

## Successful Women in a Man's World: The Myth of Managerial Androgyny

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**B**y any criteria, Karen Valenstein has made it as a corporate woman. At thirty-eight, she is a first vice-president at E.F. Hutton & Company and one of the most powerful women in investment banking. Her annual salary is reportedly a quarter of a million dollars,<sup>1</sup> she is respected and admired by her peers and superiors, and she closes enormous deals that leave competitors at other investment houses scratching their heads. Married for fourteen years and the mother of two children, she lives in Manhattan and manages to put in volunteer hours at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her job, however, takes a clear priority over most of the rest of her life, and she devotes an astounding number of hours each week to it.

With male colleagues she can comfortably maintain a patter of conversation heavily peppered with barnyard language. She's never flustered by a vulgar joke. On Monday mornings, Karen knows the football scores. When meetings with colleagues and clients run late into the night at local saloons, she keeps up with the best of them.

Some women struggle to assimilate their personality to the aggressive, hostile, politicalized environment found in the most highly competitive corporations. There are those, however, like Karen Valenstein, who fit—and feel that the fit is quite natural. One of Ms. Valenstein's colleagues at the First Boston Corporation summed up his admiration for her: "Let's put it this way: You'd like to have someone walk into your office the way Karen does and chew off the

corner of your desk. Not every male has that quality, and not every woman has it.”

Women encounter an array of obstacles as they scale the hierarchies of corporations. Faced with these obstacles, some women falter, some are pushed out, some lose the drive to continue climbing—and some succeed, rising to meet the challenge. What can we learn from the women who do succeed? Do they have characteristics that differentiate them from those who do not clear the obstacles? Do some women encounter more obstacles in their path than others? This chapter will explore these questions and will elaborate on some characteristics of successful corporate women. The very mechanism that allows the characteristics to surface, and makes some women “acceptable” as managers, may, it will be seen, hinder the performance of these same women.

Before discussing women like Karen Valenstein, we might find it helpful to take a step back and look at organizations more generally. Research conducted during the past decade provides increasing evidence that organizations can take on some very human characteristics. The concept of *corporate culture* supports this notion by reminding us that organizations are made up of people. Since these people have their own individual personalities, it is reasonable to assume that an organization represents some type of collective personality, although it certainly may not represent all the individual personalities combined.

If each organization has a unique personality, it is not unreasonable to attach to it yet another human characteristic: gender. For example: if Ma Bell was, in fact, a woman, what might we call her today? AT&T is now restructured and trying to succeed in a highly competitive environment. Along the road from virtual monopoly to razor-sharp competitor, however, Ma Bell's gender seemed to change. When we hear stock analysts describe AT&T as a “lean, mean fighting machine,” the phrase does not conjure up the image of a maternalistic Ma Bell.

Other areas of research have explored how people perceive the idea of effective management. What is an effective manager? What characteristics do we believe effective managers possess? How do they behave?

## Successful Manager = Man

Dr. Virginia Schein found that certain words emerge when managers are asked to describe the idea of effective management. In one study, 500 managers of both sexes were asked to describe, in single words or phrases, their perceptions of *successful managers, men, and women*. She found that the respondents saw men and successful managers as possessing the characteristics of leadership ability, competitiveness, self-confidence, objectivity, aggressiveness, forcefulness, and a desire for responsibility. These terms were used to describe effective managers and men *separately*. Women were perceived as possessing extremely different characteristics, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Similar studies have subsequently supported the same conclusions: both men and women have a very strong preference for a "masculine" manager, and most respondents characterize a good manager in strongly masculine terms. Indeed, research conducted by the Gallup organization and *The Wall Street Journal* in November 1984 reaffirmed that both male and female executives prefer to have men as bosses.<sup>2</sup>

This theme has been carried through in still other findings: for example, when managers were asked to make managerial selection decisions on the basis of sex, they tended to decide in favor of males. Other studies have found that males, compared to females, were more likely to be selected into a supposedly male-oriented position, whereas females rather than males were more likely to be selected for a female-oriented position. Management was considered a male-oriented position, whereas many nonmanagement jobs such as health care worker (but not physician) and teacher tended to have female orientations. In other words, when both male and female managers were asked to *think* "manager," they responded in masculine terms.

Even physical characteristics tie into this theme. Women are often placed on a feminine-masculine continuum on the basis of features such as body shape, stature, hair texture, voice, and facial hair. Short, blond, long-haired, blue-eyed women are at the more feminine end of the scale; tall, thin, short-dark-haired women are at the more masculine end. Feminine women are often stereotyped as

more fragile, helpless, and sexually attractive than more masculine women. Overall, women in traditionally male jobs (including management) tend to be taller and thinner than average and tend to have short, dark hair.<sup>3</sup>

### Reproducible Characteristics

One rationale for this preference is that men accept women with masculine features or characteristics more readily than they do women with feminine features. Rosabeth Kanter noted in her book *Men and Women of the Corporation* that all managers, regardless of gender, tend to be extremely protective of any source of acquired power. They carefully guard their power and will share it and any special privileges only with those whom they perceive as fitting in. When we give our trust to people in organizations, we seek out those like ourselves. We depend on our *observations* of how people behave to help us determine whether they are the right sort of person. We want to make sure that the ones we choose to work with, the ones with whom we share this power, are “our kind of people.”

In an environment like Wall Street, where Karen Valenstein works, a word heard often is *fit*. Can you *fit* into the team dynamics of the company? Is there a *fit* between you and the clients who provide the additional business, which is also the ultimate measurement for success and compensation?

People who manage, especially men, often reproduce themselves through subtle, unconscious promotion criteria. In the early 1960s Wilbert Moore described this concept as “homosexual reproduction”—men reproducing themselves in their own image. In the past, executives made sure the men they hired as their direct subordinates came from backgrounds similar to their own. The type of college they attended, the branch of the armed forces in which they served, and interest in similar sports were all important factors for promising executives. Such criteria still exist, but they have become simultaneously more complex and more subtle as women and other minority groups have come to populate managerial ranks. There *are* reproducible characteristics, which explains why some women can climb the corporate ladder while others remain stuck on the lower rungs.

An impressive body of research continually reinforces the belief that *effective management* is perceived as having a gender: male. In organizations where existing management is dominated by males, my own research has strongly suggested that a woman can possess certain traits that might increase her chances of being hired or promoted into the management group. As noted previously, she can look more masculine than feminine; but also, perhaps more important, she can *behave* more masculine than feminine.

What is considered masculine behavior? Interestingly, a concept that evolved from medical research describes certain behaviors and characteristics that are highly related to heart disease. Many of these characteristics are identical to those that make up the notion that we have come to know as *masculinity*.

One predictor of coronary heart disease (CHD) is a concept known as the *coronary-prone behavior pattern*, more commonly referred to as *Type A behavior*. Type A represents actual behavior, things we can watch people do if we consciously observe them. In the extreme, it includes a chronic sense of rushing and making the most of every minute, a hard-driving, competitive orientation which usually includes some hostility. Type A individuals have a strong dislike for being idle and a chronic impatience with people and situations that are seen as blocking their efforts to get things accomplished. Type B individuals, by contrast, tend to be more relaxed and easygoing, less hostile, and less overtly competitive. They are not necessarily less motivated to achieve, but they seldom experience an anxious feeling of wasting time when not engaged in clearly productive activities.

Type A is not an absolute concept; it is not something you have entirely or not at all. No one is typically Type A 100 percent of the time. Some people exhibit an extraordinary number of Type A characteristics and very few Type B characteristics, but it is always a matter of degree. Most people exhibit some aspects of both types of behavior. If you were to be assessed as one type (either A or B), however, you would rarely exhibit intense, consistent behaviors of the *other* type over a period of time. The behaviors that make up Type A are very stable over time. This makes people quite predictable from a scientific research standpoint, but it is difficult for the individuals themselves if they desire to change.

### Effective Management = Men = Masculinity = Type A

Some very standardized words have been used to describe the concepts behind the idea of Type A behavior. Table 11-1 lists a number of these words, but, beyond mere words, people exhibiting strong Type A behaviors *are aggressive, competitive, ambitious, hostile, needing to be in control, punctual, and perfectionists*. The column of terms representing behaviors that describe the concept of masculinity was developed by Sandra Bem after exhaustive studies in this area.<sup>4</sup> If we look at the research that explores how people perceive *men* in organizations and how they also perceive *effective managers*, we find that *they use almost the same terminology*. Not surprisingly, the terminology these people used to describe *effective managers* and *men* also describes the notion of *masculinity*. We

**Table 11-1**  
*Similarity of Terminology Between*  
*Type A Behavior and Sex-Role Stereotyping*

<i>Adjectives Describing the Perceived Characteristics of Femininity</i>	<i>Adjectives Describing the Perceived Characteristics of Masculinity</i>	<i>Adjectives Describing the Perceived Characteristics of Men in Organizations and/or Effective Management</i>	<i>Type A Behavioral Characteristics</i>
Yielding	Aggressive	Aggressive	Aggressive
Cheerful	Competitive	Competitive	Competitive
Shy	Ambitious	Ambitious	Ambitious
Affectionate	Forceful	Forceful	Hostile
Sympathetic	Willing to take stand	Desirous of responsibility	Need for control
Feminine	Assertive	Punctuality	Punctuality
Compassionate	Self-reliant	Precision	Perfectionism
Soft-spoken	Independent		
Warm	Has leadership ability		
Tender	Takes risks		
Gullible	Makes decisions easily		
Childlike	Self-sufficient		
Gentle	Dominant		
Loyal	Masculine		
Soothes feelings	Acts as leader		
Avoids harsh language	Individualistic		
Loves children	Defends own beliefs		
Sensitive to others	Athletic		
Flatterable	Strong personality		
Understanding	Analytical		

perceive effective managers as men, and the men as being masculine, while at the same time perceiving Type A behavior as a collection of masculine characteristics.

In any discussion of masculinity and femininity, we must also consider a third concept that exists when both are combined: *androgyny*. In contrast to the other two, an androgynous sex role represents an *equal* amount of both masculine and feminine attributes.

The concept of Type A was developed to help us understand what causes coronary heart disease. When we isolate many Type A behaviors, however, we find behaviors identical to those that describe the notion of masculinity. If you are assessed as being high on the Type A scale, the odds are considerable that you also exhibit many so-called masculine characteristics, fewer androgynous ones, and still fewer feminine characteristics.

Some authors, such as Alice Sargent in her book *The Androgynous Manager*, suggest that the best managers are androgynous and that this is the inevitable wave of the future. In this context effective managers are perceived as acting in both masculine and feminine ways. In particular, she suggests that effective managers, whether male or female, must assume certain behaviors that are characterized as feminine and others that are typically masculine. It would be encouraging to think that the concepts of masculinity and femininity can work side by side and, by so doing, will make organizations even more productive. We would like to believe that women pushing through the barriers at high levels in organizations are representative of most other women. Unfortunately, it seems that these beliefs are not being fulfilled as predicted. If this is indeed the case, then women moving into or trying to move into executive ranks are, as we will see, faced with an array of potential longer-term problems.

In the United States, the proportion of men who are Type A is perhaps greater than in any other country in the world, with only Japan and Germany as possible contenders. In contrast, women are typically Type B, with a much smaller minority, compared to men, who would be classified as Type A. Generally, women are not as aggressive, competitive, rushed, hostile, or in need of being in control as men appear to be. Not coincidentally, women also do not suffer from as high an incidence of heart disease. Only a small minority of

women in the United States, therefore, would be classified as intensely Type A.

Groups of executive women whom I have studied have proved to be considerably more Type A when compared to women in the general population of the United States. That is, when successful corporate women were assessed for Type A personalities, the proportion classified as intensely Type A was far greater than the proportion of intensely Type A women in general. In fact, the proportion of successful women in corporations who are Type A is about equal to the proportion of their male corporate counterparts who are Type A. These findings indicate that the group of women who have moved up the corporate ladder are just as Type A as their male corporate counterparts, but far more likely to be Type A than other women. Clearly, this indicates a preference in these organizations for Type A women.

The phenomenon that seems to emerge from these findings relates back to the notions of reproducible characteristics and *fit*. Type A behavior is probably one of the few unconscious ways in which a man can feel that a certain woman is, in some respect, similar to him. Type A behavior makes her seem more masculine to her male counterparts and increases the probability of her being included with other men, by being hired or promoted into an upper management group. She fits with the group of men and the highly competitive environment.

For the woman, also, this is unconscious and unplanned. Type A behavior is established in a human being by the time he or she is a teenager. You don't go from being a strong Type B to a strong Type A just by working for a fast-paced organization or by getting clues that being Type A will allow you to fit in better. In some cases an organization can certainly fuel Type A behavior, but only *if* the personality factors are in place. For example, Type As find themselves in their element when their company overschedules their days, demands a total commitment to the job at the expense of family and other interests, and requires that all projects be completed by yesterday. It is very important to realize, however, that the corporation cannot *make* you Type A. If its culture supports this, it can regard you more favorably if you seem Type A, it can reward you for behaving in a Type A manner, but it cannot turn you into a type A.



Some organizations more than others try to recruit individuals who are Type A and reward those who act in a Type A fashion. Not only has fast career development been found to be related to Type A, but the prevalence of Type As in an organization also seems to be related to company growth rate.<sup>5</sup> The faster people move up the ladder in a company and/or the faster the growth rate of the company, the more Type As you should expect to find at managerial levels. So, when you take a look around your organization for the prevalence of Type As, ask yourself two questions:

First, is the organization growing at a faster-than-average rate compared to others in its industry or compared to similar industries? This is a good rule of thumb for estimating a larger percentage of Type As. In the banking industry, Citibank, the fastest growing top-ten firm for the past decade, would meet this criterion. Not surprisingly, being Type A at this organization helps. In the same way that individuals are characterized as Type A, so too can we generalize about organizations. The more an organization expects and reinforces Type A-like behavior from its management, the more we can describe its corporate culture as Type A.<sup>6</sup>

Second, who are the movers and shakers in your organization—the ones climbing the ladder faster than others? Chances are they will be more Type A than others and may expect those around them to be Type A. If this individual is a man, a female subordinate would be likely to be required to possess Type A characteristics.

### Women and Masculinity

In a variety of studies, other characteristics tend to emerge as being common among female *executives*, though not necessarily among females in general. In addition they experience higher levels of the need for power and a higher level of self-esteem than their nonmanagerial counterparts. In these respects, they are more similar to the men in those positions than to other women who have not chosen to aspire to managerial levels.

One conclusion to be drawn from this is that women have to act masculine if they are going to fit and succeed in the man's world of competitive corporate life. Karen Valenstein's first boss at E.F. Hutton, for example, offered her early advice: "I'm not going to pay you

like a broad, and I'm not going to treat you like a broad, so don't act like a broad." Type A behavior is the acceptable way for a woman to act masculine. In a variety of studies where Type A was not assessed, women assessed as masculine were found to be more extroverted than feminine or androgynous women.<sup>7</sup> Extroversion is considered a necessary personality prerequisite for management. Masculine women were the first to assume leadership positions in group problem-solving experiments and characterized as leadership-oriented. They were also found to be least dependent on others, least submissive in their daily interactions, and most demanding of others, when compared to feminine or androgynous women.

### The Paradox of the Type A Woman Manager

There are two internal forces, among others, that influence the Type A female manager. The first is a need to prove her worth, to satisfy her need for achievement by succeeding in the face of challenge. Second is the acceptance by an overwhelmingly male decision-making structure, which perceives Type A women as more similar to themselves than to other women. The Type A woman has the strength and drive to battle a range of barriers placed before her. The Type B woman may not see these obstacles as appealing; she may choose other, more consistent options for her life or other arenas for achievement. For example, a Type B woman could possibly derive greater satisfaction from raising a family and caring for a home as a means to fulfilling her need for achievement. Type As perceive barriers as challenges, whereas Type Bs may see barriers as antagonistic and problematic. The Type A woman is not simply a survivor, she is a winner at the organizational game. She sees daily organizational problems as challenges to test her limits. She plays to win.

Although she is winning at this game, however, she is doing so at a cost. The few women who enjoy high-status positions are often subjected to male-dominated policymaking, and they experience stresses and strain not felt by their male peers. For example, feelings of isolation, conflicting demands between career and marriage and family, and coping with prejudice and discrimination are often reported by these women. Indeed, research conducted in 1980 found

that managerial women who are Type A perceive themselves as undergoing higher levels of stress than their Type B counterparts, with frustration, irritation, and anxiety being the three psychological symptoms most frequently identified.<sup>8</sup>

Although Type A may be one of the prerequisites for executives, and clearly more of a prerequisite for women than for men, it suggests possible dangers and sources of problems. The first obvious problem is that the chance for coronary heart disease is multiplied. Preliminary research indicates that coronary disease tends to manifest itself as stroke in women rather than the myocardial infarction (heart attack) more common among men. Type A women tend to smoke more, drink more coffee, and exercise less, since they don't see exercise as a clearly productive activity. If they do exercise, they do so obsessively, thereby losing the benefits of relaxation.

Type A female executives, I have found, have a much higher probability of being divorced when compared to their male counterparts or to non-Type A women. When they are divorced, there is a high probability that they are also mothers and have custody of their child or children. Caring for children as a single parent, on top of a demanding managerial job in a pressure-cooker environment, places yet another source of stress on these women. Their male counterparts tend to be either single or married; if they are divorced fathers, the odds are great that they do not have custody of their children.

There are other expected problems more directly related to the workplace that tend to accompany Type A behavior and that affect both men and women:

1. *You have a tendency to overplan each day*, which usually results in not accomplishing everything you would like in a given period. Consequently, you are always behind in your self-imposed schedule of unrealistic goals, and the overscheduling creates a chronic sense of time urgency. Type A people simply try to accomplish too much in the time allotted. Even if it were possible to accomplish everything in a given day, you would then go on to plan additional activities and rush yourselves even more. If you overplan your days, it may be because you feel your success is the result of being able to accomplish things faster than other people do. Since haste

does not equal quality, however, your success may very well be in spite of, not because of, this characteristic.

2. *You have excessive competitive drive*, going beyond healthy competition and bordering on a compulsiveness to view everything as a challenge or competitive match. This carries over from business encounters to personal and social activities. You are concerned with numbers and quantity of output. The Type A competitive spirit, which forces you to compare your performance to that of others in virtually all aspects of life, creates a constant restlessness and feeling of discontent. Always focusing on your next goal, you cannot be happy with accomplishments already achieved. Winning becomes an end in itself. Although you usually claim to be motivated by the *challenge* to win, if you don't win, often, there is no enjoyment or pride in doing the activity itself.

3. *You are impatient with delays or interruptions*. Type A people have little patience with someone they feel is doing a job too slowly. Regardless of whether it is your responsibility to oversee that person's work, you will either interrupt to demonstrate a faster method or will look on with exasperation. Type As tend to be overly critical of the way other people do their work, especially when they see a more efficient way of getting the job done. This impatience carries over to life outside the workplace; you would like most things to operate at a fast clip. Even when you go out socially, you will hurry the pace of conversation or finish a sentence for another person. When you don't finish the sentence, you may find yourself watching the mouth of the person speaking to you. The second the mouth stops moving, you start talking. This characteristic is known as *latency response*: the gap of silence between one person's completion of a verbal message and the other person's response. As a Type A, you will tend to create short latency responses in your conversations.

Type As also tend to be *polyphasic* thinkers; they think along two lines simultaneously. While you listen to what others are trying to say, you may mentally be rehearsing your response at the same time. If you are involved in conversations, they can become monologues, resembling one-sided debates. Polyphasic thinking can also involve reading a newspaper while talking on the telephone, watching

television while eating, or reading a magazine at the dinner table. This type of thinking can also be a liability in conceptualizing, because polyphasic thinkers tend to focus on the here and now rather than on more general possibilities for the future. In other words, it is more difficult to think conceptually when juggling multiple thoughts. Conceptual thinking is required of successful managers, since it is the means to accomplish long-term, strategic planning.

4. *You feel a chronic sense of time urgency.* You might claim this urgency is a function of your job, but very often you are attracted to the specific positions that place you in this time bind. Type As are always trying to accomplish more and more in less and less time. You create a continual conflict within yourself and often feel you are running on a treadmill that you cannot stop. Time pressures are a continual part of the Type A's life, and it may seem as though you live by the stop watch. Life becomes a daily rat race.

5. *You have an inability to relax without feeling guilt.* Even in their leisure activities, Type A individuals seldom relax. It is hard for you to refrain from thinking or talking about your work or the things that interest you. Perhaps because of some unresolved underlying guilt or feelings of inadequacy, you tend to overplan or overschedule your leisure activities to the point where your social life becomes burdensome. A classic Type A would find it very difficult to go to a quiet island for a week and lie on the beach all day, every day.

### Which to Change: Corporate Gender or Individual Behavior?

We cannot easily change the competitive, achievement-oriented culture that keeps the corporate environment very friendly to and supportive of Type A behavior. In fact, we now realize that changing an organization's culture (and its gender) is extremely difficult, not always desirable, and perhaps unnecessary.

On the one hand, this organizational breeding of Type As can be attributed to selection, recruitment, and promotion systems determined in large part by the organization's culture. This culture,

in turn, is almost always developed by men. On the other hand, if this culture is the ticket to an organization's success, perhaps we should not tamper with it but should instead manage the symptoms that may evolve from it. Masculine cultures are not bad in themselves; this way of describing the process simply helps us in further understanding organizational dynamics. In some cases the process may be appropriate in its ability to generate a driven, frenzied level of motivation; in others it may be inappropriate, if it drives people to leave or burns them out. Keep in mind, however, that significantly changing a corporation's culture within a short period of time is often out of the question. There is simply too much *history* involved, too strong an inertia.

We are then faced with changing someone from being a Type A and moving them in the direction of a Type B; this can also be a task of herculean proportions. Unless they have had serious health consequences as a result of their behavior pattern, Type As will not only deny that they have a problem but will attribute their success to this behavior.

The following are a sample of some strategies being used by practitioners to help Type A individuals who are motivated to change to a less frenetic life-style.<sup>9</sup>

*Positive reinforcement* methods can be helpful where the Type A business person can schedule fewer people to meet and less work to do in a given period of time, or shorten the time allotted for various business activities. You can design frequent "free periods" to devote to such "difficult" activities as daydreaming, reflecting on past memories, or finishing a pet project. You can set up a schedule where, for example, you reward yourself for meeting with someone for an hour who truly enhances your life by buying a special dessert or taking some time to read your favorite magazine. This reward would immediately be followed by a shorter session (half an hour) with someone who tends to elicit your Type A behavior: competitive feelings, hostility, impatience. Scheduled nonbusiness lunch hours can also be reinforcing if taken in settings that don't cue Type A behavior: taking a walk in the park or browsing through a bookstore.

*Avoidance responding* uses techniques that also tend to help. This category includes steps like not wearing a watch or having a

clock in the office. Timepieces generate feelings of being in a hurry, of being late, of being overcommitted, and of being overwhelmed. Similarly, you can instruct your secretary not to interrupt you when you are with another person or engaged in some other activity. The secretary can also engineer incoming phone calls so that they do not register in your office. A ringing telephone constitutes another form of interruption and tends to act as a cue to hurry up.

Attempt to do only one thing at a time. While waiting for a phone call to go through, instead of trying to accomplish a second or third task, choose instead to drop your pen and look out the window or at a soothing picture to avoid having to do something in the waiting time. When you feel yourself becoming frustrated by not completing all the work you have scheduled in a given day, ask yourself, "Ten years from now, who will know or care?"

Another set of strategies are known as *response cost techniques*. These involve drills for changing your Type A behavior. For example, whenever you catch yourself speeding up your car to get through a yellow light at an intersection, penalize yourself immediately by turning to the right at the next corner. Circle the block and drive up to the same corner and the same signal light again. After penalizing yourself like this, you might find that you do the same thing a second time, but probably not a third. There are other response cost techniques which can be engineered within your job.

In conjunction with these methods, relaxation procedures are usually taught, along with *cognitive behavior modification*. Clearly, Type A behavior is directly related to the thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and philosophies these people have regarding their relationship to the world around them. For example, one thought process might be, "I have to hurry and get everything done or people will think I'm not well organized." Another might be, "If I don't work at least fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, I won't be successful." Thoughts like these can be restructured so that they reflect a more realistic concept of self and the outcomes for which one is responsible.

Recognizing what you value and want out of life is the first step to modifying your behavior. Be responsive to the world around you. Remember that life is not a dress rehearsal—this is the real show. Adapt yourself to a reasonable pace; you will find yourself becoming more aware of your environment, and you will enjoy it more as well.

Reduce the tendency to think and speak rapidly by making a conscious attempt to hear what other people say. Curb the possibility of interrupting others by taking a slow, deep breath every time you feel the urge to finish someone's conversation.

### Future Directions

The notion that corporations have a masculine culture provides one perspective for understanding the criteria organizations have established for executive women. If an organization is characterized as masculine, we can expect greater pressure on women to have a more masculine presence than would exist in a less masculine culture. Type A behavior seems to be one of the most powerful and acceptable mechanisms for a woman to meet this requirement. The irony, however, is that Type A drags along with it a number of other characteristics that may handicap effective managers.

Corporations survive in a competitive environment only at the pleasure of their marketplace, and satisfying the needs of the marketplace can be a grueling, aggressive, risky, and dominating experience. In turn, the more competitive the environment, the greater the requirement that the culture reflect characteristics like aggressiveness, competitiveness, ambitiousness, and strength.

The business world merely reflects the expectations we have traditionally ascribed to sex roles, but the culture is undergoing dynamic changes. Most companies would prefer to wait until societal attitudes change in favor of new roles for women before taking any action within their companies. Today, however, the business world does not have the luxury of waiting for social change to become institutionalized before changing the corporate culture. Corporate leaders are expected to create the change internally, which is easier said than done. A number of high-technology organizations, for example, have realized the need for nontraditional culture in order to maintain a constant stream of creative, innovative, and marketable ideas for products and their manufacture.

Studies have shown that, for numerous reasons, females have a lower self-concept than males and possibly a different orientation toward achievement as well.<sup>10</sup> In light of this, a company may not solve the problem of sex discrimination solely by eliminating unfair



practices in pay, promotion, and opportunity. Women themselves may have to change, and the company that shrewdly recognizes the value of this major proportion of the work force will help them make the transition to a new role by taking these personality factors into consideration. Careful mentoring and coaching, combined with well-planned management development training, is one strategy for addressing the needs of women.

Equally important is the role played by the reward structures established in organizations. The formal structures provide for periodic evaluations, raises, bonuses, fringe benefits, promotions—all designed to be as objective and as fair as possible. But each organization also has its informal reward structure, its own subtle way of saying: “Do it *this* way, and you will be recognized and rewarded. If you do it another way, you’ll be ignored or punished.” The informal structure can leave much to be desired with respect to fairness, but nonetheless it is powerful and pervasive. Both forms reinforce not only *that* the job gets done but also *how* the job gets done. We constantly receive direct feedback and subtle cues from colleagues and superiors about how acceptable we are in the corporate environment.

Type A behavior, at least superficially, appears very productive and is often an underlying explanation for workaholism. People look busy, move fast, talk fast, and seem as though they are always working. As we have seen, however, in some cases the behavior is not necessarily productive but continues to be rewarded—and therefore reinforced—by the employer.

For women, the Type A imperative is further reinforced for yet another reason: it allows them to seem more like men, more worthy of being taken seriously. Perhaps as organizations, management practices, and the changing expectations of our culture evolve, women will be judged on more relevant criteria. Then, perhaps, the quality of their decisions and the skill with which they solve problems will override the degree to which they fit into a masculine culture.

## Notes

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