21 Management Style and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: A Study of the Personality and Behaviour of Women as Managers

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MANAGEMENT

The classic view of management is that it consists of four functions: planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. This definition has been expanded by those who see management as an activity which depends more on the demands of the situation, including the people concerned, than on theoretical division of the task into separate functions. For the purpose of the study, management is defined along lines suggested by Drucker (1955), Kanter (1989), Mintzberg (1973), and Peters (1988), as follows:

The four functions of management (planning, organizing, directing, and controlling) require behaviour that comprehends past and future, experience and intuition, rationality and inspiration. It combines principles and policy with social values and extenuating circumstances, utility with imagination, justice with humanity, and decision-making with inquiry. Management activities are characterized by variety, open-endedness, and flexibility.

Effective Management

The research method was to test groups of managers who were effective at their management tasks, that is, good at their job. There would have been no point in testing bad managers. Therefore the supervisors or senior managers of all respondents were asked to rate the relevant respondent on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being high) in the questionnaire reproduced in Appendix A. Only those respondents who scored above 65% overall were included in the research results.

Although this method had its limitations, in particular because the respondents were not assessed for effective management by their peers or by people working for them, the researcher was not in a position to obtain such assessments; and it was felt that the described method was sufficient for the purposes of the research.

Personality type

Carl Jung (1923) discussed the differences in people's personalities and claimed that everybody can exercise preference in how they use their mental functions; hence, people can be typed according to their preferences. Isabel Myers and Catherine Briggs (Myers and McCaulley, 1985) extended Jung's work on perception and judgement across four dimensions:

• Extraversion or introversion (i.e., directed to the outer world (E) or the inner world of ideas (I);

• Sensing or intuitive perception (S or N);

• Thinking or feelings judgement (T or F);

• Judgement or perception (i.e., whether to deal with the outer world by judging attitude—J—using T or F; or by a perceiving attitude—P—using S or N).

Further insights are provided by Keirsey and Bates (1984, pp. 25-26), who list a number of words and phrases characteristic of these four preferences; and for the purposes of the research these were taken, with slight alterations, to define the eight preferences according to the MBTI, as follows (the research was not concerned with extraversion or introversion).

Sensing perception is experience-based, therefore present-oriented; realistic; actual; down-to-earth; functional; factual; practical, and common-sensible.

Intuitive perception is future-oriented, based on inspiration, ingenuity, imagination, speculation, and hunches. It perceives a world where all things are possible, fact can be fiction and vice versa.

Thinking judgement is objective. Criticisms are based on standards, categories, criteria, principles, laws, and policies. Thinking judgement is firm, impersonal, and just.

Feelings judgement is subjective, based on social and personal values ("good" and "bad"), sympathetic to extenuating circumstances. It is humane, devoted, harmony-seeking, intimate, persuasive, and personal.

Judgement uses criteria derived from thinking or feeling to arrive at conclusions that are settled, decided, and fixed as a matter of top priority if not to an urgent deadline in order to "wrap things up," find completion and closure, make decisions, plan ahead, "get the show on the road," and run one's life.

Perception uses observations derived from sensing or intuition to gather more data like a treasure hunt while adapting with flexibility to life as it goes by and keeping options open. Perception is emergent, tentative; something will turn up, there's plenty of time, what's the hurry? let's wait and see.

According to the theory on which the MBTI is based, one pole of each of the above four dimensions is preferred by its owner over the other for each combination, or type, denoted by the letters STJ, NFP.

THE RESEARCH ARGUMENT

Historically the practice of management in Australian organisations, as in the USA, has followed closely the Weberian bureaucratic model; i.e., it describes organisational behaviour as including objective, impersonal, and firm rules and policies; specialization of roles into categories based on standardized criteria; and hierarchies of power. Managers are valued and rewarded for their planning, organizing, directing, and controlling skills. Thus a model appears to have been created of effective management behaviour. It has been referred to as a "transactional" model (Rosener, 1990, p. 120) by which management becomes a series of impersonal, rule-bound, rank-ordered transactions between those who give orders and those who carry them out. By definition it is a male model, since the practice of management traditionally has been male. In terms of the MBTI, its characteristic behaviour can be identified as primarily STJ, as defined for this study.

When women began entering managerial ranks in any number, about 20 years ago, they were advised in the literature to adopt STJ-type behaviour. For example, one of the

earliest books, written in the '70s, genuinely to encourage women to achieve management status, was entitled: *Think like a man, act like a lady, work like a dog.* (Newton, 1979). Its male author advised his female readers how to adopt effective management behaviour (i.e., STJ-type behaviour) without becoming "one of the boys."

However more recent writers have approved an emergent model of management behaviour for women, identified as owned more by female than by male managers. This model is more subjective, intimate, and sympathetic to extenuating circumstances. Emphasis is on harmony, values, and personal persuasion. The style is speculative, ingenious, interpersonal, and contingent. This style has been referred to as transformational (Rosener, 1990). It is characterized by NFP-type behaviour as described in the MBTI.

Identification of these two different models in the literature of management science gives the impression that management style is dependent on personality type and gender, that male managers, as managers, are unlikely to demonstrate (and by implication should not demonstrate) speculative, contingent behavior that is sympathetic to extenuating circumstances and open to personal persuasion. If they do, they stand in danger of being criticized for being "soft" or "indecisive."

On the other hand women managers, however effective, are assumed to own personalities that are less objective, decisive, principled, realistic, and just than those of effective male managers. If they behave otherwise they stand accused of being "hard" and "bitchy."

RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The research assumptions were:

1. Generalizations in management literature about effective management behaviour seem to suggest such behaviour is limited to a male personality profile corresponding to STJ on the MBTI;

2. Women managers in general are assumed to own an NFP-type personality;

3. Both these generalizations are misleading because:

a) they seem to imply that women *per se* own an inferior management style compared to that of their more competent male colleagues;

b) yet there are so few women in management compared to men (though the balance is changing) that it is virtually impossible to demonstrate whether or not women managers, generally speaking, do own a different management style from the majority of male managers;

c) even if there are significant differences between the way most women carry out management functions compared to a comparable sample of male managers, perceptions of differences may be due to any number of factors apart from personality, such as acculturation.

In Australia as elsewhere, women and men are socialized so differently it can be said they belong to two cultures. The major differences between these "cultures" are that in Australia, Britain and the UK at least, generally speaking, men are required to behave socially and professionally as if their personalities were STJ (i.e., objective, factual, logical, functional); and women as if they were NFP (i.e., emotional, intuitive, illogical, unable to function without support).

It does not follow from this that the majority of white, native-born Australian men would score STJ on the MBTI, nor that their female counterparts would score mostly NFP.

4. If one can assume that differences in acculturation between men and women account for any perceived gender-based differences in their management styles, then personality type becomes irrelevant to effective management. Virtually anybody, no matter what their personality type, can become an effective manager provided they are equipped with a set of appropriate skills.

5. To test this assumption, evidence must demonstrate that effective management is contingent neither on gender nor a particular personality type, in order that both female and male managers be valued for their individual contribution to the workplace. This leads to the following research questions:

1. Does effective management behavior, as defined for the research, require a particular personality style as described on the MBTI?

2. Is management style gender-specific?

METHOD

From 1991-2 a study was conducted of the personality types of a total of 135 managers or people aspiring to management status (66 men and 79 women). Respondents were all participants in management training and executive development seminars that I directed over the period. They were all described by their supervisors or senior managers as good managers or good management potential (see Appendix A).

The limitations of the research method were that the samples were not random (respondents indirectly chose me rather than the other way about); assessment of them as "effective managers" for the purpose of the study was somewhat arbitrary; there was no control group and therefore no control of extraneous variables (for example, no way of protecting the research from the "Hawthorne effect," Stone, 1991); and there was danger of overgeneralizing from too few data.

The advantages of the method were that none of the limitations appeared to be critical; the method was appropriate because it gave me access to a wide range of managers, including some Aboriginal people; it was replicable in the sense that anybody could repeat it without too much difficulty; and the research results were of direct practical and psychological benefit to the respondents. As will be described, virtually everybody who took part in the research appeared to gain in professional confidence and self-esteem as a direct result of taking part in the research.

The sample was made up as follows:

14 male and 1 female senior financial managers in a large private-sector service organization;

11 male and 10 female managers in a government service organization;

10 female members of an ambulance service;

6 male and 50 female teachers from elementary and high schools;

15 male senior executives in the NSW Department of School Education;

10 male and 8 female public health managers.

Thus 79 women and 56 men took part in the study. Table 21.1 presents the ethnic background of the participants.

Table 21.1
Ethnic Background

Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
White native-born Australians:	60	40	100
European:	19	120	
Asian:	0	11	11
Aboriginal:	0	4	4
Total			153

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 21.2 presents the MBTI score for each ethnic group and gender. Table 21.3 presents the percentages.

1. Whatever the generalizations in management literature may be, effective management behaviour, as defined for the research, did not appear to be limited to one or even a few personality profiles on the MBTI;

2. There did not appear to be any connection between gender and personality type on the MBTI. As Tables 21.2 and 21.3 show, women and men are fairly evenly distributed across the type groups, especially in the larger native Austrailian ethnic group. Thus, the results supported the research assumptions.

Virtually all participants demonstrated interest, and for the most part keen interest, in their MBTI scores. The Indicator was administered in a self-scoring version, thus most of the seminar with each group was devoted to discussion and demonstration of what the results might mean in terms of real-life behaviour.

One of the most popular debriefing activities was to describe an imaginary but plausible work-related problem to the whole group (for example: the head of your department is ill and will be away for at least six weeks. You have been asked to decide, as a team, who will take over the responsibility for the department while the boss is

Table 21.2
Ethnicity and MBTI Scores

SAMPLE	White Australians		Europeans		Asians		Aboriginals	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	60	40	19	1	0	11	0	4
SCORES								
NTJ	10	7	3	0	0	0	0	0
NTP	10	7	5	1	0	5	0	3
NFJ	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
NFP	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	1
STJ	2	5	3	0	0	0	0	0
STP	7	5	4	0	0	4	0	0
SFJ	8	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
SFP	10	4	2	0	0	2	0	0

Table 21.3
MBTI Scores as Percentages

SAMPLE	White Australians		Europeans		Asians		Aboriginals	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	60	40	19	1	0	11	0	4
SCORES								
NTJ	17	18	16	0	0	0	0	0
NTP	17	18	26	100	0	45	0	75
NFJ	12	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
NFP	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	25
STJ	3	13	16	0	0	0	0	0
STP	12	13	21	0	0	36	0	0
SFJ	13	10	11	0	0	0	0	0
SFP	17	10	11	0	0	18	0	0

away).

After describing the problem I might ask (for example) two strong SFs to leave the room and remain out of earshot for five minutes. I would then ask two NTs to discuss the imaginary problem with the rest of the group as audience (technically this structure is known as a "fishbowl" exercise).

I wrote down any spoken words or phrases that struck me as typical of an NT profile, for example:

A: "Why don't we see what happens if we have two interim heads of the department instead of one?"

B: "I think there's a rule about that; but to be fair, I don't think head office will worry too much, providing the work is done."

After about five minutes' discussion I would ask the NTs to rejoin the rest of the class, call in the two SFs and repeat the process. Invariably they would make comments such as:

C: "Well, I know from experience that there's likely to be problems whatever we decide. I remember once in an office where I used to work we avoided the problem by doing (such and such)."

D: "Yes, but this situation is exceptional, the boss is ill, people are going to feel sorry for him. They'll want to pull their weight while he's away."

It became clear that no matter by what route, all the respondents were capable of finding a solution to the problem, and by asking the groups to engage in activities like these, the implications of the MBTI became clear. One of the strongest reactions was people's pleasure in recognition of their unique potential as managers. This was particularly evident with the few Aboriginal trainees who took part in the research. They appeared to feel liberated by the suggestion, derived from their MBTI scores, that they were capable of the abstract, analytical thinking that such management functions as planning and organizing require.

I found myself reflecting on the limitations of the kind of cultural stereotypes that place too much stress on some personality characteristics and too little on others. The popular view of Aboriginal people in Australia (to which many Aboriginals themselves

subscribe) is that they are people-oriented to such an extent they are incapable of carrying out objective tasks.

The biggest single group to appear disadvantaged as managers by cultural stereotyping was of course not composed of Aboriginal respondents but women (white, Australian-born women made up 60/135 of my sample). It is arguable that the study was worth doing, and would be worth doing again, if for no other reason than to enhance the self-esteem of the female participants. Judging by this study, Australian women lack self-knowledge to such an extent that the results of their MBTI scores were little short of a revelation to them. 20/60 women were NT, 9/60 were ST and 18/60 were SF, i.e., a third of the sample of white female Australians were NT and a third SF. As one woman put it: "So much for stereotypes!"

IMPLICATIONS

1. The research assumption was strongly supported, that personality type and gender are irrelevant to effective management.

2. If this is so, the implication is that organizations should value and capitalize on any culture-based differences between men and women as managers; thus enhancing their dignity as capable individuals rather than worrying whether their gender or personality type is appropriate for management.

3. The picture of organisational behavior is changing and the historical male model of management is under revision. The rapidly accelerating pace of change across the world today demands that organisations must learn to "thrive on chaos" (Peters, 1988); and organisational theorists such as Kanter (1989) now argue the critical importance of the kind of management behaviour that is not only practical and standards-based, but also innovative, contingent, tentative, and flexible.

Organisations cannot afford to stereotype effective management style in terms of personality, and it is debatable whether it was ever constructive or helpful to do so. In any case, it is now the fashion to model a "new" manager, not limited to typical STJ-type behaviour but encouraged, even urged, to display as needed the whole range of behaviours that the MBTI describes.

4. Women are becoming an increasingly important part of the work force. For example, in 1987 in the USA as many as 38.1% of women in professional work were managers—admittedly this is compared to 50.1% of men; but Rome wasn't built in a day! (The figures come from London and Weuste, 1992, pp. 11-14).

In Australia the figure is probably comparable, since Australian work force patterns are very similar to those of the US (Stone, 1991). Australia, like the USA, cannot afford to undervalue the range of women managers' contribution to the work force by assuming they are only capable of behaving as if they were SFPs no matter what kind of management style a particular set of circumstances requires.

5. Therefore, more evidence is needed, beyond this small study, to demonstrate that effective management requires a set of skills that is not dependent for its acquisition on gender or personality type.

SUMMARY

The traditional man-made model of management behaviour in organisational settings has been taken as the norm for more than half a century. Therefore it casts doubt on the effectiveness of other management styles and particularly on an emergent

model of different behaviour of female managers. The traditional (male) management model appears to value behaviour which the MBTI identifies as typical of NT personalities whereas SF characteristics seem more applicable to the emergent (female) model.

The working hypotheses for the study were:

1. Effective management (planning, organizing, directing and controlling) does not appear to be contingent on a particular personality type;

2. Personality type for successful managers does not appear to be related to gender.

Both assumptions were supported by the research, which involved 135 male and female managers or management trainees in a variety of Australian settings and from various ethnic backgrounds.

3. All respondents, Aboriginals and women in particular, found the MBTI helped them to discover their personality strengths as managers, whether their scores indicated their behaviour was primarily S, N, F, T, P or J. They reported that this discovery gave them a new sense of confidence and self-esteem, and led them to conclude that the kind of behaviour needed for effective management today is not related to gender nor necessarily to cultural background.

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APPENDIX A

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

(The following questionnaire was administered to the supervisors or managers of all respondents. Those respondents who scored 65% or higher became the research sample of a population of "effective managers" as defined for the purpose of the research.)

Please complete the following questionnaire. Your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and analyzed as anonymous data for a research project on personality type and effective management style.

The original questionnaires will be destroyed as soon as the data have been copied.

Please rate (name of respondent) on a scale of 1 - 5

(5 = highly effective; 1 = not very effective) on the following behaviour:

1. Planning:

      1.1: Foresees problems and situations

      1.2: Makes provision for the future

      1.3: Takes a consultative approach (i.e., discusses management matters with others)

2. Organizing:

      2.1: Establishes effective teamwork

      2.2: Sets appropriate priorities for task accomplishment

      2.3: Allocates work appropriately, depending on people's strengths/skills/knowledge/information.

3. Directing:

      3.1: Demonstrates situational (contingent) leadership skills

      3.2: Is an appropriate role-model/mentor

      3.3: Makes appropriate and timely decisions

4. Controlling

      4.1: Manages discipline and conflict problems adequately

      4.2: Maintains good teamwork and office morale

      4.3: Handles budget and other administrative matters adequately