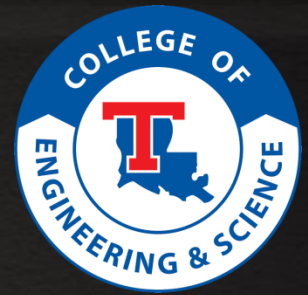


**ADVANCE**ING  
FACULTY PROGRAM



Jenna Carpenter

ADVANCEing  
Faculty Program

# Women and Leadership

The Role of Confidence and  
Active Coping

# MOTIVATION

Early in her career, Virginia M. Rometty, I.B.M.'s first female CEO, was offered a big job, but she felt she did not have enough experience. So she told the recruiter she needed time to think about it. That night, her husband asked her, "'Do you think a man would have ever answered that question that way?'"

"What it taught me was you have to be very confident, even though you're so self-critical inside about what it is you may or may not know," she said at *Fortune's Most Powerful Women Summit* this month. "And that, to me, leads to taking risks."

Pratch, Leslie, "Why Women Leaders Need Self-Confidence," Harvard Business Review, [http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/11/women\\_leaders\\_need\\_self-confidence.html](http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/11/women_leaders_need_self-confidence.html), accessed February 6, 2012.

# What does Research Show?

- o Women tend to overestimate the minimum qualifications for success.\*
- o Women tend to underestimate their own ability, skills, and experience.\*\*
- o Women are averse to taking risks.\*\*\*

The bottom line? SELF-CONFIDENCE is an important aspect of leadership! Let's see how it fits in to leadership effectiveness.

\* \*\*Correll, S., "Constraints into preferences: Gender, status, and emerging career aspirations," *American Sociological Review*, 69, 2004, 106.

\*\*\* Byrnes, James P., Miller, David C., Schafer, William D., "Gender differences in risk taking: A meta-analysis," *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(3), May 1999, 367-383.

# What effects Leadership Success?

- o Study looked at the relationship between **gender, active coping** (the ability to respond adaptively to stress and to grow), **motivation** AND leadership success (as defined by peers, superiors and subordinates).
- o Overall, the only measure that predicted leadership success for both men and women was **ACTIVE COPING**.
- o Active coping was *far more strongly associated* with perceptions of women's leadership effectiveness than it was for men's.
- o When active coping was broken down into further, the gender differences were *even stronger*.

# What is Active Coping?

It is a collective term for a set of individual characteristics that help us cope with stress in a positive manner:

- o Internal locus of control (belief that you control events around you since they primarily result from your behavior and actions)
- o Problem-focused coping
- o Stress tolerance
- o **Self-confidence**
- o Social perceptiveness
- o Response flexibility

# Defensive Coping

- Self-deceptive strategies for coping with stress
- Involves defensive strategies such as aggression, regression (temper tantrums or other immature behavior), withdrawal, denial, repression, and rationalization (blame external factors)
- Deals with stress indirectly in an effort to convince ourselves that we have effectively handled the situation, but these strategies only make it worse

# Why is Active (versus Defensive) Coping Important?

o It helps us:

- o tolerate the tension that accompanies openly perceiving internal and external events that involve challenge or conflict.
- o formulate and carry out strategies to resolve or transcend challenges and conflict.
- o optimize the ability to adaptively manage the balance between internal psychological needs, aspirations, morals and environmental demands, regulations, constraints.

# How did Active Coping differ for Women vs. Men?

Women (*but not men*) leaders who exhibited the follows attributes of active coping were judged effective leaders\*:

- Ability to identify and face difficulties openly
- Openness to the perception of frustration and difficulties
- Ability to articulate both positive and negative motivations
- Decreased tendency to deny or defensively avoid coping with demanding or conflict-arousing circumstances
- **Self-confidence** and self-esteem

\*significant correlation



# What did *not* make a difference?

The attribute that was *not* significantly correlated with effective leadership was....

o Intelligence!

# Other gender differences in leadership that emerged:

- o Male leaders described themselves as more agentic (stereotypically male)
- o Agentic: task-oriented, dominating (having subordinates follow rules and procedures, maintaining high standards for performance, making leaders and follower roles explicit)
- o Women leaders described themselves as more communal (stereotypically female)
- o Communal: interpersonally-oriented, collaborative (helping and doing favors for subordinates, looking out for the welfare of subordinates, explaining procedures, being friendly and available)

# The Upside?

- Women in leadership positions are assumed to have self-aggrandizing motives (enhance power and status)
- Women who are collaborative can gain acceptance from initially skeptical subordinates
- Friendly, cooperative, interpersonally-oriented behavior enhances the status and influence of women leaders

# What other gender differences in leadership emerged?

- Gender differences play a crucial role in the evaluation of female and male leaders
- Women who were agentic were viewed negatively (significant correlation)
- Men who were communal were not at a disadvantage
- Men can employ a larger variety of masculine and feminine styles without consequence on their evaluation of effectiveness

# The Flip Side:

- Women may be judged by criteria that are not used for male leaders
- Women must exhibit BOTH higher levels of interpersonally-oriented and task-oriented aspects of leadership
- In situations where there are is more ambiguity and lack of clear guidelines for behavior of leaders, gender is likely to increase the bias against gender-discrepant behavior
- Women must be more self-confident, task-focused and open to the perception of frustration and difficulty than male leaders

# Take Home Message?

For women to be effective leaders, the following are really important:

- o The ability to identify and face difficulties in the external world openly and non-defensively
- o Self-confidence
- o High self-esteem
- o Communal leadership style
- o Strong active coping strategies to transcend the constraints placed on their leadership style

# References

- Pratch, L. and J. Jacobowitz, "Gender, Motivation, and Coping in the Evaluation of Leadership Effectiveness," <http://pratchco.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Gender-Motivation-and-Coping-in-the-Evaluation-of-Leadership-Effectiveness.pdf>, accessed February 6, 2012.
- Pratch, L., "Why Women Leaders Need Self-Confidence," Harvard Business Review, [http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/11/women\\_leaders\\_need\\_self-confidence.html](http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/11/women_leaders_need_self-confidence.html), accessed February 6, 2012.
- Correll, S., "Constraints into preferences: Gender, status, and emerging career aspirations," *American Sociological Review*, 69, 2004, 106.
- Byrnes, James P., Miller, David C., Schafer, William D., "Gender differences in risk taking: A meta-analysis," *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(3), May 1999, 367-383.
- "Locus of Control," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locus\\_of\\_control](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locus_of_control), accessed February 6, 2012.
- "Coping with Stress," <http://www.hubbynet.com/stresscoping.htm>, accessed February 6, 2012.

# Questions?



[jenna@latech.edu](mailto:jenna@latech.edu)