

## **“THINK MANAGER, THINK MALE”: DOES IT APPLY TO ZIMBABWE?**

H. A. MANWA

*Department of Business Studies, University of Zimbabwe*

### **Abstract**

*Over the last two decades in which empirical studies on gender and leadership styles have been undertaken, the findings have consistently confirmed that people's perceptions have not changed from using leadership traits, especially male traits as a requirement for appointment to managerial positions. Most of this research was carried out in developed economies with different cultures from those prevailing in African countries. It is, therefore, important to investigate the applicability of findings from developed countries to the Zimbabwean context. The findings of the study reported in this article differed from the literature in that, although managers were perceived to possess male traits, they were also perceived to have some female traits, such as intuition and modesty.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Much research on leadership and leadership styles exists (Bass, 1985; Kotter; 1988; Conger and Kanungu, 1988; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Hinkin and Tracy, 1994). However, researching the role of gender in leadership is a relatively new phenomenon (Denmark, 1993). The literature reviewed has demonstrated that, over the last two decades in which empirical studies on gender and management have been undertaken, the findings have consistently confirmed that people's perceptions have not yet changed from using leadership traits, especially male traits, as requirements for appointment to managerial positions. The first part of the article reviews relevant literature. This is followed by presentation of findings from a study undertaken in Zimbabwean banks and hotels. Implications for management development and suggestions for future research are then presented.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON GENDER AND LEADERSHIP STYLE**

The work of Broverman *et al.* (1972) and Schein (1973; 1975) has greatly influenced the research on gender differences in leadership styles as well as the leadership styles considered appropriate for managerial positions. Broverman *et al.* investigated college students' stereotypes associated

with males and females among college students, using a number of traits, such as competency and aggressiveness, to compare females and males. The study found a consistent pattern of stereotypes pertaining to males and females in which, if males were regarded as competent and aggressive, females were not. Subsequent studies have focused on trying to prove or disprove Broverman *et al.*'s findings (e.g. Denmark, 1993).

Another important contribution to the debate on gender and leadership styles was by Schein (1973; 1975) and Schein, Lituchy and Liu (1996). These studies confirmed that male traits were generally associated with traits considered appropriate for managerial positions. Later, Brenner, Tomkiewicz and Schein (1989) replicated Schein's (1973/1975) studies. This time, the study found differences between male and female in perceptions of traits which were appropriate for managerial positions. The male sample confirmed Schein's original findings that there was a correlation between characteristics associated with men and those associated with managers. The sample of females, on the other hand, included characteristics generally associated with both males and females to be the requisite characteristics for entry into managerial positions.

### **Androgyny**

Bem's (1974) research brought a new dimension to the debate on leadership by arguing that masculinity and femininity do not constitute exclusive sets of traits and that it was possible for one to possess both masculine and feminine traits. To test this theory, she developed the Bem-Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) scale. This BSRI scale contained typically masculine, feminine and androgynous dimensions. It was, therefore, possible to score low or high on both the masculine and the feminine traits. If an individual scored high on both the masculine and the feminine traits, that individual was classified as "androgynous".

### **Transformational Leadership**

As organisations continuously faced challenges resulting from factors such as globalisation, there was a growing interest among researchers in the most effective type of leadership styles that could enable organisations to respond quickly to changes. There has, therefore, been a continued emphasis on the important role of transformational leadership style in the changing and dynamic environments (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders have been described as leaders who make decisions through consensus and consultation with their followers and who are also able to inspire followers to set aside their own personal interests for the good of the organisation (Behling and Mcfillen, 1996).

In the area of gender and management, one of the early studies to recognise the existence of transformational leadership style in females

was Rosener (1990). Her findings were that there are differences in leadership style between females and males. Females use what she referred to as "interactive leadership" whereby they rely on group consensus to arrive at a decision (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Males, on the other hand, use a transactional leadership style which emphasises goal achievement as a guiding principle and relies on positional power to exercise authority.

Despite the acknowledgement that females who are in managerial positions have a transformational leadership style, which is now considered most effective, empirical evidence shows that male traits are still the prevailing criteria in the selection of leaders (Rozier and Hersch-Cochran, 1996; Kent and Moss, 1994). Sinclair's (1994), England's (1996) and Still's (1997) research in Australia have all confirmed that the masculine leadership style is still the most favoured style and is used by both females and males. For females to be acceptable in management, they are forced to deny their feminine characteristics and adopt masculine ways of managing.

Although the literature reviewed above confirms that Schein *et al.*'s (1996) analogy that "think manager, think male" is the norm the world over, there is little empirical evidence from the African continent to confirm this view. The few studies that are remotely related to this topic were carried out in South Africa. The major weakness of these studies is that they did not specifically investigate the leadership styles most preferred in managerial positions. They investigated perceptions of females and blacks as managers (Human, 1993; 1991; Day, 1991). Interestingly, however, the evidence from these South African studies has also confirmed the existence of negative perceptions of females and blacks as managers. Of note is the fact that there was also a close association of maleness and management in South Africa. Females and blacks were perceived not to be managerial material because they did not possess male traits such as confidence and competitiveness and were perceived to be emotional and less mathematically inclined.

Thus, extant literature has confirmed that the variables aggressiveness, competitiveness, logic, and objectivity were normally associated with males, while emotion, intuition, modesty and submissiveness were normally associated with females (Marshall, 1984; Human, 1991). Existing scholarship has suggested that expectations of what was required for managerial appointments were universal (Schein, *et al.*, 1996). This claim is made although the African continent was not included in these studies' investigations and despite the fact that empirical evidence has shown that national cultures influence preferred leadership styles (Hofstede, 1993; Antonio and Dorfman, 1999). This study, thus, seeks to test this claim to universality by investigating perceptions of

managers in senior and middle management in Zimbabwean banks and hotels on traits that organisations look for when they make managerial appointments.

The study seeks to establish whether:

1. males differ from females in their perception of traits associated with females and males?
2. males differ from females in their perception of traits that are considered for appointment to managerial positions?
3. Black Zimbabweans differ from White Zimbabweans in their perception of traits associated with females and males?
4. Black Zimbabweans differ from White Zimbabweans in their perception of traits required for promotion to managerial positions?

### **Methodology**

The main design of the study was a national survey using a postal questionnaire to collect data. The sample was drawn from four commercial banks and 140 Zimbabwean hotels offering full service around Zimbabwe. Banks and hotels were chosen because, traditionally, these industries have been acclaimed to be woman-friendly in that a high proportion of their employees are female (Guerrier, 1986; Purcell, 1993). Also key players in the banking and hotel industries endorsed the project. 184 usable questionnaires were returned, representing a 65% response rate. The returned questionnaires represented 88 females and 96 males. The two industries were represented as follows: 96 hotels and 88 banks. The unit of analysis was senior and middle managers in the banking and hotel industries. For the banking industry, these included managers who occupied the first four highest levels in the organisational structure, while in the hotel industry, hotel general managers and heads of hotel operational departments were surveyed (Hite, 1996).

The study listed eight characteristics, namely, aggressiveness, submissiveness, emotion, competitiveness, logic, objectivity, intuition and modesty, and asked participants to use a seven-point Likert scale (where 1 = highest and 7 = lowest) to indicate the degree to which each characteristic was associated with either females or males, or considered important for upward mobility into senior management positions.

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the results. Means, frequencies and percentages were derived for the sample of black females, white females, black males and white males. T-tests and ANOVAs were also run.

## FINDINGS

**Perceptions of Female Characteristics Classified by Gender of Respondents**

One of the main objectives of the study was to compare male and female responses to determine whether there were gender differences in perceptions of characteristics that Zimbabwean society normally associated with each gender. Table 1 lists characteristics associated with females. Females and males had similar ranking of the top 3 characteristics of a female. These were emotion, submissiveness and modesty. Male respondents gave the variable intuition, a lower rating (3.04) than what the female respondents gave (2.82). Both female and male respondents agreed that logic, objectivity, competitiveness and aggressiveness were moderately present in females.

*T-tests*

T-tests were administered to determine whether there were significant differences between male and female perceptions of female characteristics. The tests did not show any significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ).

*Table 1:*

## PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE CHARACTERISTICS CLASSIFIED BY GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	Female Mean (N=88)	Male Mean (N=96)
Emotion	2.10	2.00
Submissiveness	2.35	2.43
Modesty	2.57	2.91
Intuition	2.82	3.04
Logic	4.31	4.21
Objectivity	4.47	4.47
Competitiveness	4.34	4.59
Aggressiveness	5.02	5.04

**Female Characteristics Classified by Race of Respondents**

The second objective of the study was to compare perceptions by race of respondents (Table 2). Both races perceived females to be emotional, submissive and modest. For the variable intuition, whites had a higher mean (2.78) than that of blacks (3.07). Blacks saw females as moderately intuitive, while whites saw females as high in intuition. Blacks and whites had similar ratings of the following variables: logic, objectivity and

competitiveness. Although both races perceived females to possess the variable aggressiveness in moderation, blacks had a slightly higher mean (4.84) than whites (5.25).

#### *T-test*

T-tests revealed significant differences between means for the variable objectivity. Blacks had a higher mean than whites. Blacks saw objectivity as significantly more present as a characteristic for females than did whites.

*Table 2:*  
PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE CHARACTERISTICS CLASSIFIED BY RACE OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	Blacks' Mean (N=100)	Whites' Mean (N=84)
Emotion	2.11	2.08
Submissiveness	2.82	2.67
Modesty	2.82	2.67
Intuition	2.82	3.04
Logic	4.10	4.46
Objectivity	<b>4.08*</b>	<b>4.68*</b>
Competitiveness	4.38	4.58
Aggressiveness	4.84	5.25

*Note:* \* ( $p < 0.05$ )

#### *Analysis of Variance*

To determine if any interactions between the variables exist, a series of ANOVAs were run against the dependent variables (emotion, submissiveness, modesty, intuition, logic, objectivity, competitiveness, aggressiveness,) using the independent variables of gender, race and industry. Significant findings are presented below.

#### *Intuition*

For the variable intuition, the analysis yielded one significant interaction, an interaction between gender and race (Table 3). White females and black males had a significantly higher mean than black females and white males. Black males and white females saw intuition as significantly more characteristic of female in general than did black females and white males.

*Table 3:*  
ANOVA RESULTS AND MEANS FOR INTUITION FOR FEMALES BY  
GENDER AND RACE

		Race		F=6.39 p<0.05
		Black	White	
Gender	Female	3.21	2.45	
	Male	2.94	3.18	

#### Male Characteristics Classified by Gender of Respondents

Table 4 documents ranking by males and females of the degree of association of the eight characteristics of the study to males. Males and females had a similar ranking of four characteristics that were considered to be associated with males: aggressiveness, competitiveness, objectivity and logic. Both males and females agreed that intuition and modesty were moderately associated with males. Males and females differed in the ranking of the variable emotion. Males had a higher mean (5.11) than females (5.72). Both genders ranked submissiveness under the category of characteristics that were not associated with males.

#### *T-tests*

T-tests showed significant differences between means for the variables, logic and emotion ( $p<0.05$ ). For the variable, logic, females had a higher mean (2.03) than males (2.50). Females see logic as significantly more characteristic of males in general than did males. For the variable, emotion, females had a lower mean (5.72) than males (5.11). Males perceived emotion to be significantly more characteristic of males in general than did females.

*Table 4:*  
PERCEPTIONS OF MALE CHARACTERISTICS CLASSIFIED BY GENDER OF  
RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	Female Mean (N=88)	Male Mean (N=96)
Aggressiveness	1.52	1.72
Competitiveness	1.95	2.03
Logic	2.03*	2.50*
Objectivity	2.10	2.31
Intuition	4.05	4.02
Modesty	4.84	4.96
Emotion	5.75*	5.11*
Submissiveness	5.85	5.37

Note: \* ( $p<0.05$ )

### Perceptions of Male Characteristics Classified by Race of Respondents

As far as racial comparisons were concerned (Table 5), the characteristics normally associated with maleness in both races were similar. Both races agreed that the ranking of the highest two items in descending order was as follows: aggressiveness and competitiveness. Blacks ranked logic third whilst whites ranked objectivity as third and logic was fourth. Blacks and whites differed in their ranking of intuition. Blacks had a mean of 3.76 while whites had a mean of 4.37. Both races agreed that males were modest to some extent. Blacks perceived males to be emotional to a limited extent, whilst whites did not believe males were emotional at all. Both races did not perceive males to be at all submissive.

#### *T-tests*

T-tests revealed significant differences between means for the variable "intuition". Blacks had a significantly higher mean (3.73) than whites (4.37). Blacks saw "intuition" as significantly more characteristic of males than did whites.

*Table 5:*

#### PERCEPTIONS OF MALE CHARACTERISTICS CLASSIFIED BY RACE OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	Blacks Mean (N=100)	Whites Mean (N=84)
Aggressiveness	1.61	1.65
Competitiveness	1.87	2.14
Logic	2.13	2.45
Objectivity	2.14	2.29
Intuition	<b>3.75*</b>	<b>4.37*</b>
Modesty	4.84	4.98
Emotion	5.38	5.58
Submissiveness	5.97	6.01

*Note:* \* ( $p < 0.05$ )

### Characteristics Important for Upward Mobility into Senior Management, Classified by Gender

Table 6 displays the ranking of perceptions of characteristics that are important for upward mobility into senior management levels by gender of respondents. Both genders agreed on the most important characteristics that a manager must have to be promoted to senior management. These were objectivity, logic, competitiveness, aggressiveness and intuition.



Modesty and submissiveness were ranked under variables that were moderately desirable for upward mobility. Females did not see emotion to be desirable for promotion into senior management positions. Males on the other hand saw "emotion" as moderately desirable for upward mobility.

#### *T-tests*

T-tests revealed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between means for the variable, emotion. Males had a higher mean (5.31) than that of females (5.65). Females saw emotion as significantly less important than did males.

*Table 6:*  
PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTERISTICS IMPORTANT FOR UPWARD  
MOBILITY CLASSIFIED BY GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	Female Mean (N=88)	Male Mean (N=96)
Objectivity	1.54	1.65
Logic	1.57	1.68
Competitiveness	1.59	1.70
Aggressiveness	2.14	2.03
Intuition	2.60	2.73
Modesty	4.34	4.45
Submissiveness	5.21	5.36
Emotion	5.65*	5.31*

*Note:* \* ( $p < 0.05$ )

#### **Characteristics Important for Upward Mobility into Senior Management, Classified by Race of Respondents**

Blacks and whites differed in the rating of the most important characteristics for upward mobility into senior management. Ranking by each race in descending order is reflected in means in Table 7. Blacks and whites had similar ranking concerning the most important characteristics for upward mobility into senior management positions. These were competitiveness, logic, objectivity, aggressiveness and intuition in descending order. Under characteristics that were moderately important, both racial groups included modesty and submissiveness. Whites did not perceive emotion to be important for upward mobility into senior management levels.

*T-tests*

T-tests revealed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between means for the variable "emotion". Blacks saw emotion as significantly more important than did whites.

*Table 7:*  
PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTERISTICS IMPORTANT FOR UPWARD  
MOBILITY INTO SENIOR MANAGEMENT CLASSIFIED BY RACE OF  
RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	Blacks Mean (N=100)	Whites Mean (N=84)
Objectivity	1.68	1.51
Logic	1.67	1.59
Competitiveness	1.64	1.66
Aggressiveness	2.16	2.00
Intuition	2.75	2.58
Modesty	<b>4.18*</b>	<b>4.66*</b>
Submissiveness	5.12	5.50
Emotion	<b>5.27*</b>	<b>5.72*</b>

*Note:* \* ( $p < 0.05$ )

*Analysis of Variance*

T-tests in the previous segment covered main effect only. To determine if any interactions between the variables exist, a series of ANOVAs were run against the dependent variables (emotion, submissiveness, modesty, intuition, logic, objectivity, competitiveness, aggressiveness) using the independent variables of gender, race and industry. Significant results are presented below ( $p < 0.05$ ).

*ANOVA for Intuition*

ANOVAs for intuition yielded one significant interaction, an interaction of gender and race (Table 8). Black females and white males had a lower mean than black males and white females. Black females and white males saw intuition as a significantly more important characteristic for promotion into senior management levels than did white females and black males.

Table 8:

## ANOVA RESULTS AND MEANS FOR INTUITION FOR UPWARD MOBILITY BY GENDER AND RACE

		Race		F=4.08 p<0.05
		Black	White	
Gender	Female	2.47	2.71	
	Male	2.94	2.42	

*ANOVA for Aggressiveness*

ANOVA for aggressiveness yielded one significant interaction, gender/race (Table 9). Black females and white males had a lower mean than white females and black males. Black males and white females saw aggressiveness as a significantly more important characteristic for promotion into senior management levels than did black females and white males.

Table 9:

## ANOVA RESULTS AND MEANS FOR AGGRESSIVENESS FOR UPWARD MOBILITY BY GENDER AND RACE

		Race		F=4.90 p<0.05
		Black	White	
Gender	Female	2.47	1.84	
	Male	1.93	2.18	

## SUMMARY OF PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH EACH GENDER AND THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Table 10 is a summary of perceptions of characteristics associated with each gender and those required for upward mobility into senior management. All groups of respondents agreed on the order of importance of each characteristic for each gender and those required for upward mobility into senior management. Females were perceived by a large percentage of the sample to be highly emotional, submissive, modest and intuitive, and moderately logical, objective, competitive, and aggressive. Males on the other hand were perceived by the sample at large to be highly aggressive, competitive, logical, and objective. Males were perceived to be moderately intuitive and modest and not at all emotional and submissive.

Another feature of Table 10 is that male and female characteristics are reversed. The two most important characteristics that were associated with males (aggressiveness, competitiveness) were at the bottom of characteristics that were associated with females. Females were expected to have a limited amount of these characteristics. Emotion and submissiveness were at the top of characteristics that society normally associated with females. Males were however not expected to possess typically female characteristics (emotion and submissiveness).

Under characteristics that were considered when appointments to senior management were made it was clear that organisations looked for individuals who on the whole possessed male traits. Managers were expected to be objective, logical, competitive, aggressive and intuitive. The only minor difference was in the ranking of these characteristics. Ranking of characteristics required for senior management levels differed slightly from the one used for males. In particular, modesty helped in upward mobility into senior management. It was acceptable for a manager to possess some limited degree of modesty to climb to the top. What is different about Zimbabwe is that, although senior managers are expected to possess male traits in abundance, they are also expected to have some female traits like intuition and modesty.

The findings of this study confirmed that submissiveness, which was considered characteristic of most females, was not acceptable in senior management in Zimbabwe. These results are in line with Baack *et al.*'s (1993) observations that to be able to rise to top management levels, a manager should not be seen to be emotional, impulsive or submissive.

*Table 10:*  
SUMMARY OF FEMALE, MALE AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT  
CHARACTERISTICS ACROSS ENTIRE SAMPLE

Female	Male	Senior Management
<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
Emotion	Aggressiveness	Objectivity
Submissiveness	Competitiveness	Logic
Modesty	Objectivity	Competitiveness
Intuition	Logic	Aggressiveness
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	Intuition
Logic	Intuition	<b>Moderate</b>
Objectivity	Modesty	Modesty
Competitiveness	<b>Low/none</b>	<b>Low/none</b>
Aggressiveness	Emotion	Emotion, Submissiveness
	Submissiveness	

## CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions that can be drawn from these results are that each gender is socialised differently to uphold characteristics that are associated with its gender. Respondents also agreed that characteristics associated with males were the same characteristics that were required for upward mobility into senior management levels. It can be deduced from this unanimity of respondents' perceptions that female characteristics were not considered appropriate for upward mobility into senior management levels. Furthermore, females were effectively excluded from successfully competing for senior management positions because of their gender.

Unlike Schein *et al.*'s (1996) studies, where females were perceived to possess only feminine traits, females in Zimbabwe were perceived to be high in feminine traits like submissiveness, emotion, modesty and intuition, but in addition, they were perceived to possess moderate male traits, such as logic, objectivity, competitiveness and aggressiveness. Another area that differed from the literature were the perceived male traits (Schein *et al.*, 1996). In Zimbabwe, males were perceived to be aggressive, competitive, objective and logical. In addition, they were perceived to possess female traits like intuition and modesty.

Yet another difference was that, in previous studies, male respondents associated male traits with traits required for middle management, while female respondents included both male and female traits (Brenner *et al.*, 1989). There was agreement among respondents on acceptable female and male traits as well as traits considered for appointment to managerial positions. This agreement can be interpreted to mean that Zimbabwean society used very powerful indoctrination on females to instil in them the acceptable traits for a female, which they would transfer to work environments. Thus, female respondents did not take cognisance of the fact that, despite all the odds, they had made it into senior management. This fact means that there must be something positive in female characteristics that had helped their upward mobility into managerial positions.

This study has confirmed that, overall, there was agreement between blacks and whites on the traits associated with each gender and those required for upward mobility into senior management positions. Interestingly though, there was significant difference in perceptions regarding some traits, intuition, objectivity and emotion. Whites perceived intuition to be characteristically feminine and, therefore, not suitable for senior managerial positions, while blacks perceived this trait to be a universal trait which is present in females, males, and senior management. Concerning objectivity, whites perceived it to be characteristically male

and required for upward mobility into senior management. The last variable with significant differences was emotion. Whites perceived females to be the only ones with this trait, while blacks perceived females to be emotional to a larger extent than males.

It can be concluded, therefore, that there are differences in cultural orientations between white and black Zimbabweans. The view of the whites seems to be closely aligned to the Anglo-Saxon view that was reported on in the literature reviewed, while blacks seem to be affected by a different cultural orientation. This study has confirmed that culture/ethnicity is another variable that influences people's perceptions of traits associated with each gender and those required for appointment into senior managerial positions. This is an area that should be explored further in future studies.

### LIMITATIONS

The point needs to be made however, that this study was limited to middle and senior managers in the two industries – hotels and banks and, therefore, its findings can not be generalised to other types of managers and industries. It is possible that the nature of the industries under investigation demanded a different leadership style that was more customer oriented. The situation might be different in non-service industries like manufacturing and mining, for example. This calls for further studies to explore leadership styles adopted by managers in different types of organisations and in order to assess the influence of type of industry on the leadership style adopted.

This study has, however, contributed to theory building in that it confirmed that Zimbabwe did not differ from developed economies in the transference of societal role expectations into formal organisations. This was manifested by the traits that were associated with each gender and those required for upward mobility into senior management positions. Overwhelmingly, male traits were associated with senior management with a few female traits also preferred.

There is, however, need for longitudinal studies to explore the issue of leadership and required leadership styles that Zimbabwean organisations look for when appointing managers. This should help organisations in their socialisation of managers and their selection policies.

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