‘Female leadership for a sustainable European Management Model (EMM)’

Literature study

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Introduction

Recent years have seen an increasing focus on female leadership. Women have made substantial gains in the workplace, and it appears the glass ceiling has been broken. Despite this positive evolution, the number of female leaders is surprisingly low. In the fifty largest publicly traded corporations in each nation in the European Union, women hold only 11 per cent of the top executive positions and account for only 4 per cent of the CEOs and presidents of boards of directors.

This study focuses on female leadership for the sake of a sustainable European Management Model. Eurocadres wishes to develop a European model of female leadership and to incorporate this model into the European Management Model. We have therefore studied the literature on female leadership over recent decades. In the first section, we discuss the current status of female leadership. In the second section, we discuss the importance of gender diversity in business. In the third section, we present the possible pitfalls which female leaders may encounter in their leadership position. In the fourth and fifth sections, we search for leadership skills and styles which lead to successful and effective leadership. In the sixth section, we answer the question whether there is a specific female leadership style. In the seventh and last section, we discuss how this female leadership model fits into the European Management Model and how the two models can empower each other.
The glass ceiling is broken

In 1986, the Wall Street Journal stated that women in their working carrier eventually crash into an invisible barrier, a concept introduced as ‘the glass ceiling’ (Hymowitz & Schellhard, 1986; Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, during recent decades, women have made substantial gains in the workplace (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger & Meaney, 2008). In the United States, women now constitute 46 per cent of all full-time and part-time workers (Eagly & Carli, 2007); in Europe 45 per cent. Several factors have influenced these changes in the workplace. For example, anti-discrimination laws have been introduced to prevent women from being denied access to (higher-level) employment activities (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Furthermore, women not only attain more education than a couple of decades ago, they also seem to attain more education than their male counterparts. Eagly & Carli (2007) state that for every 100 men enrolled in all types of post-secondary education, there are 129 women in the United States, 155 in Sweden, 137 in the United Kingdom, 128 in France and 122 in Spain. Therefore we can conclude that lack of education is no longer an obstacle for women in the workplace.

These changes in women’s positions in the workplace have not passed by unnoticed. In 2004, the Wall Street Journal published a special section on the topic, entitled ‘Through the glass ceiling’, stating that the glass ceiling had finally been broken (Hymowitz & Schellhard, 1986; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Eagly & Carli (2007) agree with this perspective, and even take it to a further level. The authors state that the metaphor of the glass ceiling is no longer valid.

“Prejudice and discrimination that slow down or sometimes completely block women’s advancement have surely not disappeared, but the idea of a glass ceiling, with its portrayal of inflexible limits, has lingered too long. The facts demand a new image. [...] We offer a new metaphor, the labyrinth, that captures the varied challenges confronting women as they travel, often on indirect paths, sometimes through alien territory, on their way to leadership”.

But although women now represent a larger proportion of the world’s labour force, their share of top positions remains surprisingly low (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Desvaux et al.,
2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kaminski & Yakura, 2008; Schein, 2001). In the fifty largest publicly traded corporations in each nation in the European Union, women hold about 11 per cent of the top executive positions and account for 4 per cent of the CEOs and presidents of boards of directors (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In the United States, fewer than a third of the leading 15,000 companies had women among the top executives in 2006 (Desvaux et al., 2008). Fisher’s study in 1992 surveyed 201 CEOs in the United States: only 2% considered it probable their company would have a female CEO within the next decade (Oakley, 2000).

It seems that women continue to lack access to power and leadership compared to men (Carli & Eagly, 2001). The successful routes to leadership seem to be difficult to discover for women, therefore Eagly & Carli (2007) propose the use of a new metaphor, the labyrinth. The metaphor of the labyrinth suggests that the barriers which women face in finding the route to high-level positions consist not of one absolute barrier, but of numerous barriers, some rather subtle and others quite obvious (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Thanks to the progression towards equal opportunities for women and men, the barriers women encounter no longer take the form of a rigid glass ceiling, but are more subtle and diverse, underlying the route to high-level positions (Desvaux et al., 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007).
A (business) case for women

Business arguments

Now why do women matter in high-level positions? Desvaux et al. (2008) distinguish two important reasons why women matter in business. The first argument states that gender diversity can meet and stimulate certain business goals. For example, in the future there will be a need for more talented employees in several sectors and countries (Desvaux et al., 2008). Many countries, the authors state, face a shortage of talent at almost all levels. The proportion of women in the workplace can partially fill this gap (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger & Meaney, 2008). Also, in many male-dominated domains, such as IT or engineering, there is a serious shortage of talent on the one hand, and a high percentage of women educated but inactive in these domains on the other. Gender diversity programmes can thus help certain business goals, such as increasing productivity and attracting talented people.

The second argument proposed by the authors is the positive relationship between the number of women working in an organization and corporate performance (Desvaux et al., 2008). McKinsey has done numerous studies on the nature of this relationship. The results of the research have shown two important findings. First, companies with a high score in nine well-defined organizational dimensions have higher operational margins than companies with lower scores. Second, companies employing three or more women in senior executive positions score more highly in these dimensions than companies without senior-level women (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger & Meaney, 2008).

The intrinsic importance of diversity

Without minimizing the importance of business goals and corporate performance, we could state that these arguments represent an important but rather instrumental view of the importance of gender diversity. Other scholars emphasize the importance of gender diversity in its own right (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, 1995, Rosener, 1990). Much of this argumentation is based on Kanter’s 1977 work on tokenism, which states that women’s
proportional representation within an organization and within work groups affects their workplace experiences (Ely, 1995). Ely (1995) states that “with no or few women in positions of power, sex may persist as a salient category with negative consequences for women lower down in the organization, despite balanced representation at lower levels”. The effects of this tokenism in the context of female leadership are something that we will discuss further on, in the section focusing on the pitfalls of female leadership. It is important to realize that the necessity for gender diversity, here discussed in the context of female leadership, is not based on one single argument, but can be subscribed from different perspectives.

**Female leadership for a sustainable EMM**

In 1997, Eurocadres stressed the importance of 10 areas for action that have a key role to play in shaping a European Management Model (Eurocadres, 1997). One of these areas is “to enhance the diversity of management methods in our countries, reflecting the cultural diversity of Europe”. In 2006-2007, Eurocadres conducted the study ‘Women in Decision-making: From Europe to the Company’. The results of this study showed that “women in decision-making positions face difficulties and obstacles when they have already entered decision-making positions”. These obstacles are created by the differences in leadership styles, which lead to misunderstanding, mistrust, clashes and conflicts. A model of female leadership can therefore mark another pillar of the European Management Model, offering diversity of leadership styles and values.
**Pitfalls of female leadership**

The remarkable absence of women in leadership positions raises the question why this female drop-out takes place, despite the earlier discussed positive changes experienced with regard to women’s position in the workplace and in society (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Desvaux et al., 2008). There seems to be an incongruence in reality. On the one hand, many scholars and journalists seem to be quite optimistic about the future rise of women as corporate leaders. In Business Week, for example, Sharpe claimed that “after years of analyzing what makes leaders most effective and figuring out who’s got the Right Stuff, management gurus now know how to boost the odds of getting a great executive: Hire a female” (Sharpe, 2000, in Business Week; from Eagly & Carli, 2003). Harvard Business School professor Regina Herzlinger even states that women will form a large part of the Fortune 500 CEOs by 2010 (Stanford et al., 1995). On the other hand, many scholars recognize that there are still several pitfalls which women face on their path to high-level positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

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**Trade-off between family and work**

In ‘Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders’, Eagly & Carli (2007) distinguish several possible factors that can become pitfalls for women on the path to leadership. First, they discuss the impact of family responsibilities on women’s careers. Women often face trade-offs between family and career. Although male input in domestic work has never been higher than today, men still do not fully share domestic responsibility with women. Therefore women often face this trade-off between family and work, and are forced to take more leave, maternity breaks, and work more regular hours. Another downside of this possible trade-off is that people expect women to put less effort into work than men, on the assumption that in the trade-off between family and career, women will choose family as their primary concern. Eagly & Carli (2007) found these assumptions to be mistaken, on the basis of the studies of Bielby & Bielby (1988). Women do not put less effort into their work, they simply organize their work in a different way, by avoiding long lunches or after-work drinks for example.
Discrimination

A second possible pitfall concerns discrimination. Eagly & Carli (2007) pose the question whether discrimination is still a problem. They conclude that both wage differences and promotions are still influenced by different forms of discrimination. They state that – even though the numbers show a positive evolution – the gender gap in authority remains. Promotions for women, for example, come more slowly than for men, assuming equivalent positions. The authors state that it is important to correctly understand this difference concerning promotion: it must not be seen as the glass ceiling, namely women being particularly blocked from high-level functions. The decreasing number of women going up the hierarchical organizational ladder is the result of a bias against women of all ranks, which has a consequence for the number of women in higher positions.

Prejudice

These forms of discriminatory behavior can come from underlying processes creating prejudice, which is the third factor that Eagly & Carli (2007) recognize as a possible pitfall for female leaders. It does not necessarily concern outright forms of prejudice, but relates rather to subtle links which people tend to make (Alvesson & Billing, 1992; Eagly & Carli, 2007). “People associate women and men with different traits, linking men with more of the traits that connote leadership. Such conclusions can make people believe that no woman could have the ‘right stuff’ for powerful jobs”. This link between male traits and leadership traits is a consequence of two phenomena, gender stereotyping (Eagly & Carli 2007) and gender symbolism (Alvesson & Billing, 1992).

Gender stereotypes are constituted by our beliefs about social groups, such as the social group of women. These beliefs about women are descriptive (what we think they are) and prescriptive (what we think they should be). Eagly & Carli (2007) state that there are two typical associations which people tend to make when gender stereotyping: the communal and the agentic association. These associations are important for an understanding of the impact of these gender roles. Agentic attributes such as assertiveness, control and confidence are much more often ascribed to men than to women (Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt, 2001). Communal attributes, however, are mainly ascribed to women, who are seen as friendly, helpful and concerned with the compassionate treatment of others.
Women are therefore influenced by this gender role, which associates women with communal attributes. People use these stereotypes unconsciously as shortcuts for judgment making. This gender stereotyping creates the danger of reducing masculinity and femininity to a rigid ‘dualism’, without room for different forms of one of them (e.g. a masculine woman or a feminine man). Alvesson & Billing (1992) state that it is best to avoid this gender stereotyping by starting from a more differentiated view on gender, seeing gender stereotypes as socially constructed ideas, and not as fixed definitions of what women and men are. We must realize that what we stereotype as ‘female’ is a socially constructed idea of what ‘female’ means.

Besides this gender stereotyping, there is also a connection between gender and organizational symbolism. Every organization, position or sector has some kind of gendered image or aura (Alvesson & Billing, 1992). This means that leadership roles are also ‘gendered’. Leadership roles “are like other organizational norms, (they) provide norms that regulate the performance of many tasks, which would therefore be similarly accomplished by male and female role occupants” (Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt, 2001). But higher-level positions are commonly seen as ‘masculine’; the more highly a position ranks in an organizational hierarchy, the more this position becomes associated with the male character (Alvesson & Billing, 1992). This is generally referred to as the ‘think manager – think male’ phenomenon. This is a combination of the earlier discussed gender stereotyping and evolutionary psychology. “Many evolutionary psychologists claim that leadership is inherent in the male psyche” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). They believe men to be more dominant and competitive than women, and therefore more likely to gain authority roles. Eagly & Carli (2007) state that such assumptions are erroneous or at least inconclusive, since they are based on limited sources of data. Wood & Eagly state in their biosocial origin theory that the typical roles of women and men “are not fixed but change over time, reflecting the ability of each sex to perform important tasks in its particular culture”.

Berthoin Antal & Izraeli (1993) stated that “probably the single most important hurdle of women in management in all industrialized countries is the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male”. “As a result,” Eagly & Carli (2007) state, “stereotypes block women’s progress through the labyrinth in two ways: by fueling
people’s doubt about women’s leadership abilities and by making women personally anxious concerning these doubts”.

**Resistance to female leadership**

The fourth possible pitfall for female leaders can be seen as a direct consequence of the unconscious use of gender stereotypes. When people make judgments on female leaders through the use of gender stereotypes, they can develop a tendency towards resistance to female leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This resistance is based on two forms of stereotyping. On the one hand, gender symbolism suggests that leadership roles are masculine, because they are associated with male characteristics. On the other hand, gender stereotypes see women as communal, being friendly, helpful and kind. The authors refer to this phenomenon as the “double bind” faced by female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2007). This double bind concerns a perceived incongruity between the female gender role and typical leader roles. On the one hand, women tend to be evaluated less favorably because leadership abilities are perceived more to be stereotypical of men than of women (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002). On the other hand, women tend to be evaluated less favorably concerning their actual leadership behavior, because perceived ‘male’ behavior, such as agentic behavior, is perceived as less desirable in women than men (Eagly & Karau; Eagly & Carli, 2007). We can therefore conclude that there is a negative tension between women’s role as leaders and their gender role: “conforming to their gender role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role”.

**Visibility, exaggeration of differences and stereotyping**

Gardiner & Tiggemann (1999) distinguish three similar pitfalls which female leaders can encounter: visibility, exaggeration of differences and stereotyping. These pitfalls, the authors state, can lead to increasing levels of performance pressure and stress, which in
their turn lead to decreased motivation for women to participate in the workplace. First, high visibility can lead to increasing performance pressure. As stated earlier, tokenism can make women feel as if they are ‘under constant observation’. In several studies, women reported experiencing stress from constantly having the feeling they should perform better than their male colleagues. Often women with a token status change their style accordingly, adopting a more ‘masculine’ style (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Kanter, 1977; van Engen, van der Leeden & Willemsen, 2001). Second, the exaggeration of differences can lead to isolation of female leaders and lack of support (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999). Third, stereotyping leads to the double bind discussed earlier, again increasing the level of performance pressure and stress. Eagly & Carli (2007) refer to a similar pressure-increasing phenomenon. When people are in a situation where they might confirm an unfavorable stereotype about a social group to which they belong, we speak of stereotype threat.

Because of all these possible pitfalls which women may encounter on their path to leadership, we may state that it is correct to see this path as a labyrinth, slowing down and hindering women in achieving their leadership position. We cannot speak of clear and visible obstructions, such as outright discrimination; the pitfalls women may encounter are subtle, often even unintended and the result of unconscious stereotyping processes.
Successful leadership skills

A tremendous amount of research has been conducted in exploring which skills, traits, characteristics and competences lead to successful and effective leadership. Bass’s *Handbook of Leadership* (1990) comprises an enormous number of studies performed to discover possible dimensions or characteristics of leadership. Intelligence, scholarship, knowledge, dominance, and even elements of physical appearance have all been investigated concerning their relation to leadership. But what do we mean when we speak about leadership? Giving one clear-cut definition of leadership is an impossible task. Leadership has been conceived as many things, such as the exercise of influence, an effect of interaction, the focus of group processes or a power relation (Bass, 1990). Eagly & Carli (2007) propose working with a fairly straightforward definition of leadership. According to them, a leader is someone who “exercises authority over other people. Leadership entails being in charge of other people in multiple ways. It consists of influencing, motivating, organizing, and coordinating the work of others”.

Leadership theories

In the literature on leadership we find three primary classifications of leadership theories: personal behavior theories, traits theories and contingency theories (Stanford et al., 1995). These different theories all focus on which type of factors determine leadership. First we discuss the different types of leadership theories; the most important leadership styles will be discussed in the next section.

*Personal behavior theories* state that leaders can best be classified by their personal qualities or behavioral patterns (Stanford et al., 1995). They concentrate primarily on what the leader does in carrying out the managerial job. An example of such a classification is Blake & Mouton’s (1968) Managerial Grid Theory. They distinguish five personal behaviors or styles of leaders, based on their values, opinions and feelings. These styles are situated on a grid, with care for production on one axis, and care for employees on the other.
Each value is numbered from 1 to 9, with 1 presenting a low level of care and 9 the maximum care. The two dimensions must be seen as interdependent on one another (Blake & Mouton, 1968). The five combinations of these two dimensions are the 1.1 style, which means a minimum of care for both people and production; the 9.9 style as the contrary and the 1.9, 9.1 and 5.5 as variations in between (Blake & Mouton, 1968).

Traits theories of leadership focus on traits or characteristics which individuals inherently possess (Bass, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Stanford et al., 1995). These theories suggest that some traits have specific potential for making people effective leaders. A famous scheme on personality traits is known as the Big Five, proposed by Tupes & Christal (1961). The Big Five suggests a scheme of broad personality constructs that are manifested in more specific traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Eagly & Carli (2007) state that, among the five constructs, conscientiousness and extraversion are the strongest predictors of leadership.

Contingency theories state that situational aspects are the primary determinants of what makes leaders effective and successful (Bass, 1990; Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs & Flaishman, 2000; Stanford et al., 1995). Mumford et al. (2000) emphasize the importance of recognizing the influence of situational and environmental elements. These theories thus state that although traits theories and personal behavior theories may be very useful, we cannot predict successful leadership based on traits or behaviors alone, since they are always influenced by situational elements. Fiedler (1967), for example, distinguishes three important situational dimensions (Fiedler, 1967; Stanford et al., 1995): the leader-member relations; the structure of the tasks; and the power inherent in the leadership position.

Given these different perspectives on the predictors and determinants of successful leadership, it appears to be close to an impossible task to provide one clear-cut model of successful leadership skills. With the introduction of transformational leadership, scholars found a more dynamic way to look at leadership. Transformational leadership became at the same time both a leadership style and a leadership model. Therefore we will discuss the concept of transformational leadership in the next section, exploring leadership styles.
Eagly & Carli (2007) proposed a list of characteristics ascribed to successful leadership, which can offer a general orientation of successful leadership.

| Change agent: Inspirational, risk taker, energetic, decisive, persuasive |
| Managerial courage: Courageous, learns from adversity, resilient, resourceful |
| Leadership ability: Intelligent, leadership ability, team builder, well-informed, visionary, strategic thinker |
| Result oriented: Proactive, industrious, articulate, politically astute, action oriented, high expectations, achievement oriented |
Leadership styles

For decades, scholars have been proposing classifications of leadership styles (Bass, 1990; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). Many efforts have been made to extrapolate conclusions from one special type of leadership to another leadership style (Bass, 1990). By leadership styles, we mean “the alternative ways that leaders pattern their interactive behavior to fulfill their roles as leaders” (Bass, 1990). We discuss the most important leadership styles in a thematic way, since many of the ‘styles’ are variants of one single theme.

Autocracy versus democracy

One of the first classifications was proposed by Lewin & Lippitt (1938). They suggested a continuum of autocracy versus democracy. On the one end of the continuum is autocracy, ranking leaders who do not allow interference by employees, and at the other extreme of the continuum is democracy, ranking leaders behaving in a more democratic way (van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

Task-oriented versus interpersonally-oriented style

Another common distinction is that of the task-oriented style versus the interpersonally-oriented style, introduced by Bales (1950). A task-oriented style means emphasizing behavior that accomplishes assigned tasks, maintaining high standards of performance and having employees follow rules and procedures (Eagly & Carli, 2007; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). An interpersonally-oriented style means “emphasizing behavior that maintains positive interpersonal relationships” (Eagly & Carli, 2007), such as being available, friendly, and looking out for employees’ welfare (Stanford et al., 2007). Some scholars see these as two ends of one single dimension, while others see them as two different dimensions. We could state that both Likert’s participative model of job-centered versus employee-centered leadership, as well as Tannenbaum & Schmidt’s (1973) job-centered versus employee-centered continuum, are rather similar to Bales’ paradigm (Likert, 1961).
Communion and agency

The concepts of communion and agency were introduced by Bakan (1966). In the context of an organizational setting, ‘agentic’ is described by Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt (2001) as referring to being assertive, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions. ‘Communal’, on the other hand, the authors describe as speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others’ direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems. These two characteristics play an important role in the debate on masculine and feminine leadership styles and gender stereotyping, as discussed earlier.

Participative versus directive

House (1971) suggested a path-goal theory on leadership styles, distinguishing four different leadership styles: directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented. Again the opposites seem to concern task orientation and attention towards subordinates.

Transactional, transformational and laissez-faire

The most important paradigm of leadership styles in today’s literature is that of transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles, proposed by Burns (1978). In the period, this paradigm was proposed by Burns (1978), with the focus in leadership theory being no longer mainly on personal behavior or personal traits, but shifting towards a more dynamic understanding of leadership, including the aspect of transaction or exchange between the leader and his subordinates (Bass, 1990). Leadership no longer necessarily comes from one or a few individuals located at the top, but is more widespread throughout the company. These leadership styles are also referred to as post-heroic, because they no longer assume the single, all-powerful leader (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Laissez-faire leadership is “marked by a general failure to take responsibility for the management” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). A laissez-faire leader exhibits frequent absence
and lack of involvement during critical junctures (Judge & Bono, 2000; from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-5X).

Transactional leadership means obtaining cooperation by establishing exchanges with subordinates and then monitoring the exchange relationship (Judge & Bono, 2000). A transactional leader provides rewards for satisfactory performance, attends to employees’ mistakes and failures to meet standards, and waits until problems become severe before attending to them and intervening (Judge & Bono, 2000; from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-5X). The concept of transactional leadership was divided into three dimensions later on, these being contingent reward, management by exception in an active way, and management by exception in a passive way, corresponding to the characteristics discussed (Judge & Bono, 2000; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Transformational leadership means “establishing oneself as a role model by gaining followers’ trust and confidence” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Transformational leaders demonstrate qualities that motivate respect and pride from association; they communicate values, purposes, and the importance of the organization’s mission; they exhibit optimism and excitement about goals and future states; they examine new perspectives for solving problems and completing tasks; and they focus on development and mentoring of followers and attend to their individual needs (Judge & Bono, 2000; from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-5X). Burns (1978) conceived leaders to have one of the three leadership styles. The concept of transformational leadership was divided into four dimensions later on: charisma or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualistic consideration (Judge & Bono, 2005; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Bass (1990) modified Burns’s paradigm in an important way, stating that although transactional leadership and transformational leadership are two empirically separable concepts, they can both be displayed by a single person (Bass, 1990; Judge & Bono, 2000). Bass (1990) proposed “that transformational leadership augments the effects of transactional leadership on the efforts, satisfaction, and effectiveness of subordinates”.

“Many of the great transformational leaders, including Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy, did not shy away from being transactional as
well as transformational. They were able to move the nation as well as play petty politics” (Bass, 1990).

Eagly & Carli (2007) state that most researchers intended the concept of transformational leadership to capture the essence of effective leadership under modern conditions. Therefore the concept of transformational leadership can also be considered as a model for successful leadership (Bass, 1990). There also seems to be evidence of this effectiveness, provided by the meta-analysis performed by Judge & Piccolo (2004). They found higher effectiveness overall for transformational leaders.
Recognition of a specific female leadership style?

Although for several decades a large body of studies has focused on different leadership styles, some scholars have recently shifted the focus to whether a difference exists between the leadership styles of women and men (Bass, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Stanford et al., 1995). Some scholars see this debate as useless, and state that what is important is the end result: “it does not make any difference how you lead as long as your leadership style is an effective one” (Stanford et al., 1995). Some scholars emphasize the importance of finding a new model for female leadership which can serve as a blueprint for effectiveness (Stanford et al., 1995). Considering the earlier discussion of the pitfalls which female leaders can encounter in their position, it seems useful to us to investigate this possible difference in leadership styles.

Gender roles and leadership roles

In this debate on female leadership styles, there are scholars who emphasize the sex differences in leadership roles – especially in the feminist literature – and scholars who emphasize the similarities (Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt, 2001). Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt (2001), however, state that it might be better to avoid this dichotomy by starting from the perspective of the social role theory of sex differences and similarities. This theory states that leaders are influenced not only by leadership roles, but also by the gender roles discussed earlier. “In emphasizing gender roles as well as leader roles, social role theorists argue that leaders occupy roles defined by their specific position in a hierarchy and simultaneously function under the constraints of their gender roles” (Eagly, Johanessen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003). This leadership role consists of formal norms and more informal actions which are less regulated by the organizational leadership role. Therefore Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt (2001) state that it is probable that most gender differences in leadership behavior concern these discretionary and less regulated aspects. “Gender is able to exert its effects on leadership because leaders have some latitude in fulfilling their roles” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). So women are simultaneously occupied by the gender role and their leadership role. It is important to realize that the influence of
gender roles is not only external, but that most people have to some extent internalized these gender roles (Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt, 2001).

**Female leadership: communal and/or transformational?**

In 1990, Cann & Siegfried performed two separate studies to assess the correspondence between gender stereotypes and dimensions of effective leadership. The results of the study indicated that consideration, one of the dimensions of effective leadership, is typically perceived as a feminine trait. They concluded that “despite stereotypic expectations that portray effective leadership as dominated by masculine qualities, the behavior recognized as relevant to successful leadership includes behaviors that are viewed as feminine” (Cann & Siegfried, 1990). Cann & Siegfried (1990) state that leaders must therefore seek to be behaviorally androgynous, behaving in ways associated with both masculine and feminine styles.

Since both sex difference in leadership styles and the transformational leadership style have begun to come under close attention, researchers have started seeking the possible patterns between sex and the transformational leadership style. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen (2003) performed an important meta-analysis comparing women and men with respect to their transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. The results showed significant sex differences in most aspects of the three leadership styles (Bass, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007). One point that was especially interesting was the finding that women, more than men, have generally effective leadership styles, being somewhat more transformational than male leaders, especially concerning support-giving and motivating subordinates (Bass, 1990; Eagly & Johanessen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly, Johanessen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003). “There are some reliable (albeit small-effect size) gender differences in leadership styles, whereby women leaders emphasize both interpersonal relations and task accomplishment more than do men” (Gardiner & Tiggeman, 1999).

Now why do women leaders favor transformational leadership? We can suggest several possible explanations for this phenomenon. First, individualized consideration, one of the four dimensions of transformational leadership, is consistent with the gender stereotype association of women being communal (Eagly & Carli, 2007). They are both concerned
with interpersonal relations, caring about the well-being of others. Second, female leaders often face legitimacy problems, because of employees resisting or judging their leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Therefore it is not improbable that women use a more democratic, participative leadership style to ‘earn’ this legitimacy and to avoid resistance from subordinates.

Gender and values

With the focus on differences between male and female leadership styles becoming quite popular, we must also consider possible sex differences in underlying values of leadership behavior. “Values are attitudes about end states and behaviors that guide the selection and evaluation of behaviors and events. They transcend specific situations and, when comprehensively measured, are ordered in a hierarchy of importance”. In keeping with the results on transformational leadership, research on job values also indicates that women attach more importance to jobs that involve helping others (Beutel & Marini, 1995). Women are also more likely to overlook differences between themselves and others, and are more likely to support policies that regulate and protect citizens, consumers and the environment (Beutel & Marini, 1995). Furthermore, the study found that females are less likely to accept materialism and competition (Beutel & Marini, 1995).
Female (transformational) leadership for a sustainable European Management Model

We have seen that transformational leadership is proposed by literature as the leadership style that best captures the essence of effective leadership under modern conditions. Therefore we propose the model of transformational leadership as guidance towards successful leadership. Transformational leaders demonstrate qualities that motivate respect and pride from association; they communicate values, purposes and the importance of the organization’s mission; they exhibit optimism and excitement about goals and future states; they examine new perspectives for solving problems and completing tasks; and they focus on the development and mentoring of followers and attend to their individual needs. Seen in the framework of a sustainable European Management Model, this type of leadership style can stimulate the broad range of values which the European Management Model puts forward, such as the importance of long-term thinking, stakeholder engagement, social accountability and professional development (Eurocadres, 2004).

Furthermore, we have seen that female leaders tend to use this transformational leadership style because it is in harmony with their gender role as well as their leadership role within the organization. Within the framework of the European Management Model, the search for a model of female leadership is important for the realization of that model. “Companies have to become learning organizations, they have to provide safe spaces and the appropriate environment for learning, openness and diversity” (Eurocadres, 2004). The European Management Model states that a company culture should allow employees to share their expertise and take the initiative for improvement and innovation. A transformational approach can guarantee such an open climate. In 1997, Eurocadres stressed the importance of 10 areas for action that are of key importance for shaping an EMM. One of these areas is “to enhance the diversity of management methods in our countries, reflecting the cultural diversity of Europe”. A model of female leadership can therefore mark another pillar of the EMM, offering diversity of leadership styles and values. “Diversity is considered as an asset, whose implementation will require a major effort in terms of innovation” (Eurocadres, 1997).
What can companies do to prevent pitfalls?

Eagly (2005) states that leadership training can help female leaders in their position. First, leadership training should focus on exploring the legitimacy deficit which female leaders experience. This can help towards understanding and solving why subordinates are resistant towards the female leader. Second, the negotiation of potential value disagreements with subordinates should also be considered (Eagly, 2005). Third, training should address the issue of effectively projecting the leadership authority. Training can help women achieve identification and trust from their subordinates. This is an important aspect, since people often dislike women leaders who adapt to masculine leadership styles. This way, Eagly (2005) states, female leaders can achieve relation identification, by knowing themselves and acting upon their beliefs.

A business case for women

Yoder (2001) emphasizes the importance of *gender- and context-sensitive analysis*. We must not only focus on the female leadership, but also on the gendered context of the leadership. “In contexts undergoing change and with broadened measures of leadership effectiveness beyond task completion, transformational leadership appears to work similarly for women and men leaders” (Yoder, 2001).

Conclusion

It is important to recognize the need for an empirically tested model for female leadership. Women’s access to leadership roles creates a gain for equal opportunities, with or without a female leadership model. But without a specific model for female leadership, the transformation and exchange in the organization will never be optimized (Eagly, 2005). “The foundation that can serve women best is a female model of leadership, well grounded in empirical data, that can serve as a blueprint for effectiveness, just as an architectural drawing guides the building of an edifice” (Stanford, Oates & Flores, 1995).
References


