

Leadership Behavior of Male and Female Managers, 1984–2002

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The literature is rife with research exploring various alleged differences between men and women in management. Over the past 3 decades, each gender group has touted the superiority of its own management styles (Chusmir, Koberg, & Mills, 1989; Collingwood, 1995; Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999; Hegelsen, 1990; Rosener, 1990). These claims tend to exaggerate the differences between men and women, but the disparities they fix upon fall within the same, very limited set: collaboration and nurturance versus power and control.

That narrowly based stereotype was both confounded and compounded by Rosener's 1990 *Harvard Business Review* article, which was based on an undisclosed number of high-level female executives in the Independent Women's Forum. That widely heralded paper confirmed the stereotype about women, but asserted that changes in the managerial environment had converted women's purported liability into an asset. The Rosener argument suggests that, in the new organizational world, "female" behaviors—particularly collaborativeness and nurturance—had become more appropriate for managers than the stereotypical male predilections for power and control. Nonetheless, as late as 2002, women still held only about 1.2% of CEO positions ($n = 6$) in the *Fortune* 500 companies, and

ABSTRACT. Using data collected from 1984 to 2002 from 2,371 male and 1,768 female middle and senior managers in the United States, the authors of this article demonstrate not only that traditional gender role stereotypes do *not* hold up, but also that counterstereotypical patterns exist. Using the Connective Leadership Model, based on nine sets of achieving styles, the authors found that the traditional gender gap in competitiveness has decreased sharply, but for an unanticipated reason: Men's competitive scores have dropped, whereas women's have remained rather stable. Men's collaborative and contributory behaviors also have decreased significantly, whereas women's have increased.

71% of *Fortune* 500 corporations still had no female directors (Glaser, 2002; Morton, 2003). If Rosener's argument is correct, it is difficult to understand why pragmatic American managers continue to exclude women from the highest managerial ranks.

In this article, we argue that viewing male and female managers through such a restricted lens adds little to our understanding, no matter how long and hard we stare at them. Rather, to understand what, if any, behavioral differences exist between males and females and how these differences relate to the managerial world, it is imperative to develop a broader, more nuanced spectrum of

behavior that is geared toward goal attainment.

Consequently, the burden is fourfold:

1. To present a broader-spectrum model of goal-oriented behavior;
2. Using that model and a sample of over 4,000 managers across a spectrum of industries, to explore whether the much-vaunted difference between male and female managers in collaboration and control exists;
3. To reveal what other behavioral differences, if any, occur in the way that male and female managers go about accomplishing their tasks and achieving their goals; and
4. Given the globalized managerial environment, to examine the trajectory of whatever differences, if any, in such behavior have existed between male and female managers over the past 3 decades.

The Connective Leadership Model

The Connective Leadership Model describes a nine-part spectrum of behaviors that individuals use to accomplish their tasks (Lipman-Blumen, 2000, 1998, 1997, 1996, 1992). It is based on the presumption that, in the current global, organizational, and political climate, the greatest challenge that

leaders confront is the need to integrate two major, contradictory global forces: interdependence and diversity.

Global corporations, as well as political systems, now exist in an interdependent environment, where events occurring in one part of the system reverberate rapidly throughout all of its parts. Diversity, in this context, is a multidimensional concept (a) that refers to differences that exist at levels ranging from the multinational to the individual and (b) in which agendas among nations; business organizations; ethnic, racial, and other groups; and individuals vary so much as to appear irreconcilable.¹

These forces appear to be contradictory because they call for categorically different behavioral strategies. Interdependence requires engaging in collaboration through alliances and networks, as well as contributing to one another's tasks. Diversity speaks to the uniqueness of groups or individuals that drives them toward separate, independent, often competitive and controlling action. In a world where diverse groups and nations live cheek by jowl, integrating their frequently opposing agendas will take leaders who can use a far more sophisticated repertoire of system-savvy behavioral strategies. It is just such a behavioral repertoire that underlies the Connective Leadership Model.

Achieving Styles and an Instrument for Measuring Them

The goal-oriented behavioral spectrum that underlies the Connective Leadership Model consists of nine categories of achieving styles; that is, the characteristic behaviors that individuals use to accomplish their goals. The Achieving Styles Model consists of three major behavioral domains: *direct*, *instrumental*, and *relational* (see Figure 1).

Each domain, in turn, comprises three distinct styles, resulting in a full behavioral complement of nine styles. The direct set, which speaks primarily to the forces of diversity, focuses on executing and mastering one's own tasks. The relational set, which addresses issues of interdependence, emphasizes contributing, actively or passively, to group tasks, as well as to the tasks of others. The instrumental set, a trio of

political, system-oriented behavioral strategies, serves as the bridge between the more oppositional direct and relational styles. The instrumental set focuses on behavioral strategies that use the self to attract others to join in, that create and share networks, and that use the system, its resources, its processes, and the participants as instruments for goal attainment. Ideally, connective leaders are adept at using all nine achieving styles in various degrees to accomplish their goals, depending on the demands of the particular situation.

The Direct Set

The three styles within the direct set are labeled *intrinsic*, *competitive*, and *power*. The intrinsic style focuses primarily on executing and mastering one's own tasks, as measured against one's own previous performance, using an internalized standard of excellence. Athletes who strive to break their own record time exemplify this. The compet-

itive style, guided by an external standard of excellence, involves striving to outperform relevant others. For example, sales offices frequently reward the sales representative who outperforms his or her fellow sales reps. The power style calls for creating order out of chaos, by taking charge and organizing the task through actions that include controlling other individuals, resources, and system processes. We recognize the power style in individuals who step forward to take charge in times of crisis, delegating some tasks to others but controlling the overall process and retaining overall responsibility.

The Instrumental Set

The three instrumental styles are *personal*, *social*, and *entrusting*. These styles represent more complex, nuanced leadership behaviors that are particularly relevant in a globalized environment. The personal style uses all aspects of the self—from intelligence, physical prowess, and attractiveness,

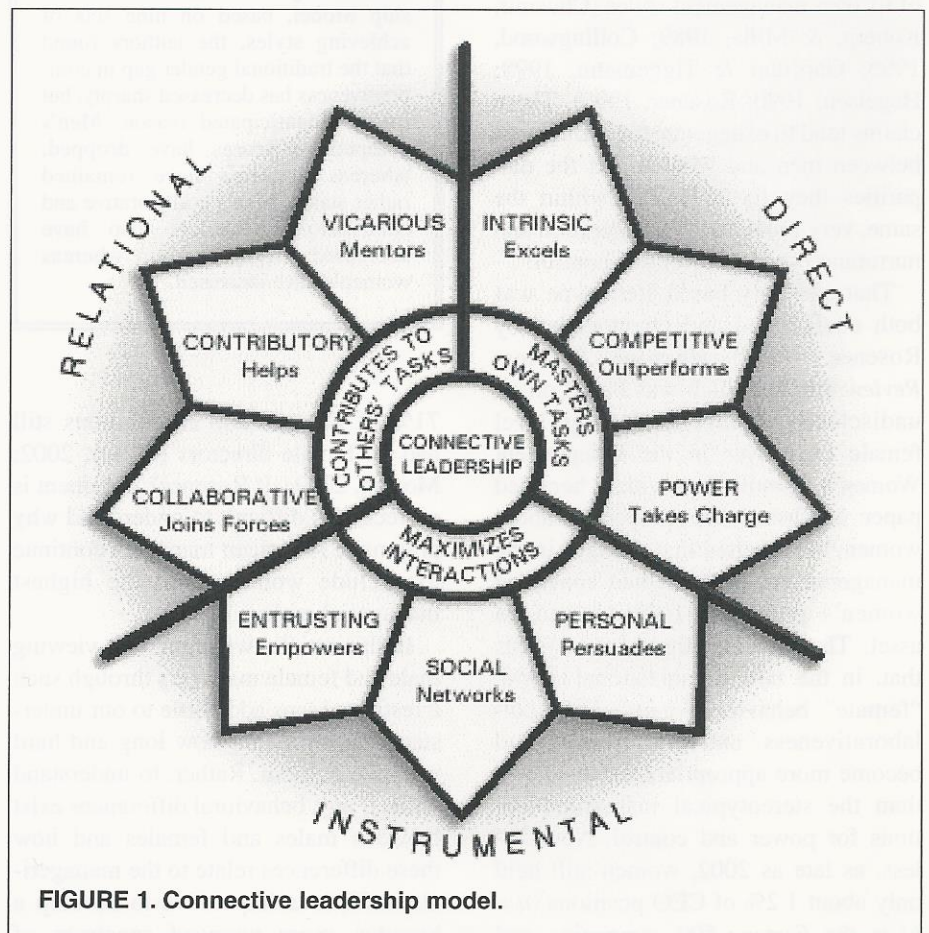


FIGURE 1. Connective leadership model.

along with other personal qualities such as self-deprecating humor and theatricality, to demographic characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, education, and occupation—to attract others to the task. Charismatic leaders such as John F. Kennedy epitomize this approach. The social style focuses on accomplishing tasks through creating and sharing networks of individuals with specific, relevant abilities, experience, or connections. Corporate headhunters use these skills to match executives to firms seeking to fill high-level positions. The entrusting style calls for expecting other individuals, with or without pertinent experience, to execute the task. The manager who relies on a new staff person to perform an important task without much oversight is demonstrating this style.

The Relational Set

The three styles within the relational set are called *collaborative*, *contributory*, and *vicarious*. The collaborative style calls for joining forces with others to accomplish a group task and taking one's share of responsibility for successes or failures. Many individuals in advertising tap into this behavior as they strive to improve their productivity. The contributory style involves not only contributing directly to the role tasks of another party with whom the contributory achiever identifies, but also deriving a sense of achievement from that contribution to the other's success. A manager who helps a staff member complete an important task and a speechwriter who composes the CEO's address to the Chamber of Commerce are both exhibiting contributory behavior. The third style within the relational set, vicarious, focuses on contributing indirectly or passively to the success of another with whom the vicarious individual identifies. This behavior is demonstrated by mentors, who enthusiastically guide the training and advancement of their protégé's career and experience a sense of achievement from the protégé's success. The vicarious style also is exhibited by fans who support their team, as well as by proud family members, who facilitate the success of the achiever in more general and indirect ways.

The L-BL Achieving Styles Inventory (ASI-13)

In this study, we used the L-BL Achieving Styles Inventory (ASI-13), developed by Lipman-Blumen and Leavitt in 1973, to assess participants' Connective Leadership profiles.² The L-BL Achieving Styles Inventory, revised and validated 14 times over the course of its development, is a 45-item self-report instrument. The nine leadership styles are measured on a seven-point Likert scale that represents how frequently individuals call upon these behaviors to accomplish their goals. Each scale ranges from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*).³

Study Sample

To examine differences between male and female managers' achieving styles, we gathered data from 4,139 upper- and middle-level U.S. managers. This sample consisted of 2,371 men and 1,768 women. The study participants varied across occupations as well as types of employers. The employers represented included government; large, medium, and small corporations; nonprofit organizations; educational institutions; and self-employers. The average age of our sample was 43 years. The percentage of married participants was 52.4%. With regard to education, 25% of the sample group held a bachelor's degree, 35% a master's degree, and 17% a doctorate.

Hypotheses and Results

The stereotypical contention is that female leaders use a relationship-oriented management style, encompassing collaborative, contributory, and vicarious behaviors, to accomplish their tasks. Male leaders, on the other hand, are stereotyped as using task orientation, competition, and power. In opposition to this limited view, *our primary hypothesis postulates that men and women will exhibit similar leadership behaviors, except in the competitive area. Second, we hypothesized that male managers would exhibit more competitive behavior than women.*

We conducted a *t*-test analysis to examine differences between the male and female respondents across the nine achieving styles measured by the ASI (see Table 1). For 6 of the 9 achieving styles, we found no significant gender differences. We found a significant difference, however, in the *competitive* achieving style, with men scoring higher on competitiveness than women. This substantial difference in competitive behavior supported our hypothesis and prompted further analysis.

In addition, small, counterstereotypical but statistically significant differences were seen in two other styles.⁴ First, on the intrinsic style, which focuses on executing a task on one's own and measuring performance against an internal standard of excellence, women scored higher than men. This finding

TABLE 1. Comparison *t* tests of Achieving Styles Inventory (ASI) Means for Male and Female Managers

Achieving style	Men (<i>n</i> = 2,371)	Women (<i>n</i> = 1,768)	Mean difference	<i>t</i> value
Intrinsic direct	5.43	5.58	.15	5.57*
Competitive direct	4.48	4.03	.45	12.56*
Power direct	5.31	5.31	.00	.10
Personal instrumental	4.64	4.59	.05	1.23
Social instrumental	4.34	4.31	.03	.92
Entrusting instrumental	4.62	4.66	.04	1.20
Collaborative relational	5.10	5.09	.01	.23
Contributory relational	5.11	5.08	.03	.94
Vicarious relational	5.00	4.81	.19	5.65*

Note. ASI results were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Higher numbers indicate greater reported use of the behaviors.

**p* < .01.

runs counter to the stereotype that women are more interested in people than tasks. Second, men reported slightly greater use of the vicarious style, defined as deriving a sense of achievement through the accomplishments of others with whom one identifies. This finding also counters the gender stereotype that women are higher on this more passive relational scale.

Taken together, however, the entire pattern of responses contradicts the classic gender stereotypes. More specifically, in the first instance, women are neither more collaborative nor more contributory than men. Second, men act somewhat more vicariously, using relational behavior more frequently than women. Third, women are more task oriented than men, as demonstrated by their higher mean score on the intrinsic style. The only serious gender difference in leadership behavior was in the competitive realm, where men scored significantly higher than women.

Does the Competitive Gap Persist Over Time?

Given the policy and programmatic efforts beginning in the 1970s to encourage women's competitive behavior in education and athletics, we hypothesized an increase in women's competitive scores over the subsequent decades. To explore the trajectory of this difference in competition between men and women, we examined cohort data by decade, comparing data from 1984 to 1989, 1990 to 1999, and 2000 to 2002. *Third, we hypothesized that the largest difference in competitive behavior would be seen in the 1980s, with men's and women's competitive behavior converging over time. Fourth, we further hypothesized that women in recent years would exhibit more competitive leadership behaviors than they had in the past.*

Here, we found intriguing differences (see Figure 2). The largest gap between the competitive behavior of men and women was seen in the 1980s, as hypothesized. From 1984 to 1989, male managers reported a competitive mean score of 4.62, compared with 4.02 for the female managers (see

Table 2). This difference was significant ($p < .001$). During the 1990s, male participants reported a lower average score ($M = 4.33$) than they had in the 1980s, although this was still significantly higher than the reported score for the female managers ($M = 3.94$). Between 2000 and 2002, the male managers' scores had dropped further

to a mean score of 4.31, compared with a fairly consistent score for the female managers ($M = 3.97$) across the decades. Between 2000 and 2002, the competitive scores for men and women were not statistically different. At this point in time, it is not clear whether this recent lack of difference signals that the convergence between male and

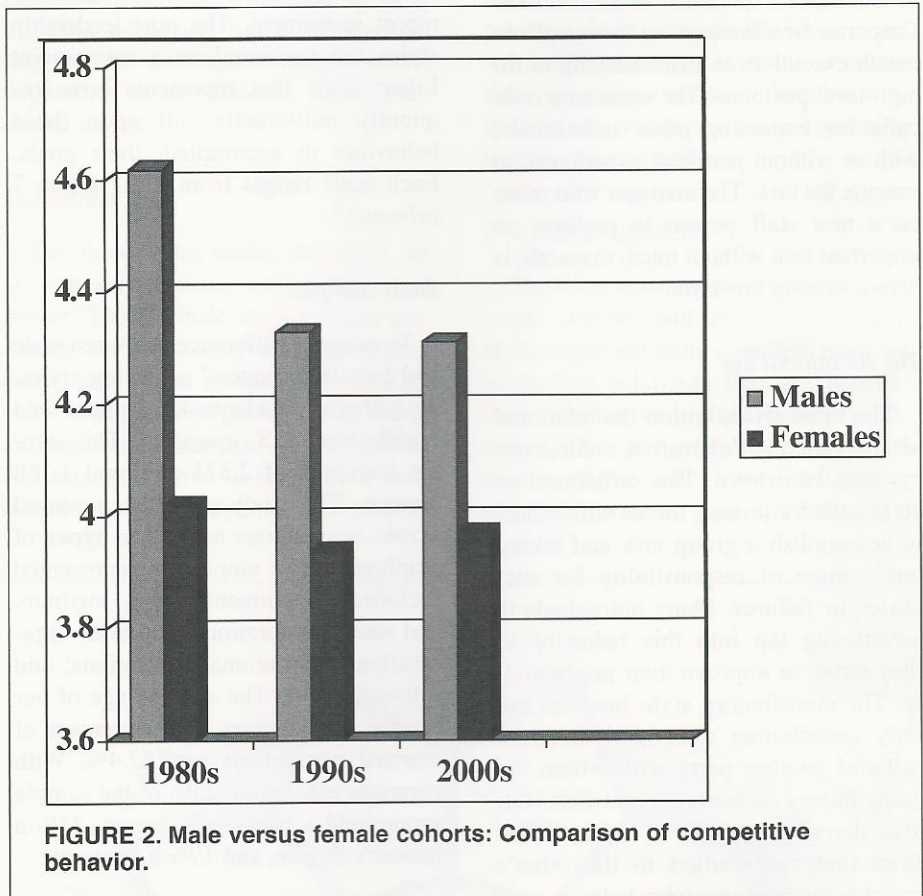


FIGURE 2. Male versus female cohorts: Comparison of competitive behavior.

TABLE 2. Male and Female Cohorts' Competitive Behavior: ANOVA Comparison

Competitive behavior scores	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2002
Men (<i>n</i> = 921)	4.62* (<i>n</i> = 519)	4.33 (<i>n</i> = 347)	4.31 (<i>n</i> = 55)
Women (<i>n</i> = 628)	4.02 (<i>n</i> = 308)	3.94 (<i>n</i> = 264)	3.97 (<i>n</i> = 56)
Gender comparison	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	NS

Note. Managers in the last column represent a smaller group over fewer years than managers in the other columns. We used post hoc REGWQ analysis to control for unequal sample sizes and reduce Type I errors. Scores were measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

*Significantly different from score for men during 2000-2002; $p < .001$.

NS = not significant.

female managers on competition is finally complete or if the sample size for those years is too small to reveal a remaining difference.

True, the gap in competitive behavior between men and women managers is declining as hypothesized. Yet, the decline stems from an unexpected source. Our data show that the narrowing of the gap between men and women came not as the expected result of women becoming *more* competitive, but rather because men are becoming *less* competitive. This may be indicative of a changing socialization of males that allows them more flexibility in leading through more relational, traditionally "feminine" behaviors. It may also stem from similar changes in business education that are promoting cooperation and team building (Leavitt & Lipman-Blumen, 1980). Our findings also may reflect globalization's demand that organizations work together, using more complex forms of cooperation to prosper in the rapidly changing environment.

Additional Comparisons Across Decades

These findings on competitive behavior prompted us to examine other changes across the nearly 3 decades during which we collected data. Given the changing socialization of males and females promoted through various government programs, including Title IX, as well as business schools' emphasis on teamwork, we expected both men and women's collaborative and contributory scores to increase over that time span.

For this analysis, we used cohort data to hold age constant (the group included only managers in their 40s). Then we examined differences across time. This allowed us to look at sequential generations, which are influenced by different socialization and educational patterns. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed statistically significant differences in men's and women's collaborative and contributory scores. We also conducted a post hoc analysis using a REGWQ (Ryan-Einot-Gabriel-Welsch) to examine further the source of these differences. We used the REGWQ to reduce the likelihood of a Type I error

induced by unequal sample sizes. Men's 1980s scores were statistically different from their 2002 scores on both the collaborative and contributory achieving styles ($p < .001$); however, their scores did not increase as predicted. Scores for both collaborative and contributory achieving styles for male managers, in fact, *decreased* (see Table 3). In contrast, between the 1980s and 2002 there was a significant increase in scores ($p < .05$) for women in both collaborative and contributory achieving styles (see Table 4). The REGWQ analysis, however, did not register this difference in women's scores as statistically significant.

Conclusions

The nine-style Connective Leadership Model presents a more differentiated conceptualization of goal-oriented behavior (see Figure 1). As such, it meets our goal of providing a more nuanced understanding of potential gender differences among managers. It allows us to go beyond the simple dichotomy of collabora-

tion and nurturance versus power and competition, the scale that has been used in previous research to describe female-male differences.

This research achieved several additional goals. Drawing on a substantial managerial database, our analysis indicates that the purported stereotypical gender differences in the use of collaboration and power cannot be substantiated in this U.S. sample. We were able, nonetheless, to demonstrate a significant gender difference on competition, with men reporting higher scores than women, as the stereotype would predict.

The data, however, revealed several counterintuitive, counterstereotypical results. First, males scored higher on vicarious behavior, traditionally associated with females. Second, females scored higher on intrinsic, or task-focused, behavior, customarily attributed to males. Perhaps the most interesting counterintuitive finding on gender differences came from our time series analysis, which indicated a definite narrowing (perhaps even closing in the last few

TABLE 3. ANOVA of Male Managers' Collaborative and Contributory Scores

Decade	Collaborative	Contributory	<i>n</i>
1980s	5.23	5.23	519
1990s	5.15	5.25	347
2000s	4.53*	4.41*	55

Note. Male managers after 2000 represent a smaller group over fewer years than male managers in the other decades. We used post hoc REGWQ analysis to control for unequal sample sizes and reduce Type I errors. Scores were measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

*Significantly different from male managers in both 1980s and 1990s for same achieving style; $p < .001$.

TABLE 4. ANOVA of Female Managers' Collaborative and Contributory Scores

Decade	Collaborative	Contributory	<i>n</i>
1980s	5.10	5.08	308
1990s	5.22	5.25	264
2000s	5.55*	5.47*	56

Note. Female managers after 2000 represent a smaller group over fewer years than female managers in the other decades. We used post hoc REGWQ analysis to control for unequal sample sizes and reduce Type I errors. Scores were measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

*Significantly different from female managers in the 1980s for same achieving style; $p < .05$.

years) of the gender gap in competitiveness from the mid-1980s through 2002. What makes that finding particularly intriguing is the source of that convergence: Rather unexpectedly, male managers' competitive scores were significantly lower than they had been in the early 1980s, whereas women's had remained relatively constant. This finding occurs despite considerable public policy efforts during this period to increase women's competitiveness. In addition, women's collaborative and contributory behaviors have increased significantly during this same time, whereas men's have significantly declined, despite emphasis on teamwork both in business schools and in the workplace.

As with all research, these conclusions must be viewed in terms of the strengths and limitations of this particular study. The large sample size and the availability of nearly 3 decades of data for upper- and middle-level managers in the United States constitute major strengths in the current study. This substantial database lends support not only to the findings presented, but also to their "generalizability" across occupations and industries. At the same time, the greatest limitation lies in the fact that, despite the large sample sizes for the 1980s and 1990s, only a relatively small sample of respondents was available after the year 2000, an inevitable restriction at this point in time. Future research should examine whether these findings hold true as we approach the end of this decade.

Notwithstanding previously conducted studies of the behavioral correlates of the L-BL Achieving Styles Inventory (Lipman-Blumen, 1991), the general limitations of self-report measures apply to this research as well. This means that future research using other types of leadership measures is needed to confirm the results presented in this study.

The conclusions drawn from this research have important implications for business education and business practice. They suggest, first, that gender should not be used as a major predictor of narrowly defined leadership behaviors. This recommendation coincides with other research, including several meta-analyses, suggesting that knowledge of individuals' gender does little to

help predict their subsequent leadership behavior (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Dobbins & Platz, 1986; Lipman-Blumen, Fryling, Henderson, Moore, & Vecchiotti, 1996). Despite the assertions of previous research, neither men nor women uniquely can claim leadership profiles that represent a better fit for today's business challenges. Thus, it is critical in business school admissions policies, as well as hiring and promotion decisions, to consider people as individuals with their own specific, rather than gender-based, strengths and weaknesses.

Second, it appears unwise for business school curricula and other leadership-development programs to reinforce the "now-you-see-them-now-you-don't" gender stereotypes by encouraging either men or women to adopt styles presented as "natural" for the opposite sex. Third, leadership development programs should take into account the magnitude and speed of ongoing changes in socialization, business education, and business practice, particularly within the context of globalization. The growing complexity of these current trends necessitates a more differentiated, sophisticated leadership repertoire. This is particularly the case if leaders hope to meet the challenge of integrating the opposing global forces of interdependence and diversity. The Connective Leadership Model offers one possible means of addressing this challenge.

NOTES

1. That is, in this usage, diversity speaks to the differences among nation states, organizations, communities, demographic groups, and individuals. Thus, we extend the meaning beyond the usual limited sense, in which "diversity" is commonly used to refer to different racial, ethnic, age, and gender groups within the work force.

2. For a description of the L-BL Achieving Styles Inventory and its history, reliability, and validity characteristics, see Lipman-Blumen, Handley-Isaksen, and Leavitt, 1983. For additional technical information, including norms, behavioral validation studies, and so forth, see Lipman-Blumen, 1991.

3. Since 1983, the Achieving Styles Institute, at the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management, has collected data from over 12,000 men and women across various age, race, ethnic, and occupational groups, countries, and industries. The instrument has been translated into 17 languages. In addition, two related instruments have been developed: the L-BL Organizational Achieving Styles Inventory (OASI), for measuring the achieving styles rewarded by organizations, and the L-BL Achieving Styles Situational Evaluation Technique

(ASSET), for assessing the achieving styles most needed to accomplish a particular task or project.

4. Although these two small differences were found in the intrinsic and vicarious styles, it is important to note that they accounted for less than 1% of the variance explained and may be a result of the large sample size.

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