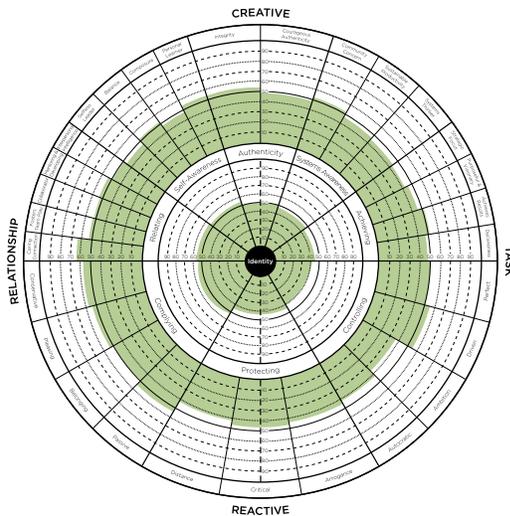
Again, a further understanding of the gender differences for each ethnic group can be garnered by looking at the Creative and Reactive scores, as laid out in the next table. There are a few interesting interactions. For example, the gender gap in Reactive is more pronounced than for Creative for Asian/Pacific Islander and Black/African American leaders. The reverse, where the gender gap in Creative is more pronounced than Reactive, occurs for leaders who identify with one of the “Other” ethnicities, and the gender gap is similar across Creative and Reactive for Hispanic/Latin American and White leaders. The difference may be an indication of a greater acceptance of Reactive tendencies among male leaders within some ethnic groups and cultural differences that influence that acceptance. Although we observe a consistent female advantage in leader performance across cultures and ethnicities, there are variations in the magnitude of these differences. It is possible that other factors related to diverse experiences and expectations in leadership are playing a role and these should be explored further in research that specifically collects data related to the diverse perspective to determine the extent to which the conclusions drawn here apply to all leaders.

Ethnicity/Race of American Leaders	Creative Female Leaders	Creative Male Leaders	Reactive Female Leaders	Reactive Male Leaders
Asian/Pacific Islander	53.5	53.3	46.3	48.8
Black/African American	55.7	54.8	44.5	46.0
Hispanic/Latin American	54.7	53.3	45.7	47.1
Other	57.7	50.4	43.6	49.0
White	54.9	51.7	45.9	49.0

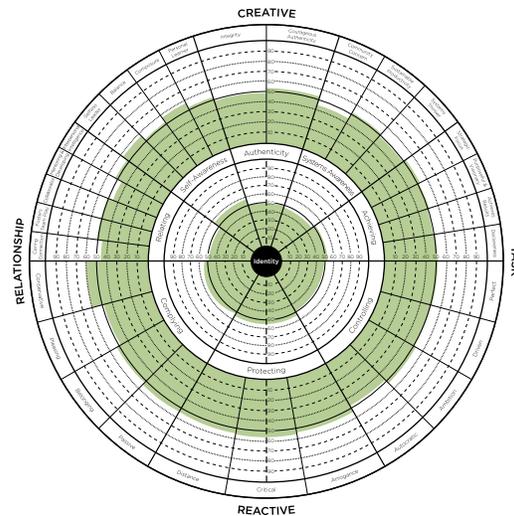
Differences in How Leaders Rate Themselves

Several past research studies suggest that there are differences in how female and male leaders perceive their own leadership. To test this conclusion, we began by directly comparing the self-assessments of female and male leaders. The averaged self-ratings for the two genders are provided in the next graphic.

Aggregate Female Leader’s Self-Assessment



Aggregate Male Leader’s Self-Assessment



A quick perusal of the shading in the profile circles will reveal that there are very few obvious differences in how female and male leaders rate themselves. Indeed, out of the 36 dimensions and sub-dimensions, there were only 8 with meaningful differences (Effect Sizes larger than .20). However, there was an overall difference in how female and male leaders rated their Creative competencies versus Reactive tendencies. Female leaders rated their development and expression of Creative competencies higher than their exhibition of Reactive tendencies, whereas male leaders rated their exhibition of Reactive behaviors as more frequent than their expression of Creative skills.

In other words, female leaders see themselves as more Creative and less Reactive and male leaders see themselves as more Reactive and less Creative.

This finding may suggest that both female and male leaders have a good grasp on their performance as it lines up with the overall conclusions based on evaluator data. However, the specific nature and magnitude of differences in Creative abilities and Reactive tendencies in the self-ratings do not always correlate with evaluator ratings and sometimes lead to different conclusions. For example, male leaders rate their abilities in *Strategic Focus* considerably higher than female leaders rate their abilities on this leadership competency ($p < .001$, E.S. = .26). But evaluators do not rate males and females substantially differently on this competency ($p < .001$, E.S. = .06), and even rate female leaders slightly higher.

This type of discrepancy may be at the heart of many of the contradictory findings within the literature, as some studies rely on self-assessment for drawing conclusions and others rely on evaluator ratings. Our findings emphasize the caution in using only self-assessment data to identify gender differences.

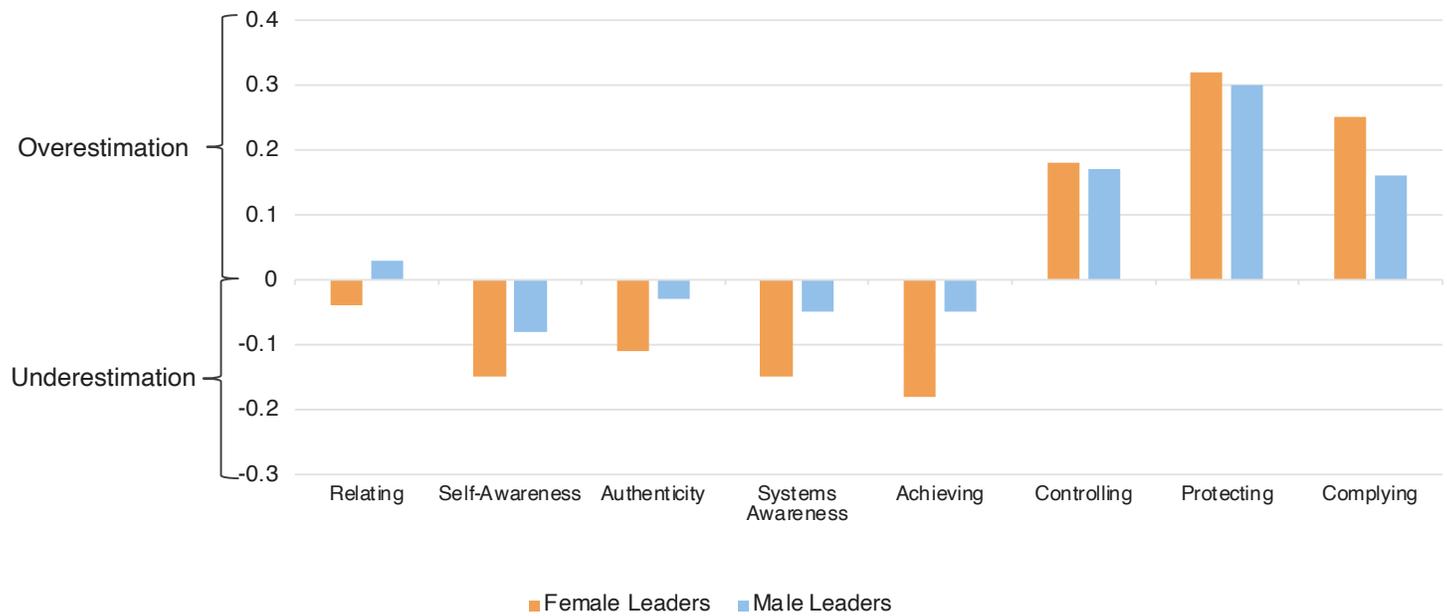
When analyzing the self-assessments of leaders on the LEI scale, we found that female leaders rate their effectiveness slightly below the rating that male leaders gave their effectiveness (with standard scores of 49.8 and 50.9, respectively). Although the difference in self-assessments of effectiveness was statistically significant, it was not practically meaningful (E.S. = -0.11). This finding runs contrary to many studies that have found a “modesty effect” in which female leaders often downplay their strengths and significantly underestimate their effectiveness compared with how male leaders rate their performance. Other studies also suggest that male leaders may have an inflated perception of their leadership and so are likely to downplay their challenges and overestimate their skills. At first blush, our results appear to refute these findings.

However, when we compare leaders’ self-scores to their evaluators’ scores, we do see some significant and meaningful gender differences that corroborate some of the past research. [Note that for this comparison we used the raw rating scale scores so we could conduct a direct comparison. Raw scores are based on a 5-point scale.] The self-ratings of both female and male leaders are lower than evaluator ratings for leadership effectiveness, as the next table indicates. Yet, the underestimation for female leaders is considerably greater than for male leaders, in effect doubling the gap between genders compared to the direct difference in self-ratings. This finding is more in line with past research that suggests females underrate their performance to a larger extent than males. However, this finding also refutes the notion that males inflate their leadership performance, at least in comparison to how others view their effectiveness.

Ratings of Leadership Effectiveness	Average Self-Rating	Average Rating of Evaluators	Difference in Self and Evaluator Ratings
Females	3.59	4.05	0.46
Males	3.65	3.96	0.31

Across most areas of leadership, there is a general trend for leaders to underestimate their Creative abilities and overestimate their Reactive tendencies compared with evaluators' ratings. Of more importance is the finding that female leaders underestimate their Creative abilities and overestimate their Reactive tendencies to a much larger extent than male leaders, as the following graph illustrates.

Gap Between Self-Assessment and Evaluator Ratings by Gender



These findings support other research that suggests that female leaders are harder on themselves than male leaders and often undervalue the contribution they are making. Further, in the case of *Relating*, we see evidence of male leaders' inflated self-perception. According to evaluators, *Relating* is a core leadership strength for female leaders and one in which they are significantly more capable than male leaders. However, female leaders' self-scores in *Relating* are lower than what evaluators give, and male leaders' scores are higher than what evaluators give creating a self-perception view that male leaders are better relationship builders than female leaders - which of course is inconsistent with the way they are showing up.

It may be that male leaders are not perceiving how they come across with respect to *Relating* as they think they are showing up differently from how others experience them. It is also possible that they do not hold themselves to the same standards as others do in this area. In either case, this may be what is preventing male leaders from improving their *Relating* skills at the same pace as female leaders, thus creating the ever-widening gap that is observed between their performance and female leaders' performance even as their overall effectiveness increases.

CONCLUSION – PUTTING THE FINDINGS IN CONTEXT

It may be tempting to conclude that females make better leaders than males, however, this may or may not be true. Our findings certainly show that female leaders are more effective than male leaders – they have developed, and exhibit, more Creative competencies and they are far less Reactive. Our findings of a feminine leadership advantage are consistent with findings from many studies, and it has been shown in this study to be robust – the feminine leadership advantage exists at all management levels, all age groups, and across cultures.

So why then do some studies find no difference and other studies find mixed results with some advantage to male leaders and some to female leaders? Our analysis of the differences in skills and behaviors at different levels of leadership effectiveness may help explain this. At the least effective level of leadership, there are fewer differences than similarities between female and male leaders – largely no differences in Creative competencies or Reactive tendencies. At the moderate level of effectiveness, female leaders have better developed Creative competencies and fewer Reactive tendencies than male leaders in several areas but not in every area of leadership – in a few areas, male leaders outperform female leaders. By the time leaders are highly effective, the performance within nearly all areas of leadership favor female leaders. Thus, the differences in past findings may be the result of the interaction of gender differences with overall leadership effectiveness and the possibility that past studies have used narrowly defined samples of leaders who are predominately at one level of leadership effectiveness.

Further, our findings related to differences in gender leadership orientation are not always consistent with leadership styles as previously researched. Contrary to several studies and popular belief, we did not find that female leaders were more relationship-oriented and male leaders more task-oriented. Both leaders tend to be balanced in their approach to people and tasks. Further, female leaders perform consistently well in both areas of leadership, although the difference with male leaders is more pronounced in terms of *Relationship* competencies. Indeed, our findings suggest that female leaders have developed greater Creative competencies in all five Creative leadership dimensions (including the vast majority of sub-dimensions). Further, females leaders have significantly fewer Reactive tendencies and that in combination with their Creative skills creates a distinct Feminine Leadership Advantage. Feminine leadership is balanced in task-relationship with a super charge in *Relating*. It may be the elevated development in *Relating* competencies that leads to the impression of stylistic differences along the *Relating-Achieving* dichotomy. However, our results suggest that it is the proclivity of male leaders to engage in *Protecting* behaviors that undermine their relational skills, cancelling them out and preventing male leaders from forging the deeper more vulnerable relationships that are requisite for higher level performance within this dimension of leadership. That is, it is not so much that male leaders are overly focused on *Achieving* but rather that they are overly focused on strategies of *Distance*, *Arrogance*, and superiority to protect position, and maintain sense of self-worth and/or safety that leads to their lower performance in *Relating* compared with their female counterparts who do not engage as often in these Reactive styles.

This latter finding is consistent with several articles (e.g., Ito & Bligh, 2017; Arata, 2018) that suggest female leaders are better at *Relating* because they are more emotionally vulnerable, have developed empathy for others, and take a genuine interest in others' lives. (We add that these skills are more accessible in the Creative orientation.) Whereas male leaders tend to avoid emotional connections, remain more aloof, show less compassion, and are reluctant to engage in personal conversations or

genuinely listen to others when they express their feelings. These descriptions of male and female leaders closely correspond to the feedback evaluators gave leaders in our study. It is important to notice that both male and female leaders were described as people persons (echoing the previously cited finding that both male and female leaders focus on *Relating*). However, the frequency with which evaluators reported on the depth, compassion, empathy, and trust of connections created by female leaders was nearly the same as the frequency that evaluators reported male leaders struggling in these areas. Although male leaders were reported as personable and approachable, capable of reaching out to others and building relationships, they were also described as having challenges with forming relationships at a shallow level and of being inattentive to others' needs, feelings, and opinions – a more Reactive approach to the relationships they had formed.

One last observation from our findings that is worth noting, as it has implications for future research and organizational practice, comes from comparing the results obtained from our analysis of the quantitative and qualitative feedback. Although the findings coming from our descriptive analyses of evaluator feedback support the findings from the evaluator rating data overall (the qualitative results show more Creative strengths and less Reactive challenges for female leaders compared with male leaders, consistent with the quantitative ratings), the direction and magnitude of some strengths did not align with the rating data. That is, a few strengths were reported significantly more frequently for male leaders than female leaders in the feedback data, but they showed no difference in the rating results.

Interestingly, the disparate qualitative strengths correspond to stereotypical masculine traits that other studies have found are more often ascribed to male leaders, including project management, strategic thinking, and problem solving – traits that are hallmarks of task-oriented styles (and that correspond to *Systems-Awareness* and *Achieving* on the LCP). In fact, this type of finding has been used to support the claim that males are more task-oriented. However, our evaluator ratings for these same dimensions showed no significant differences between male and female leaders' actual performance, with female leaders slightly (although not meaningfully) outperforming their male counterparts in these areas of leadership.

For these few instances, evaluators report qualities differently than how they evaluate them, and we might ask why so? The answer may be in the nature of the methodology used between the two studies. In the descriptive study, evaluators' feedback was solicited based on open-ended questions, without focusing the respondent on a specific aspect of leadership. Without the specific framing, it may be that evaluators responded in accordance with what they stereotypically look for in a male and female leader and reported on that. As a consequence, evaluators may have analyzed male leaders' assets from the *Achieving* role and noted whether they were present or not but did not even consider these when thinking and responding to the assets of female leaders, thus under-reporting the same skills.. However, on the LCP rating assessment tool, evaluators were specifically asked about performance within the *Systems-Awareness* and *Achieving* (task-oriented) dimensions. In completing the rating scales, evaluators were focused less on their general impressions (which may be heavily influenced by stereotypes) and more on actual behaviors (as the instrument asks them to rate the frequency of behaviors). In this case, evaluators did not differentiate the performance of male leaders and female leaders on the task-oriented traits.

The difference in outcomes by methodology is important. First, it may help explain the discrepancies in past research between those studies that find traditionally accepted gender leadership style differences versus those that do not. As mentioned in the literature review section of this report, most of the studies that have found evidence for males using a task-

oriented approach to leadership are based on descriptive data and this may naturally lend itself to measuring stereotypical impressions as opposed to perceived performance.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the tendency to focus on impressions aligned with stereotypical thinking may indicate a potential bias in everyday assessment of leaders in the organization. If bosses use conventional wisdom, as opposed to more formal assessments, to evaluate and promote leaders they may not always select those best suited to the job. Indeed, some researchers have suggested that because the male stereotype is more closely related to leadership impact (specifically in terms of achieving results) and male leaders are perceived as being proficient in these areas, it can create an undo disadvantage for female leaders and may be one of the reasons that there is disparity in the frequency of female compared with male leaders (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Brooks, 2011).

Third, there may be a female bias that overlooks development attained. When we examine the research provided in the categories of maturing age and leadership positions, there is an increasing feminine advantage gap. When examining leadership position, the data indicates that female leaders advance in Creative competency at all levels, notably in senior positions. The same is indicated for maturing age, where a female advantage gap widens compared to their male counterparts in senior position and age.

Taken altogether, the variances shown in this study contribute to meaningful gender differences in leadership competency and effectiveness and perhaps opportunities to be realized for organizations. Our findings suggest that the Creative vs. Reactive orientations to leadership best distinguish differences between female and male leaders. It is also this shift that creates better leaders, regardless of gender. Female leaders' Creative orientation to leadership results in showing up more effectively in the workplace. Organizations might benefit from looking to promote women leaders that lead effectively, as the results of this study show that they will continue to add greater effectiveness as they lead. There may be a decisive advantage in promoting, developing, and providing opportunities sooner to female leaders than has historically been the case or in areas and jobs that have not previously been considered.

There is also an advantage and opportunity for male leaders to increase leadership competency toward more Creative orientations. It may not have seemed as critical for promotion or effectiveness for male leaders in the past; however, this study demonstrates a clear advantage for males to begin new levels of Creative orientation for greater leadership effectiveness. There is a significant advantage in creating diverse teams that include the leadership effectiveness of female leaders. Diversity in Creative leadership expression and style can elevate an organization in ways that have been previously overlooked or not yet realized.

Why are there Gender Differences in Leadership?

Why is there a feminine leadership advantage? There are at least three hypotheses that have been proposed in the literature. We look at each of these in the light of our findings to determine which reason(s) are most strongly supported.

Hypothesis 1: Females have innate and/or socialized skills that provide an advantage in leadership as it develops.

Many studies report that females enter leadership positions with strong relational skills and that this creates an advantage over male leaders because female leaders only have to focus on developing other leadership capabilities in order to become great leaders, whereas males must develop all aspects of leadership. Some research suggests that women are born with a predisposition toward *Relating* that is not part of men's DNA (e.g., Van Edwards, 2017). These studies use recent evidence from neuroscience that indicate that women are hardwired genetically with hormones (namely Oxytocin) that promote intimate connections, whereas men are hardwired differently. According to this research, when men engage in emotionally vulnerable interactions (a key to deeper relationships), it triggers the release of cortisol prompting a stress reaction. As a consequence, most men avoid such intimate interactions and subsequently don't develop the relationship competencies that women bring to the leadership table.

Other research (e.g., Reddy, 2018) has suggested that from childhood, females are taught to express their emotions and are rewarded for demonstrating nurturing tendencies, whereas males are taught to hide their emotions and not express their true feelings. These social expectations continue into adulthood and subsequently better prepare females to take a transformational (or what we would call Creative) leadership orientation that focuses on building deep and effective relationships.

Although our study cannot fully distinguish whether there is a biological predisposition to *Relating* skills or if female leaders have been socialized into these skills, our findings do support the assertion that enhanced *Relating* abilities contribute to overall leadership effectiveness and female leaders, on average, have more developed relational competencies than male leaders. Even the least effective female leaders, as well as female leaders in lower management positions, demonstrate earlier ability to form warm, caring relationships than their male counterparts. This finding does suggest that some *Relating* skills have already been developed before females assume leadership positions. However, our findings also show that female leaders' *Relating* skills continue to improve as they become more effective, are elevated to higher management levels, and as age increases. This latter finding suggests that at least some of the relationship competencies female leaders possess are learned and/or honed on the job.

Hypothesis 2: Female leaders are more demanding of their performance and so work harder at development.

Several studies suggest that female leaders strive harder once in their leadership positions than male leaders and this results in higher-level performance compared to their male counterparts. Zenger & Folkman (2012) suggest that female leaders may feel they have to work harder in all competency areas to be rewarded for their leadership skills. In follow-up interviews they conducted with female leaders, they found evidence that female leaders believe they have to continually prove themselves to be accepted and secure in their positions. Interestingly, as they point out, this propels female leaders to take initiative, seek feedback, and incorporate feedback into their leadership practice – the very developmental strategies that lead to more Creative leadership. This highlights another avenue for organizations to take seriously.

Several findings from our research also suggest that female leaders may be more demanding of their performance than male leaders – even at times engaging in overdrive and perfectionism in an

attempt to maintain their security. See for example the elevated Reactive tendencies for *Driven* and *Perfect* that continue to be prevalent up until the time female leaders become highly effective, at which point they appear to have channeled the power within these Reactive tendencies into more Creative expressions of leadership. Further, evidence from the progression of leadership strengths (as noted in both the rating data and the feedback data), where female leaders frequently outpace male leaders in the development of Creative competencies, suggests that female leaders may be putting more effort into their development. Our findings from the self-assessment study also suggest that female leaders may try harder for their work to have worth, but because they do not appreciate how much they have accomplished or undervalue the contribution they have made, causing them to strive for more perfect results.

A counter possibility that our findings suggest that has not been raised in the literature, focuses less on the increased effort of female leaders and rather on the possibility that male leaders may put less focus into development, at least of relational competencies. Why would male leaders exert less effort to improve? It may be, as the data from the self-assessment suggests, that male leaders have lack of awareness with respect to *Relating* and do not perceive how they are coming across in the workplace. This obstruction in view may be the result of lack of socialization into these skills, as the previous hypothesis surmised. Another possibility is that male leaders have less incentive to develop their relational awareness, or to evolve their Reactive tendencies, because these skills and behaviors have not been required for their promotion into higher management levels, as the next hypothesis suggests.

Hypothesis 3: Males are promoted to leadership positions even if less skilled and thus are at a comparative disadvantage.

Some studies report that male leaders are often promoted without some of the qualities required for exceptional leadership and that this is less true for female leaders (e.g., Eagly and Carli, 2007; Edwards, 2017; Chamorro-Premuzic & Gallop, 2020). This research suggests that there exists a double standard in many organizations, where male leaders need only to display achievement strengths to be promoted, whereas female leaders must have strengths in both *Achieving* and *Relating*. This research suggests that the reason female leaders employ a transformational leadership style (or we would say a Creative orientation to leadership) more frequently than male leaders is because it increases their likelihood of success. Further, these studies offer evidence that because female leaders must excel compared with male leaders to be promoted, this leads to disparity among promotion rates of males and females. Consequently, there are more male leaders who do not have the ideal requisite leadership skills or possess skills that are developmentally below those of female leaders in the same leadership roles.

Although the LCP database does not contain information on the skills required for promotion of the leaders who participated in the LCP, our findings do line up with the results as would be predicted from the above hypotheses. We found evidence that male leaders can achieve high levels of effectiveness (as evidenced by the 29% who do) but are more likely to perform at a much lower levels of effectiveness (as evidenced by the 34% who score well-below average on effectiveness). The exact opposite is true of female leaders, only 27% score in the less-effective range and 37% score at least one standard deviation above average on leadership effectiveness.

In addition, our analyses of management levels support the idea that females are promoted as their effectiveness increases. As female leaders move from lower-level management positions to senior

management positions, their Creative competencies continue to improve (as does their reduction in Reactive tendencies). Male leaders also show some improvements at successively higher levels of management; however, the growth is not nearly as dramatic as for female leaders and may reflect that they have been promoted without the same level of skill exhibited by female leaders. These findings also suggest that it is valuable to consider strategies of developing and promoting female leaders earlier on in their careers as results show that this investment has significant advantage once female leaders achieve even moderate levels of effectiveness.

Developing Leaders toward Higher Effectiveness within an Organization

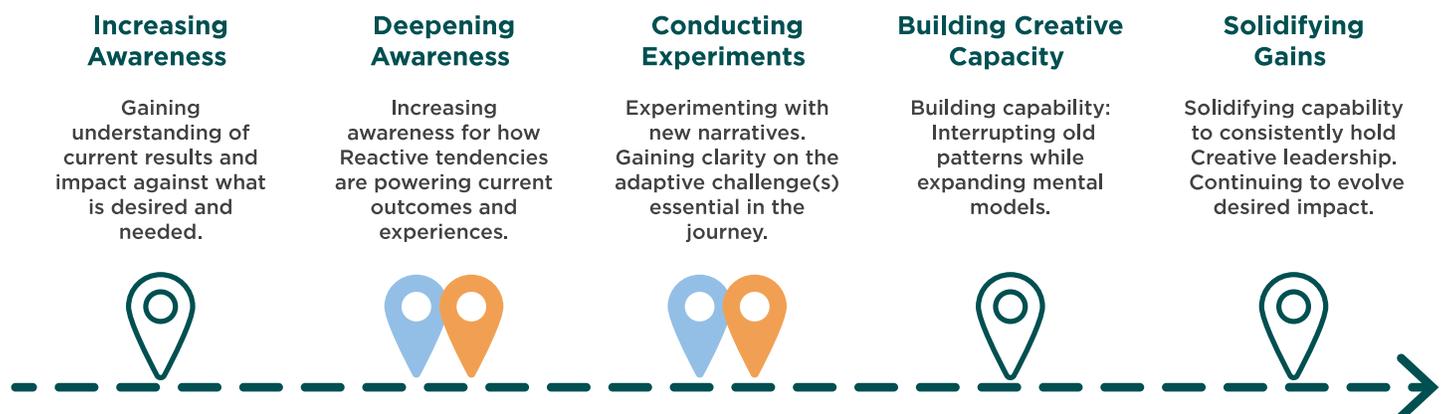
Based on the findings of a feminine leadership advantage, it can be argued that employing female leaders is smart and healthy for an organization. This is supported by other evidence that shows that companies with larger frequencies of female leaders, particularly in the top leadership positions, also have better business performance than companies with significantly fewer female leaders (e.g., Nolan, Moran, & Kotschwar, 2016; Ting, 2021; Lemke, 2021). Additionally, these finds are suggested by Development Dimensions International (DDI), reporting that “Organizations in the top 20 percent of financial performance counted 37 percent of their leaders as women; among organizations in the bottom 20 percent, only 19 percent of leaders were women (DDI, Global Leadership Forecast 2014/2015).

Some of the benefits for companies who employ more female leaders (particularly over those that do not employ any) is that they realize greater net profit and ROA, generate more creative and profitable solutions to business problems, and implement innovations faster.

To maximize the impact of leadership within an organization, diversity in leadership ranks is proving to have a strategic advantage. It will be important to not only hire and promote female leaders, but to encourage their development along with the development of male leaders. Our findings suggest that the pathway to more effective leadership is similar for females and males, although there are some unique challenges that each must transcend.

Transcending from a Reactive to Creative orientation is distinguished by a substantive shift in our meaning, making interpretations of our narratives, context, experience, and perceptions of reality and success. These may vary in various cultural groups, race, gender and other constructs. This development will comprise the following journey and provides a pathway for coaching:

THE PATHWAY IN COACHING



Though the overall development pathway follows the same principles for all leaders, for typical male and female leaders highlighted in this study, there are differences required to understand when coaching specific Reactive Tendencies, within a gender construct. The context provided in this study is important for coaches to glean insight into gender patterns that may (not always) be operating. This awareness and knowledge for potential gender patterns beyond “the one person” with whom a coach is engaged can be instructive. Regardless of the particulars of the journey, the transformation from Reactive to Creative leadership results in significantly increased leadership effectiveness.

Coaching and Developing the Average Male Leader: The Forceful Knower



The Forceful Knower: The center of gravity for development of typical male leaders lies within the *Protecting* Dimension. While male leaders do possess increased scores in the *Controlling* sub-dimensions (particularly *Autocratic* and *Ambition*) and in the *Complying* sub-dimensions (more notably *Passive* and *Belonging*) the potency for development is most likely found in *Protecting* - and informed by a more aggressive energy in *Autocratic* or a fading energy in *Passive*. The swing of the line, either into *Autocratic* or into *Passive* and potentially both, focuses the coaching agenda. The largest differentiator between male and female leaders occurs for the *Protecting-Controlling* aggregate and results in an archetype described as the *Forceful Knower*. The secondary pattern which moves into a *Complying* Dimension with a sub-dimension of *Passive* can be described as the *Elusive Knower*. We describe both below.

Coaching and Developing the Average Female Leader: The Exhausted Hero



The Exhausted Hero: The center of gravity for development of an average female leader likely lies within the *Controlling* sub-dimensions of *Perfect* and *Driven*. While female leaders may have other areas needing development, the sub-dimensions of *Perfect* and *Driven* are at the heart of what persists with women leaders over time and even when more highly effective, like an unshakeable overload. It isn't that the scores continue to be strong when highly effective, but that the exhausted hero remains, requiring further development. (Note the challenges on Page 30 for highly effective female leaders.)

Finally, our findings reveal that with focused development work, both female and male leaders can offer exceptional leadership.

The Forceful Knower



Evolving the Forceful Knower requires an identity narrative shift from “knower in chief” (I am my ideas, if they are not best, I am a nobody) to a courageous relational learner (I am good with ideas and have much to learn from and with others). This is a transformational shift from the stance of “retreating to mind and moving away from people,” to an embodied vulnerable presence, learning in partnership, with others.

Internal Assumptions, Behaviors, and Impact

Forceful Knower behaviors are based on internal assumptions that link security and worth with being superior, smartest, right, self-sufficient, and hyper-rational.

Focus and Behaviors: This leader is likely to focus on superiority - superiority of their ideas and reason, therefore behaviors show up in determining how to preserve that superiority of ideas and brilliance. Including: who and what is wrong, criticizing others' ideas, avoiding conflict (or ensuring dominance during conflict), dismissing, interrupting, forming opinions before listening all the way through to others, and ensuring emotional distance.

Impact: Can be in missed opportunities in achievement and relationship. Overlooked is that the scaling of ideas and initiatives requires learning with others and highly engaged committed teams for collective breakthrough. This requires emotional intelligence, vulnerability, connected relational leverage, and self/systems awareness that at this orientation are generally not operating.

Finally, leadership effectiveness suffers as scale without relationship competency is impossible.

Coaching and Experiments to Consider

The first step in assisting the Forceful Knower is to help them to become more aware of the narrative experiences that form their current results, and bring clarity to whether the current way of being (the inner and outer game of leadership) is able to bring them to who they want to be and where they want to go. This requires creating a space of trust and safety for the leader to begin to assess what is at stake, needed, and desired now in their leadership and if they want to take the journey.

Interrupting narratives: Interrupting narratives can start by asking questions that bring some pause to things not thought about before. Some interrupting narrative questions could be: What is a cost to you personally/professionally for having to be the one with the right or best answers? What is at risk if you are not seen as put together when presenting thoughts and ideas? Are there circumstances where your best ideas are not moving forward, why? What is the real challenge for you in this? What is the cost of distant rationality in your role as a leader? As a spouse/friend? What do you want now? This phase loosens faulty narratives in service of greater awareness and choice and helps leaders to reframe old narratives to newer and more expansive narratives.

Conducting experiments with new beliefs is a lot like putting on a pair of glasses and simply noticing the difference to determine if you like the results. ‘What if’ questions are useful: What if... “I can learn from people who are not as smart as me?” “I can be more fulfilled and wiser in emotional connection.” “I am more than my knowing and ideas.” “I can learn more by leaning fully into undefended presence and openness.” These are just a few.

Behavior experiments can begin small and then take on sustainability. Experiments for male leaders in this pattern may be in yielding to others - listening before speaking and deciding, seeking out different voices than before, asking how people are feeling and responding with empathy or genuine curiosity, listening to how one listens, delegating idea creation to the team, deciding not to use “me/ I” and include “we/ us”, practicing being fully engaged and present (in the body) in difficult and emotionally charged situations.

The result is in forming a more complex narrative that isn't as tied to ego identity, but rather drawn to purpose and presence, fluidly learning and in scaling effectiveness with others.

The Elusive Knower



Evolving the Elusive Knower requires the same shift as described above as both of these patterns are centered in protecting. The Elusive Knower includes moving from knowing big and playing small (“I am my brilliance, emotionally contained, if I am not right, smart I am nothing”) to a courageous relational learner (“I am good with ideas and as I share these I ideas I learn from and with others. Learning with others brings scale.”). This is a transformational shift from the stance of “retreating to mind and moving away from people,” to an authentic embodied vulnerable presence, learning in partnership, with others.

Some Differences - Internal Assumptions, Behavior, and Impact

Elusive Knower behaviors are based on internal assumptions that link security and worth with being superior, smartest, right, self-sufficient, and hyper-rational and retreating to self-contained mind. This leads to outcomes of “knowing big yet playing small”.

Focus and Behaviors:

This leader is likely to have brilliant ideas and yet the focus of isolation and self-sufficiency leads to not showing up fully in a way that these ideas are heard and implemented. Playing small and knowing big can bring passive-aggressive behavior and shrinks impact, containing emotion and belief in their ability to influence.

Therefore, behaviors are centered in self-containment - protecting ideas and brilliance. These behaviors can be seen more by what is not - not committing to teams, not being fully present, not speaking up and influencing in power situations, appearing to agree (through silence) in public and doing their own thing anyway, taking a project and moving it privately without organizational knowledge or support, criticizing others' ideas indirectly, avoiding conflict and ensuring emotional distance by disappearing or not showing up.

Coaching ideas can be gleaned from the above table descriptions. Developing the ability to remain fully present in mind, body, and spirit in relationship requires practicing and is critical to the coaching journey.

For male leaders in both patterns, creating integrated teams and launching peer coaching may assist in developing skills that do not come as naturally. Learning from peer groups that have diversity including women as part of the mix is essential. Studies (e.g., Hauwiller, 2021) demonstrate that peer coaching can help leaders to develop more emotional intelligence and strengthen relationships.

The Exhausted Hero



Evolving the Exhausted Hero requires a narrative identity shift from an unyielding heroic doer (I must do better than best/I am what I do – if I am not doing, I am irrelevant) to Balanced Creator in service. The exhausted hero is also exhausting, illuminating intensity. This requires a fundamental shift from moving against obstacles with personal/solo will, toward moving with what is, allowing obstacles to inform action in partnership.

Internal Assumptions, Behaviors, and Impact

Exhausted Hero behaviors are based on internal assumptions that link security and worth with doing, high accomplishment, and being seen as accomplishing – “I am how much and how flawlessly I produce”.

Focus and Behaviors: The exhausted hero can over focus on looking and doing better than the rest – more achievement and more carrying the load. Therefore, behaviors show up in an effort to preserve the appearance of the highest accomplishment status. Behaviors are likely to include: Ignoring and dismissing feedback that doesn't fit the agenda, pushing forward regardless of circumstance, expectations for self and others that are exhausting, overlooking (self/other) boundaries and needs.

Impact: Underlying internal self-doubt as doing enough is never enough and “I will never be enough”. Missing opportunities for seeing and enjoying success and in recognizing growth and competence. Dampened leadership scale and long-term sustainability.

To scale leadership, balanced-servant mastery will be needed.

Coaching and Experiments to Consider

The first step in assisting the Exhausted Hero is to help them to become more aware by working with them to uncover for themselves how deep, persistent, and pernicious the pattern is in their life – professionally and personally and to honestly assess what they truly want. These costs usually are perpetuating internal stress and helping them to bring clarity to the chronic nature of doing results in this manner brings new resolve to evolve.

Interrupting narratives: Some interrupting questions for this pattern might be: Is there a cost personally for believing you must achieve above or else? What is the risk to you if you don't accept an important assignment? What if you fail to meet or exceed standards? What is your exhaustion level and what do you want? Are their circumstances where you are preventing others from growing because you carry the load?

With greater clarity, awareness and choice, it is time to experiment with some ‘what ifs’: What if... “I gain greater results from not working around the clock?” “What if showing more vulnerability brings strength?” “What if you mattered, without having anything to prove?” “What if you could get better results without the cost extracted now?” “What if you could help others in a more impactful way by being present more and doing less?”

Behavior experiments can begin small and then take on sustainability. Experiments for women leaders will likely consist of: Trying out small to larger boundaries, letting go of the shield of perfection and leaning into vulnerable authenticity, strengthening others' ability to be authentic by example, slowing down to listen to inner wisdom, learning to pay attention to body signals, valuing presence over task to assess wiser action.

Learning to utilize presence and attention with informed wisdom in service of purpose and in authentic partnership is the master journey. Learning to distinguish between overdrive and purpose ensures scalable results, sustainable performance, and a much more fulfilling experience of leadership.

Female leaders would benefit from advocating for and owning their leadership abilities, forthrightly acknowledging the contribution they are making, removing the self-doubt, and creating boundaries without guilt. Our findings show that female leaders underestimate the impact they are having, and other research suggests that this lack of confidence in, or undervaluing of, their competencies may prevent female leaders from pursuing more senior positions or achieving success when they do so (e.g., Chief Executive, 2016).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Cynthia Adams is Global President of Products, Certification and Community at Leadership Circle. She leads global leadership teams and organizational initiatives for product innovation and codification, global scale, and advancing leadership that elevates humanity through a community of practitioners, organizational leaders and partners worldwide. Cindy combines a deep understanding of leadership development, whole systems change and business process performance to guide outcomes that matter, engagement, adaptive capacity, and fulfillment. As a fellow traveler on the leader's path, both personally and professionally, she is intimately familiar with the challenges that leaders face throughout their careers and the adaptive challenge inherent in meeting today's turbulent conditions. As a founding partner and leader, Cindy has worked with leaders from a wide array of businesses and industries. Cindy holds a master's degree in management: human resources and organizational behavior.



Lani Van Dusen, Ph.D. specializes in designing and conducting both quantitative and qualitative assessments of organizational systems, culture, leadership effectiveness, and human performance. As the President of the Worldwide Institute for Research and Evaluation, she has designed and conducted over 200 studies for government agencies and educational institutions, as well as for profit and non-profit organizations in 23 countries. She also serves as an external director of the Leadership Circle Assessment Center, where she works with both consultants and clients using best practice research and evaluation technologies to provide meaningful and actionable information to leaders, their teams, and the organizations they serve.

APPENDIX – DESCRIPTIONS OF THE LCP SUB-DIMENSIONS

Relating Dimension

- **Caring Connection** measures leaders' interests in and abilities to form warm, caring relationships.
- **Fosters Team Play** measures leaders' abilities to foster high-performance teamwork among team members who report to the leader, across the organization, and within teams in which the leader participates.
- **Collaborator** measures the extent to which leaders engage others in a manner that allows the parties involved to discover common ground in conflict situations, find mutually beneficial agreements, develop synergy, and create win-win solutions.
- **Mentoring & Developing** measures leaders' abilities to develop others through mentoring and maintaining growth-enhancing relationships. Helps people grow and develop personally and professionally. Is genuinely interested in seeing another develop / improve.
- **Interpersonal Intelligence** measures the interpersonal effectiveness with which leaders listen, engage in conflict and controversy, deal with the feelings of others, and manage their own feelings.

Self-Awareness Dimension

- **Selfless Leader** measures the extent to which leaders pursue service over self-interest. It measures a very high state of personal awareness where the need for credit and personal ambition is far less important than creating results – in collaborative relationships – which serve a common good.
- **Balance** measures leaders' abilities to keep a healthy balance between business and family, activity and reflection, work, and leisure. It measures leaders' tendencies to be self-renewing and handle the stress of life without losing sense of self.
- **Composure** measures leaders' abilities, in the midst of conflict and high-tension situations, to remain composed and centered, and to maintain a calm, focused perspective.
- **Personal Learner** measures the degree to which leaders demonstrate a strong and active interest in learning, personal and professional growth. It measures the extent to which leaders actively and reflectively pursue growing in self-awareness, wisdom, knowledge, and insight.

Authenticity

- **Integrity** measures how well leaders adhere to the set of values and principles that they espouse; that is, how well they can be trusted to “walk the talk.”

- **Courageous Authenticity** measures leaders' willingness, one-on-one and in groups, to take tough stands, bring up the "undiscussables" (risky issues the group avoids discussing), openly deal with relationship problems, and share personal feelings / vulnerabilities about a situation.

Systems Awareness

- **Community Concern** measures the service orientation from which leaders lead. The extent to which they link their legacy to service of community and global welfare.
- **Sustainable Productivity** measures leaders' abilities to achieve results in a way that maintains or enhances the overall long-term effectiveness of the organization. It measures how well they balance human and technical resources so that long term high performance is sustainable.
- **Systems Thinker** measures the degree to which leaders think and act from a whole system perspective as well as the extent to which they make decisions in light of the long-term health of the whole system.

Achieving

- **Strategic Focus** measures the extent to which leaders think strategically. How well leaders translate strategic thinking into rigorous and thoroughly developed business strategies to ensure that the organization will thrive in the near and long-term.
- **Purposeful & Visionary** measures the extent to which leaders clearly communicate and model commitment to personal purpose and vision.
- **Achieves Results** measures the degree to which leaders are goal directed and have a track record of goal achievement and high performance.
- **Decisiveness** measures leaders' abilities to make decisions on time, and the extent to which they are comfortable moving forward in uncertainty.

Controlling

- **Perfect** measures leaders' needs to attain flawless results and perform to extremely high standards in order to feel secure and worthwhile.
- **Driven** measures the extent to which leaders are in overdrive.
- **Ambition** measures the extent to which leaders need to get ahead, move up in the organization, and be better than others.
- **Autocratic** measures leaders' tendencies to be forceful, aggressive, and controlling.

Protecting

- **Arrogance** measures leaders' tendencies to project a large ego - behavior that is

experienced as superior, egotistical, and self-centered.

- **Critical** measures leaders' tendencies to take a critical, questioning, and somewhat cynical attitude.
- **Distance** measures leaders' tendencies to establish a sense of personal worth and security through withdrawal, being superior and remaining aloof, emotionally distant, and above it all.

Complying

- **Passive** measures the degree to which leaders give away their power to others and to circumstances outside their control.
- **Pleasing** measures leaders' needs to seek others' support and approval in order to feel secure and worthwhile.
- **Belonging** measures leaders' need to conform, follow the rules, and meet the expectations of those in authority.
- **Conservative** measures the extent to which leaders think and act conservatively, follow procedure, and live within the prescribed rules of the organization with which they are associated.

REFERENCES

- Alimo-Metcalfe, B., & Alban-Metcalfe, J. (2003). Under the influence. *People Management*, 9(5), pp. 32-36.
- Andersen, J. A. & Hansson, P. H. (2011). At the end of the road? On differences between women and men in leadership behavior. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*. 32 (5), 428-441. doi:10.1108/01437731111146550.
- Anderson, R. (2009). The Leadership circle and organizational performance. Research Paper Series: The Leadership Circle.
- Appelbaum, S., Audet, L., & Miller, J. (2003). Gender and leadership? Leadership and gender? A journey through the landscape of theories. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24(1), 43-51.
- Arata, R. (2018). Vulnerability: A 21st century leadership skill. *Ethics and Values: The Good Men Project*. <https://goodmenproject.com/ethics-values/vulnerability-a-21st-cengry-leadership-skill/>
- Brooks, H. (2011). Women in power: Leadership differences by gender. *Women on Business*. <https://www.womenonbusiness.com>.

- Burke, S., & Collins, K.M. (2001). Gender differences in leadership styles and management skills. *Women in Management Review*, 16(5), pp. 244-257.
- Business News Daily (2020, March). Male vs. female entrepreneurs: How are they different? <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/6762-male-female-entrepreneurs.html#:~:text=Female%20entrepreneurs%20might%20be%20outdoing,comes%20to%20running%20successful%20businesses.&text=According%20to%20the%20findings%2C%20women,and%20time%20with%20their%20children>.
- Chaluvadi, N. (2015). "Differences in Leadership Styles between Genders: Outcomes and Effectiveness of Women in Leadership Roles" MBA Student Scholarship. 35. Johnson & Wales University. https://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/mba_student/35
- Chamorro-Premuzic, T., & Gallop, C. (2020). 7 leadership lessons men can learn from women. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2020/04/7-leadership-lessons-men-can-learn-from-women>
- Chapman, J.B. (2017). Comparison of male and female leadership styles. *Academy of Management Journal*, 18(3). DOI: 10.5465/255695
- Chief Executive. (2016). Leadership differences between Men and women. Chief Executive Research. <https://chiefexecutive.net/leadership-differences-between-men-and-women/>
- Cliff, J. E. (2005). "Walking the talk? Gendered rhetoric vs. action in small firms". *Organization Studies*, 26, 63-91.
- Dalal, D., Lin, B., Smith, B.S., Zickar, M. J. (2008). Psychometric properties and validation of the leadership circle profile. Technical Report. Institute for Psychological Research and Application. Bowling Green State University.
- Eagly, A.H., & Carli, L.L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: an evaluation of the evidence. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14 (6), pp. 807-834.
- Eagly, A.H. & Carli, L. L. (2007). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 85, 62-71.
- Eagly, A.H., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C., & van Engen, M. L. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 569 -591.
- Eagly, A.H. & Johannesen-Schmidt, M.C. (2007). Leadership style matters: The small, but important, style differences between male and female leaders. In Bilimoria, D. and Piderit, K. (Eds), *Handbook on Women in Business and Management*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, Cheltenham, pp. 279-303.
- Eagly, A.H. and Johannesen-Schmidt, M.C. (2011). The leadership styles of women and men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), 781-89.
- Eagly, A.H., Karau, S. J., & Makhijani, M. G. (1995). Gender and the effectiveness of leaders: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 125-145.
- Eklund, K.E., Barry, E.S., & Grunberg, N.E. (2017). Gender and leadership. Chapter in *Gender*

Differences in Different Contexts. DOI:10.5772/65457. <https://www.intechopen.com/books/gender-difference-in-different-contexts/gender-and-leadership>

- Globe (2004). An overview of the 2004 study: Understanding the relationship between national culture, societal effectiveness and desirable leadership attributes. *Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness*. https://globeproject.com/study_2004_2007
- Hamori-Ota, V.E. (2007). Gender differences in leadership style: Predictors of level of agreement between leader self-ratings and supervisory ratings, peer ratings, and ratings by direct reports. Dissertation: University of Michigan.
- Hauwiller, J. (2021). Peer coaching can be a win for organization when everyone plays their part. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2021/05/03/peer-coaching-can-be-a-win-for-organizations-when-everyone-plays-their-part/>
- Horowitz, J.M., Igielnik, R., & Parker, K. (2018). Chapter 2: Views on leadership traits and competencies and how they intersect with gender. Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/09/20/2-views-on-leadership-traits-and-competencies-and-how-they-intersect-with-gender/>
- Hyde, J.S. (2005). The gender similarities hypothesis. *American Psychologist*, 60(6), 581-592 DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.60.6.581
- Ibarra, H. & Obodaru, O. (2009). Women and the vision thing. *Harvard Business Review* pp. 62-70.
- Ito, A., & Bligh, M. (2017). Feeling vulnerable? Disclosure of vulnerability in the charismatic leadership relationship. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 10(3), 66-70.
- Institute for Women's Leadership (2020). Facts & stat Tracking issues in women's leadership. <https://iwl.nichols.edu/facts-stats/>
- Jonsen, K., Maznevski, M.L., & Schneider, S.C. (2010). Gender differences in leadership – believing is seeing: implications for managing diversity. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 29(6), 549-572. DOI: 10.1108/02610151011067504
- Kent, T. W. Blair, C. Rudd, H.F., & Schuele, U. (2010). Gender differences and transformational leadership behavior: Do both German men and women lead in the same way? *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 6(1), 52-66.
- Kinicki, A. & Williams, B. (2009). *Management: A practical introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Irwin, p. 443.
- Leadership. (2012). Insight: The differences between male and female leaders. Trainingzone. <https://www.trainingzone.co.uk/lead/culture/insight-the-differences-between-male-and-female-leaders>
- Lemke, T. (2021). Do companies with female executives perform better? *The Balance*. <https://www.thebalance.com/do-companies-with-female-executives-perform-better-4586443>
- Levy, P. (2010). *Industrial organizational psychology: Understanding the workplace* (3rd ed.). New York: NY: Worth Publishers.

- Lyncova, D. (2020). Shocking male vs female CEO statistics 2020. Leftronic. <https://leftronic.com/ceo-statistics/#:~:text=Amazing%20Female%20CEOs%20Statistics.%20Let%E2%80%99s%20get%20started%2C%20ladies,senior%20management%20roles%2C%20globally%2C%20are%20fulfilled%20by%20women.>
- Madsen, S.R. & Scribner, R.T. (2017). A perspective on gender in management: The need for strategic cross-cultural scholarship on women in management and leadership. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 24(2), 231-250.
- Marinakou, E., & Giousmpasoglou, C. (2015). Gendered leadership as a key to business success, evidence from the Middle East. In Ordóñez de Pablos, P. and Tennyson, R. (Eds) Handbook of Research on Human Resources Strategies for the New Millennial Workforce. Hershey: IGI Global
- Noland, M., Moran, T., & Kotschwar, B. (2016). Is gender diversity profitable? Evidence from a global survey. Peterson Institute for International Economics – Working Paper Series, 16-3. <https://www.piie.com/system/files/documents/wp16-3.pdf>
- Paustian-Underdahl, S.C., Walker, L.S., & Woehr, D.J. (2014). Gender and perceptions of leadership effectiveness: A meta-analysis of contextual moderators. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99(6), 1129-1145.
- Radu, C., Deaconu, A., & Frăsineanu, C. (2017). Leadership and gender differences—Are Men and women leading in the same way? *Intech Open*. <https://www.intechopen.com/books/contemporary-leadership-challenges/leadership-and-gender-differences-are-men-and-women-leading-in-the-same-way->
- Reddy, K. (2018). Male vs female leadership: Differences and similarities. *Wisestep*. <https://content.wisestep.com/male-vs-female-leadership/>
- Riggio, R.E. (2010). Do men and women lead differently? Who's better? *Psychology Today*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201003/do-men-and-women-lead-differently-whos-better>
- Rosette, A. S. & Tost, L. P. (2010). Agentic women and communal leadership: How role prescriptions confer advantage to top women leaders. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(2), 221-235. doi:10.1037/a0018204. PMID 20230065.
- Smith, D.G., Rosenstein, J.E., & Nikolov, M.C. (2018). The different words we use to describe male and female leaders. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2018/05/the-different-words-we-use-to-describe-male-and-female-leaders#:~:text=Our%20research%20on%20leadership%20attributes%20found%20significant%20differences,more%20often%20assigned%20compassionate%2C%20enthusiastic%2C%20energetic%20and%20organized.>
- Snaebjornsson, I.M., Edvardsson, I.R., Zydziunaite, V., & Vaiman, V. (2015). Cultural leadership: Expectations on gendered leaders' behavior. *Sage*. April-June, 1-8.
- Stentz, J.E., Clark, V.L.P., & Matkin, G.S. (2012). Applying mixed methods to leadership research: A review of current practices. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(6), 1173-1183.
- Ting, H.-I. (2021). CEO gender, power and bank performance: evidence from Chinese banks. *Journal*

of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy. DOI: 10.1108/JEC-04-2020-0065

Trinidad, C. & Normore, A.H. (2005). Leadership and gender: A dangerous liaison? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 26(7), 574-590.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020). Labor force statistics from the current population survey. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

Van Dusen, L. (2020). LCP and bias. Unpublished technical report. Worldwide Institute for Research and Evaluation.

Van Edwards, V. (2017). Battle of the sexes: Male vs. female leadership. Huffpost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/battle-of-the-sexes-male-vs-female-leadership_b_59647ddbe4b09be68c00551a

Vecchio, R.P. (2002). Leadership and gender advantage. *Leadership Quarterly*, 13(6), 643-671.

Vecchio, R.P. (2003). In search of gender advantage. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), pp. 835-850.

Wharton (2005). The 'masculine' and 'feminine' sides of leadership and culture: Perception vs Reality. Leadership Conference help at Wharton Business College, University of Pennsylvania. <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/the-masculine-and-feminine-sides-of-leadership-and-culture-perception-vs-reality/>

Yukl, G. (2002). *Leadership in organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2019). Research: Women score higher than men in most leadership skills. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2019/06/research-women-score-higher-than-men-in-most-leadership-skills>