

Trouble at the Top: Women Who Don't Want to Work for a Female Boss

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An exploratory field study inquired whether women like to be supervised by a female manager. The more jobs held by female respondents, the less they preferred having a woman for a boss. Additionally, there was negative bias related to the age of the female manager. There were no similar effects between male subordinates and managers of either gender. In fact, the more jobs males had in their careers, the more they believed that females make the best boss. Implications are discussed toward whether the glass ceiling for females is being perpetuated to some degree by other females in subordinate positions.

INTRODUCTION

As ambitious young women are endeavoring to carve out careers in male dominated business environments, they might expect one thing to work in their favor: a female boss¹. The reality is that younger women complain that they feel disparaged by senior female bosses who have achieved upper level management positions. Senior female bosses are more likely to support male subordinates than younger female subordinates (Mizrahi, 2004).

In the United States, nearly 60% of adult women are in the workforce (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Presently, despite advances in women's higher education and entrance into traditionally male-dominated disciplines and occupations, women remain underrepresented at the highest levels of corporate decision-making and management positions. According to a 2010 census of men and women in top corporate leadership, women held 51.4% of all managerial and professional positions but were only 13.5% of all Fortune 500 executive officers (Catalyst, 2010). Further, the growth in the share of women in these top positions has slowed dramatically in recent years (Ritter & Yoder, 2004; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

Diversity in the workforce has led to increasing acceptance of female leadership by both genders, which is crucial to the promotion of women to higher levels in organizations. At the same time, the presence of pressure to conform to fashionable ideas termed "political correctness" (Bernstein, 2009) has become more pervasive. A question that might be raised is whether expressed attitudes favoring women in management reflect a genuine commitment to seeing more women actually achieve higher positions, or simply wishful thinking driven by conformity to a general contemporary ideal.

The dominance of masculine cultures has rightfully been credited with difficulties women have in constructing their managerial identities (Priola & Brannan, 2008). Surveys have suggested that women are equally qualified as men and have typically similar leadership skills, but men are more likely to emerge as the preferred leader by both male and female subordinates (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Tahmincioglu, 2007). Organizations are generally dominated by male stereotypes (Gherardi & Poggio, 2007). When subordinates expect men to exhibit higher authority than women, they tend to have prejudice against females who lead (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Industries and jobs that are more stereotypically male also evoke greater negativity toward a female boss (Garcı-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006). It has been shown that female managers are devalued relative to males in similar positions (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992).

Early studies indicated that female subordinates had no gender bias favoring either male or female leaders (Brewer, 1979; Brewer & Kramer, 1985). However, Ely (1994) discovered female subordinates to have negative perceptions of female managers when there were fewer women in senior positions. In a peculiar twist on the glass ceiling effect (i.e.: an invisible barrier to upward advancement of women), male subordinates have been found to be more receptive to having a woman as a boss than are female subordinates (Warning & Buchanan, 2009). That women may be actively contributing to the glass ceiling raises critical questions on the nature of leadership and followership as they relate to gender differences.

The purpose of this study is to attempt to identify and spotlight the relationship dynamics between female support of their own gender group in the workplace, and the pressures that favor male oriented power structures. Explorations of bias against women as managers have tended to focus on the attitudes and behaviors of the supervisor, while studies of the female subordinate are far fewer. The conclusions point toward awareness that could enhance female upward mobility. The data collection is structured to capture the perceptions of subordinates in the hierarchical relationship. Rather than focusing primarily on leadership, this study is follower oriented. This creates a perspective that makes a contribution to literature. If there is a hidden or unintentional bias toward female managers from females below them, it is not surprising that the nature of such would be difficult to discern and define. It is to be emphasized that this research is exploratory, and literature is limited on perceptions of subordinates in gendered leadership relationships. Thus, some of the hypotheses lack an abundance of backing literature. Additionally, it continues to be challenging to define and query the precise nature of this bias as it is emerging through research.

Clarity toward the following overarching questions is sought: (1) is the glass ceiling being perpetuated, at least in part, by women in subordinate positions who are not supportive of female leadership, and (2) what is the nature of the relationships between female managers and their subordinates in which a negative bias is present? Two theoretical approaches relevant to our inquiry are *role congruity* and *social identity*.

THEORIES

Role Congruity Theory

According to role congruity theory, stereotyping of gender roles leads to expectations of individual behavior (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The recognition that there are differences between genders dictates suitable norms and behaviors (Burgess and Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Communal or nurturing traits are expected of women, which are quite different from the “agentic” traits expected of men. Communal behavior is helpful, gentle, and nurturing, whereas agentic behaviors include assertiveness, confidence, and control (Eagly, 1987). As leadership is traditionally linked to agentic qualities, men are stereotypically predisposed to assume leadership roles more often than women. There appears to be acceptable crossover behavior between agentic and communal behavior norms. Girls can at times act like “tomboys” and boys can show their “sensitivity” (Burgis and Borgida, 1999). Communal attributes, however, are valued positively for women, and agentic attributes, for men.

Eagly proposed that when females are perceived to have higher agentic traits, role incongruity occurs. Top-level executive behaviors are almost always associated with masculine, agentic qualities.

Disapproval may be induced when women succeed in “male positions of responsibility.” Women leaders often find themselves needing to exhibit behaviors considered inappropriate for their gender, such as being tough and openly competitive. At the same time, they may find themselves abandoning some of the traditional female traits of social sensitivity and service orientation (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Social Identity Theory

Tajfel (1978) defines social identity as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership.” A primary driver of group identity is to compare one’s own group to another group. This creates identification with the ingroup (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), composed of others who share that identity and receive the benefits of being an insider. According to social identity theory, individuals are motivated to sustain a positive social identity, which biases them in favor of their ingroup and differentiates them from the outgroup.

In comparing men and women on their relative receptiveness to female managers, social identity theory would propose that women subordinates would be more receptive than male subordinates to the appropriateness of having women serve in managerial roles. This expectation runs somewhat counter to role congruity theory. Specifically, whereas role congruity theory projects a resistance to stereotypically communal women serving in traditionally agentic leader roles, social identity theory projects a favorability toward women as leaders by women themselves. Notably, the disconnect does not occur with males, as social identity applied to men favors men-as-leaders, consistent with role congruity expectations.

Research has found females to suffer adverse effects from violation of gender-prescriptive norms (Cora, 2008). For example, when female roles or behaviors are not congruent with feelings of “sisterhood” or communal traits, female subordinates may feel betrayed. Women can accept hierarchy from men but not from other women (Weiss, 2009). These negative social reactions, even to highly competent female bosses who exemplify male leadership traits, are likely to be a hindrance for upwardly aspiring women (Heilman *et al.*, 2004). Females in leadership roles have been shown to be evaluated more harshly than men (Goldberg, 1968; Lewis, 2000). Those who prove themselves competent in areas typically deemed “mans work” can provoke hostility, ostracism, or sabotage (Meece, 2009), and are otherwise penalized for exhibiting leadership behavior that would be accepted in a male leader (Eagly, Makhinjani, & Klonsky, 1992; Mathison, 1986; Rudman, 1998; Tinsley *et al.*, 2009). Of great concern is recent research indicating that women penalize successful women (Parks-Stamm, Heilman, & Hearn, 2008). In attempts to maintain their positive self-view, females characterized the highly effective women as unlikable and interpersonally hostile.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

In a workforce that has become more acclimated to diversity, the natural trend would find workers to be increasingly receptive to the notion of leadership by females who are qualified by virtue of their experience and skill sets. Of particular interest is how role congruity and social identity forces are reconciled, as they lead to divergent conclusions in the female subordinate – female boss relationship. In the case of a conflict, it is informative to observe which motivation becomes dominant.

Role congruity bias would call for women subordinates to prefer males in a leadership role. The basis for role congruity expectations would help identify those workers most susceptible to such bias. For example, it might be a cultural relic, more ascribed to by older workers. Or, the preference for gender of boss may be associated with experiences that take place during ones career.

Number of Jobs

The exact mechanism through which age is related to bias is unclear. One possibility is that a variety of work experience would offer greater opportunity for workers to compare male and female bosses through first-hand experience. Attitudes toward women managers would be expected to be influenced

with exposure to more diverse workplace experiences with women in management. Emergent preferences would take place through actual manager-subordinate relationships, the quality of which may be varied. We assessed degree of work experience as the number of jobs participants have held in their careers, and considered its potential to effect bias incrementally beyond age.

In observing the ways in which members of a non-dominant group comprehend their relationship with the group and with the organization, social identity theory deals with aspects of “belongingness” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Even if females are not dominant, they can enhance their self-image by maintaining a positive social identity with the other females. This also improves self-esteem (Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George, 2004). Their sense of well-being is enhanced through effective relationships with other similar group members.

However, the female boss is subject to social mobility influences, in which they endeavor to gain membership into the higher status (i.e.: male) group (van Knippenberg & van Oers, 1984). By aligning themselves with the dominant male group at higher levels in the organization, they begin disassociating from the lower status group of females. While this is occurring in female managers’ career development, their female subordinates relatively new to the work force would only notice it after more experience, perhaps under a variety of managers.

H1: Female workers with fewer jobs in their careers will have a more favorable preference toward being managed a female boss than will more highly experienced female subordinates.

Gender of Subordinates

Gender bias that favors males in management roles is a group level phenomenon that spans a wide variety of organizational types (Lyons & McArthur, 2007). In fact, women may not be seen as appropriate to lead (Biernat, 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Many organizations do, after all, generally continue to be structured as “boys clubs.”

Additionally, men continue to often be presumed to be more negative than women toward females in the workplace. Women have long been shown as the targets of negative perceptions of males in the workplace (Bass, Krussell, and Alexander, 1971; Bowman, Wortney, & Greyser, 1965; Harlan, & Weiss, 1982). Nonetheless, meta-analysis by Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) found, counter to their hypothesis, that male subordinates were more receptive than female subordinates, to having a female boss.

In updating this workforce relationship, we hypothesize that:

H2: Female subordinates will be more negatively biased toward the female boss than are the male subordinates.

Age and Experience

Seniority of women managers may relate to bias from female subordinates in the following way. As leaders, females who are personally powerful tend to display a level of assertiveness that violates gender stereotypical expectations (Sargent, 1977). Their high ego strength threatens other women who have been powerless to overcome external forces over which they had no control. The term “Queen Bee Syndrome” was first coined by Staines, Tavis, and Jayaratneto (1973) to describe women who have been individually successful in male-dominated environments (Ellemers et al., 2004). A “queen bee” is a female who exhibits male assertiveness characteristics in order to meet the requirements of her leadership role.

Queen bees are not supportive of their female subordinates because they fear that the success of other women may challenge their own positions of power in organizations (Kanter, 1977). For some women professionals, however, this emphasis on assertiveness puts them in a very tenuous position within the organization (Mathison, 1986). To compete they must be assertive; yet by asserting themselves they depart from gender related norms of female compliance and noncompetitiveness, which are expectations

commonly held by traditional organizational cultures (Stohl, 1982). Rindfleish (2000) elaborated upon the challenges and organizational barriers that influence the Queen Bee syndrome.

Researchers have theorized that lower status group members (i.e.: women) sometimes shift their identification from their group to a dominant group in order to increase their power and status (Levin, Federico, Sidanius, & Rabinowitz, 2002; Major et al., 2002). Such dis-identification can influence them in favor of the higher status group, as their quest for success leads them to engage in role behaviors that reinforce the existing gender status differential, and perpetuate the status and power of the dominant groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Genders and ethnicities have been observed to favor the higher status group, to the detriment of policies such as equal treatment and opportunity (Levin et al., 2002). Staines et al. (1973) found that age increases resistance to change, as individuals become more committed to established ways, ingrained habits, and personal beliefs. In this fashion, the female boss over time may depart from the “sisterhood” of other females in lower positions. We hypothesize that age of the female manager is associated with negative perceptions by the females they supervise.

H3: Age of female boss is negatively related to satisfaction, from the viewpoint of female subordinates.

METHOD

Participants

Of the 311 students sampled from several disciplines at a university in the center of the US, 190 (61%) were women. One hundred fifteen respondents were finishing their Master of Education, 79 were in a MBA program, and 32 were advanced nursing program students. Mean age was 33 years (range = 18 to 70) and work experience averaged 14 years (range = 0 to 46).

Measures

Demographics

Gender, age, and number of jobs in their career were the respondent demographic variables selected for this study. In considering the respondents’ supervisors, their age at the most recent time of working for them was used as an independent variable.

Belief that Females Make the Best Boss

A two-item scale was used to capture the impression that the best manager is a female manager. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The intent was to capture an overall general perception of the competence and desirability of females who manage. The alpha for this measure was .73.

Preference for Female Managers

Although conceptually closely related to a belief that females are superior managers, actual preference for women managers is a critically distinct construct in the theoretical perspective adopted here. Social desirability (i.e.: political correctness) might lead one to state that females make the best boss, even though an individual may not actually want to work for one. This distinction was shown to exist in research by Warning and Buchanan (2009). We used two items to assess preference: "I would rather have a female supervisor than a male supervisor" (true-keyed) and "I prefer a male supervisor to a female supervisor" (false-keyed). The -.52 correlation between these items was judged strong enough to warrant aggregation, yielding alpha = .70.

Characteristics of a Previous Supervisor

The survey asked respondents to recall a previous boss who was not a current supervisor. This was intended to create a past-tense scenario for all subjects. Fourteen questions were asked before asking them to recall another manager of the opposite gender. Subjects were randomly assigned surveys that began

with either a male or a female manager. The items used in this analysis were Likert scaled as above, stating “This was a satisfactory relationship,” “It would be great to have a person like this as a supervisor again,” and “I would never work for this person again.” The item “Rate your overall experience with this boss” was 5-point scaled from very unfavorable to very favorable, and “To what extent would you want to work for another similar manager?” was scaled similarly from ‘absolutely not’ to ‘definitely yes’.

Procedure

Subjects were presented a written survey during available classroom opportunities over a five-week period, with an online option for distance students. While participation was specified as being strictly voluntary, a random cash prize drawing was used as an inducement. More than 95% of surveys requested were completed.

Analyses

Hypotheses were tested and observations made through the use of descriptive statistics and OLS regression. Gender was coded 1 = male and 2 = female, and so a positive correlation would signify a higher mean on the other (continuous) variable for females over males, and a negative correlation would signify male mean > female mean.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for all variables appear in Table 1, based on all participants and males and females separately. Respondents’ number of jobs were used as independent variables, and their attitudes toward gendered bosses were outcome variables. Table 2 shows the relationships between the managers’ age and the opinions of the subordinates.

**TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND T-VALUES FOR RESPONDENTS IN
TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY GENDER**

Respondents	All n = 311		Males n = 121			Females n = 190		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	Mean	SD	t
Number of Jobs	1.99	0.88	2.03	0.84		1.94	0.91	
Outcomes								
Believe females make best boss	2.85	0.76	2.85	0.65	1.96*	2.85	0.82	-1.23
Prefer having female for a boss	2.67	0.84	2.68	0.73	1.24	2.66	0.91	-1.92*

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001, two-tailed

TABLE 2
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND T-VALUES FOR SUPERVISORS,
BY RESPONDENT GENDER

Age	Female boss n = 293				Male boss n = 302			
	42.62		42.19					
	Female Respondent n = 181		Male Respondent n = 103		Female Respondent n = 178		Male Respondent n = 117	
	μ	<i>t</i>	μ	<i>t</i>	μ	<i>t</i>	μ	<i>t</i>
This was a satisfactory relationship	3.59	-2.07*	3.68	.36	3.72	-.13	3.82	1.49
Would work again for a similar manager	3.20	-1.95*	3.10	-.527	3.39	-.04	3.50	1.61
Rate your overall experience with this mgr.	3.39	-3.32***	3.47	.20	3.57	-.67	3.84	.55
Would be great to have again as a boss	3.18	-2.12*	2.98	-.114	3.23	-.49	3.41	1.00
Would never work for this person again	2.54	1.98*	2.53	.186	2.34	.95	2.31	-1.49

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, two-tailed

Hypothesis 1 (H1), which stated that there would be a negative relationship between the number of jobs a female worker had held and their preference for having a female boss, is supported, $F(9,188) = 3.69$, $p < .05$. H2, predicting that female subordinates would have a greater negative bias toward female supervision than male subordinates, was supported. In fact, more jobs in their career related to increasing belief that women make better bosses, $F(9,120) = 3.84$, $p < .05$.

H3 examined the age of the female supervisor in relationship to several gender preference elements. It was strongly supported in its negative relationship of age to how satisfactory the female subordinates' relationship with the female boss was, $F(31,179) = 4.29$, $p < .05$, whether the women would work again for a similar manager, $F(31,179) = 3.78$, $p < .05$, and the overall experience with the manager in question $F(31,179) = 10.99$, $p < .001$. Additionally, we found women respondents to be negative on having the older female again as a boss, $F(31,179) = 4.50$, $p < .05$, or ever wanting to work for her again $F(31,179) = 3.90$, $p < .05$. It is noteworthy that none of the same relationships were significant with the male supervisor for either gender of subordinate.

DISCUSSION

Warning and Buchanan (2009) identified a "hidden bias" against women as managers in finding that women believed that females can serve effectively as managers, while at the same time they did not actually want to work for a female boss. This negative bias was stronger in subordinates who had a larger number of jobs in their careers. We find in this study also that number of jobs is negatively related to perceptions of female supervision with women subordinates, although this relationship was positive with male respondents. One of the goals of this current study was to attempt to replicate and elaborate upon any ways that time in the workforce might enter the gender bias dynamics in hierarchical working relationships.

More jobs create more comparison points for the individual, as well as the likelihood of exposing them to one or more female bosses. If this leads to a conclusion that the more one sees of female leadership, the less she likes it, the implications for opening the way upward in organizations to females are disturbing.

A dynamic that emerges from this scenario is that the female social identity which would support female supervision in early careers, may give way to role congruity in later careers. In this fashion, the female subordinate shifts their preferences to the traditional agentic behaviors of male leadership. This

could also relate to the outcome of hypothesis 3, in which older female bosses who take on agentic qualities as their careers progress, alienate their female subordinates.

Hypothesis 2 indicated that males may be responding better to female supervision than female subordinates. The more jobs men had, the more they believed that women generally make better bosses. Similarly to H1 where women are influenced by the array of jobs they experience, men may be drawing conclusions, although in their case it is a positive rather than a negative conclusion toward female management. This furnishes some explanation to the earlier findings of Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) which they found to be puzzling. The evidence indicates that men may be getting the message of diversity in the workplace, in some aspects better than women.

Through a comparison of means in Table 2, we see that while male preference for male supervision has the highest ratings overall, their opinions of female bosses in some categories exceed the perceptions of females toward their female bosses. Also, the means of the female perceptions toward female bosses is more negative in every category listed than their perceptions of male supervision. This is reflected in comments we hear in our community from managers who are reluctant to promote a female, fearing the other girls will refuse to work for her.

Hypothesis 3 raises more questions than it answers. The indications of Table 2 clearly indicate an age bias that accompanies gender bias in the perceptions of female subordinates toward female managers. All of the satisfaction relationships were negative. The only positive relationship was between age of the female boss and never wanting to work for her again. In looking at social identity, it is clear that there is a disconnect between the older female managers and their subordinates in this study. Somehow the subordinate females fail to identify with the older female manager. Perhaps the manager through time and experience shifts their own identity toward the dominant male agentic qualities in the furtherance of their careers.

IMPLICATIONS

Two elements of concern that emerge from the data analysis in this study relate to gender discrimination and age discrimination. The most favorable perceptions of female management involving less experienced female subordinates and younger female bosses point toward a dichotomy in application of the two theories in this study. The results indicate that the women shifted from social identity favoring females, and moved toward role congruity that favors male supervision, as the female workers were in the work force longer. Perhaps females early in their careers identify favorably with the female gender of their boss, only to have this erode as they experience the boss-subordinate relationship over time, whereby their preference shifts to being negative toward having a female supervisor. They may be finding the role of supervisor does not lend itself well to the female as a boss.

Anecdotally, negative perceptions of this relationship abound. However, descriptions such as “meanness” or “cattiness” between females are not easy to define with any clarity or consistency. That is the nature of such exploratory research. Beyond replicating elements of Warning and Buchanan's (2009) evidence of the hidden bias, we sought through a different survey to define its nature by identifying factors that might be related to such bias. This data set leads only slightly in that direction.

Another finding that emerged from this research was the negativity of perceptions of female managers by their subordinates in relationship to the age of the manager. As she became older, the female subordinates found the relationship with female boss to be less satisfactory, with more of an unfavorable overall experience, and a desire to never work again for this or any similar manager. This leaves us to consider the attributes of the older female manager that would be generally perceived less favorably. Such a manager would tend to have more experience in their role, and their success might be based on the effective application of the male oriented agentic qualities, more so than the communal style that would characterize a female manager earlier in her experience. This could be a matter of concern, because age bias favoring younger female bosses cannot support the emergence of career female leaders.

These biases do not bode well for the promotability of women, as one would hope females are proving themselves favorably to their subordinates. At the same time, it is interesting to note that the male

subordinates do not exhibit a similar bias in this data set, either in the age of the boss, or the number of jobs held by the subordinate. Thus the male subordinates appear to be more receptive to female supervision than are the female subordinates. In anecdotal conversations, men do not seem to have as strident opinions of female managers.

This needs to be investigated in further research, as it goes against assumptions of the benefits of diversity and the elimination of the glass ceiling, to see that female subordinates' attitudes may harden in relationship to age and experience with female supervision.

CONCLUSIONS

Attributes of female leadership and conflict have been widely studied (e.g., Eagly and Karau, 2002; Ellemers *et al.*, 2004; Kanter, 1977; Sargent, 1977). Subordinates' perceptions of female leadership dynamics, however, are generally under-researched. Studies have indicated that assertive professional women are devalued by women to an even greater extent than they are devalued by men (Goldberg, 1968; Miller and McReynolds, 1973), and in some instances women are more likely than men to rate other women negatively (Mathison, 1986). Warning and Buchanan (2009) added to this line of inquiry, in finding that women were less receptive than men, to having a female boss.

This study is specifically concerned with the way women are regarded as managers by subordinates and especially by other women. Our findings suggest that, in keeping with social identity theory, women subordinates early in their careers have as much favorable attitude toward women as managers as do men, but that, consistent with role congruity theory, those positive attitudes diminish as they gain more experience, and as their female bosses become older. Their favorable perceptions of having a female boss diminish. These biases involving both gender and age were stronger in women than in men, suggesting that perhaps males are getting the message of gender diversity in leadership better than women.

Thus, it appears that women's support of female leadership in organizations has potentially serious fundamental flaws. A critical conclusion from this research, especially important to note given similar findings were reported by Warning and Buchanan (2009), is that women themselves appear to be contributing to the glass ceiling effect, limiting the advancement of women to higher positions. This possibility offers a nuanced perspective on the glass ceiling, which is usually articulated in terms of societally perpetuated male domination. The observed difference in attitudes suggests that the glass ceiling has multiple layers. Whether women are consciously aware of the penalties they impose on each other in hierarchical scenarios seems doubtful.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

As women globally attain greater participation in the work force, more will be recognized as eligible to fill leadership roles. Women today possess advanced educational levels, skills, leadership thinking and decision making power equal to men, yet are significantly underrepresented in top management positions. They remain mired in middle management jobs and below.

Women's natural management talents closely match the leadership changes demanded in the future; flatter organizations, teamwork, diversity and cross-functional activities. Women are well suited to team orientation, and are highly effective communicators. However, women do not like being told what to do by other women and this attitude can quickly devolve into destructive conflict. This problem emerges when younger women expect to have as much power and impact as a team's long-serving members. When these young women are denied a sense of equality, they typically voice complaints to a male executive. Not only does this create problems for leadership of the team but such behavior can also undermine women's contributions to organizations. Because of this, perceptions then emerge that "women just can't get along with each other."

Our results add additional evidence that politically correct (Bernstein, 2009) attitudes articulated by women favoring women in management may be offset by negative female experiences under female leadership. If so, women need to be trained more specifically about the impact that their attitudes have on

other women. Female leaders need to be trained about ways to manage more acceptably to female subordinates, and female workers need to be socialized into the workplace more effectively to support the efforts of other females who have moved higher in the organization. The processes mediating same-sex leader-subordinate relationships are matters for further inquiry.

Estrich (2001) maintains that women at the top are successful because they have convinced men that they are not like other women. They continue to distance themselves from other women, thereby creating an uneven balance of power. The female subordinates do not appreciate feeling a lower sense of power in comparison. To a greater degree than males, females have to be cognizant of their colleagues' self-esteem. Women who have achieved more power must level or balance the equation of the power. This perception of equity is a critical component of constructive female work relationships. Therefore, it is important for the female boss to level or balance this perception of inequality by giving sincere compliments and offering empathy and support which will result in their female subordinate's feelings of being valued and empowered (Baker, 1986).

This study was not absent of limitations. Data were obtained in a field study with a relatively small sample size. Responses may reflect social desirability (Crowne & Marlow, 1960), undermining validity in assessment of actual behaviors and attitudes toward female managers. Future data collection should be performed over a broader population, more geographically dispersed. A multicultural international perspective would make an excellent contribution to literature. Finally, although relationships were observed between self-reported attitudes and preferences, causality cannot be inferred from the cross-sectional design of this study. Nevertheless, the statistical indications give way to future research that awakens workers and particularly women to an awareness of hidden bias toward women in leadership roles, in order to encourage more cooperative and less resistant working relationships.

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In closing, this study furnishes a starting point for future research. The nature of bias in female subordinates is elusive. Some other constructs that might be informative include Alpha Female Inventory (Ward, Popson, & DiPaolo, 2010), followership (Baker, 2006), Big Five personality dimensions (Goldberg, 1990), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), anxiety, dominance, and competitiveness (Jackson, 1984). Longitudinal studies could be used to infer causality, as well as observing critical changes in perceptions at various time intervals. The questions that need to be answered, arising from this study, involve the reasons that women are less receptive to female management as they have more jobs in their careers. There is also the issue of the seeming age discrimination that emerged.

Is there anyone at fault for these biases? Are the negative attitudes a result of negative experiences? Are female bosses proving to be too difficult? Additional study needs to focus on dynamics of female team building and collaboration, and to develop a facility for relatedness. Women's sense of self-worth is based in motivation to engage in constructive processes with other women. Empathy and supportiveness is an integral component of this cognitive and emotional activity which in turn invites a sense of mutual response empowerment and mutual development (Baker, 1986). Future research can serve to enlighten women to utilize their natural and genetic tendencies to achieve leadership success through affiliations and not sabotage. The cost of ignoring this female-to-female dynamic is too high.

ENDNOTE

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