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Source: *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jan., 1987), pp. 79-86

Published by: Wiley

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3000341>

Accessed: 10-09-2016 04:53 UTC

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Sex effects in the evaluation of influence tactics

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The influx of women into the labour force and the barriers to their upward mobility stimulated an interest in the impact of sex on performance evaluation (Terborg 1977. For reviews of that literature, see Brown, 1979; Nieva and Gutek, 1981). The findings are contradictory. Some studies report that different criteria are used to evaluate the performance of men and women and that each sex is expected to behave in stereotypically sex-role congruent ways (Deaux and Taynor, 1973; Rosen and Jerdee, 1973; Petty and Lee, 1975; Petty and Miles, 1976; Bartol and Butterfield, 1976; Haccoun, Haccoun and Sallay, 1978; Rice, Bender and Vitters, 1980; Jago and Vroom, 1982). Other studies, however, report no such sex bias and suggest that in achievement situations the same standards are used to evaluate the performance of men and women (Butterfield and Bartol, 1977; Dipboye and Wiley, 1977; Lee and Alvares, 1977; Petty and Bruning, 1980; Butterfield and Powell, 1981; Stitt, Price and Kipnis 1983; Izraeli and Izraeli, 1985).

Most studies to date, have focused on the relationship between sex and some set of contrasting leadership behaviours such as initiation of structure (task oriented) and consideration (people oriented) or autocratic and participative behaviour. A key leadership issue for women is the access to and use of power and influence, variables generally associated with masculinity (Kanter, 1977). We found only two studies (Johnson, 1976; Wiley and Eskilson 1982) which examined the effects of sex on the evaluation of influence tactics.

Johnson (1976) found that respondents expected men and women to exercise power differently. Direct influence tactics such as coercion, legitimate, expert and informational power were significantly more expected of males than of females but for the expected 'female' tactics such as ingratiation and other forms of indirect influence, there was no significant sex difference. Johnson (1976, pp. 108-9) concludes that '... it's acceptable that only males will use the strong aggressive type of power, yet males are allowed to use the other bases. Females, however, are limited in our society's expectations to the less powerful base'. Indirect (manipulative) tactics are a weaker base because the influencer, acting as if the person on the receiving end is not aware of the influence (Tedeschi, 1972), is less likely to be perceived as a powerful person than is he or she whose ability to influence is known (Michner, Lawler and Bacharach, 1973).

Using a similar design to that employed in the present study, Wiley and Eskilson (1982), like Johnson, found an interaction effect for sex of influencer and influence

technique on performance evaluation. The performance of a male manager was evaluated more positively when he employed expert compared to reward based influence techniques, while the performance of a female manager was rated superior when she employed reward compared to expert based techniques. Observing that rewards are a less stable basis of power than is expertise, Wiley and Eskilson, like Johnson, point to the 'catch 22' situation for women in leadership, namely the expectation that they adopt the less empowering of the power tactics, rendering them potentially less effective.

This study examines the relationship between sex and the evaluation of direct and indirect influence tactics among Israeli managers. Two alternative hypotheses are considered: Hypothesis 1 (*sex-role congruence*): Sex-role congruent expectations affect performance evaluation. Given an influence situation, subjects will evaluate a female manager more favourably when she uses an indirect (typically female) influence tactic than a direct influence tactic, and a male manager more favourably when he uses a direct (typically male) tactic than an indirect tactic.

Hypothesis 2 (*style not sex bias*): There is a preferred influence tactic or style for managers and subjects will rate the manager using the preferred tactic more favourably than the manager using the less preferred style, regardless of manager sex.

The literature on the effects of subject sex on performance evaluation shows inconsistent findings, although most studies conducted in the United States report no sex of subject differences (Nieva and Gutek, 1981, p. 88). In the only Israeli study to examine sex of subject differences in attitudes towards women as managers, Gafni (1980), using a convenience sample of 285 employed men and women, found that women expressed more favourable attitudes than did men concerning women's suitability for a senior managerial role, but they also expressed a stronger preference for working under a male as manager than did men. No hypothesis regarding the impact of subject sex was formulated, but the variable was introduced into the design.

METHOD

Instrument

A 2×2×2 design was used with a 'hypothetical situation' questionnaire prepared in four versions varying the tactic of influence (direct/indirect) and the sex of manager (male/female). In Hebrew, all verb and noun forms including occupational titles (such as manager) are gender specific, thus highlighting the sex of the manager in each version.

The Northern Plant

A contract reached the desk of the Projects Department manager of an organizational consulting firm located in Tel Aviv. It was for a study to be conducted in a metal producing plant situated in the north of the country. The plant was located at a considerable distance from any residential area and was not easily accessible by public transportation. In addition, manager-worker relations there were strained — a fact that would make conducting the research more difficult than otherwise.

The department manager deliberated to whom to assign the project. She (he) finally decided on Yosi, because of his special competence in tackling such problems. In the past he had successfully managed some highly sensitive and complex projects.

The problem then arose — how to break the news to Yosi?

At the next department meeting the manager reported to the members on the order that had come in for a study of the Northern Plant.

(1) Direct tactic version: She (he) then turned to Yosi and said that she (he) had assigned the project to him and that it was now up to him to carry it through. (2) Indirect tactic version: That afternoon the department manager came into Yosi's office and remarked: 'You know, the project in the north is really interesting'. She (he) added that the professional problems it posed were very similar to those Yosi had solved so successfully in his previous project. The next morning the department secretary put the Northern Plant file on Yosi's desk.

Each subject received one version of the questionnaire and was asked to respond to the following three questions (dependent variables): How effective is this manager? How much influence does this manager have in the organization? How self confident is this manager? Responses were rated on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Subjects were 184 employed junior and middle level managers (125 males and 59 females) who at the time of study were enrolled as part-time students in university sponsored management training courses.

Table 1. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) in perceived influence, self confidence and effectiveness by sex of manager, type of influence tactic and sex of subject

Source of variance	Influence			Self-confidence		Effectiveness	
	Sum of squares	<i>df</i> †	<i>F</i>	Sum of squares	<i>F</i>	Sum of squares	<i>F</i>
A. Male versus female manager	1.47	1	1.21	0.04	0.03	1.37	1.09
B. Direct versus indirect tactic	17.45	1	14.43‡	32.09	20.47†	7.00	5.54§
C. Male versus female subject	0.89	1	0.74	2.21	1.41	0.34	0.27
Interaction A × B	4.44	1	3.68§	0.76	0.05	2.65	2.09
Interaction A × C	1.61	1	1.33	0.48	0.31	4.71	3.73§
Interaction B × C	0.14	1	0.11	4.27	2.72	1.76	1.39
Residual	213.99	177		227.55		223.70	
Total	239.91	183		315.91		2451.78	

*Because there is only 1 degree of freedom, the mean square is identical to the sum of squares and therefore not repeated.

†The column presenting degrees of freedom is identical for all three dependent variables and, therefore, not repeated.

‡ $p < 0.001$.

§ $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Two alternative hypotheses were tested: sex-role congruent criteria are used to evaluate the performance of men and women; there is a preferred style and it provides the criterion for evaluating both men and women.

Table 1, which reports the ANOVA, reveals the following: A main influence tactic effect was found which supports hypothesis 2 that there is a preferred influence tactic. The manager who used the direct tactic was rated more influential, more self confident and more effective than the manager who used the indirect tactic. In addition, a sex of manager/influence tactic interaction was found for perceived influence. Using a direct tactic resulted in a higher influence rating for the female than for the male manager.

Table 2. Means of perceived effectiveness, influence and self-confidence by sex of manager, type of tactic and sex of subject

Sex of manager	Tactic/Subject	<i>n</i>	Effectiveness		Influence		Confidence	
			<i>x</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>t</i>
(a)	Type of tactic							
Male	Direct	49	3.16	N.S.	3.04	N.S.	3.43	2.99*
	Indirect	47	3.00		2.74		2.64	
Female	Direct	45	3.58	2.75*	3.53	3.99*	3.42	3.31*
	Indirect	43	2.93		2.58		2.56	
(b)	Subject sex							
Male	Male	63	3.02	N.S.	2.70	N.S.	2.95	N.S.
	Female	33	3.20		3.09		3.21	
Female	Male	62	3.41	N.S.	3.10	N.S.	2.97	N.S.
	Female	26	2.92		3.00		3.08	

Key: 1 = low; 5 = high.

* $p \leq 0.01$.

Table 2a which presents mean differences in rating within each manager sex shows that the female manager using a direct tactic is rated more influential, more effective and more confident than the female using an indirect tactic. But for the male manager this difference is found only for confidence.

No main sex of subject effect was found. Table 1, however, reveals an interaction effect between sex of subject and sex of manager for effectiveness, which is a reverse similarity effect. As shown from the means in Table 2b when the manager in the story was a female, she was rated considerably less effective by female subjects than by male subjects, when the manager was a male he was rated slightly more effective by female than by male subjects. This pattern is repeated for the influence variable, although the effect is not significant. The finding lends partial support to the argument of greater female prejudice against women.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study support hypothesis 2. Managers were evaluated differently on the basis of the type of influence tactic employed and not whether they adopted stereotypically sex congruent behaviours.

A review of the research suggests a number of explanations for the inconsistent findings regarding the impact of sex on performance evaluation and particularly results supportive of the sex-role congruence hypothesis. Predictions based on sex-role congruence are supported more often in (1) earlier studies than later ones (see references at beginning of this paper); (2) studies based on student subjects who, lacking full-time work experience, are more likely to be influenced by stereotypes about managers (Brown, 1979); (3) studies based on an all male sample or subjects working in an all male environment where stereotypes may be more prevalent (see, for example the Rice *et al.* (1980) Westpoint study; (4) studies conducted in highly stable organizational climates compared to more turbulent ones (Petty and Bruning, 1980) where considerations of effective leadership style become more salient and sex-roles less so.

The fact that the present study was conducted in Israel, raises the provocative issue of whether cultural factors may also impact on research findings. Cultures differ in the kind of sex-role stereotypes they foster. For example, Huang (1971), using the Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman and Broverman (1968) questionnaire, found significant differences between Chinese students from Taiwan and American college students in the traits identified as typically male or typically female. Comparing the view of women held by the American women and the Chinese women, Huang found significant differences on 62 of the possible 122 traits. Ziv, Sistein and Litan (1973), in a replication of the Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz, (1972) study, found that Israeli youth had fewer sex stereotypes than found by Broverman *et al.* for an American sample. Only nine of the 19 attributes found by Broverman *et al.* to be male stereotypes and 13 of the 19 attributes found to be female stereotypes were so identified by the Israelis. In a cross-cultural replication of the Goldberg (1968) study, which included a sample of kibbutz members and of city (Jerusalem) dwellers, Mischel (1974) found that the Israelis showed the same occupational sex-role stereotypes as the U.S. subjects regarding the sex association of four fields (law, city planning, dietetics and primary education) but no sex bias in evaluating professional journal articles by authors in those fields.

Cultures also differ in the extent to which each sex is permitted to adopt patterns of behaviour associated with the other sex. During the period of pre-State Israel, the ideology of sex equality that prevailed granted women the right to adopt the highly valued, but symbolically masculine pioneering roles associated with nation building (Rein, 1979; Izraeli, 1981). The status enjoyed by women army officers, particularly in fighting units, women managers and politicians, indicates that Israeli culture rewards women who demonstrate non-typical characteristics such as initiative, risk taking and assertive behaviour, especially in achievement situations (Izraeli and Izraeli, 1985). Although socialization does not foster these characteristics, social norms condone them. Hofstede (1984) in a 40 nation study, based on a matched sample of individuals from the same organization and in the same occupational roles, convincingly demonstrated the impact of culture on work values and the way in which people evaluate the quality of their work life. He distinguished between masculine cultures

which 'use the biological existence of two sexes to define very different roles for men and women' and feminine cultures which 'define relatively overlapping social roles for the sexes'. Compared to the United States, Israel was rated as having a less masculine or more feminine culture. The significance of culture for mediating the effects of sex in evaluation has not yet been explored and is worthy of further research.

An unanticipated finding was that the impact of the preferred direct influence technique, was stronger for the female than for the male manager. The female manager who adopted a stereotypically masculine, but preferred, direct influence tactic was not penalized for incongruent sex-role behaviour. She rather was rated more influential and more effective (the latter difference was not significant) than the male using the same tactic. This result may be explained in terms of the 'principle of inconsistency' (Meeker, 1981) developed within the framework of status expectation theory to describe how people combine information from several sometimes inconsistent sources to create performance expectations (Berger, Fisek, Norman and Zelditch, 1977). According to the inconsistency principle, 'in the information-combining process a single item of inconsistent information has greater weight in determining expectations than an item of consistent information' (Meeker, 1981, p. 315). Given that the direct tactic was preferred, the female who behaved contrary to stereotypical expectations and used a direct influence tactic was, consequently, rated higher than the male using the same tactic. The situation is similar to that described by Taynor and Deaux (1973) who found that a woman's behaviour in a civic emergency (armed robbery) was rated as more deserving of a reward than that of a man when her behaviour was portrayed as somewhat out of role (she remained cool-headed) and her actions were praised by experts (the police).

The major conclusion suggested by the above findings is that given that a normative pattern of action is highly valued, such as remaining cool-headed in an emergency or employing a direct influence tactic under the conditions described in the present study, women have much to gain from adopting the sex incongruent behaviour. It appears that the demands of the situation have a more compelling influence than sex-role expectations on shaping evaluation of performance. This conclusion is significantly different from that reached by Johnson (1976) and Wiley and Eskilson (1982).

The finding that women rated the female manager less effective than did men rate her, may reflect women's lower expectations for female success especially in a masculine task (Parsons, Ruble, Hodges and Small, 1976). If so, it may explain Gafni's (1980) finding that the Israeli women more than the men, expressed a preference for working under a male manager.

The present study has a number of limitations which need to be taken into consideration for future research: The hypothetical situation approach, while it permits control over multiple variables which intervene in real life situations, is nonetheless less valid. A simulation under experimental conditions using a number of different direct and indirect influence situations to control for a possible specific situation artifact, would provide greater reliability and validity to the results. Control over subject socio-demographic and organizational variables, not provided in the present study, is particularly important for identifying the impact of specific cultural conditioning on sex effects in social expectations and performance evaluation.

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