

Any Difference? An analysis of gender and divisional management styles in a large airline Gender Work and Organisation July2001

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Abstract

There has been much debate as to whether women manage differently from men and whether this may constitute a reason for women's lack of progress to the top echelons of organizations (Tanton 1994; Coyle 1993; Still 1994; Wajcman 1998). This paper locates the sameness/difference debate into a wider analysis of management styles, with particular attention paid to the business function. It is also suggested that any debate on styles must take place with a feminist theoretical framework which acknowledges inequalities of power, economic and patriarchal interests. Management skills are socially constructed (Phillips and Taylor 1980) and change according to social and economic conditions. The paper shows that business function is the most important influence on management style. The author contends, like others, that even in times of great change, men seem to be able to hold on to the most powerful positions in organizations (Cockburn 1986; Savage and Witz 1992; Collinson and Collinson 1991). The convergence of patriarchal interests with business interests ultimately determines what style is valued. The much vaunted feminisation of management (Rosener 1990) does not mean that more women are to be found in senior positions in organizations. Nor do large numbers of women managers necessarily lead to a more feminised management style (Kanter 1977). Stereotypes of women still act against their acceptance into positions of power whilst men's ability to adopt some of traditionally feminine skills of communication means that women's supposed advantage (Rosener 1990) may have been leapfrogged.

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Introduction

This piece of research is part of a much wider study on organizational cultures and women managers, the hypothesis of which was that organizational cultures may act as a means of patriarchal closure to women managers in organizations. There is a growing body of work examining the relationship between organizational cultures and women managers (Ramsey and Parker 1992; Itzin and Newman 1995; McDowell 1997; Maddock 1999). Management style is one aspect of organizational culture and refers to the way in which the business is conducted. In the corporate culture literature it is the business function and leadership which most influences the style of management (Handy 1985; Schein 1985; Anthony 1990; Brown 1995). Until recently this factor has been neglected in the writing on women and management style. However Wahl (1998) studied a woman dominated company and found that style was relevant according to the functional position of the manager, and Wajcman (1998) concluded that 'organizational constraints rather than individual personality traits determine management style', in her research into five multinationals. Using research into five different divisions of a large airline the author tried to attend to the business influence on management style and to the impact of leadership as well to gender differences. The author's intention was to ascertain whether gender was a determining factor in the management style and whether women's style may inhibit their progress in any way. The paper argues that although women themselves thought that they had a different management style to that of men, it was the business function of the division that most determined the prevailing management style.

Management as masculine

The terms masculinity and femininity pertain to the socially generated consensus of what it means to be a man or a woman (Kerfoot and Knights 1996). They need to be kept analytically distinct from the biological category of men and women as women may display masculine characteristics and men can display feminine characteristics. These characteristics vary according to time, society and culture. In current management terms, a masculine style is usually associated with a command and control approach, and a distancing of the personal self from the professional role of manager. Feminine style usually refers to a more communicative, caring approach to management with an emphasis on people skills like listening rather than mere performance of a task

Management has traditionally been the preserve of men. As ownership of organizations changed from being in the hands of one owner/manager to being owned by a number of capital holders in the form of a joint stock companies, and they grew in size, management developed into a profession. Characteristics of management change under different economic and social conditions. Earliest definitions of management emphasised precision, objectivity, rationality and control - traits long associated with masculinity. Rationality was emphasised by Weber in his discussions on bureaucracy as a means of legitimising authority on account of status in an organization and away from the patrimonial authority that had existed in family run firms. The exclusion of feelings and emotions, the unpredictable and the uncertain was vital to the new management rationale (Gerth and Wright Mills 1958). Industry developed and organizations were structured according to F.W. Taylor's Theory of Scientific Management (1911) which also emphasised rationality, objectivity and impartiality. By designating management as a science, women, popularly considered as the antithesis of science by virtue of their closeness to nature (Merchant 1980) were further excluded. So the dominant model of professional management from its inception excluded the symbols of femininity and promoted characteristics of a type of

exemplary masculinity (typically white middle class). Work is the main social arena in which men act out their needs for status, authority, power influence and material rewards (Cockburn 1986). Willis (1977) argues that consequently organizations are structured to protect male power and reward masculinity accordingly. Preserving the masculinity of a job is important even when the status of the job has been downgraded (Collinson and Knights 1986). Men's ability to hold onto management as a male domain is rooted in men's ability to construct the cluster of skills that make up management as being rooted in masculinity.

Far from being an objective economic fact skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it. (Philips and Taylor 1980)

This is an important angle to grasp because men have continued to dominate top management despite the big increase in women's participation and the fact that the requirements of management are in a continual state of flux (Grint 1995). The development of HRM (human resource management), and TQM (total quality management) were in response to increasing competition and the need to improve worker productivity. Management is now about winning the hearts and minds of employees as well as controlling their bodies (Willmott 1993). More recently it has become important for managers to develop an understanding of the ways emotion works in the form of emotional intelligence (Thomson 1998). The feminisation of management and the trend for transformative leadership runs parallel with the entry of women into management. But a change to a more 'feminine' style of management does not necessarily mean an increase in the numbers of women reaching senior levels.

Do women manage differently?

Women's exclusion from management was originally based on their difference from men and hence their unsuitability. However the equality legislation of the seventies was developed on the premise that, in reality, women were no different from men and had to be treated the same. There was a certain amount of pressure to prove women similar to men to earn them credibility as managers (Powell 1988). However the failure of women to make a radical breakthrough into the senior ranks of management has been attributed by some to their failure to adopt the masculine style of management. Research by Schein on management students in 1973 and repeated in 1989 found that both men and women thought that men possessed more of the characteristics which made up a good manager. A series of worldwide studies found remarkable similarities, 'regardless of context, there appears to be a devaluation of women's qualifications among male students of management world-wide.' (Schein 1994 p.49). But when placed in the wider context of women's devaluation in society then, 'the pervasion of managerial sex typing reflects the global devaluation of women.' (Schein 1994). Rigg and Sparrow (1994) found some evidence of generalised differences between the managerial styles of women and men, as did Coyle (1993) which she put down to a learned strategy within oppression rather than as springing from essentialist qualities. In other words, managerial styles are not a fixed and unchanging function of an individual's gender or sex.

Far from seeing women's different management styles as an obstacle to their progress, some writers in the nineties began to advocate the new feminine style as the approach for the nineties and beyond (Rosener 1990; Hegelson 1990; Fagenson 1993). Rosener says that women's leadership involves more participation, motivation by inclusion and power by charisma. Changes in management requirements means that communication skills have become far more

important and that women may have the right skills at the right time (Hammond 1992; Rosener 1990; Schwartz 1989). However it is also possible that these feminine skills are currently in demand for management in much the same way as women's nimble fingers and patience make them 'suitable' for various types of monotonous factory work. Women may be entering management to fulfil certain functions and these are to be found in the lower ranks of management and in those areas most concerned with customer needs (Savage 1994). There is little evidence that women's superior skills are required in the upper echelons of senior management (Still 1994). Kanter argued that once enough women reach positions of power then management styles will shift accordingly (1977).

Emphasising sameness, as the liberal rhetoric of equal opportunities legislation has done, made it difficult for women to compete with men on men's terms. But emphasising difference has its own pitfalls, as it enables the differences to be accentuated to women's disadvantage (Cockburn 1991). This is illustrated only too well in the Sears Roebuck case (1988) in which women's 'difference' was deemed to justify excluding them from highly paid commission sales jobs. Cockburn (1991) says it is for women to say when they are the same or different to men. Currently it is still predominantly men who have the power to determine when any differences matter and when they do not. They may stress difference when they seek to defend their privilege. The debate of sameness and difference of management style needs to be located within a feminist framework with a focus on the power inequalities between men and women.

Critiques of masculinity and management

Prompted by feminism, male academics have undertaken analyses of men and masculinities and tried to decentre the male in discourse, problematising maleness and masculinities within the field of management studies (Roper 1994; Hearn 1992, 1994; Collinson and Collinson 1990; Collinson and Hearn 1996; Kerfoot and Knights 1996). Increasingly research highlights the way that men in organizations often seem preoccupied with the creation and maintenance of various masculine identities and with the expression of gendered power and status in the workplace (Willis 1977, Collinson and Knights 1986). Whilst it is important to acknowledge that there are many types of masculinity (Collinson and Hearn 1996; Mills 1998) to be found in organizations, men's dominance in positions of power is the recurring theme in all of them (Cockburn 1991; Hearn 1992).

Kerfoot and Knights (1993) point out that masculinity and management are not two separate concepts but that management discourse is imbued with certain notions of masculinity, and both male and female women may enter it. Women are now entering management discourse and indeed can and do display the same traits as men but they are often then stigmatised for being 'masculine'. When Ann Hopkins sued Price Waterhouse for sex discrimination for failing to make her a partner, the accountancy firm's defense was that she was unladylike, her behaviour was macho and that she should be more feminine in the way she walked, talked and behaved (Weisel 1991). So it is not masculinity per se that is valorised in organizations it is masculinity in men. Linstead (1995) points out that by adopting male characteristics, women are not seen as extending their femaleness but as abandoning it. In contrast when men embrace a more 'feminine' way of behaving, it is considered an addition to male virtues.

"The image (of a caring man) allows the colonisation of certain attractive parts of femininity in order to re-centre rather than de-centre

masculinity and further marginalize the feminine by creating a more complete version of masculinity" (Linstead 1995 p.200)

The denial of emotion is a recurring theme in critiques of 'masculine' management (Fineman 1993; Giddens 1992; Kerfoot and Knights 1993). Emotion is now making a comeback as an accepted management trait in the guise of emotional intelligence or emotional capital as there is now a recognised need to understand emotions in people. But the emphasis is still on control and management of emotions. My data shows that emotions that relate to sadness or vulnerability are still associated with women and as such unacceptable in the workplace. Stress, inability to cope and tears are not permitted displays of emotion, even in Cabin Services where management style focused on feelings and the self.

Research findings

The research took place in a large airline, Airco, and looks at five different divisions - Finance, Cabin Services, Marketing, Cargo and Human Resources. There is never one management style in an organization, in the same way that there is never one culture. A total of 135 questionnaires to men and women managers and received a 75% response rate. In addition twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted and I shadowed a senior director in each division. The objectives were to gauge the management style through a number of factors - decision making, what work characteristics respondents think is most rewarded, strength/personality of leadership, whether there is a hierarchical or non-hierarchical structure, the importance or not of status and seniority. The line of questioning was influenced by Handy's work (1985) and culture surveys done by private consultancies. As well as general questions on style, which did not directly have a gender bias to them, the question, "Do you think women manage differently from men?" was included and, following this, an open-ended question asking "If yes, in what ways?" In interviews respondents gave me quite a clear view on the way the business was managed and as the interviews tended to be quite work-related, a lot of data for this section was gained from them. Also, shadowing gave me the opportunity to see some of this management in practice which was invaluable. The airline's overall management style is analysed first, followed by a discussion on the divisional styles in relations to the data on whether respondents thought that women managed differently from men. There are two tiers of manager, management group (MG) and senior manager (SM).

Airco management style

The traditional management style of the airline had been bureaucratic, with its insistence on rules and regulations and its emphasis on status inherited from its RAF roots. Despite an enormous change in culture and style over the past fifteen years, residues of the old bureaucratic and hierarchical structures were apparent, with the accompanying problems of poor accountability and slow decision making. Furthermore status awareness was still high and internal politics busy. Management style was based on consensus decisions, with people reluctant to stick their necks out for fear of making a bad decision. Perhaps because of this dislike of open conflict with people, there is a lot of behind the scenes manoeuvring with the right people. This was found throughout the divisions. Political networking was vital, with 41% of respondents saying that getting on with the boss is the most rewarded attribute an employee can have. This had repercussions for the women in my research as most said they disliked politics.

Merit is not sufficient nor sometimes primary in succeeding and women need to be able to infiltrate and be very political themselves. (Female MG, Human Resources)

You have to be seen. You have to network and I'm not very good at it. (Female MG, Finance)

Status is still important in the airline and people regarded other people's position of seniority as a pointer as to how to treat them. This could work in women's favour.

They (the pilots) know I'm an SM so they wouldn't speak to me like that. (Female SM Finance)

The airline ran a successful campaign in the eighties called 'Putting People First' which could be interpreted as supporting a more feminine style of management, promoting as it did caring, communication and better service - skills traditionally associated with women. This can be seen as an example of difference being valued when it adds to profitability. The former chief executive saw women as an untapped resource and introduced the airline's equal opportunities campaign to promote more women managers at about the same time. The latest campaign, called Leadership 2000, used slogans like 'Favouring the Brave' and 'Return of the Heroes'. The main objectives were to instill leadership skills into management and make it more entrepreneurial. Whilst promoting responsibility in managers, the campaign emphasised boldness, bravery, and heroism and was perceived by many women in the airline as being rather macho. Famous 'heroes' both past and present were used in the publicity, showing posters of men like Simon Weston, the Falklands hero, which emphasised his bravery in confronting friends with a scarred face, rather than his bravery in battle, Martin Luther King and John Kennedy. Some women said they felt totally alienated by all the talk of 'Favouring the Brave'.

Seventy four percent of respondents said that they thought that women managed differently from men. This broke down to 84% of women respondents compared to 55% of male respondents.

Table 1 Do women manage differently from men?

	Yes % (no.)	No % (no)
Total	74 (72)	26 (25)
Men	55 (53)	45 (44)
Women	84 (82)	16 (15)

sample size 97

Table 2 Percentage of Women in Senior Management in Airco divisions

Division	Male (no.)	Female (no.)
Cabin Services	68% (32)	32% (15)
Cargo	93% (14)	7% (1)
Marketing	53% (9)	47% (8)
Finance	80% (64)	20% (16)
Human Resources	54% (19)	46% (16)

sample size 194

Table 3 Do women in Airco manage differently? Responses of male and female managers by division

	Yes % (no.)	No % (no.)
Cabin Services	50% (7)	50% (7)
Cargo	80% (8)	20% (2)
Marketing	57% (8)	43% (6)
Finance	77% (23)	23% (7)
Human Resources	87% (25)	13% (4)
		sample size 97

Divisional management styles

Marketing (47% of senior management were women)

Marketing, where 57% of respondents thought that women managed differently (table3), is made up of a highly motivated, fast moving group of young people who are now a vital part of the airline's future success. It has the highest proportion of 'new' people i.e. non-airline, than any other division and this in itself gives the division a freshness. Marketing is an individualistic sort of area, where people are very committed and quite egocentric, looking out for themselves, and there is quite a lot of confrontation between strong characters, again out of line with the prevailing airline style.

There is a lot of adrenaline as it is quite dynamic but as it is managed by the same type of people - it is not really ideal. It doesn't have a terrific history of man management skills. (Male MG)

There is also a high proportion of women managers (47%). This may be in part due to the youth of the industry and its recent arrival in the airline - it has no long history for it to have become really entrenched as a masculine area. Marketing is also very results orientated, which some feel explains why it offers more scope for women to do well.

Success is measurable. If they get results, they are judged purely on that. Something works or it doesn't work. Something generates revenue or it doesn't. Talent is the issue. (Female SM)

The most senior manager, under board level, in Marketing was a forty year old woman, who arrived three years ago from an American food company. She described herself as fair and people who worked for her respected her but also held her in awe, although as a department there was little hierarchy. Work issues were discussed but emotions kept at a distance. Here, then, is division which on its gender composition could be considered quite feminised, with nearly as many women in senior management as men (47% - table 2). Yet the overall style was not considered to be feminine.

I consider the style of management to be quite macho here. It is a lot about pushing through your own ideas and you win through by sheer force of character. (Male MG)

I don't think there is much difference. There are so many women here, it doesn't seem to be an issue. We are all quite brash here but we can work well as a team if we need to. (Female MG)

I attribute this to the function of the business which was about bringing a successful idea into fruition. It did not involve dealing with customers or providing a 'people' service in any way. This did not detract from a high level of awareness around people issues and communication in the division. A lively, stimulating environment was considered a necessary ingredient for the creative drive of the division. Its leader, whilst a woman, did not manage in a characteristically 'feminine' way.

Cargo (7% of senior management were women (see table 2))

Cargo, where 80% of respondents thought that women managed differently (see table3), was undergoing structural and cultural change. The comfortable life career in Cargo was no longer assured. Old working practices, like controlled overtime, high pay rates, as well as unproductive managers were under attack for being uneconomical. Margins in the once very profitable business had been eroded and change was underway to improve productivity. The new MD was an airline man, new to the cargo industry and had been appointed for his quite brash and aggressive approach. There was a certain amount of fear in the division as change was going to be painful. The management style was also driven to some extent by the strained relationship between management and the unions. There have been serious industrial disputes in the past and the threat of more accompanied every management change. The division of 'them' and 'us' was even apparent in Cargo's restaurant, heralded as open to all levels even the MD, yet overalled employees were requested to sit on one particular side of the room. The management approach was adversarial and combative, based on beating union tactics, rather than on any collaborative decision making. The research period coincided with a particularly difficult time. The MD had been there about eighteen months and figures were not very good. He felt constrained by the resistance to change from all levels. He was very much the commander-in-chief and there was a sense of a war being fought, albeit it was described as more like a long drawn out terrorist campaign.

As women managers were so few and far between in this division, and hence there was little to judge women's managing skills on, I did wonder whether the men merely imagined women would manage differently, particularly given the macho approach of current management, or whether the few women around were different. The one senior woman manager in Cargo thought she had a more straightforward approach than her male contemporaries and this may have influenced the responses. She was accepted for herself and had her own style which she had developed over the seventeen years she had been there. She was the token woman, a bit of a tomboy, and widely respected for her ability to deal with the shopfloor (which only two other managers were able to do).

The industrial relations scene set the parameters on how the culture could develop and meant the confrontational, mistrustful style of management would be hard to prevent. However the role of the new leader was key in setting the new cut and thrust style of management, wiping away all traces of the grace and favour of the earlier regime which, whilst exclusionary to many had also protected some managers. This management style was the hardest in the airline for women to thrive in. The discourse of conflict management where all strategy is drawn up on terms of battle positions is outside most women's experience. Senior management seemed to want to display a kind of masculine strength to match the actual physical strength displayed by the men on the shop floor. We

can see here an example of competing masculinities discussed by Collinson, Knights and Collinson (1990), the effect of which was to marginalise women. There was also a total denial of an emotional or personal life. When asked about the expression of emotion one young male manager said,

It's not encouraged! It's actively discouraged! I mean it's a boy's culture isn't it? Hulking boxes-it's a man's world. Someone once cried but they had to leave the building to do it, so that gives you an idea of how acceptable it is. (Male MG Cargo)

Cabin Services (32% of senior management were women - see table 2)

In Cabin Services, where only 50% of respondents thought that women managed differently (see table 3), all ten thousand cabin crew were passing through an intensive training programme, called Breakthrough. How cabin crew treat passengers has become in their staff training is a testament to this. Breakthrough is based on existential psychology, which sees the self as in charge of its own destiny. The emphasis on cabin crew service is now on 'being' s opposed to 'doing' and to do this effectively it was felt that staff needed to understand themselves, and relate to themselves, before they could relate to passengers. Managers, also, were being trained to be more in touch with themselves in order to relate to cabin crew more effectively. One recent senior managers' programme used the Actors' Workshop, which was designed to uncover what roles people felt comfortable with and then to explore why. The logic behind the programme is that it is easier to understand someone's input if you know where they are coming from. This is an example of harnessing emotional capital for the needs of the business.

It is a shift in leadership style that we are looking for; it's not doing, it's being and letting people free a bit more, freedom of choice, more spontaneity, being yourself, being genuine, being at ease with yourself, with colleagues and with customers. (Male SM)

It was an awareness of self that was a characteristic peculiar to Cabin Services, with its emphasis on people's ability to bring personal strengths and weaknesses into the work of management, something which goes totally against the traditional understanding of a uniform rational management. I think this acknowledgement and allowance of difference gives space for women to be themselves, free from the straitjacket of a set of laid down behaviours and characteristics. This resonates with the work of Parker and Hall who suggest that the flexible workplace can also extend beyond time/space or style to encompass 'psychological availability'.

A flexible work place enables employees to bring their 'full' selves to work and to be psychologically engaged in the tasks, activities and relationships that make up their jobs. (Parker and Hall 1993 p.124)

They argue that people have personal identities and non-work roles and people are more engaged in their work when they can express, rather than suppress, these identities in the workplace. This type of style is demanded when it suits the business needs.

I'm not sure it is what the whole airline wants, but I think it works here. It is a simple message - creating the climate of openness, trust, honesty, frankness and it's really bringing yourself at home to work. You don't have to put on this cloak of professionalism, hierarchy and office. (Male SM)

One of the problems women in management have encountered is this strict demarcation between home self and work self (McDowell 1997) and perhaps this psychic merging of the two made working life for women in Cabin Services more comfortable than in other areas of the airline. Indeed, one male SM said

I think women probably bring themselves to work more easily than men do. What we are trying to do is get the men to do the same. They are still stuck on the being professional kick. (Male SM)

The style of management here was demanded by the nature of the business. Mills (1998) has shown how different types of cabin crew have been employed over the years. The current emphasis is on diversity and intimacy of service to the customer. Many of the male cabin crew are gay.

It's the people, you become a reflection of the people you manage. Because there are 10,000 cabin staff and we recruit types of people who care about people; they entertain people, they're extroverts, they're quite sensitive; emotion forms quite a large part of their life, they are comfortable with emotion and showing emotion. Management has to adapt accordingly. I mean you can't be Robert Maxwell in that situation. The unions in cabin services expect you to be tough but not macho. (Male SM)

The non-hierarchical, informal management style was also influenced strongly by the head of department. Sixty per cent of Cabin Services respondents said they had a strong leader and 50% said that motivation came from the top in response to the question of the way the division runs. It was this leader who had decided that even senior management would have to go on soul-baring weekends, and he did so himself. Some of the older male members of the division found the open style of management quite difficult. Senior women managers made up 32% of senior management (see table 2) and fewer Cabin Services respondents than from any other division thought that women managed differently than men at 50% (see table 3).

I don't see any difference between male and female managers in cabin services. (Female MG)

We don't think male - female. (Male MG)

On there being a feminine style of management a female MG commented

I actually think that's a load of crap. I believe that people emulate the way that they are managed. But I have to admit that I come across men who feel they should be in control as managers more often than I have come across men who manage from themselves. (Female MG)

This comment correlates with the above comment by a senior male manager who said that he thought women 'brought themselves to work' more easily than men. Cabin Services offers a fascinating insight into the complexities of management style and gender. Men were being encouraged to invest in what has traditionally been seen as a feminine style of management- being in touch with their own and other people's emotions. In some ways women might be thought to have an advantage but what irritated some women managers was that skills that many of them have possessed 'naturally' are now suddenly being recognised as valued and being taught to men, akin to Linstead's 'colonisation of feminine skills' (1995). These skills are now being taught in many organisations and called 'emotional intelligence'. Hochschild's work, *The Managed Heart*, (1984) popularised the idea that emotional labour can be a public form of labour that is directly

appropriated for commercial exploitation. Originally recognised as the unseen work done by service workers to please and satisfy clients, it is now being extended and recognised as a management characteristic. However emotions relating to weakness and stress were still not acceptable (Kerfoot and Knights 1993). The very long hours worked in Cabin Services contributed to stress in the managers, particularly those with children.

Cabin crew may burst into tears and often do, but managers do not cry, not in front of staff any way. (Female MG)

Finance (20% of senior management were women - see table 2)

Women have always worked in finance, as a glance in any accounts department will show, but it is only relatively recently that they have broken through to become accountants in large numbers. A recent recruitment drive in the division had brought a new crowd of young accountants, many of who were young women, into senior management. This change reflected the changing role of finance from a rather reactive bank-like division to a more dynamic and proactive one. The top five men in finance had arrived from Ford five to six years previously bringing with them a very command and control type of management style. This was hierarchical and authoritarian and had cascaded down throughout the division. A firm line to control the finance division had been required then and the corresponding lack of welfare towards employees has been a consequence of this approach. Many of the younger people complained about the lack of people skills in the division and the shadowing provided evidence of this. A meeting had been called to discuss a lengthy report, written by a woman manager. She sat in silence while the head of finance discussed something else with the other two senior men for one and a half hours. Her report was ignored.

Central finance isn't a nice place to work in. It isn't teamy. It doesn't value its staff and you'll be expected to work fifteen hours a day during the budget. It is a department where people like me (line finance manager) have never been trained in man management skills. You are promoted on your technical skills alone, yet you are in charge of many people, so it's hit or miss. (Female SM)

In response to the question on different ways of managing, a high 77% of finance respondents thought that men and women managed differently (see table 3). One very personable line finance manager talked about the different ways that women manage.

We are more team players than men. We can be very masculine if we want to. I can shout and bawl and swear if I want to, but I also can read people quite well - and then vary my approach accordingly. For instance, I may flatter X by saying, 'I'm having some difficulty with this plan and I wondered whether you could help me out with it.' We use many different approaches. (Female SM)

Some of this 'adapting' seemed to involve taking into account particular male colleagues' needs e.g. the need to feel more superior, the need to feel protective etc. This seems to fall into the category of emotional labour. There is always a certain amount of extra, albeit unconscious, emotional workwomen put in to justify their space in the workplace (Gherardi 1995). Finance is a dry area, requiring analytical skills but not people skills. Neither of the two senior women made any impact on the style of the overall division, indeed the second one managed in a very 'masculine' way in that she could not abide any

display of emotion in the office at all. Expression of any weakness, stress or inability to cope was not part of the discourse (Kerfoot and Knights 1993)

'People do get angry and have stand up rows sometimes. But I would never ever burst into tears. It's a no- no. Similarly if you are suffering from stress at work you just wouldn't say nor would you discuss your private life. (Female MG Finance)

Human Resources (46% of senior management were women - see table 2)

In Human Resources 87% of respondents thought that women managed differently (see table 3). This is a person orientated division and, as such, people skills such as communication and good listening were a pre-requisite for the job. The importance the airline places on personnel issues ensures that the status of the division remains high, so that feminisation in terms of numbers of women managers and the person-orientated style has not resulted in diminishing its status. It might have been thought that the presence of many women would mean a narrowing of the perceived difference in management styles, as perhaps in the case of Marketing or Cabin Services, but this division disproved that hypothesis. I put this high degree of perceived difference down to the awareness of the concept, their focus on people's behaviour and the contact that HR managers had with all managers in the airline. Despite the friendliness of the division, it was fairly introverted and the people cautious.

People manage their behaviour very well in HR. I suspect it's partly because they know or they see it happening elsewhere and they are party to the conversations about behaviour. There is a lot of caution about the way you behave, everything is very measured. There is not much spontaneity here and it is very political. (Female SM)

It was a comfortable place to work for women and the presence of a lot of middle aged women added to the family feel of the division. Yet the intense political manoeuvring that occurred in this division put women at a disadvantage in as much as they reported less interest in political networking than men. HR managers were very careful at managing their behaviour, and emotional outbursts were rare. The division had just been centralised. HR managers were being brought back from line management and put into consultancy roles to work on projects rather than being an ongoing support to line managers. Both the men and women alike were unhappy about their new roles, as they enjoyed being involved in the day to day running of whichever division they had worked in and had formed strong relationships with the staff there. There was speculation as to whether this change from a support role to a more proactive role would have repercussions on how well women fared in HR.

Conclusion

As well as the evidence that the business function determined the divisional management style, the survey data showed that a big majority, 84%, of women thought that women managed differently from men, while 55% of men did (see table 1). The open-ended question of "If yes, in what ways?" was answered by many and three clear themes emerged from all divisions.

1 Better people skills Many respondents felt that women were better listeners, that they were more relationship-orientated, more empathetic, and more likely to take other people's feelings into account, and that they gave higher priority to human aspects of any situation.

2 Fewer status concerns. Respondents felt that women managers were more consensus-orientated, more concerned with how decisions had an impact on others, less political and more collaborative with fewer status needs.

3 Better managerial skills. Respondents said that women managers were stronger characters, tougher, more flexible, that they were able to juggle different jobs at once. They were more demanding, more creative, found less obvious solutions and had better organizational skills. They were more able than men to adapt their style according to their work teams.

Women's stated dislike of status and politics and the perception that they are not as political as men could act to exclude them from positions of power in organizations where both of these are considered important for career progress. There was a general feeling among women that many of their skills listed above were not recognised in organizations. The women felt themselves to be better managers than men, but undervalued in the organization. It may be hard to value women's skills in work when they are so undervalued in society (Schein 1994). Women are expected to bring certain caring and communication skills to their work which are naturalised, in the same way that mothering is considered a natural skill and the hard emotional and physical work goes unacknowledged. Instead it was factors like visibility, concern with status and single-mindedness, all criticised by many of the women as having nothing to do with productivity or good management per se, which continued to be rewarded.. These findings support the more recent trend of problematising the masculinities of management (Roper 1994; Collinson and Collinson 1990; Hearn 1994; Kerfoot and Knights 1993). The findings also support those studies, which showed women's different ways of managing (Marshall 1984; Rosener 1990; Helgeson 1990; Coyle 1993). Some women observed a narrowing of the difference between men and women as women reached more senior positions, as found by Still (1994) and Wajcman (1998)

Junior women managers are more aware of and giving of recognition to their teams, they are less emotional and dictatorial and more open to discussion of different options. But of more senior managers I see no differences between men and women. And those attributes, which I consider positive, are seen by me in neither men nor women. (Female MG, Marketing)

What you find is that the women at senior levels tend to demonstrate fairly macho images and they are more acceptable. (Female MG, Human Resources)

There were also some negative comments from men about women managers

"She is far too tough and aggressive. Some of these women overdo it when they get promoted. It is not very attractive." (Male MG Finance)

thus providing evidence for the contention that women who display masculine traits are considered 'unwomanly' (Linstead 1995). Interestingly none of the comments on women's difference referred to their emotionality.

The airline's overall style with its emphasis on status, meetings and deferring decision making to senior managers was found in all divisions but the different business function led to completely different styles of management. In Human Resources and Cabin Services, part of management's job was to find out what employees really thought and felt, not just that they were functioning and getting the job done. Where the goals of the division are not service related the management style was one that reflected less personal involvement in employees' welfare. This is regardless of whether the leader is a man or woman

or of the gender composition of the workforce. Many studies of female managers have looked at industries, which employ a lot of women, like retailing and retail banking, which are service industries. It may be that the 'feminine' style often found is a requirement of the business, not a consequence of the gender composition. The other strong influence was the leadership. Halford, Savage and Witz (1997) noted how organizations are able to construct new types of managerial qualities if they are required. A strong leader is able to impose his/ her own stamp on the divisional style.

How we manage is a reflection of how we ourselves are managed (Female MG Cabin Services)

The findings do not support the argument that large numbers of women in a division or organization make it more likely that a feminine style is favoured (Kanter 1977). Marketing had the highest percentage of women at both senior and middle management levels and was run by a woman in a more masculine than feminine way. Cabin Services was more femininely run, with fewer senior women at the top. So a high percentage of women managers does not necessarily lead to a more feminine management style (Kanter 1977). Although in the questionnaire the majority of women considered themselves to manage differently from male managers, there was evidence of men managing in a feminine way and women managing in a masculine way. Women's skills, whether inherent, learned or more realistically continually worked at are considered useful in certain areas, particularly for improving communication and customer service. These skills can also be learned and performed very satisfactorily by men, as in Cabin Services. The different divisional styles could also be an example of different types of masculinity (Hearn 1993; Mills 1998). But as men embrace aspects of femininity deemed to be appropriate for management, it becomes all the more important to acknowledge that power inequalities are not changed through discourses of masculinity and femininity (Wajcman 1998). It is still predominantly men in positions of power in organizations. Business requirements change according to economic and social conditions. Patriarchy and capital have often been in tension (Walby 1990) and it is the convergence of patriarchal and economic interests that determine which management styles are required and valued.

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