

ABSTRACT

Gender, Computer-Mediated Leadership, and the Utilization of Disciplinary Measures:
Breaking the Unequal Distribution of Power and Social Stereotypes
that Invade Face-to-Face Communication

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Virtual workplaces are presently reconfiguring old notions of organizational life. These online, computer-mediated realms are providing fresh perspectives on leadership and presenting new challenges and opportunities for leaders. Preconceived ideas of acceptable feminine performance have previously limited women's contributions to organizational life and prevented female leaders from enacting their own individual dispositions. However, computer-mediated settings revolutionize these long-standing rules that define successful leadership and the socially accepted behavior of men and women. An equalization trend emerges, and female leaders are freed from traditional gendered stereotypes and regulating social context clues. This study was conducted to satisfy two important objectives: (a) to add to the research on leadership by comparing the disciplinary strategies emitted by male and female leaders in the virtual workspace, and (b) to add new understandings of gender by determining if the portrayals of male and female leaders collected in face-to-face communication transcend into a virtual framework.

Gender, Computer-Mediated Leadership, and the Utilization of Disciplinary Measures:
Breaking the Unequal Distribution and Social Stereotypes
that Invade Face-to-Face Communication

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CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction and Review of the Literature

Introduction

Although women have overcome inhibiting cultural conditions and constructed new gateways to leadership opportunities in the past three decades, they are still underrepresented in organizational positions of power, especially in the formal sphere. While it's natural to assume that women's presence in corporate offices and top earning positions in the largest companies in the United States has increased with the passing of each year, the actual statistics of women advancement fail to corroborate this optimism. In 2007, women accounted for 15.4 percent of corporate officer positions at *Fortune* 500 companies, this number dropped from 15.6 percent in 2006. Women represented 6.7 percent of top earner positions in 2007--a static percentage from the year before. Moreover, the number of companies housing no women corporate officers rose from 64 in 2006 to 74 in 2007, and the number of companies with three or more women board directors decreased from 234 to 203 (Catalyst Census, 2007).

It can be argued that women must continually negotiate the constraints of the "glass ceiling" (for a more in depth definition of the glass ceiling see Weiss, 1999). Even when women attain higher levels of power and prestige, they are frequently limited in methods of influence. Gender stereotypes and gender biases in evaluation often situate women in leadership positions of perceived powerlessness in which their subordinates

fail to trust their instincts and their ability to mobilize forces and make good decisions (Payne, Fugua, & Cangemi, 2001).

However, a new workplace is reconfiguring organizational life, and is presenting new challenges and opportunities for male and female leadership. It is also providing fresh perspectives on leadership. The virtual and computer-mediated realm in organizational life is one that is growing and evolving, and the conditions of this virtuality are redefining leadership roles and how we evaluate the effectiveness of organizational leaders and managers (Zigurs, 2003; Lojeski & Reilly, 2008). Leaders are now required to motivate, supervise, direct, and establish positive relationships with employees in both face-to-face and virtual settings by appearing empathetic and asserting authority (Kayworth & Leidner, 2002). Because of this, they have to modify and re-strategize critical aspects of their leadership in order to be successful in these multifaceted surroundings (Kayworth & Leidner, 2000; Bell & Kozlowski, 2002).

Scholarship on virtual leadership is proceeding at an impressive pace, and the bulk of this research has examined how the process of leadership is enacted in virtual teams. Literature has emerged which examines a variety of issues including the normative practices leaders should utilize when communicating with virtual groups (Hambley et al, 2007a; Hambley et al, 2007b; Fisher & Fisher, 2001; Hoefling, 2001; Pauleen, 2004; Zaccaro & Bader, 2003; Godar & Ferris, 2004). However, more needs to be known about how leaders manage individual relationships with members in a virtual world, and how mediated environments change the styles, strategies, and conversational moves of leaders toward members.

Within this small amount of scholarship conducted on leader-member virtual relationships, previous scholars have rightly devoted their attention to motivational strategies used by leaders (Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2003, Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Geister, Konradt, & Hertel, 2006; Furst et al, 2004), as well as methods of attaining trust (Handy, 1995; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Jarvenpaa, Knoll, & Leidner, 1998; Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2002; Magllivan, 2001; Wu & Tsang, 2007), establishing group identity (Zhang, 2007; Bouas & Arrow, 1995; Martins, Gilson, & Maynard, 2004; Donath, 1999; Rogers & Lea, 2005), and overcoming cultural barriers in cyberspace (Chevrier, 2003; Jude-York, Davis, & Wise, 2000; Rutkowski et al, 2007; Axtell, Fleck, & Turner, 2004; Dekker, Rutte, & Van den Berg, 2008). Still, very little is known about how virtual leaders discipline their subordinates in an on-line world, and how it may differ in comparison to the measures employed in face-to-face leadership. This is surprising considering employee discipline has always been regarded as an essential component of the leadership repertoire.

Belohlav (1985, p. xi) describes discipline as “the link between individuals (and their needs) and the organization (and its needs), while Greer & Labig (1987) refer to it as “an important albeit distasteful function in almost every manager’s job” (p. 507). No matter how unpleasant the process may be, it is necessary to advance organizational efficiency and productivity. Indeed, an organizational culture of discipline has been pinpointed as one of the seven timeless principles enabling organizations to make that transition from being good to great (Collins, 2001). It serves as the most frequent issue invoking labor arbitration (Belohlav, 1985). Additionally, it also is a very prominent

issue within organizations, as 52% of American workers have observed at least one type of ethical misconduct in the workplace (National Business Ethics Survey, 2005).

This thesis was conducted to hopefully satisfy two important objectives. First, it was conducted to add to the research on leadership by comparing the disciplinary strategies emitted by male and female leaders in the virtual work environment. Second, it was conducted to add new understandings of gender by determining how the portrayals of male and female leaders collected in face-to-face settings transcend to the virtual framework.

Review of Literature

There is an abundance of literature analyzing female and male leadership in face-to-face settings. Within this literature, there are three prominent theories which organize the comparative research on gender and leadership. These theories include social role theory, role congruity theory, and status characteristics theory.

Social Role Theory

According to Eagly and Karau (2002), social roles are “socially shared expectations that apply to persons who occupy a certain social position or are members of a particular social category,” and as such, “gender roles are consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men” (p. 574). However, sex-typical social roles are more than mere beliefs about symbols of masculinity and femininity, they transcend into strict expectations. Furthermore, Eagly (1987) notes, “many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe the qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex” (p. 574). At a young age, children are taught that their

biological sex is indicative of the socially correct way in which to behave. Males are taught to portray a masculine image and demeanor, which translates into their adopting agentic characteristics such as aggression, independence, assertiveness, domination, being directive and task-oriented. Such qualities ultimately privilege men in effective leadership positions (Eagly, 1987).

Conversely, throughout the socialization process women acquire communal characteristics that primarily concern them with the welfare of those surrounding them. They are taught to be helpful, kind, empathetic, nurturing, sensitive, gentle, sympathetic, and relationship-oriented (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987). As a result, they are often associated with occupying lower-status roles and predisposed to be more interested with feelings and fulfilling the role of homemaker instead of leader/breadwinner (Eagly et al., 2000). Thus, gender roles are activated, yet the consensual expectations of what it means to be masculine or feminine do not stop here.

Along with these *descriptive* norms are *injunctive* norms which dictate how a male or female ought to act or ideally should act in a group situation (Cialdini and Trost, 1998). As such, injunctive norms carry a prescriptive component which adds to the traditional stereotype construct (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Not only are women and men expected to perform in ways that correspond with gender roles, but they will be punished with hostility and discrimination if they fail to abide by these norms. This is because research has shown overtime that as “behaviors become more sex differentiated in actuality, people judge them as increasingly appropriate for just one sex.” Accordingly it “appears that people tend to think that men and women ought to differ, especially in those

behaviors that are associated with larger sex differences.” (Eagly and Karau, 2002, p. 574).

Social role theory research documents that gender roles have severe impacts. Even when compared with age, race, occupation, and experience, sex serves as the categorization instrument with the most leverage (A.P. Fiske, Haslam, & Fiske, 1991; Stagnor, Lynch, Duan, & Glass, 1992; van Knippenberg, van Twuyver, & Pepels, 1994). In addition, Eagly (2003) claims that gender-related cues arousing stereotypes about men and women are easily and often automatically detected, thus influencing “people to perceive women as communal but not very agentic and men as agentic but not very communal” (p. 84). These perceptions are only contradicted when individuals are intentionally made aware that such gender expectations and stereotypes have been activated and are therefore “motivated to counter their influence” (Eagly, 2003, p. 84).

Role Congruity Theory

Role Congruity theory reifies the robust effects of gender roles and their ability to foster sex differences in behavior, but it stretches one step beyond the contents of social role theory. Its objective is to examine “the congruity between gender roles and other roles, especially leadership roles, as well as to specify key factors and processes that influence congruity perceptions and their consequences for prejudice and prejudicial behaviors” (Eagly and Karau, 2002, p. 575).

Empirical research conducted in countries spanning the globe over the past half century has substantiated a masculine construal of leadership. People have an inclination to associate their beliefs about leadership with men at the expense of women (J. Lee & Hoon, 1993; Schein, 2001). According to Eagly and Karau (2002), prejudice against

female leaders “arise[s] when perceivers judge women as actual or potential occupants of leader roles because of inconsistency between the predominantly communal qualities that perceivers associate with women and the predominantly agentic qualities they believe are required to succeed as a leader” (p. 575). Endeavors such as Schein’s (1973, 1975) research illustrate how men and women perceive successful and competent managers as exhibiting agentic qualities such as being self-confident, competitive, aggressive, and objective. Men are therefore considered to be the more resourceful and successful leaders.

Because gender roles often creep into work environments (Gutek and Morasch, 1982), and simulate “implicit background identit[ies] (Ridgeway, 1997 p. 231),” placing an individual in a leadership role causes expectations of gender roles and expectations of leadership roles to compete with one-another. In these situations, women are again greatly disadvantaged as leaders. As Eagly and Karau (2002) explain, “because ... gender roles are automatically activated by gender related cues in virtually all situations, the high accessibility of expectations on gender likely maintain their impact.” Thus, “in thinking about female leaders, people would combine their largely divergent expectations about leaders and women, whereas in thinking about male leaders, people would combine highly redundant expectations” (p. 575). As such, when women attempt to occupy leadership positions, they are seen as violating the injunctive norms of the female gender role (how women ought to act based on their typical social role). As a result, they frequently face stiff persecution by both male and female associates.

Theoretical implications for women leaders. When women display leadership through the use of agentic attributes they contradict the standards for their gender. As a

consequence, they are critically evaluated or elicit negative reactions for their gender role violation--particularly by traditionalists who abide by long-established gender roles (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Forsyth et al, 1997).

Coincidentally, people more readily and eagerly accredit men with leadership characteristics and recognize men as leaders. Women are caught in a double blind or a double standard in which they are either too feminine as leaders, or they are not feminine enough and emerge as being abrasive and overly forceful or ambitious. Either way, they fail as valued leaders (Rhode and Kellerman, 2007). Indeed, a meta-analysis of over one-hundred studies has established that women's perceived leadership skills falter when they espouse authoritarian and ostensibly masculine styles, especially when their position is usually fulfilled by a man and/or those evaluating them are of the opposite sex (Butterfield and Grinnel, Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky, 1992; Cleveland et al, 2000; Sharpe, 2000).

While some scholars disagree, claiming that managerial style is not preeminently determined by gender (Toren et al, 1997), others have discovered results similar to those above. For example, Eagly and Karau (2002) found that the incongruity between a gender female role and a traditional leadership role is connected to two forms of prejudice: "(a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman" (p. 573). As a result, when performing as a leader, women find it more difficult to reach high levels of success.

These forms of prejudice have a substantial effect on the way women chose to engage leadership roles by triggering gender differences in power and social influence

moves. In general, men typically utilize expert and legitimate power because of their place and authority on the organizational hierarchy and their accumulated task-oriented skills that command respect. Women, on the other hand capitalize on referent power, which is relationship-based in nature and radiates a perception of pleasantness, agreeability, compassion, and expressiveness and is the epitome of the feminine stereotype (Carli, 1999). It can safely be assumed that females feel more compelled to exercise this type of power because it is aligned with societal standards of appropriate female behavior, and as such, allows them to avoid harmful biases and judgments. However, because referent power is often less effective and instrumental to typical leadership situations than its legitimate and expert counterparts, “women generally have greater difficulty exerting influence than men do, particularly when they use influence that conveys competence and authority” (Carli, 1999, p. 81). This inaptitude for authoritative leadership—or an inability to be taken seriously when adopting an authoritative style—predisposes women to weak leadership, especially when embracing stereotypically masculine leadership roles-- the most masculine of which could easily be argued as being punishment or discipline.

Status Characteristics Theory

Status characteristics theory, a set of principles that extend from Expectation States Theory, defines a status characteristic as any characteristic that organizes and facilitates the performance expectations and beliefs imposed upon a particular actor. (Berger et al, 1974; Ridgeway, 1988).

There are two classes of status characteristics: specific status characteristics which are explicit expectations for performance that are required in a clearly designated

situation; and, diffuse status characteristics which are general or broad expectations that are not confined under a specific condition (Johnson , 1992; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992). Examples of diffuse status characteristics include gender, experience, race, ethnicity, and physical attractiveness (Johnson, 1992).

In order for a diffuse status characteristic such as gender to be strategically salient in a situation, it must be relevant to the task, which activates this characteristic and the resulting expectations for performance associated with it into the situation. For example, when gender is activated into an organizational group, males and females begin to be evaluated differently in terms of esteem, honor, confidence, and inherent value. Because of this, they are perceived as developing crucial differences in their interaction profiles. In brief, men are widely held to be more competent and resourceful in all of these qualities and areas.

But to be more precise, society ranks men with more power and prestige, and for this reason they are anticipated (expected) to make more contributions to group task performance, to initiate additional problem-solving attempts, to be more assertive and convincing in displaying nonverbal clues, and to ultimately be more influential (Berger et al, 1977; Berger et al, 1980; Ridgeway, Berger, & Smith, 1985). Hence, they receive more positive contributions for their performance and are privileged with a high status title. Needless to say, high status individuals, due to their outstanding performance-oriented behavior, are typically presumed to exhibit more dominant traits (Gerber, 1996).

Conversely, since women are perceived to occupy an inferior social status, they are viewed as less important and are not expected--nor at times even welcome—to contribute to group ideologies or enterprises. Therefore, a man's say in a workplace

setting will always reign with societal value when it is being compared to that of a woman's (Berger et, 1977; Berger et al, 1980).

Furthermore, some scholars argue that gender's role as a valued societal characteristic is so resolute and widespread that once gender is activated, gender status will affect performance expectations even when it is not relevant to the task. In these instances, gender differences lead directly to gender stereotyping.

Computer-Mediated Leadership: A New Era in Organizational Existence

In today's world, we are rapidly approaching a newfangled organizational era in which technological advances and innovations are propelling our society into an organizational way of life that is very different from the traditional face-to-face environment we have grown so familiar with in the past (Godar & Ferris, 2004; Jackson, 1999; Townsend, DeMarie, & Henrickson, 1998). Because of this new reality, the workplace has been reinterpreted and in a sense, restructured and revitalized. Virtual teams that straddle the globe have emerged as a communicative force which surpasses co-located teams in both its advantages and limitations: On one hand, the restricted nature of technology, when compared to face-to-face interaction, elicits the specter of irresolvable clashes (Kiesler & Sproull, 1992), and can foster task distractions (Davison & Vogel, 2001). Yet, studies have also proven that computer-mediated teams surpass co-located face-to-face teams in idea generation (Valacich et al, 1994), and operational decision-making (Schmidt et al, 2001).

With the onset of such teams, many contemporary leaders are pushing outdated strategies associated with facial interaction aside and searching for techniques that motivate and inspire their subordinates in ways that span space, time, and culture.

Several long-established management /leadership skills and perspectives are now being reconsidered and reconstructed as employees are no longer located just down the hall, and the challenge of coordinating people from a distance begins to take its toll (Duarte & Snyder, 1999; Kayworth & Leidner, 2000; Fisher & Fisher, 2001; Bell & Kozlowski, 2002). Because virtual managers are juggling multiple working environments, elevated levels of interdependence, interaction, and performance become a necessity, and a leader/manager must shift some critical aspects of their role in order to meet new challenges and adeptly support their virtual team and its members. In other words, the person in charge must reevaluate the processes by which work gets done and the manner in which he/she leads in order to achieve success. If they choose to continue to rigidly abide by the workflow processes of the traditional (FTF) working environment and simply layer the unprecedented e-collaboration requirements on top, personal and organizational struggles will surely ensue (Hoefling, 2001).

Despite the escalation in the number of virtual teams world-wide, the role of the virtual leader and his/her influence on the team has received relatively little attention (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002). Even more, virtual leader-subordinate dyads have been largely neglected all-together. This comes as a great concern and is a substantial gap in scholarly work to which we must heed. Because the virtual workplace is a reality that will only continue to become more widespread in the future and as such, technology-mediated communications will be an aspect almost all leaders and employees will need to become accustomed to (Martins, Gilson, & Maynard, 2004), the study of virtual leaders and their one-on-one interactions with employees undoubtedly deserves more focus and consideration.

A matter that is even more intriguing to test is the potential effects this modern organizational structure has on female leadership in the organization. The virtual environment could be very liberating in terms of the socially accepted behavior of men and women in a professional environment. More importantly, computer-mediated organizational settings can revolutionize the long-standing rules of suitable and successful leadership. In other words, a virtual reality is capable of synchronously introducing humanity into another reality: one in which more versatile and universally valuable leadership reigns. No longer will it be beneficial for male leaders to throw themselves into stereotypically masculine subroles; nor will it be beneficial for women to limit themselves to feminine tasks, checking their masculinity at the corporate front door. On the contrary, the most skilled leaders will be able to adapt to all styles of leadership and will eagerly embrace each intricate fiber of its multi-faceted domain.

In order to determine how women leaders will respond to the virtual working environment, we must first analyze the impact of a virtual environment on the definition of leadership. By constructing a set of best practices for virtual leaders, we can begin to categorize these practices as masculine or feminine and can discuss how the virtual environment manipulates the traditional gender stereotypes through decentralized communication, a flattening of the organizational hierarchy, and minimizing the discriminatory backlashes affiliated with demographic dissimilarity.

Stereotypical Feminine Tasks Evoked by Virtual Leadership

In many ways the femininity of the virtual environment advantages stereotypical feminine leadership. It can be argued that several of the best practices of virtual leadership can best be performed by a woman because it necessitates the feminine skills

of listening, building healthy relationships, asking others to participate in the communication process, encouraging group members to overcome potentially calamitous insecurities, and sharing knowledge thereby creating an open working environment. As such, women's natural tendencies (referent/relational power and individualized consideration) will help to propel them forward and transform them into effective virtual leaders (Zhang et al, 2005). In describing the core tasks a virtual leader must accomplish, scholars quite often end up reverbalizing the backbone of feminine management. Consider the following descriptions of some of the most important best practices of virtual leadership and their congruency with feminine values:

Trust. First and foremost, in order for any virtual work force to succeed, a leader must be able to build and maintain trust that extends both ways in the manager-subordinate dyad. Defined from a leadership perspective, Zand (1997) describes trust as “a willingness to increase your vulnerability to another person whose behavior you cannot control, in a situation in which your potential benefit is much less than your potential loss if the other person abuses your vulnerability” (p. 91). In a collaborative environment, trust exists when people are constructing their working relationship in good faith and with respect to their explicit and implicit commitments, are being honest and not manipulating one another (Gignac, 2005). Yet, within virtual working environments, building and maintaining an overarching sentiment of trust is complex requiring higher levels of concern and significance on the part of the team leader (Moustafa-Leonard, 2007). For example, arguments that can be quickly resolved in face-to-face conversations might escalate when people are at a distance from one another (Fernandez,

2004). Indicators gauging a person's trustworthiness which are usually accumulated over time are stripped from team member's reservoirs (Duarte & Snyder, 1999).

Because females are praised for their predisposition for democratic leadership and their drive to construct intra-organizational connections with all employees, their inclination to be perceived as trustworthy is often higher than that of men. Generally speaking, men lead from a more authoritative platform and are more concerned with what employees can do for the company rather than what they, as leaders, can do for employees.

Analogous to this train of thought, Zhang et al (2005) hypothesized that women's aptitude to facilitate trust-building improves their performance in virtual teams (2005). Additionally, other observational experiments have determined that a virtual working space actually increases women's disposition to be trusted because demographic dissimilarity (based on characteristics such as gender, age, birthplace, education, etc.) is *not* negatively associated with the assembling of group trust as it is in the traditional FTF vocational scene (Krebs, Hobman, & Bordia, 2006).

Team Cohesion. Another imperative managerial task in a virtual setting that can be classified as stereotypically feminine is the construction of team cohesion. Unfortunately, the physical distance between virtual team members is naturally coupled with a feeling of isolation that is derived from not working in close proximities with their teammates and leader. The most vigorous and effective distance leader will help team members conquer this insecurity by encouraging the team to participate in team-building activities and various other community-building interventions (Fisher & Fisher, 2001). After all, studies have confirmed that virtual team members believe the most efficient

way a virtual leader can impact a team's interactions is by building a cohesive team because it works well together and will always be more productive (Hambley et al, 2007a; Hambley et al, 2007b).

Because teams are loaded with such diverse players, one challenge for the leader is strengthening each team member's identification with the group through computer-mediated technologies. If the leader can accomplish this, organizational commitment will inevitably follow. In the context of a virtual team, identification is solely a communicative process in which individuals construct their identities through sharing common interests and shared communication values. As can be expected, the leader should take the reins by encouraging this process. "As leaders communicate with their team members, they share the values, goals, and information of their team in the form of guidelines for collective action. Members may then accept this persuasion by adopting the team's interests" and therefore, "identifying with the team" (Sivunen, 2006, p. 5). By laying down this type of common ground leaders provide members with a shared understanding of their domain which unifies them under their mutual knowledge. This subsequent sense of cohesion that takes hold of virtual teammates helps them to overcome many other task constraints including less face-to-face interaction, physical distance, and restricted time. Research predominantly indicates that building team cohesion lends itself to feminine leadership.

Catering to the individual. Finally, perhaps the most feminine virtual leader responsibility is the most vital to virtual success: catering to the individual. In a virtual team setting, it is much easier to lose focus on relationship building (Kimball & Eunice, 1999). Not surprisingly, it has been found that electronic communication methods

coupled with compressed project deadlines has the capacity to considerably impair the personal connections formed within the team (Jarvenpaa & Tarniverdi, 2002). However, if virtual leaders can enhance workplace relationships by influencing teammates to engage in more personalized and social communications, higher levels of trust, motivation, and solidarity are likely to develop (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999).

It goes without saying that catering to the individual is customarily a feminine trait. Most females prioritize cognitive contact with the people they communicate with on a regular basis. Generally speaking, most women have a desire for relational closeness (Gupta, Jenkins, & Beehr, 1983; Statham, 1988; Eagly and Johnson, 1990), while men desire task completion and rely on instructive behavior as a means to this end (Baird & Bradley, 1979; Eskilson & Wiley, 1976; Fowler & Rosenfeld, 1979).¹ Put it this way, a man's professional world is structurally black and white: specific, directive leadership = production and goal accomplishment. A woman, however, sees many gray areas that give way to interpretation. There are several lines of attacks to consider when sizing up each task, and she gains knowledge of these alternative paths through the relationships she instills with her subordinates and prides herself by maintaining. As such, a woman can't help but cater to an individual, for it can easily be argued that it is in her nature; she functions this way in her private life, it would only make sense to infiltrate it into her professional life as well. In fact, Zhang et al (2005) claim that the female's ability to combine "individualized consideration" with "contingent reward" that will thrust them into the realm of success as virtual team leaders. The scholars also suggest that this

¹ I do not presume that all studies have produced the same results. In fact, some studies have found that men leaders were more person-oriented than women leaders (Winther and Green, 1987), and women leaders were more task-oriented than men (Bartol & Wortman, 1979).

method of individualized consideration will “improve virtual team performance” by “improving leadership satisfaction” (p. 6.)

Stereotypically Masculine Tasks Required by Virtual Leaders

Given that the most critical virtual tasks a leader must master promote feminine qualities, it comes as no shock that some studies have found that women reported a more natural and effortless adjustment to virtual work when compared to their male counterparts (Raghuram et al, 2001). Yet, there are crucial features of a successful virtual leader that privileges masculine traits.

Setting Goals and Establishing Direction. Every leader must be skilled at setting firm goals and establishing direction. According to Lipnack and Stamps (1997), a predictor of virtual team success is the precision of its purpose and vision. In order to succeed, virtual organizations must shift gears, transforming their purpose and vision into overt action. This can be done by setting goals, roles, and responsibilities for team members and virtual employee’s subsequently using these goals to design and dictate their work and learning processes (Lipnack & Stamps, 1997). The literature on virtual teams consistently highlights the importance of laying down clear, distinct performance goals and member responsibilities to keep members focused on the organization’s chief priorities (Fisher & Fisher, 2001; Grenier & Metes, 1995; O’Hara-Devereaux & Johansen, 1994).

However, establishing goals and direction for a computer-mediated team is much more difficult and time-consuming than it is for co-located teams. Leaders are not physically present in order to consistently monitor the team, and point them in the right direction should they fall off course. (Pauleen, 2004; Mayrhofer & Back, 2004).

Measuring the accomplishment of goals is yet another way that a computer-mediated team is put at a disadvantage. While it may be clear whether or not a critical deadline is met or a project is executed with precision and punctuality, it is almost impossible to supervise the progress of fixed short-term goals in the absence of day-to-day feedback about the efforts of individual team members. In light of this, some scholars have advocated using results-oriented performance measures for both the team as a whole, and for each team member. By installing a tangible way of assessing the virtual group's headway, leaders are furnished with a more objective and dependable tool that can determine if action is needed to push the team back on track or reward it for its prosperity (Duarte & Snyder, 1999).

Dictating direction and result-oriented measuring of accomplishments are unequivocally masculine traits as they highlight the "black and white" hub from which male professional behavior radiates, especially when put in a position of authority. The self-confident, assertive, self-actualizing, and independent nature of men (Bar-On, 2000) position them as great leaders because they strongly believe in their game plan, and they have no problem in convincing those surrounding them to bury their faith in it as well and embracing change (Cavallo & Brienza, 2002). Self-confidence is an attractive trait that advantages male leaders. According to Social Role theory, male leaders generally enjoy high levels of it and self-esteem (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574), they often excel in charisma and motivate their subordinates with a clear picture of a promising future and a distinctly structured route for reaching it. Social Role and Role Congruity theory teaches us that subordinates are much more likely to follow men in a task-oriented fashion than women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992).

Effectively networking and adhering to external responsibilities. Virtual leaders must also learn how to effectively network and adhere to external responsibilities. A broad and well-built network is critical to a virtual organization's success because it generates tolerance for competing priorities and changing requirements, and grants access to needed capital while instilling a sense of trust in the team and the work it is produce (Duarte & Snyder, 1999).

While female leaders are depicted as looking inward to solve organizational problems and formulate methods and expressways to success, male leaders look outward and juxtapose stakeholder needs and wants with desired results. Only after doing this, do males decide the next step to take. In essence, male leaders are characterized as always looking ahead, while women are characterized as inspiring and intellectually stimulating their colleagues (Bass, 1999; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

Instances of masculine leadership roles--such as the ones I have listed above--are essential functions that every thriving virtual leader must add to their managerial repertoire so that they can draw upon them in present and forthcoming organizational situations. Enacting, and successfully executing masculine traits, then, is a principal and indispensable virtual leader responsibility that females cannot escape. However, as I outline in the next section of this paper, many scholars have found that the virtual environment promotes a sense of equality that enables women to embrace the most masculine of leadership roles without fear of being discriminated against and/or unfairly criticized. For this reason, women are able to flourish as leaders in the virtual environment (Zhang et al, 2005).

Rationale for Study and Hypotheses

Theoretical Implications for Women as Disciplinarians

There have been several attempts to explain how female leadership and within this, female-initiated discipline, is affected by society's general perception of discipline as a masculine role. One such study conducted by scholar Atwater et al (2007) categorized 19 leadership/management subroles being male or female. Participants responded by associating the roles in the following manner:

Female Subroles

Planning and Organizing
Developing and mentoring
Recognizing and Rewarding
Motivating and Inspiring
Communicating

Male Subroles:

Delegating
Disciplining
Punishing
Strategic decision-making
Problem solving

(p. 397).

The results indicated that in a managerial context, females were described as nurturing, supportive, rewarding, feel-good practices, while males were linked with stringent, hardwire, ask-initiative practices. This and other studies (see Catalyst, 2005) emphasize stereotypes that manipulate how employees perceive and justify the actions male and female bosses take in administering discipline. Simply put, because discipline is interpreted as a primarily masculine role, males are perceived in many organizational environments as being more effective disciplinarians, and women are perceived as being less effective, less fair, unfounded, and deceptive (Atwater et al, 2007; Robinson, 1992; Atwater et al, 2001). In delivering discipline, females are often labeled as imposters who entertain a façade of justness and impartiality, but underneath are harboring a grudge and/or lashing out due to feelings of intimidation. In Atwater et al's study (2007), female supervisors were reported by both male and female employees to be effective

disciplinarians 40 percent of the time, compared to male supervisors' 57 percent of the time, and female leaders were described by both male and female subordinates to be much more prone to mishandle discipline. In a follow up role-play experiment of a manager-subordinate dyad in which discipline was distributed to a problematic employee, females "reported more reluctance to discipline harshly and a greater likelihood to ignore the incident than males" (Atwater et al, 2007, p.397).

In fact, for women to successfully enact a disciplinarian role, they have to alter it from its traditional character and feminize it. In order to restrict negative outcomes and increase worker improvements, women must discipline employees in a timely and private manner and must always fashion it in a two-way discussion (Brett et al, 2005; Atwater et al, 2007). If she fails to dispense discipline with echoes of sensitivity and consideration, a woman pays a higher price in terms of how others assess her disciplinal behavior and consequently, her capacity as an adequate leader (Atwater et al, 2007).

Yet these requirements mysteriously vanish when males become disciplinarians. Males are not mandated to patiently listen to an employee's side of the story or to inquire about their input as to how the situation can best be resolved for no commendable employee would insinuate that they should do so. Believe it or not, in some circumstances--such as classroom discipline—research has indicated that because discipline is strictly allied with the masculine attributes of power and control (Connell, 1985; Beynon, 1985, 1987) male teachers (classroom leaders) that implemented disciplinary measures with *coercion* and *violence* were not only seen as fulfilling the depths of their occupation, but were notified as the exemplars of "good" teachership. Because they are socially expected to be in command of their surroundings at all times,

males were projected to use any means necessary to govern their students for if they faltered their power would be undermined, self-perceptions destroyed, and chances of promotion expeditiously denied (Robinson, 1992). Furthermore, Robinson (1992) found that because women educators did not feel comfortable exploiting such arbitrary methods and were “more likely to incorporate negotiation skills and less aggressive measures,” they incidentally “reinforced with the perception of powerlessness and helplessness associated with femininity” (p. 278). Not surprisingly, women’s leadership qualifications therefore plummeted in the eyes of their male colleagues and students.

A few scholarly efforts deflect social role and role congruity theories as well as their implications on gender and the distribution of discipline. Providing exploratory studies that suggest that female managers are “better equipped than male managers to manage employee discipline situations,” (p. 254), Cole (2004) argued that women are actually perceived as being more fair and productive in regiment situations. Still, the bulk of scholarly work regarding discipline confirms a gender difference that disadvantages women in leadership positions because they are viewed as less successful disciplinarians than men. This stereotype permeates the spectrum of organizational politics in businesses across the world.

Theoretical Implications for Women as Targets of Discipline

Status characteristics theory, on the other hand, foregrounds discipline in the superior-subordinate dyad in an entirely different manner. Developing the theory one step further, Johnson (1992) predicts that in organizational task groups where all members enjoy equality in status characteristics (age, experience, race, education, ethnicity) other than gender, “both men and women will expect men to perform better at a

task, even if gender is irrelevant to the specific task” (p.33). This renders men more likely “to contribute more to the task, have more opportunities to contribute, receive more positive evaluations for their contributions,” and to experience higher levels of authority (Johnson, 1992, p. 33; Also, see Berger et al, 1974; Berger et al, 1977).

A large body of research and empirical data supports this theory. For example, in her research, Linda Carli (1989, 1990) found that men depicted themselves as having made a much greater number and higher caliber of contributions when compared to women in their task groups. At the same time, women perceived themselves as making fewer and lower grade quality contributions when compared to men, but unidentified independent onlookers identified no gender differences in performance (Carli, 1989, 1990). Many other studies also identified gender as a status characteristic and have subsequently found disparities in male and female’s influence, activity, and task orientation in small group interactions. With all other factors equal, gender has repeatedly proven to be the controlling ingredient in task forces, causing women to talk less, offer fewer proposals, appear less knowledgeable, and be seen as less persuasive than their male colleagues (Lockheed & Hall, 1976; Piliavin & Martin, 1978; Strodbeck & Mann, 1956; Wood & Karten, 1986; Dovidio et al, 1988; Major et al, 1990; Meeker & Weitzel-O’Neill, 1977; Smith-Lovin & Brody, 1989). Additional empirical studies have verified that males tend to be favored in evaluation situations (Nivea and Gutek, 1980; Landau, 1995; Pulakos et al, 1989; Bartol, 1999), and even suggest that the “undeniably successful” work of women “may be attributed to luck rather than effort or ability” (Larwood, 1979, p. 540; Deaux and Emswiller, 1973). One particular study generated mixed results concluding that lower minimum competency standards but higher ability

standards are prescribed for females than males in group situations (Biernat and Kobrynowicz, 1997).

Disciplining a Man vs. Disciplining a Woman

In portraying the nature of the interaction between leaders and subordinates, Cathryn Johnson (1992) found evidence that suggested “the gender of the subordinates has a more significant impact on leader behavior than the gender of the leader” (p. 36). Expectation states theory has the capacity to further explain and explore this concept. Because of men’s higher social status and superior organizational value, scholarship has found that in disciplinary situations, men are “more likely to be retained in organizations despite their shortcomings” (Larwood, 1979, p. 541) as they are still recognized as being highly capable even when confronted with obvious mistakes. It would follow then that in comparison to women, men are “less subject to negative personnel actions, such as discharge”, transfer, suspension, and demotion, and exerting punishment is “more readily recommended against a women that against a man when each is employed in their traditional work roles” (Larwood, 1979, p. 541.)

Studies have confirmed this pattern of disciplinary distribution, finding for instance that female saleswomen are evaluated more harshly than salesmen (Bellizzi and Norvell, 1991), punishing personnel action for males in traditional male-identified positions was least likely to be recommended by managers (Larwood et al, 2006) and that when responding to an incident of poor performance, “leaders responded more punitively toward women than toward men subordinates (Dobbins, 1985 p. 589). Other analyses have indicated that male job applicants are rated more positively than women applicants in terms of acceptability and service potential (Rosen, Jerdee, & Prestwich, 1975), and

thus “leaders will rate different corrective actions as appropriate when responding to men and women subordinates who perform poorly” (Dobbins, 1985, p.588). Likewise, Hartman et al (1994) discovered that all decision-makers in the workplace, both male and female are “more likely to enforce discipline upon a culpable woman than a culpable man” (p.54). What’s more, all were “reluctant to fire male workers regardless of the extent of their culpability” (p.64). Many others have found that women are subjected to more severe penalties than men (Kahn et al, 1980; Larwood et al, 1979; Morrow and Lowenber, 1983; Oliphant and Alexander, 1982). Of course some studies disagree, claiming that saleswomen are disciplined less (Bellizzi and Hasty, 2002), and in certain situations such as the courtroom, women receive less harsh punishments for their crimes (Scott, 1974; Dalton and Tudor, 1985; Bemmels, 1988).

The Nature of Mixed-Dyadic Leader-Member Relations

The bulk of scholarly work covering expectation states theory has discovered that the activation of gender as a status characteristic is most likely to transpire in mixed-gender groups as this is the primary situation in which the sex of an employee rouses a basis for discrimination (for example, see Berger et al, 1980; Fishman, 1978; Henley 1977; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992; Johnson, 1992; West & Zimmerman, 1977; Zimmerman & West, 1975). In these circumstances, gender differences begin to reflect differences in power dynamics and men’s greater power and standing in society as a whole stimulates them into integrating higher levels of power and prestige into organizational interactions. As a result, their degree of importance and usability towers over that of their female collaborators (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992).

While mixed-sex settings permit men to survey new avenues of status, they simultaneously initiate gender stereotypes that inhibit women and expose them to devalued conditions. As a result, “interacting with subordinates of the opposite sex,” causes “greater social distance and less easy-going give and take” (Maccoby, 2002, p. 90). For example, Johnson (1992) discovered that with subordinates of the opposite sex, leaders tend to ask more questions while offering fewer opinions and operating in a less directive manner.

In terms of a cross-gender disciplinary situation, these findings have many implications. Because society encourages men to station themselves on a superior platform, complications arise when women attempt to discipline male employees. For example, Atwater’s study (2001) revealed that when disciplined by a female supervisor, men reported significantly more negative outcomes and feelings of resentment than when they were disciplined by a male supervisor (76% vs. 59%). They also were much more likely to not accept responsibility for their behavior, to view the female supervisor as making a mistake or not knowing how to effectively discipline, and to refuse to alter their behavior after the discipline had been issued.

On the other hand, when male supervisors disciplined a female employee, Atwater (2001) found that women were more likely to perceive the punishment as fair, to accept responsibility for their behavior, to view the supervisor as an effective disciplinarian, and were less likely to suffer feelings of anger, disappointment, and sadness than if they had been disciplined by a supervisor of their same gender. In sum, Atwater’s study found that males were perceived as better equipped disciplinarians

despite the sex of the subordinate, and therefore were more confident in their disciplining strategies and capabilities.

Along similar lines, Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) concluded that male followers in general displayed a stronger tendency to devalue women leaders than did women leaders--who reportedly demonstrated no gender bias in their evaluations, and others have discovered that a cross-sex dyadic composition of actors in disciplinary proceedings resulted in lower percentages of just workplace outcomes in which the employee prevailed (Dalton et al, 1987; Dalton & Todor,1985). Interestingly, Dobbins et al's study (1983) reported that "subjects in same sex leader-subordinate dyads made greater external attributions for the missed deadline than subjects in opposite sex-leader-subordinate dyads," and pinpointed Banks' analysis as the a possible answer to the questioning of this conclusion (p. 338). Banks (1976) suggests that within organizational settings, "male leaders are 'closer' to male subordinates than female subordinates and female leaders are 'closer' to female subordinates than male subordinates." Consequently, it is this type of "differential distance" that is responsible for the attributional bias generated by sex variables (Dobbins et al, 1983, p. 338). To put it differently, when a leader and a subordinate in a work group share the same sex, the leader detects a "psychological closeness" with that particular subordinate that generously affects their selection of corrective action (Dobbins, 1983, p. 339). In other words, the more similar leaders are to their subordinate, the less likely they are to strictly punish them. Tsui and O'Reilly (1989) would argue that this is because demographic similarity leads to attitude and value similarity. Thus, a leader is less likely to harshly

discipline and threaten the job of an employee when they perceive that employee as sharing values that are identical to their own .

Of course not all studies have found results that align cross-gender conditions with significant differences in disciplinary measures. In fact, multiple criticisms of expectation states theory have risen from “recent evidence that suggests that some gender differences are actually smaller in mixed-sex interaction than they are between male and female same-sex interaction,” (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992, p. 157; Carli, 1989; Hall, 1984; Piliavin & Martin, 1978.) According to these studies and others like Foschi and Lapointe’s (2002)--which reported no major differences in influence rejection in cross-sex dyadic groups when compared to same-sex dyadic groups--gender fails to serve as a status characteristic at all, and thus cross-gender discipline is congruent with same-gender discipline in any type of workplace environment. Coincidentally, women leaders entertain self-perceptions as equally successful disciplinarians in comparison to men leaders, and there are no discrepancies in how a woman chooses to discipline a male or female subordinate, or how a man chooses to discipline a female or male subordinate.

Virtual Environment’s Implications for Women as Leaders and Disciplinarians

Because of the distinctive, innate attributes of the virtual sphere, a female’s aspiration to ascend to the apex of the organizational structure is rendered more accessible, and her proclivity to shatter the phenomenon of the “glass ceiling,” is realized. The “freeing qualities” of the computer environment indeed empower women in that it facilitates “egalitarian and democratic forms of communication” and emancipates them from the “traditional individualistic, competitive environment in which many men thrive” and which persists in many professional collocate fields today (Fey, 2001, p. 357).

Because of this, the gender impact of virtual collaboration has been diminished when compared to their face-to-face counterparts, and women feel more satisfied working and leading in these conditions as they perceive virtual conflict as more fluently and readily resolved (Lind, 1999).

Gender role and role congruence prejudices are virtually pushed aside because not only are computer-mediated groups effective in “reducing the negative consequences of dissimilarity (Krebs, Hobman, & Bordia, 2006, p. 721),” but the communication technology of computer-mediated messages “filters certain social cues and causes social inattention to organizational role and expertise level...which lessen the effect of gender on leadership perception” (Zhang et al, 2005, p. 6). Moreover, the virtual environments ability to decrease context clues installs many “deregulating” upshots on communicative exchanges. As a result, Sproull and Kiesler (1986) found that “much of the information conveyed through electronic mail...would not have been conveyed through another medium” (p. 1492).

Not only are gender role biases diminished in the virtual sphere, the viral trappings of status characteristics theory are also exhausted and devitalized. Labeling it the “equalization phenomenon” Dubrovsky et al (1991) found that status inequalities were significantly reduced in virtual communication, and Nowak (2003) established that virtual employees were commonly incapable of identifying the gender identities of their peers from the composition of their e-mail correspondence, and in the instances where they could, the mainstream attributions they proposed were inaccurate.

Because of the unique features of virtual systems, the emergence of a leader has repeatedly proven to have no relationship to gender (Yoo and Alavi, 2004) or any other

demographic variables (Yoo and Alavi, 2002), as leaders are more often selected by their “ability to build some level of a personal relationship with their virtual team members before commencing a virtual working relationship” (Pauleen, 2003, p. 227) and their capacity to instigate social conversations that emphasize bases of common ground between diverse virtual members, thereby improving social bonds (Powell et al, 2004, p. 10). In truth, the characteristics of “remote team members that are not prominently visible (e.g. gender) become irrelevant,” and are at the very least, transitory in nature (Sarker et al, 2002, p. 5.)

Granted that not all studies have resulted in support of status equalization in virtual groups (Owens et al, 2000; McLeod et al, 1997; Hollingshead, 1996), it nevertheless appears that virtual possibilities endow the conventional working environment with many innovative and de-standardizing alternatives. In order to add to these findings and to discern the impact status characteristics theory has on subordinates in virtual disciplinarian situations, the following hypothesis guides this study:

HP1: When disciplining virtually, leaders will discipline both men and women with the same degree of disciplinary fairness. (In other words, women will no longer be disciplined more often or to a harsher degree than men.)

HP 2: Cross-gender and same-gender disciplinarian scenarios will no longer elicit different strategies, emotions, and thought processes on the part of the disciplinarian. (In other words, whether a virtual leader is disciplining a man or disciplining a woman, it will not affect the methods and/or words he/she chooses to use.)

A second area of investigation in this study entails how the virtual sphere will change females as leaders from a disciplinarian standpoint. Because the virtual leadership transforms the role of a leader from a gender/external prerequisite to an internal prerequisite that primarily prescribes the implementation of trust, security, and

culture in virtual work arrangements (Harrington and Ruppel, 1999), women are enabled to incorporate and uninhibitedly accommodate masculine roles- and therefore any role that is in accordance with their own emotions, values, dispositions, and personal beliefs without hesitation (Stuhlmacher et al, 2007). Accordingly, and as I have henceforth indicated, the social role of disciplining is no longer epitomized by society as masculine, and women can use the same tactics as men in this organizational element without facing negative consequences. Thus, virtual leadership promotes a podium of equality which *all* users inaugurate. Therefore, with this breakdown of social role and role congruity theories in the virtual environment and female leadership, the following hypotheses result:

HP3: In a virtual setting, women and men will experience similar levels of self-confidence when disciplining their subordinates

HP4: When disciplining virtually, female leaders will use levels of legitimate, expert, and coercive power that are similar to those of male leaders. In other words, women will feel more comfortable enacting stereotypically masculine characteristics in disciplinary situations that are computer-mediated.

CHAPTER TWO

Methods and Materials

This chapter will detail the study's experimental research design and specifically analyze the procedures that were used in conducting the experiment. The following methodological considerations will be discussed: (1) the study design, (2) a description of the subjects that participated in the experiment, (3) the procedures implemented for collecting data and executing the experiment, (4) the operationalization of variables, and (5) the statistical tests used to analyze the results of the experiment and the circulated questionnaire.

Design

A 2 X 2 factorial design (see Appendix A) was employed during this study using the following independent variables: (1) biological sex of the leader and (2) biological sex of the subordinate. The dependent measures of the study included discipline strategies, perceptions of power, and perceptions of self-confidence.

Subjects

The subjects recruited for this study were undergraduate students from a large private university in the Midwest who were enrolled in communication courses. A total of hundred forty-five subjects participated in the study (50 males and 95 females). Subjects were enlisted on a volunteer basis from two lower-level Public Speaking and Small Group Communication courses. The students ranged in age from 18 to 47 with a mean age of 19.8 years. One hundred and thirty-one of the subjects had previously

accumulated some type of job experience and 38 of those individuals claimed to have held or currently hold full-time occupations.

Procedure

Subjects first signed up to participate in the experiment at a predesignated date and time on a list of sign-up sheets that were circulated during either their Public Speaking or Small Group Communication courses. The experiment was conducted over a period of eight week days, and subjects signed up for thirty-minute time slots ranging from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. daily. Once arriving, students were greeted by an experimenter at the communication laboratory, and an informed consent form was first distributed to all subjects explaining the purpose of the study. Afterward, they were randomly assigned to either the male or female subordinate condition and were instructed to enter into the communication laboratory to sit down at a computer. The experimenter then handed each subject a discipline scenario (see Appendix B for a closer look at each scenario), and gave a brief summary of the role-play situation the subjects would be performing.

The discipline scenarios placed each subject in the role of a virtual leader. It informed the subject that the work of one of his or her subordinate had begun to deteriorate. This subordinate was missing deadlines and had become increasingly harder to get in contact with. The subject was specifically informed that his/her relationship with the subordinate is primarily virtual or computer-mediated, and because of this, corrective action would have to take place through e-mail. The subject was instructed to type a disciplinary response to his/her assigned subordinate explaining to him/her how they planned to handle the situation. The subject was asked to send his/her strategy

electronically to one of two Google email accounts that were created depending on the gender of the subordinate.

After selecting a disciplinary strategy, subjects completed a questionnaire which included measures of perceived power, self-confidence, as well as demographic items. Finally, subjects were debriefed, thanked for their participation, and instructed to avoid discussing the study with any of the other subjects until after the project has been fully completed.

Operationalization of Variables

Discipline Strategies

The primary dependent measure in this experiment was the discipline strategies collected from the subjects. Subjects typed out these strategies and electronically mailed them to the experimenters' computers. The experimenters then analyzed the strategies, using an abbreviated form of Schlueter's (1999) typology to code the strategies into 14 different categories (Tables 1 and 2 for a detailed description of each category). Forty of the 144 strategies were randomly selected and coded independently by each of the two experimenters. After mutually resolving their disagreements on how each strategy should be categorized, the intercoder reliability of the content analysis was highly reliable (Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance $W = .90$). Afterwards, one of the experimenters used this highly reliable measurement procedure to code the remaining strategies.

Power

Two methods were used in this study to measure the power of the leader.

Perceived position power. A subject's perceived power was presumed to be an indicator of the types of disciplinary strategies the subject selected in this study. Perceived position power will be operationalized using Schmidt and Kipnis's (1984) seven-point, ten-item scale. This measure is comprised of two sub-scales that ask respondents to evaluate the amount of perceived influence they have (a) in the organization, and (b) over their subordinates. Subjects rated perceived influence over the organization in the following areas: (1) setting budgets for my work unit, (2) coordinating with other units in the organization, (3) influencing organizational policy in areas on directly related to related to my work, (4) influencing organizational policy in areas that are important to my work, and (5) influencing my superiors. Subjects evaluated their perceived influence over subordinates in the following areas: (1) assigning work to my subordinates, (2) disciplining my subordinates, (3) controlling the quality and pace of my subordinates' work, (4) determining the salary and promotion of my subordinates, and (5) hiring and placement of my subordinates. Each of these areas (or items) was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from (1) "I have little influence in this area," to (7) "I have a great deal of influence in this area." The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the organizational influence subscale was .726 and for the subordinate influence subscale was .816, indicating that both of these measurements were generally consistent and reliable.

Power bases. In this study, power was operationalized using Richmond et al.'s PPS measure based on the five power bases founded by French and Raven (1959). These bases of power are categorized as reward power (Cronbach alpha = .952), coercive power (.976), legitimate power (.960), expert power (.966), and referent power (.978). Subjects were tested on five, seven-point Likert like scales which assessed the degree to

which they chose to initiate a disciplinary strategy with a subordinate because of each type of power. (See Appendix C).

Prior to being asked to evaluate the utilization of their power bases, subjects were first provided with a section defining the five bases of power. Then, for each base of power, subjects were instructed to respond to the following statement, “I chose to initiate a disciplinary strategy with this subordinate because of my _____ power.” on the following seven point, Likert-like scales: agree/disagree; false/trust; incorrect/correct; right/wrong; yes/no. Responses to these five scales will then be calculated for each power base.

Self Confidence/ the Perception of Self-Confidence

The self-confidence subjects displayed during this study was measured using Olseon, Poehlmann, Yost, Lynch, and Arkin’s (2002) seven-point, seventeen-item scale. Consisting of two subscales, this measure is designed to measure the constructs of doubt subjects have in their ability to perform. While the self-doubt scale (Cronbach alpha = .808) primarily evaluated how competent and confident subjects were when carrying out their disciplinary strategies, the concern for performance subscale (.662) was designed to indicate how conscious subjects were of the *appearance* of high performance. (See Appendix D).

Statistical Analysis

The primary statistical tests used in this study were two-variable chi-square (X^2) tests (also called crosstabulations) which examined the differences in the distribution of disciplinary strategies created from two nominal independent variables (sex of the subordinate and sex of the leader). These chi-square tests were used to determine

relationships between leader gender, subordinate gender, and the preference for using particular disciplinary strategies over others. 2 X 2 analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were also conducted in order to determine whether the gender of the leader or gender of the subordinate significantly affected the subjects' perceptions concerning each of the following dependent variables: influence over organization, influence over subordinate, each power base, self confidence, and perceived self confidence (importance of success)

CHAPTER THREE

Results

This chapter reveals the findings of the research project by displaying and clarifying the results of the variables that were investigated. The outcomes of the statistical analyses described in chapter three will be addressed and findings regarding the hypotheses proposed in chapter two will be discussed.

Hypothesis One: Disciplining a Woman vs. Disciplining a Man.

The first hypothesis read as follows: when disciplining virtually, leaders will discipline both men and women with the same degree of disciplinary fairness. (In other words, women will no longer be disciplined more often or to a harsher degree than men.) This hypothesis was confirmed. A chi-square analysis of the biological sex of the subordinate by the fourteen types of strategies revealed that there was not a significant difference between subordinate gender and the disciplinary strategy implemented, $X^2 (13) = 6.46, p > .05$. While, male subordinates were actually given more ultimatums than women, were more likely to be put on probation, and received less counsel from their leaders on how the work-related issue could be solved, none of the differences in the strategies used by leaders to discipline male and female subordinates were significant (See Tables 1 and 2)

Hypothesis Two: Cross-Gender vs. Same-Gender Discipline Scenarios.

The second projected hypothesis stated that cross-gender and same-gender disciplinarian scenarios would no longer elicit different strategies, emotions, and thought

processes on the part of the disciplinarian. (In other words, virtual leaders will not use

Table 1: Comparison of Disciplinary Strategies by Gender of the Subordinate

Strategy	Example	Male	Female	Total
Ingratiation	“Your efforts since starting here have been outstanding and have helped us become the company we are today.”	9 (11.5%)	6 (9.1%)	15 (10.4%)
Counsel	“I value your past hard work and determination and will work with whatever circumstances you are facing to pull your work quality back up to above average.”	15 (19.2%)	16 (24.2%)	31 (21.5%)
Allurement	“If you start meeting your deadlines and become a diligent worker again, you could have a higher possibility of going further in this company.”	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)
Debt	“I believe in you a great deal- as it is evident with the sacrifices that I have made.”	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (1.4%)
Duty	“I expect excellent work throughout your entire time with the company.”	5 (6.4%)	5 (7.6%)	10 (6.9%)
Altruism	“Your work is not only important to our group, but vital to the success of the company. We are counting on you to pull your weight.”	8 (10.2%)	4 (6.1%)	12 (8.3%)
Explanation	“Interdependency is key to the success of this team... Since we are miles away, you must provide me, as well as your team members, with the information that is asked of you in a more efficient manner.”	3 (3.8%)	4 (6.1%)	10 (6.9%)
Disguised Request	“Our goal through this email is to simply bring to your attention what we have seen over the past few weeks, and we hope this email will motivate you to enhance your performance.”	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (1.4%)

Table 1 continued.

Strategy	Example	Male	Female	Total
Direct Request	“I would urge you to return to your past performance because you have such potential with this company.”	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)	3 (2.1%)
Warning	“Let this be fair warning: there are plenty of people who are willing to do your job promptly and thoroughly if you are unable or unwilling.”	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)	3 (2.1%)
Threat	“If you do not become more productive in the next few weeks there will be more consequences.”	5 (6.4%)	7 (10.6%)	12 (8.3%)
Aversive Stimulation	“You will have two weeks to show the company that you are a serious and successful employee.”	6 (7.7%)	2 (3.0%)	8 (5.5%)
Ultimatum	“If you do not respond within a week from today, your position as an employee will be terminated... and you will not be receiving any letter of recommendation from us.”	9 (11.5%)	5 (7.6%)	14 (9.7%)
Negative Moral Appeal	“I never expected such poor performance levels from you. Both you and I know your abilities, and obviously you aren’t putting enough effort into the company.”	11 (14.1%)	13 (19.7%)	24 (16.7%)
Total Strategies =		78 (54.2)	66 (45.8%)	144 (100%)

NOTE: A statistically significant $X^2(13) = 6.46, p > .05$.

different methods when disciplining a subordinate primarily based on the fact that the subordinate is of a different sex.) This hypothesis was also confirmed. A chi-square analysis validated that there was not a statistically significant difference in the way virtual leaders disciplined John or Janice based on their sharing or not sharing the same sex with that subordinate, $X^2(13) = 13.58, p > .05$, (See Table 3 below). However, the results of the experiment did indicate that collectively, female leaders were more than twice as likely to exercise a negative moral appeal strategy or ultimatum when

disciplining a woman than when disciplining a man. Also, the study yielded results that suggested that male leaders were three times as likely to utilize a counsel strategy when disciplining a women than when disciplining a man. Also, the study yielded results that suggested that male leaders were three times as likely to utilize a counsel strategy when disciplining male subordinates. That is, male leaders were more inclined to consult a subordinate and lend a helping hand in order to establish reciprocal solutions for both the company and the employee when the subordinate was also of the male gender. Nevertheless, these findings did not translate into significant differences in the statistical tests conducted in the study. Ultimately, cross-gender leader/subordinate dyads and same-gender leader/subordinate dyads used strategies that were considerably similar to one another.

Table 2: Comparison of Disciplinary Strategies by Gender of the Subject

Strategy	Example	Male	Female	Total
Ingratiation	“Your efforts since starting here have been outstanding and have helped us become the company we are today.”	4 (8.3%)	11 (11.6%)	15 (10.4%)
Counsel	“I value your past hard work and determination and will work with whatever circumstances you are facing to pull your work quality back up to above average.”	8 (16.3.2%)	23 (24.2%)	31 (21.5%)
Allurement	“If you start meeting your deadlines and become a diligent worker again, you could have a higher possibility of going further in this company.”	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (0.7%)
Debt	“I believe in you a great deal- as it is evident with the sacrifices that I have made.”	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.2%)	2 (1.4%)
Duty	“I expect excellent work throughout your entire time with the company.”	7 (14.3%)	3 (3.2%)	10 (6.9%)

Table 2 continued.

Strategy	Example	Male	Female	Total
Altruism	“Your work is not only important to our group, but vital to the success of the company. We are counting on you to pull your weight.”	3 (6.1%)	9 (9.5%)	12 (8.3%)
Explanation	“Interdependency is key to the success of this team...Since we are miles away, you must provide me, as well as your team members, with the information that is asked of you in a more efficient manner.”	2 (4.1%)	5 (5.3%)	7 (4.8%)
Disguise Request	“Our goal through this email is to simply bring to your attention what we have seen over the past few weeks, and we hope this email will motivate you to enhance your performance.”	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.2%)	2 (1.4%)
Direct Request	“I would urge you to return to your past performance because you have such potential with this company.”	1 (2.0%)	2 (2.2%)	3 (2.1%)
Warning	“Let this be fair warning: there are plenty of people who are willing to do your job promptly and thoroughly if you are unable or unwilling.”	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.5%)	3 (2.1%)
Threat	“If you do not become more productive in the next few weeks, there will be more consequences.”	3 (6.1%)	9 (9.5%)	12 (8.3%)
Aversive Stimulation	“You will have two weeks to show the company that you are a serious and successful employee.”	4 (8.3%)	4 (4.2%)	8 (5.5%)
Ultimatum	“If you do not respond within a week from today, your position as an employee will be terminated... and you will not be receiving any letter of recommendation from us.”	5 (10.2%)	9 (9.5%)	14 (9.7%)
Negative Moral Appeal	“I never expected such poor performance levels from you. Both you and I know your abilities, and obviously you aren’t putting enough effort into the company.”	10 (20.4%)	14 (14.7%)	24 (16.7%)
Total Strategies =		78 (54.2)	66 (45.8%)	144 (100%)

NOTE: A statistically significant $X^2(13) = 13.58, p > .05$.

Table 3: Disciplinary Strategies and Cross-Gender, Same-Gender Subordinate/Leader Dyads

	Male Leader/ Male Subordinate	Male Leader/ Female Subordinate	Female Leader/ Female Subordinate	Female Leader/ Male Subordinate
Strategy	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Ingratiation	3 (9.7%)	1 (5.9%)	5 (10.2%)	7 (15.2%)
Counsel	5 (16.1%)	2 (11.8%)	14 (28.6%)	9 (19.6%)
Allurement	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.2%)
Debt	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.2%)
Duty	3 (9.7%)	4 (23.5%)	1 (2.0%)	2 (4.3%)
Altruism	3 (9.7%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (8.2%)	4 (8.7%)
Explanation	1 (3.2%)	1 (5.9%)	3 (6.1%)	2 (4.3%)
Disguised Request	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.2%)
Direct Request	1 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.2%)
Warning	2 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Threat	1 (3.2%)	2 (11.8%)	5 (10.2%)	4 (8.7%)
Aversive Stimulation	2 (6.5%)	1 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (6.5%)
Ultimatum	3 (9.7%)	2 (11.8%)	3 (6.1%)	6 (13.0%)
Negative Moral Appeal	6 (19.4%)	4 (23.5%)	9 (18.4%)	4 (8.7%)
Total Strategies	31	17	49	46

Hypothesis Three: Gender and Self Confidence

The third hypothesis stated that in a virtual setting, women and men will experience similar levels of self-confidence when disciplining their subordinates. This

hypothesis was disconfirmed. A 2 X 2 ANOVA of revealed a significant main effect on the gender of the leader, $F(1, 141) = 4.6, p < .05$. Female versus male leaders perceived statistically significant lower levels of self confidence during the act of disciplining their employees.

Hypothesis Four: Gender and Employed Power Bases

Hypothesis number four postulates that in the virtual environment, female leaders will employ equal levels of legitimate, expert, and coercive power when compared to male leaders. In other words, women will feel more comfortable enacting stereotypically masculine characteristics in disciplinary situations that are computer-mediated. This hypothesis was again confirmed. 2 X 2 analyses of variance tests for legitimate, $F(1, 134) = .031, p > .05$, expert, $F(1, 133) = .559, p > .05$, and coercive power, $F(1, 133) = 1.10, p > .05$, confirmed that there were no significant differences in the use of these power bases by female and male leaders. However, an interaction effect for reward power was observed, $F(1, 131) = 7.40, p < .05$. In cross-gender leader/subordinate dyads, female leaders influencing a male subordinate perceived significantly more reward power than when influencing a female subordinate, and male leaders influencing a female subordinate perceived significantly more reward power than when influencing a male subordinate (See Table 4 below). To put it differently, in order to discipline the opposite sex, leaders reported capitalizing on their ability to mediate rewards such as promotions, salary increases, and vacation time.

Table Four: Table of Factor Score Means and Standard Deviations for the Subordinate Sex X Subject Sex Interaction on Perceptions of Reward Power.

Subject Sex	Subordinate Sex	
	Male	Female
Male	M = 14.97 ^c SD = 8.85 n = 31	M = 20.47 ^a SD = 10.86 n = 17
Female	M = 17.81 ^b SD = 9.09 n = 42	M = 14.16 ^c SD = 8.53 n = 45

Means with common superscripts do not differ significantly, $p < .05$.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence that leader sex and subordinate sex had on the disciplinary strategies that leaders implemented in computer-mediated organizations. Specifically, this study also sought to explore the impact that the sex of the subordinate had on the disciplinary action enforced upon him/her, and the impact that the sex of the leader had on his/her perceived self-confidence, influence, and optional power bases. More importantly, the unorthodox environment of virtual organizations was examined and its manipulation of gender in the leader-subordinate dyad was explored and analyzed.

The study was experimental in nature. One-hundred and forty-five students at a medium-sized private university in the Southwest participated in the study by enacting disciplinary role-playing scenarios in which they were the leader of a virtual organization. Subjects were instructed to sit down at a computer in a communication laboratory, type a disciplinary strategy, and email it to one of two Google email accounts depending on the sex of the subordinate in his/her scenario. Afterwards, they completed a questionnaire that was distributed to them. The research questionnaire contained measures of perceived power and influence, self-confidence, and inquired about basic demographic items. Upon completion of the experiment and the questionnaire, the experimenters assembled the emails and questionnaires for coding and analyses. This chapter will provide a summary of the results study, offer an explanation of key findings, and recommend avenues for future research.

Summary of the Results

Hypotheses one and two predicted that in virtual disciplinary situations, the sex of the subordinate and the sex of the leader would not have a significant affect on the disciplinary strategies that are enacted by leaders in computer-mediated settings. Both of these hypotheses were confirmed as chi-square tests indicated that there was not a significant difference between the subordinate sex and the selected disciplinary strategies. These two hypotheses tested whether the status inequalities described in Status Characteristics theory that neutralize female leadership in face-to-face settings would endure and prevail in the virtual sphere. As we hypothesized, computer-mediated communication would significantly reduced these gender inequalities translating this novel working condition into an “equalization phenomenon” (Dubrovsky et al, 1991).

Hypotheses three and four were conceptualized more within the restrictions of social role theory, and claimed that because the virtual environment will transform the role of a leader from a external, fixed requirement founded upon gender to an internal, flexible one based on experience and personal characteristics and dispositions. Therefore, women leaders would be more willing to capitalize on stereotypically masculine leadership tactics and would feel more confident in their skill in doing so. Specifically, hypothesis three claimed that female leaders in a virtual setting would experience similar self-confidence levels with male leaders when disciplining subordinates. Hypotheses number four advanced the claim that female leaders would also utilize similar levels of the stereotypically masculine resources of coercive, expert, and legitimate power bases. 2 X 2 ANOVAs disconfirmed hypothesis number three and disclosed that female leaders reported significantly lower levels of self-confidence during the act of disciplining than

male leaders. However, the tests also confirmed hypothesis number four and presented this study as a bona fide example of how female leaders perceive their power bases being broadened in virtual surroundings.

Discussion of Key Findings

Significance of Nonsignificant Effects

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the sex of the leader and the sex of the subordinate do not have a significant influence on the disciplinary strategies leaders implement in a virtual organization. There are several factors that give special significance to these results. As theorized, the nonsignificant effects that were generated translate into a break down of the preconceptions and stereotypes that confine female leadership in face-to-face settings. The limitations prescribed by social role, role congruency, and status characteristics theory disperse and cease to control the networking and functionality of an organization that primarily exists online.

Social Role Theory. The outcome of this study contradicts the claim that women are less effective in leadership positions because they are socialized into specific gender roles which deny them the opportunity to advance past a predestined point in the organizational hierarchy (Eagly, 1987). Within a virtual workplace, women leaders can indeed break free from their “socially accepted” communal characteristics and adopt a masculine image and autocratic demeanor in order to successfully and efficiently complete the organizational task that confronts them. Two-way ANOVA tests for legitimate, expert, and coercive power bases demonstrated that women had no problem taking advantage of stereotypically masculine behaviors and did not feel the need to

stage-manage their interactions. The female leaders in this study reported having just as much accessibility to these power bases as their male counterparts. In contrast with the claims many scholars have made in the past (Eagly, 1987; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Bakan, 1966), female leaders did not feel compelled to exercise solely referent and relationship-oriented power measures based on a predisposed notion of appropriate gender performance. Therefore, Carli's (1999) depiction of women feeling more comfortable and experiencing elevated degrees of self-confidence when exerting referent power due to the fact that it epitomizes societal standards of femininity is not supported by the findings of this study. Neither is the scholar's implied argument that females sense lower levels of sufficiency when utilizing legitimate, expert, and coercive power because these bases are principally contracted to men due to the authority their task-oriented skills and location on the organizational hierarchy earn them.

Role Congruity Theory. Tenets of role congruity theory was found were also disconfirmed. According to Eagly and Karau (2002), prejudice against female leaders surfaces when perceivers begin to visualize females as tangible or prospective occupants of leader roles. The predominantly feminine, communal qualities that are typically associated with women are inconsistent with the predominantly masculine construct of leadership, and because of this, role congruity theory claims that both men and women portray women as being less resourceful and competent leaders. Consequently, women engaging in leadership positions fear their subordinates largely conflicting expectations of leaders and women, and their perceived leadership skills falter when they adopt authoritarian and ostensibly masculine leadership methods (Butterfield and Grinnel, Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky, 1992; Cleveland et al, 2000; Sharpe, 2000).

Yet the experimental tests administered for this study revealed that the pioneering conditions of the virtual environment grant women autonomy from the many stipulations that interrupt and protract their achievement of top-tier success as organizational leaders. Two-way ANOVAs confirmed that female leaders experienced levels of perceived influence over the organization and perceived influence over the subordinate that paralleled those of their male counterparts--regardless of the disciplinary strategy exploited to correct the subordinate's deteriorating performance. In other words, female leaders did not envision their persuasion powers and leadership skills as being inferior to those reported by men. Accordingly, the study suggested that female leaders were not discouraged or distressed in any detectable way by the thought of being perceived as less favorable or adequate by their subordinates or the organization based exclusively on the status of their gender.

Furthermore, Carli's (1999) proposition that women are perceived as having "greater difficulty exerting influence than men do, particularly when they use influence that conveys competence and authority (p. 81)," is also disconfirmed by the collected data. In the virtual setting, this experiment found that women did not perceive themselves as harboring an inability for being taken seriously when disciplining employees, nor did it suggest that female leaders were threatened that their subordinates would refute their leadership for enacting an authoritative style. Hence, the inherent disadvantages of the "gender entrapment" were subdued in virtual working spaces and female leaders were not predisposed to weak leadership in any nature--including masculine leadership roles such as punishment or discipline.

Status Characteristics Theory. The nonsignificant findings of the experiment corroborate Dubrovsky et al's (1991) depiction of the virtual sphere as an equalizing mechanism that counterbalances external status hierarchies predetermined by characteristics that are idealized by society. The results of this study also suggested that the effect of external status on a leader's perceived "influence was reduced when groups communicated by electronic mail rather face-to-face." In addition, this study documents the scholar's claim that a female virtual leader's perceived level of credibility is also increased when compared to their face-to-face counterparts. Hence Dubrovsky et al's established argument which contended that computer-mediated communication "muffles social-context cues and hence social [gender] differences" is also verified in the current study (1999, 138). Likewise, the nonsignificant findings of this experiment also reaffirm Sproull and Kiesler's (1986) conclusion that electronic mail's potentiality to "decreas[e] social context cues has substantial deregulating effects on communication" (p. 1492).

The fact that two-way ANOVA tests indicated that female subordinates were not disciplined more often or to a harsher degree than male indicates that when role playing the position of leader, subjects did not associate the woman subordinate, Janice, with inferior levels of importance, self-esteem, and general vitality to the company. Accordingly, this finding challenges Berger et al's (1974; 1977; 1980) claim that society automatically ranks men with more power and prestige and thereby praises them as integral components in organizational life. In the present study, the inclination for leaders of both sexes to administer an equal degree of disciplinary fairness justifies their perceptions that women are just as valuable a commodity as men in organizational settings when all other external factors remain constant. Subsequently, Hartman et al's

discoveries that women were more likely to receive discipline than males and that all leaders are reluctant to terminate male workers regardless of their offense--as well as others analogous to them (Larwood et al, 2006; Dobbins, 1985; Kahn et al, 1980; Morrow and Lowenber, 1983; Oliphant and Alexander, 1982)--are not upheld by the results of the this study.

It was confirmed that female leaders in our experiment were not subjected to the same stereotypically powerless and restrictive measures that have often previously deterred their leadership capacities in face-to-face settings. In the past, the stereotypical obstacles presented in social role, role congruity, and expectation states theory encumber a female leader's scope of organizational legitimacy both as a leader and a subordinate. What's worse, they also symbolized the contours of interactions in traditional business/professional contexts. However, the present research found that the liberating and revitalizing possibilities of the virtual organization empowered our female leaders, and allowed them to have access to power bases and influential capacities that are no longer categorized as gender-specific. In this way, the nonsignificance of the majority of the statistical tests that were computed can be interpreted or diagnosed as an extremely significant discovery.

Significance of the Women Leader's Reported Self-Confidence

The present study also attempted to test whether male and female leaders would report comparable levels of self-confidence when disciplining their employees. 2 X 2 ANOVAs found that women actually disclosed lower levels of self-confidence when engaging in these simulated disciplinary situations. This finding corresponds with the results of other study's conclusions (Instone, Major, and Bunker, 1983), that self-

confidence did not prove to have any correlation to the type or range of disciplinary strategies women subjects utilized in comparison to men. In other words, the current study suggests that while female leaders recorded lower levels of confidence during their efforts to convince subordinates to return to the company's performance standards, this lack of confidence did not hinder their perceived aptitude for delivering discipline relative to men. This lack of female self-confidence did not have an impact on the disciplinary strategies female leaders chose relative to men. Male leaders, who reported higher levels of self-confidence, used strikingly similar strategies to those of the female leaders. It would therefore indicate that perceptions of viable power bases and perceptions of their role as agents of facilitative influence had a more concrete and recognizable impact on the disciplinary strategies subjects employed during the experiment than self-confidence.

This finding related to self-confidence raises some very important questions. How relevant and critical is the female leader's lower levels of self-confidence in terms of their leadership capacities? And what caused women in this study to report significantly lower levels of self-confidence than men?

Obviously self-confidence is an essential component to any successful leader's repertoire. It enables leaders to manage everyday organizational dilemmas, controversies, and challenges with a system that is both inspirational to subordinates and also demands their respect and cooperation. Self-confidence also plays a chief role in taking chances, interacting with stakeholders, and providing the fundamental tools that will help a company grow and develop both externally and internally. Hence self-confidence is normally a prerequisite to leader recognition and productive leader output. Yet, this

study reveals that the external output of female leaders was not inhibited nor significantly affected by their lower range of self-confidence. Why?

Many research conclusions have generally suggested that women's socialization prepares them to proceed into achievement-oriented settings with a consistent, low level of self-confidence with few exceptions (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, Frieze et al, 1978; Horner 1972; Hoffman, 1972). However, it may be that women reported experiencing lower-levels of self-confidence because they are more intricately concerned with their emotions and aware of how their characteristics are manipulated by their current surroundings. Past research has demonstrated that while men's levels of self-confidence overtime are continuously solid and locked into stages of increased intensity, women reserve a "situational sensitivity" that indefinitely inflicts their levels of confidence, causing them to be "unstable" and "vulnerable." Depending on the situational circumstances, women's self-confidence levels "can vary more than men's both downwards *and* possibly upwards, given appropriate situations" (Lemney, Gold, and Browning, 1983, 939). As a result, women are more susceptible to varied levels of self-confidence because their emotions are more easily evoked and reflected upon. However, the flexibility and intermittency that women exercise in reporting this attribute does not render their self-confidence levels inevitably inferior to women. In fact during certain episodes, female leaders could authentically experience identical levels of self-confidence with their male counterparts, but perceive and thus report their experiences in a much different way.

Significance of the Perceived Use of Reward Power in Cross-Gender Dyads

Respondents of the study reported another unanticipated interaction effect. In cross-gender dyads, male and female leaders perceived statistically significant higher levels of *reward* power. There are a couple of explanations that support this discovery. Male and female leaders may perceive heightened levels of this power base when disciplining the opposite sex because it is indeed the least sophisticated measure of control and is consistently an abundant resource in their persuasion tactic's repository. The power to mediate rewards is the most raw and elementary form of compliance gaining a leader can draw upon because it is non-conflictive, it's not antagonistic, it does not rely on favors or threats, and it positions the leader as utilizing his/her hierarchical status on behalf of the subordinate instead of using it to oppress and exploit them. The idea of the leader "throwing in a little extra" coaxes the subordinate into complying with the leader's principles and doctrine for personal, self-propelling reasons, and often puts the leader at a disadvantage because he/she is the one who sacrifices capital in the transaction.

When individuals placed in positions of power overly rely on reward-based initiatives, less effort is being focused downward in the organizational hierarchy and thus transformational leadership is replaced by transactional (Bass, 1990). In using this undemanding power apparatus, leaders are not attempting to inspire, intellectually stimulate, individualize the needs, or consider the personal development of the subordinate. On the contrary, the leader's primary intention is to obtain agreement and abidance by luring the subordinate with tangible rewards (Northouse, 2007, 184-185). The lack of effort elicited on the part of the leader creates a great social distance between

him/her and the subordinate, and perhaps this social distance parallels the detachment men and women encounter when they are disciplining an opposite-sex employee. To put it differently, it is quite possible that leaders of both sex feel more comfortable using reward power with opposite-sex subordinates because it does not require them to adapt to the needs of that subordinate or to personally invest in them in any way. Hence, personal connection—a task that is often difficult for two heterogeneous individuals--can be bypassed and compliance can be more readily reached.

Limitations of the Study

All research endeavors have limitations, and this study is no exception in this regard. First and foremost, role-playing simulations are not always indicative of the real-world conditions. The subjects that constructed this study were undergraduate college students and not business executives, and this reduction of collective experience and maturity might have undermined their ability to make replicable decisions in a professional organizational context. However as previously noted, 131 of the 145 subjects who took part in the study reported that did have some type of job experience and 38 of those individuals claimed to have held or currently hold full-time occupations.

Many of the subjects surveyed in the study were also entirely unacquainted with the definition of a virtual environment prior to this experiment and this may have also affected their ability to realistically function as a virtual leader. Still, being that they were college students, the computer-mediated communication channel selected to simulate the virtual setting--e-mail--was one that students most likely felt very comfortable and confident utilizing.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research pertaining to the leader-member dyad in the virtual environment and the impact that gender has on this relationship in an online world is an area of communication studies that warrants attention and further investigation. This is the first study that ventured to analyze the disciplinary tactics adopted by leaders in the virtual space and to distinguish the prominent role that subject sex, subordinate sex, self-confidence, and perceived levels of power and influence played in their executive decisions. However, future scholarship should also investigate alternative factors that prompt variations in a virtual leader's deliverance of discipline such as self-esteem, perceptions of company success, and the creation and maintenance of an organizational narrative.

The current research project can also be expanded upon by re-content analyzing the accumulated emails and recoding them in a more global rather than tactical manner. That is, the complex nature of the language in the emails that were gathered enables and encourages the experimenters of this present study to further their research and analysis by categorizing this detailed data in accordance to the styles and patterns of expression that the subjects employed in addition to the strategy. Reviewing only a sector of the emails makes it profusely clear that the communal expression and communicative styles associated with feminine leadership--such as empathy, affection, and inclinations to use more qualifiers and speak tentatively--and the agentic qualities and communicative styles associated with masculine leadership--such as assertiveness, forcefulness, and inclinations to speak sternly and make problem-focused decisions—alternate as each email is individually studied. Conclusively, it would be interesting to determine the

correlation that a subject's communication style has with the disciplinary action he/she chooses to pursue, and whether or not the dependent variables investigated in this study would have an impact on the language schemes and grammatical designs that are adopted.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this thesis offers several new understandings and insights into the study of gender in computer-mediated communication and its relationship to discipline in leader-member dyads. This study contributes to existing body of literature concerning the relationships between disciplinary behaviors, leader sex, and subordinate sex by reporting the detailed findings of the data analysis.

Hopefully, this study will provide a fresh template that will benefit future researchers as they continue to study the diversity in gendered communications, the distribution of workplace discipline, and the ever-evolving online organization.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Experimental Design

		Sex of Subordinate	
		Male	Female
Sex of Manager	Male	male leader male subordinate n = 25	male leader female subordinate n = 25
	Female	female leader male subordinate n = 25	female leader female subordinate n = 25

APPENDIX B

Discipline Scenarios

Taking a cue from industry leaders such as IBM, West Bend, Verifone, and Eastman Kodak, your company decided 5 years ago to add a virtual branch to the organization, and you were put in charge of leading this new division to success. While this addition to your company may be great for global competition and opening new markets, you have begun to face challenges with implementation and human resource management. The employees working underneath you are from different countries of the world and have never met face-to-face. Your only form of communication with each of them is computer-mediated.

Scenario #1

Janice, an employee that has been with you from the beginning, has begun to slip and the quality of her work is starting to decline. While her work in the past has been impressive, prompt, and integral to the company, she has recently failed to meet two out of the past three deadlines, causing the project objectives of the entire group to suffer, and clients to complain. While Janice is an ideal member of the group in terms of her advanced education and the role she serves as a multi-functional specialist, she has become harder to get in contact with and has become less responsive to your e-mails and instant messages.

In an e-mail, what would you say to Janice to get her performance back up to company standards?

Scenario # 2

John, an employee that has been with you from the beginning, has begun to slip and the quality of his work is starting to decline. While his work in the past has been impressive, prompt, and integral to the company, he has recently failed to meet two out of the past three deadlines, causing the project objectives of the entire group to suffer, and clients to complain. While John is an ideal member of the group in terms of his advanced education and the role he serves as a multi-functional specialist, he has become harder to get in contact with and has become less responsive to your e-mails and instant messages.

In an e-mail, what would you say to John to get his performance back up to company standards?

APPENDIX C

Power Bases

This segment of the questionnaire focuses on the traditional power bases and their relation to the choosing disciplinary strategies. The five classifications of power will be briefly describes, and then you will basked to identify the type of power that elicited your most influential disciplinary measure.

Reward Power: Power that is based upon your ability to mediate rewards. The strength of reward power increases with the magnitude of rewards with which you have the resources to negotiate. These rewards could include things such as salary increases, more vacation time, or promotions.

Coercive Power: This power is based on your ability to mediate punishments. The strength of coercive power increases depending on the magnitude of the negative consequences you impose. These punishments could include such acts as withholding pay, giving overly difficult responsibilities to a subordinate, or in his/her complete job termination.

Referent Power: This power is based on liking, respecting, or identifying with someone who has certain qualities that you find desirable. This kind of power may show itself in your desire to empathize with the subordinate.

Expert Power: This power is based upon the belief that a person in a powerful position has a great deal of valuable knowledge, skill, or information in this given area. This kind of power could result in your ability to discipline an employee because of the experience

you have obtained in the organization and the overall field of which the organization is a part.

Legitimate Power: This power is the actual hierarchical power that gives you the right to prescribe the behavior of another person, and obligates the subordinate to accept this influence. This power may come from seniority or job title and is derived from the acceptance of others.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please decide to what extent the statements below indicated your behavior and feelings during the experiment and circle a number on each of the 5 lines under each statement.

1. I chose to initiate a disciplinary strategy with this subordinate because of my reward power.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Disagree
False	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	True
Incorrect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Correct
Right	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Wrong
Yes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No

2. I chose to initiate a disciplinary strategy with this subordinate because of my coercive power.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Disagree
False	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	True
Incorrect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Correct
Right	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Wrong

Yes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No

3. I chose to initiate a disciplinary strategy with this subordinate because of my referent power.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

False 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 True

Incorrect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Correct

Right 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Wrong

Yes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No

4. I chose to initiate a disciplinary strategy with this subordinate because of my legitimate power.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

False 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 True

Incorrect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Correct

Right 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Wrong

Yes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No

5. I chose to initiate a disciplinary strategy with this subordinate because of my expert power.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

False 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 True

Incorrect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Correct
Right	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Wrong
Yes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No

APPENDIX D

Self Confidence

Self- Assessment Inventory

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each item carefully and decide to what extent it is characteristic of your feelings and behavior. Fill in the blank next to each item by choosing a number from the scale printed below.

- 1- Strongly disagree
- 2- Moderately disagree
- 3- Slightly disagree
- 4- Neutral
- 5- Slightly agree
- 6- Moderately agree
- 7- Strongly agree

- _____ 1. It is important that I succeed in all that I do.
- _____ 2. Failure has its advantages.
- _____ 3. Failure is unacceptable to me.
- _____ 4. I think that in some situations it is important that I not succeed.
- _____ 5. Sometimes I am more comfortable when I lose or do poorly.
- _____ 6. I try to avoid being too successful.
- _____ 7. For me, being successful is not necessarily the best thing.
- _____ 8. There are some situations where I think it is better that I fail.
- _____ 9. I strive to be successful all of the time.
- _____ 10. When engaged in an important task, most of my thoughts turn to bad things that might happen (e.g. failing) than to good.

- _____ 11. For me avoiding failure has a greater emotional impact (e.g. sense of relief) than the emotional impact of achieving success (e.g. joy and pride).
- _____ 12. More often than not I feel unsure of my abilities.
- _____ 13. I sometimes wonder if I have the ability to succeed at important activities.
- _____ 14. I usually feel confident in my ability to succeed at an important activity.
- _____ 15. I often wish that I felt more certain of my strengths and weaknesses.
- _____ 16. Sometimes I feel that I don't know why I have succeeded at something.
- _____ 17. As I begin an important activity, I usually feel confident in the likely outcome.

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