

# Communication Style And The Managerial Effectiveness Of Male And Female Supervisors

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined whether a male-oriented management model is changing to a more flexible “feminine” style. Males had more relaxed, friendly, impression leaving communication styles and were perceived as more effective managers.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Employee and Management Trends

In 1998, 52 percent of the labor force in the United States was female. Amazingly, over the next two years, the number of women in the labor force had increased to 63 percent of total U. S. employees (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998, 2000). In the last two decades, increases in the number of women in the workforce has been accompanied by increases in the number of women in managerial positions, but the number of women promoted to management has been disproportional to the numbers entering the workforce (Neher, 1997). In 1980, 70 percent of managers were male, but by 1990 that figure had declined to 57 percent (St. George, 1995). Yet, in 1995, women occupied less than five percent of senior level and executive positions in Fortune 500 companies (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). While the number of women entering managerial positions has steadily increased, the position of “manager” continues to be identified in masculine terms (Ivy & Backlund, 2000; Reardon, 1997; Wheelless & Berryman-Fink, 1985). Research reveals that because masculine characteristics are identified with managerial effectiveness, men are perceived as more capable, more acceptable, and are preferred for management positions (Berryman-Fink & Wheelless, 1987; Reardon, 1997). Some conclude that women are too prone to communicate and behave in ways that hold them back (Dowdall, 2003). It is argued that women tend to avoid boasting of successes, and are often too quick to apologize or accept blame (Dowdall, 2003; Hogan, 1990; Tannen, 1994). Some researchers have found that corporate decision-makers often hold the sex-role stereotype that women lack the personality characteristics necessary for top leadership roles. This stereotypical judgment is based on the assertion that women are naturally affinitive and nurturing, and cannot make tough decisions (Ivy & Backlund, 2000; Stewart and Clarke-Kudles, 1993).

### Perceptions of Female and Male Managers

Researchers have attempted, with varying results, to separate myth from fact concerning the perception that members of one sex versus the other make better managers. In the Minnesota studies of twins, obvious differences in temperament were found between women and men. Men were more aggressive and less fearful or harm avoidant, while women were much more nurturing, sentimental, and had strong feelings of empathy for other people. Yet, while there were substantial differences in occupational interests among women and men (e.g., engineering versus pediatrics), no differences in status were found. Women and men expressed about equal interests in most professions, and there was substantial overlap between the sexes (e.g., some women wanted to be astronauts or truck drivers, and some men wanted to be nurses, potters, etc.) (Lykken, 1999).

Historically, studies have found that traditional masculine characteristics tend to be rated more highly than traditional female characteristics by both female and male subordinates (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Geis, Boston & Hoffman, 1985; Schein, 1975), and both women and men employees have identified successful managers as possessing such stereotypically male characteristics as objective, independent, competent, and logical (Butterfield & Powell, 1981; Schein 1973). The attitude prevails that men, possessing such stereotypically masculine characteristics as aggressiveness and competitiveness, are more capable, acceptable, and preferred for management positions. Women who compete for managerial positions in organizations dominated by male management styles are perceived as less “powerful,” and female management styles are often deemed “deficient.” (Berryman-Fink & Wheelless, 1987; Ivy and Backlund, 2000; Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 2005).

Some research, however, has produced less absolute conclusions. Schneier and Bartol (1980) found that women and men emerge in equal numbers as leaders of groups, and concluded that both masculine and feminine characteristics are essential in effective leaders. Baird and Bradley (1979) observed that the subordinates of female managers have higher morale, and Camden and Witt (1983) conclude that productivity is higher for employees managed by females. Wheelless and Berryman-Fink (1985) found that female employees generally hold women managers generally in higher esteem than male employees, and view female managers in a more positive light than male employees, who tend to evaluate female managers more negatively. In 1992, Ragins found that employees who perceive their boss as having considerable power within the organization hold highly favorable views of the boss, regardless of her or his sex. Still another study found that interpersonal communication skills are perceived as more valuable than other managerial attributes (Fine, Johnson, & Foss, 1991). Wheelless and Berryman-Fink (1985) conclude, “as more women enter management spheres, the male-oriented management model is likely to give way to a flexible style that integrates traditional female behaviors and skill with traditional male behaviors” (p. 91). They contend that, given the changing work force, management trends are already evolving to combine task-oriented, traditionally masculine skills with people-oriented, traditionally feminine skills. Borisoff and Merrill (1998) argue that women often strive for a balance between femininity and masculinity in order to be taken seriously in professional positions. Sandra Bem (1974) labeled the integration of feminine and masculine traits as “psychological androgyny,” and others have perceived the need for more versatility or flexibility to adapt management style to varying situations (Lashbrook, 1974; McCroskey & Richmond, 2000; Merrill & Reid, 1981; Richmond & Martin, 1998; Richmond et al, 2005; Wheelless & Dierks-Stewart, 1981). It would be expected that the integration of masculine and feminine managerial behaviors would be reflected in the communication styles of female and male managers. Larsen and his colleagues have labeled this phenomenon in the workplace as a “convergence of communication” (Larsen, Martin, & Giles, 1977).

This study was undertaken to test the supposition that differences in the communication styles of women and men as managers are endemic, and to determine if any particular communication style is predictive of managerial effectiveness. Specifically, the purposes of this study were 1) to determine if the communication styles that subordinates perceive their supervisors to be using are related to perceptions of managerial effectiveness and 2) to examine the extent that perceptions of either communication styles or managerial effectiveness are related to whether the supervisor is a woman or man.

## **COMMUNICATION STYLE**

Communication style has been defined as “...the way one verbally and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood” (Norton, 1978, p. 99). According to Norton (1983) individuals exhibit trait differences in their basic communication styles. In addition to the work of Norton, communication styles have been examined under such labels as “personal style” (Merrill & Reid, 1981), “social style” (Lashbrook, 1974), “psychological androgyny” (Bem, 1974; Wheelless & Dierks-Stewart, 1981), “socio-communicative style” (Richmond & Martin, 1998). Other than Norton’s work the various conceptualizations of communication style have been rooted in Jungian psychology. The best known manifestation is found in the Myers-Briggs personality inventory (Richmond et al, 2005). Regardless of etiology, all of these approaches to studying communication style are based on the assumption that trait differences in communication behavior are produced by an individual’s temperament or personality.

Norton (1978; 1983) conceptualized the variables of dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression leaving, relaxed, attentive, open, friendly, and overall communicator image as the domain of the communicator style construct. In a later study, Norton and Pettegrew (1979) distinguished attentiveness as separate from the generic concept of attention. Attentiveness was defined as a function of posture, verbal behavior, and eye contact. Later yet, openness was differentiated from trustworthiness and credibility (Norton & Montgomery, 1982). Openness was defined as the manner in which the individual deals with information about the self as the individual knows the self to be. The elements of calmness, attentiveness, openness, and friendliness correlated with high levels of job satisfaction in the superior and subordinate relationship, while dominance and dramatic correlated with low levels of employee satisfaction (Baker & Ganster, 1985).

Other studies that have involved superior and subordinate relationships have implications for the study reported here. In a study of the communication style of physicians and nurses, Infante and Gordon (1979) found that each group perceived a large difference in the other's communication style, and Miller and Ratusnik (1979) discovered that physicians saw themselves as relaxed, dramatic, contentious, and impression leaving, while nurses saw themselves as being animated and friendly. In another study in the health care field, communication style variables were found to contribute to nurses' evaluations of their supervisors' effectiveness, but the attentiveness dimension alone accounted for 50 percent of the variance in supervisors' overall effectiveness.(Allen, Rybczyk, Judd, & Allen, 1994). Additionally, Wheeless and Wheeless (1989) determined that doctors' communication styles affect the way nurses make decisions in varied situations, and their judgments of satisfaction with doctors' communication. Interestingly, Camden and Kennedy (1986) expected nursing supervisors to show a more stereotypically masculine orientation in their managerial roles, but their research showed that a more responsive, stereotypically feminine style produces higher morale in subordinates. Allen and Allen (1989) found that patients report greater satisfaction with doctors who are more responsive and less assertive.

Another group of studies related to superior-subordinate relationships have investigated teacher-student relationships in classrooms. Examining teacher effectiveness and communication style, Norton (1977) noted that college instructors' ratings of themselves showed that they felt effective teachers were impression-leaving and attentive. Students agree, but think that effective instructors are also friendly, precise, relaxed, and lack of dominance. Instructors thought that they were more impression-leaving, relaxed, friendly, and attentive than did their students. Norton and Nussbaum (1980) investigated the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and effectiveness in the classroom. and linked a dramatic style to teacher enthusiasm.

Norton's communication style concept is a relational model of communication in interpersonal contexts (Wheeless, 1990; Wheeless & Lashbrook, 1987), and it has been used to examine management style in the organizational context. Bradley and Beard (1977) reported results that indicated that subordinates perceived a democratic leader to be relaxed, animated, attentive, and friendly. An authoritative manager was perceived to be dominant and argumentative. Bednar (1982) found that outstanding managers in an insurance company were perceived to be open and precise, with a more positive overall communication style, while hospital managers were perceived as outstanding if they were less contentious, more animated, attentive, with a more positive overall communication style. He suggests that the "specific role sets, contexts, objective, and procedures of different organizations may have unique communicator style requirements for managers and supervisors" (p. 71). Infante and Gordon (1981) found that supervisors are perceived as more effective if they are perceived as high on the components of relaxed, impression-leaving, and dominance and low on the contentious and dramatic components.

When it comes to managing people, communication style has been found to be related to task-orientation (Wheeless & Reichel, 1990; Wheeless & Lashbrook, 1987), the success of compliance-gaining strategies when trying to influence subordinates (Garko, 1992; Infante, Anderson, Herington, & Kim, 1993), manager's performance (Bednar, 1982; Allen, Judd, & Ceruzzi, 2003), the use of upward influence tactics by subordinates (Edge & Williams, 1994), morale (Camden & Kennedy, 1986), reciprocity and accommodation between supervisors and subordinates (McCroskey & Richmond, 2000), and employee satisfaction (Baker & Ganster, 1985; Infante, Anderson, Martin, Herington, & Kim, 1993).

In terms of communication style and biological sex, Baird and Bradley (1979) examined subordinates' perceptions of male and female managers, and found differences between subordinates' perceptions of male and female managers on the communication style variables of dominant, contentious, and attentive. Montgomery and Norton (1981) studied the communication style self-reports of male and female university students, but did not find consistent differences across two studies. A study by Lamude and Daniels (1984) found differences between subordinates' perceptions of male and female managers related to subordinate sex. So, up to now, studies of communication and style and sex have produced mixed results.

## **MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS' COMMUNICATION**

Attempts to identify specific differences in male and female communication have produced mixed, sometime controversial results. In reviewing several studies, Wilkins and Anderson (1991) found "...no meaningful difference in the behavior of male and female managers" (p. 27). In contrast, some studies have found that female managers are more likely to use an interactive style of leadership with both male and female employees. Female managers were found to use collaborative styles to resolve problems with peers and subordinates, engage in more open discussion of differing views, and display more supportive communication. Male managers were found to be more competitive, nonaccommodating, and used power strategies and organizational protocol and policies to resolve disputes (Burrell, Buzzanell, & McMillan, 1992; Roesner, 1993). Helgesen (1990) contends that feminine management style involves supportive, facilitative leadership and participation, while masculine management style involves control, power, and a competitive tone that creates winners or losers. Wheelless and Barryman-Fink (1985) found that female subordinates have a positive perception of female managers' communication, but males generally have a negative view. In line with the idea being tested here, of a "convergence" or "diminishing" of the differences between female and male managers' communication, May (1997) contends that the "feminization of management" is occurring because of replacement of the notion of control with one of shared responsibility; an emphasis on helping and developing employees, instead of an emphasis on regulating and supervising; and an emphasis on building meaningful networks of relationships.

## **HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTION**

In order to test the proposition of the convergence of female and male managers' communication styles, and to determine if any particular communication style predicted managerial effectiveness, three hypotheses were tested and a research question was investigated.

- H1:** Subordinates' reports of supervisors' communication style are predictive of perceptions of supervisors' managerial effectiveness.
- H2:** Subordinates' reports of supervisors' communication style differ depending on supervisors' sex.
- H3:** Subordinates' reports of supervisors' effectiveness differ depending on supervisors' sex.
- RQ1:** Are the dimensions of communication style differently predictive of either the structure or consideration dimensions of perceptions of supervisors' effectiveness?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The study was conducted in a mid-sized, military defense manufacturing plant in the northeastern United States. Data were collected from 410 subordinates (males = 294, females = 116) on 82 (males = 67, females = 35) of their immediate supervisors.

## Data Collection

The Communication Style Measure (CSM) and the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire (LOQ) were used by subordinates to record their perceptions of their supervisors' communication style and leadership effectiveness. Using the CSM, developed by Norton (1978; 1983), subordinates were asked to report their supervisors use of the dimensions of communication style by a Likert-type scale for each item (strongly agree, agree, neutral or undecided, disagree, strongly disagree). The CSM has been structurally reliable over a vast number of studies. Internal reliabilities in this study for each of the dimensions of CSM were: dominant (.82), dramatic (.68), contentious (.65), animated (.70), impression leaving (.69), relaxed (.71), attentive (.57), open (.69), friendly (.70), and communicator image (.72).

The LOQ, developed as part of the Ohio Leadership Studies (Bass, 1956; Bendo, 1984; Fleisman & Ko, 1963; Fleisman, Harris, & Burt, 1955; Gruenfeld & Weissenberg, 1966; Litzinger, 1965; Penley & Hawkins, 1980; Rim, 1965; Tenopyr, 1969), was used to collect data on subordinates' perceptions of supervisors' effectiveness. The LOQ has two factors: structure and consideration. Structure is the extent to which a supervisor is likely to define and structure her or his own role and those of her or his subordinates toward goal attainment. Consideration is the extent to which supervisors are likely to have job relationships with subordinates characterized by mutual trust, respect for subordinates' ideas, consideration of subordinates' feelings, and a perception of warmth between the supervisors and subordinates. A high structure and high consideration style is the ideal for supervisory behavior, and a low structure and low consideration style is theoretically the least effective supervisory style (Hersey, 1980). The LOQ has been used with approximately 5,000 supervisory personnel, over almost four decades. The factors of structure and consideration have been found to account for 83 percent of the variance in leaders' behavior. In previous studies, the internal consistency reliabilities for the LOQ were .79 for structure and .70 for consideration.

Minor pronoun changes were made to modify the survey from a "self-report" instrument to an instrument reflective of subordinates' reports of supervisors' behavior (e.g., "My supervisor" was substituted for the pronouns "I" and "me."

## DATA ANALYSIS

The first hypothesis concerning the relationship of the communicator style variables to supervisory effectiveness was initially tested through a Pearson Product-Moment correlation to determine candidacy for the stepwise regression analysis. Determinations about this hypothesis were made on the basis of the amount of explained variance. The second hypothesis concerning the sex differences in communication style of manufacturing supervisors was tested using a t-test. A t-test was also used to test the third hypothesis concerning sex differences and the managerial effectiveness of manufacturing supervisors. The research question concerning the relationship of communication style variables to the structure and consideration dimensions of managerial effectiveness was tested through a Pearson Product-Moment correlation for each scale to determine candidacy for stepwise regression analysis. Decisions about the contributions of the communication style variables to the structure and consideration dimensions of managerial effectiveness were based on the amount of variance explained by each communication style variable. Tests were also conducted with the demographic variables of chronological age; years of experience and whether the participant was a lone or staff supervisor were tested to insure they were not intervening.

## RESULTS

To determine whether subordinates' perceptions of supervisors' communication style are predictive of their perceptions of supervisory effectiveness (hypothesis 1), the two factors of the LOQ, structure and consideration, were summed as a continuous dependent variable labeled overall managerial effectiveness. An examination of Table 1 reveals that, with the exception of dramatic ( $r = .09$ ) and animated ( $r = -.04$ ), there was a moderate to high correlation between each of the communication style variables and overall managerial effectiveness. Table 1 also reveals that the independent variables of communication style had low correlations among themselves. The first hypothesis was tested by entering the independent communication style variables into stepwise regression analysis with the dependent variable, overall supervisory effectiveness. Results of this analysis revealed that three communication style variables,

friendly ( $r^2 = .46, p < .001$ ), impression leaving ( $r^2 = .09, p < .001$ ) and relaxed ( $r^2 = .04, p < .01$ ), account for 59 percent of the dependent variable of managerial effectiveness. Thus, selected dimensions of communication style are predictive of supervisory effectiveness, and the first hypothesis was accepted.

Table 1: Correlation among Communication Style and Supervisory Effectiveness Variables

Variables <sup>a</sup> (n=82)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Dominant	-	.65 <sup>e</sup>	.68 <sup>c</sup>	.49 <sup>e</sup>	.47 <sup>e</sup>	-.28	-.03	.37 <sup>e</sup>	-.02	.13	.21	-.03	.13
2. Dramatic	.65 <sup>e</sup>	-	.48 <sup>c</sup>	.55 <sup>c</sup>	.43 <sup>c</sup>	-.20	-.01	.23	-.10	.10	.21	-.08	.09
3. Content.	.68 <sup>e</sup>	.48 <sup>c</sup>	-	.36 <sup>d</sup>	.58 <sup>c</sup>	-.23	-.04	.25	-.09	.05	.36 <sup>c</sup>	-.15	.16
4. Animated	.49 <sup>e</sup>	.55 <sup>e</sup>	.36 <sup>d</sup>	-	.30 <sup>d</sup>	-.36 <sup>d</sup>	-.18	.24	-.14	-.08	.11	-.18	-.04
5. Impress Lv	.47 <sup>e</sup>	.43 <sup>c</sup>	.58 <sup>c</sup>	.30 <sup>d</sup>	-	.18	.36 <sup>a</sup>	.31 <sup>d</sup>	.26	.39 <sup>e</sup>	.56 <sup>e</sup>	.11	.47 <sup>e</sup>
6. Relaxed	-.28	-.20	-.23	-.36 <sup>d</sup>	.18	-	.61 <sup>e</sup>	.06	.45 <sup>c</sup>	.56 <sup>e</sup>	.17	.54 <sup>c</sup>	.49 <sup>e</sup>
7. Attentive	-.03	-.01	-.04	.18	.36 <sup>d</sup>	.61 <sup>e</sup>	-	.33 <sup>d</sup>	.73 <sup>c</sup>	.69 <sup>e</sup>	.31 <sup>d</sup>	.65 <sup>e</sup>	.66 <sup>e</sup>
8. Open	.37 <sup>e</sup>	.23	.25	.24	.31 <sup>d</sup>	.06	.33 <sup>d</sup>	-	.38 <sup>c</sup>	.43 <sup>c</sup>	.13	.42 <sup>c</sup>	.37 <sup>e</sup>
9. Friendly	-.02	-.10	-.09	-.14	.26	.45 <sup>b</sup>	.73 <sup>e</sup>	.38 <sup>e</sup>	-	.73 <sup>a</sup>	.32 <sup>d</sup>	.66 <sup>e</sup>	.68 <sup>e</sup>
10. ComImage	.13	.10	.05	-.08	.39 <sup>e</sup>	.56 <sup>c</sup>	.69 <sup>e</sup>	.43 <sup>e</sup>	.73 <sup>c</sup>	-	.28	.67 <sup>c</sup>	.61 <sup>c</sup>
11. Structure. <sup>b</sup>	.21	.21	.38 <sup>f</sup>	.11	.56 <sup>c</sup>	.17	.31 <sup>d</sup>	.13	.32 <sup>d</sup>	.28	-	.05	.73 <sup>e</sup>
12. Consider. <sup>b</sup>	-.03	-.08	-.15	-.18	.11	.54 <sup>e</sup>	.65 <sup>c</sup>	.41 <sup>e</sup>	.66 <sup>e</sup>	.67 <sup>c</sup>	.05	-	.72 <sup>e</sup>
13. Ov. Effect <sup>c</sup>	.13	.09	.16	-.04	.47 <sup>c</sup>	.49 <sup>c</sup>	.66 <sup>c</sup>	.37 <sup>c</sup>	.68 <sup>c</sup>	.66 <sup>e</sup>	.73 <sup>c</sup>	.72 <sup>e</sup>	-

<sup>a</sup>Numbers of columns correspond to the numbered labels of rows.

<sup>b</sup>The dimensions of structure and consideration are the factors of the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire (LOQ).

<sup>c</sup>Overall leadership effectiveness (Ov. Effect) is the sum of structure and consideration.

<sup>d</sup>Two-tailed significance = <.01.

<sup>e</sup>Two-tailed significance = <.001

The second hypothesis was to determine if subordinates perceive differences in the communication styles of male and female supervisors. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on each of the variables in the study. A test of the means of the style variables indicates significant differences between subordinates' perceptions of the communication styles of male and female supervisors. Male manufacturing supervisors are perceived by subordinates as more attentive,  $t(80) = 4.06, p < .05$ , open,  $t(80) = 3.98, p < .05$ , friendly,  $t(80) = 9.66, p < .01$ , and to possess a stronger communicator image,  $t(80) = 8.63, p < .01$ , than their female counterparts. Therefore, as predicted in the second hypothesis subordinates perceived that male and female supervisors have different communication styles.

Table 2: Means for Subordinate Ratings of Male and Female Supervisors' Communication Style and Effectiveness<sup>a</sup>

Comm. Style & Effectiveness	Male Supervisors	Female Supervisors	All Supervisors	Standard Deviations
Dominant	11.8	12.3	12.1	1.9
Dramatic	10.8	11.7	11.3	1.7
Contentious	12.2	12.4	12.3	1.8
Animated	12.9	12.3	12.6	1.5
Impression Leaving	13.9	14.2	14.1	1.5
Relaxed	12.1	12.6	12.4	1.8
Attentive	12.7*	13.6*	13.2	1.6
Open	13.1*	14.0*	13.6	1.5
Friendly	12.7*	14.0*	13.4	1.6
Comm. Image	15.7*	17.2*	16.5	1.9
Effect.-Structure	42.4	43.7	43.1	8.8
Effect-Consideration	43.0*	49.8*	46.4	8.7
Effect-Overall	85.4	93.5	89.5	8.8

<sup>a</sup>Means in the same row marked with an asterisk (\*) are significantly different,  $p = <.05$ .

The third hypothesis predicted that subordinates' perception of managerial effectiveness will vary depending on whether the supervisor is male or female. An examination of the means for male and female supervisors as determined by the LOQ (Table 2) shows that female manufacturing supervisors are perceived by subordinates as less effective than their male counterparts [ $t = 5.28 (80), p < .05$ ]. Thus, the third hypothesis was accepted.

The research question was to determine if any or all of the communication style variables are predictive of either the structure or consideration dimensions of supervisors' effectiveness as measured by the LOQ. An examination of the correlation of effectiveness and structure (Table 1) reveals that the two scales are mutually exclusive in this study ( $r = .05$ ). Each scale measures different aspects of supervisory behavior. Each dimension of effectiveness, structure and consideration was treated as a continuous dependent variable. As shown in Table 1, there are low to moderate correlations of the communication style variables with the structure dimension of managerial effectiveness with low intercorrelations among the variables of style themselves. The communication style variables were then entered into a stepwise regression analysis to test their affect on the structure dimension of effectiveness. The only style variable to enter the equation was impression leaving ( $R^2 = .32, p < .05$ ). There are also a low to moderate correlations of the communication style variables and the structure dimension of managerial effectiveness and low intercorrelations among the communication style variables themselves. Stepwise regression revealed that combined the four communication style variables of communicator image ( $R^2 = .45, p < .05$ ), attentive ( $R^2 = .07, p < .05$ ), impression leaving ( $R^2 = .04, p < .05$ ) and open ( $R^2 = .03, p < .05$ ) explain a total of 59 percent of the variance of the consideration dimension of subordinates' perception of supervisors' managerial effectiveness.

## DISCUSSION

Hypothesis one stated that subordinates' perception of their supervisors' communication style is predictive of their perceptions of their supervisors' effectiveness. One of the major findings of this study was the impact of the communicator style variables of friendly, impression leaving and relaxed on managerial effectiveness. These three variables explained 59 percent of the effectiveness variable. It should be noted that the friendliness variable alone accounted for 46 percent of the variance related to supervisory effectiveness. Supervisors, who can communicate without hostility, manifest a visible or memorable style of communicating and not appear tense and anxious, are more likely to be perceived as effective by their subordinates. Previous studies have found friendliness correlated with high levels of job satisfaction and job satisfaction was related to an increase in work proficiency (Baker & Ganster, 1985; Infante et al., 1993), impression leaving has been found to correlate with trust of supervisors (Edge & Williams, 1994), and a relaxed communicator style correlated with improved morale (Camden & Kennedy, 1986) and increased reciprocity in communication with subordinates (McCroskey and Richmond, 2000).

In the earlier work of Norton (1978), the communicator style variables of dominant, impression leaving, relaxed, open, friendly and attentive explained 53 percent of the variable communicator image. Communicator image for the purpose of this study was treated as an independent variable, but was not a predictor of effectiveness. However, the style variables of friendly, impression leaving and relaxed, which helped to explain communicator image, were themselves predictors of supervisory effectiveness.

Previous studies have found that in the United States women tend to be more responsive communicators, while men are thought to be more assertive (Bem, 1974; Richmond & Martin, 1998; Richmond et al., 2005). Female managers are more supportive communicators, collaborative leaders, and use participative decision-making styles, while male managers' communication is reflective of control, authoritative leadership, and competitive decision-making styles (Burrell et al., 1992; Helgesen, 1990; Roesner, 1993). It has been contended, however, that the "feminization" of management is occurring through an emphasis on shared responsibility, mentoring and helping relationships, and a "join" management communication style (May, 1997; Ivy & Backlund, 2000; Richmond et al., 2005). The second hypothesis was to test that contention. If management style is becoming more supportive and participative, it would be expected that subordinates would perceive little or differences in the communication styles of male or female supervisors. However, the results of past studies support a difference hypothesis, therefore, it was predicted that subordinates would perceive differences in the communication styles of male and female supervisors. In fact, in this study significant differences were found between sex of supervisors and subordinates' perceptions of

supervisors' communication style. Curiously, male supervisors were perceived by their subordinates to be more attentive, open, friendly, and possess a more positive communicator image than their female peers. These results are somewhat contradictory of previous studies of supervisors' sex and communication style.

In previous studies of supervisors' sex and communication style, Baird and Bradley (1979) reported that subordinates perceived male managers to be more dominant and contentious, while female managers are perceived as more attentive. In a study by Lamude and Daniels (1985) subordinates reported that female managers are more dramatic and open. Interestingly, in these two studies, the communication style variables found to discriminate between male and female managers fits the descriptive, stereotypic norms that, in the U. S. at least, would be expected to discriminate between masculine and feminine communication styles. Women are generally perceived to be more expressive and responsive, while men are generally perceived to be dominant and assertive (Bem, 1975; Richmond & Martin, 1998; Richmond et al., 2005). However, in this study, males were found to be stronger in terms of the communication style variables of attentive, open, friendly and communicator image. Here in lies the curiosity, these communication styles would fit in the genre of styles that have been categorized in the literature as feminine (Bem, 1975; Richmond & Martin, 1998; Richmond et al., 2005), yet, in the manufacturing environment in which this study was conducted, male supervisors were perceived to possess significantly more of the communication styles of attentive, open, friendly, and communication image than women. Perhaps, as some have contended (May, 1997; Ivy & Backlund, 2000), the contemporary work environment with an emphasis on shared responsibility and employee development lends itself to a more feminine style of management, or it may be that as more women enter the workforce, and are viewed as competent, that a convergence is occurring and the differences between male and female managers' communication styles are diminishing (Wheless and Barryman-Fink, 1985). However, the conundrum still exists as to why subordinates in the manufacturing environment perceive male supervisors to possess higher levels of these "normally" feminine communication styles than the female supervisors.

Hypothesis three predicted that there would be differences in subordinates' perceptions of supervisory effectiveness depending on the supervisors' sex. Results indicate that Male supervisors are perceived to be more effective than female supervisors. It should be remembered that in testing hypothesis two male supervisors were perceived to be more friendly than their female counterparts, and also, it was found in testing hypothesis one that a friendly communicator style accounts for 46 percent of the variance in subordinates' perception of supervisors' managerial effectiveness (hypothesis 1). Subordinates obviously associate a friendly communication style with managerial effectiveness, and they believe that male supervisors are more friendly. Thus, the communication style of friendly explains the sex difference for the effectiveness variable in the manufacturing environment studied.

The LOQ has two mutually exclusive factors: structure, the extent to which supervisors' behavior emphasizes task or goal attainment, and consideration, the extent to which supervisors' behavior emphasizes concern for subordinates as people and is concerned with their welfare. The research question asked whether the dimensions of communication style are differently predictive of either structure or consideration. In answering this question, impression leaving entered the separate regression analysis of both structure and consideration. Impression leaving was the only variable to enter the regression analysis for structure and explained 32 percent of the variance for that scale, but explained only four percent of the variance for the consideration scale. Communicator image explained 45 percent of the variance for consideration.

It is interesting to note that neither of the communicator style variables of friendly or relaxed, which explained overall supervisory effectiveness, entered the separate regression analysis. The explanation for this is that the style variable of friendly, which explained 46 percent of the effectiveness variable, was a combination of those behaviors measured by the structure and consideration scales and was not a function of only one of the independent scales. The communicator style variable of relaxed, which explained four percent of the effectiveness variable, was also a combination of behaviors measured by the structure and consideration scales and was not a function of only one of the independent scales. This suggests that supervisors in a manufacturing environment may alter their structure behavior by increasing or decreasing their communication style related to impression leaving, and may also alter their consideration behavior by increasing or decreasing their communication style in relation to communicator image,



attentiveness, impression leaving and openness. However, supervisors must bear in mind that the communication style variable which most impacts effectiveness is friendly.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this report were consistent with the literature in that communication had a major impact on supervisory effectiveness. The communicator style variables of friendly, impression leaving and relaxed explained 59 percent of supervisory effectiveness and therefore helped to clarify the efficacy of these communication factors. However, these results conflict with previous studies that found that male supervisors had a more confrontational and assertive style and female supervisors had a more nurturing and responsive style. Therefore, any conclusions concerning masculine and feminine differences in supervisory communication style and hence masculine and feminine differences in supervisory effectiveness would be premature at this time. The situation or context in which the person was communicating may have played an important role in this study in a manufacturing environment where the prevalent style is masculine. Generalization of these results must also be tempered by the smaller number of females in supervisory positions in this manufacturing environment. In light of those qualifications, it can be said that this study taken together with other studies of communication style demonstrates that people discriminate on the basis of a person's communication style, and that perceptions of supervisors' effectiveness is, more likely than not, going to be impacted by the variables of communication style. It has been shown that there are differences in supervisory communication style for the effectiveness factors of structure and consideration. Now, there is a need to examine both of these effectiveness scales in terms of their specific styles. There could be situations in manufacturing environments which require one management style over another.

There is one thing that is very clear from the study reported here. When it comes to placing individuals in supervisory position consideration should be given to their communication style and whether it is appropriate for the work group and the task at hand. Someone has said that a manager is paid 80 percent of her/his salary to communicate. Studies such as this indicate areas where communication and consequently productive could be enhanced.

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