Female Leadership: How Women Can Inspire Trust and Become Leaders in Male-led Work Environments

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Abstract

Women are 46.8% of the American workforce, but only 20 of the S&P 500 companies have a woman in its CEO role. In the public relations industry, women are 70% of workers but 4% of top leaders. Because women are educated in greater numbers than men, and generally excel at the competence level, we hypothesize that it is their inability to inspire trust that prevents them from becoming leaders. We analyze trust on one hand, and leadership qualities on the other. We also explore some behavioral mistakes that have been claimed to be made by women in the workplace. Combining these facets (trust, leadership qualities, and common women's mistakes), we conclude that the mistakes that women make are mistakes of trustworthiness. We build the 'Three-Level Model Of Trust' to explain the complex composition of trustworthiness. The three levels of trust are ability, integrity and benevolence. The model also explains why working hard and excelling at the ability level do not necessarily lead to someone becoming a leader.

Introduction

The Catalyst workforce report for 2016 (http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/statistical-overview-women-workforce) shows that only 20 of the S&P 500 companies have a woman as CEO.

On the other hand, education and labor statistics show that women are educated in higher numbers than men (http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf) and constitute almost half of the workforce in the United States (https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/facts_over_time.htm#labor).

The "glass ceiling phenomenon" (Department of Labor, 1991) refers to the situation in which women, although possessing the preparation, skills, and work experience necessary to move up on the corporate ladder, have fewer opportunities to become leaders than men have.

The phenomenon exists across industries, but it is more notable in certain fields. Certain industries, such as fishing, construction or mining, for example, employ fewer female workers, and these occupations tend to be male-dominated. In these industries and occupations, the fact that top leaders are men is understandable, and certainly proportional to the workforce composition.

But an industry such as public relations presents an especially interesting gender unbalance: in the United States, women are about 70% of its workers, but only 4% of its top leaders. Academic programs in public relations display similar scenarios: the majority of the students are female, while the majority of instructors are male.

The public relations profession has been described as "velvet" or "pink ghetto" (Cline, Smith, Johnson, Toth & Turk, 1986; Ghiloni, 1987; Geyer, 2012, among others). According to the report that the International Association of Business Communicators funded in 1986 (Cline, Smith, Johnson, Toth & Turk, 1986), policies that mandated that companies in the United States hire more women triggered the feminization of the profession. By the end of the 70s, the report that studied the American public relations industry found, the management of large companies, pressed by compulsory inclusion policies, had started placing women in departments in which it was believed they could not "do much harm." In some cases, companies went as far as to create entire departments with the specific purpose of placing these women they were forced to hire. These departments were communication and/or public relations, and the roles women occupied did not affect the bottom line.

The report predicted that the number of female public relations professionals would keep growing, but it did not foresee the non-linear direction of its growth. Had women's participation grown linearly, we would see today an industry made up of 70% of women at all levels. 70% of large public relations firms would be, in proportion, led by women.

Some voices, though, affirm that women are less ambitious than men, or that women reject top leadership positions because they do not want that high level of responsibility. However, the recent report *Women in the Workplace 2016* (LeanIn & McKinsey&Co., 2016) finds that women and men are equally ambitious: 78% of men and 75% of women say they want to be promoted. But as their careers progress, the desire to get top roles fades in women, while it intensifies in men. According to the report, women feel they do not have the same advancement opportunities as men have, and when they reach a certain level of seniority, they are satisfied.

It could also be true that the high costs of childcare push many women to stay at home while their kids are growing up. Then, after being away from their careers for a long period, it is more difficult for women to re-enter the workforce. But, the LeanIn and McKinsey&Co. report also states, mothers and fathers are more eager to get promoted than those who are not parents.

The report points to the fact that women are generally in roles that do not affect the bottom-line, and therefore, are not considered for top leadership positions. These so-called non-line roles, or staff positions, are typically human resources, public relations, or information (LeanIn & McKinsey&Co.).

The implication that the "glass ceiling" exists even in highly feminized industries such as public relations is that women, albeit unknowingly, could be helping maintain this unbalanced situation. Besides social and economic factors related to family care and personal choices, and besides sexism, women could be doing something against their own career advancement.

What if women were impairing their own upward career mobility by the way they behave or communicate?

In 2004, Lois P. Frankel published *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: Unconscious Mistakes That Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers.* Frankel uses the term "self-sabotage" to describe certain behaviors that some women exhibit in the workplace that prevent them from getting into top leadership positions.

On the positive side, Sylvia-Ann Hewlett, in her 2014 book *Executive Presence*, presents the qualities that leaders have and display that make others perceive them as leaders. As she writes, "Executive presence is an amalgam of qualities that telegraphs that you are in charge, or deserve to be" (Hewlett, 2014: p. 1). And by perceiving the characteristics that executive presence encompasses, others perceive leaders as trustworthy, which is the fundamental characteristic of leadership. Therefore, women and men who want to become leaders in their careers, need to be able to inspire trust. Seen from the other side, a manager needs to trust an employee in order to promote him or her to a higher position.

The fact that women in leadership positions are scarce, even though they statistically possess the education and the work experience needed to progress, leads us to question women's ability to inspire trust. Is it the inability to inspire trust that is stymieing women's career advancement?

In order to determine whether women are less able to inspire trust in work environments, especially those led by men, this capstone analyzes first, the nature of trust and the conditions that foster trust in professional relationships. Second, it studies the leadership characteristics proposed by Hewlett (2014), and third, the mistakes that Frankel (2004) describes.

Combining the three elements, we conclude that, indeed, the mistakes that women as a group make in the workplace impair their ability to inspire trust, and, as a consequence, stymie their career advancement.

It is worth noting, however, that this is not the only factor that prevents women from becoming leaders, and that women are not solely responsible for their lack of career advancement. As stated above, there are social, economic and corporate factors that affect women's upward mobility. This researcher is aware that sexism is still prevalent in many corporate cultures and in the society as a whole, and that the victims of discrimination should never be blamed for being discriminated against.

Purpose of the Study

This capstone identifies aspects of women's behavior and communication at work that impair their upward mobility on the corporate ladder. It is the researcher's goal to provide women who work in male-led work environments with specific tools that will help them inspire trust at a higher level. Women's changing the factors that are under their control may lead to a less stereotyped perception of their professional personae and ultimately, to a greater professional consideration.

Hypothesis

Certain behaviors that women as a group exhibit in work environments where men are leaders undermine their ability to generate trust, and therefore stymie their career advancement.

Research questions:

RQ1: What is trust?

RQ2: What are the characteristics that someone needs to have in order to generate trust in a professional relationship?

RQ3: How does the ability to generate trust influence the ability to become a leader?

RQ4: What are the mistakes that women as a group make that negatively affect their ability to generate trust and, hence, be perceived as potential leaders?

Literature Review

Both the trust and leadership literature take for granted that leaders are trusted, and that the ability to inspire trust is one of the fundamental characteristics of leaders. But in order to understand how leadership relies on trust, we need to explore first, what is trust, and what are the conditions that make someone appear trustworthy. We also need to analyze how the ability to generate trust in others influences the possibility of being perceived as a leader. Since women are not reaching leadership positions in proportional numbers to their participation in the workplace, we argue that one of the factors that interferes with their leadership potential is their ability to inspire trust in their managers.

Definition of trust

Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995, 2007) explore the concept of trust in business settings, and analyze the conditions under which it develops among members of a team, and between leaders and their followers. They conceive trust as a complex entity constructed by three interrelated elements: trust itself, the factors that contribute to trust, and the outcome of trust. Trust itself, the authors argue, is an aspect of one particular relationship. Within the factors that contribute to trust, they study the characteristics of the two parties involved in the relationship, the trustor and the trustee. They also analyze the contextual factors that affect the extent to which a trustor will trust a particular trustee. As the outcome of trust, the authors propose that the trustor is willing to take a risk.

1. Trust itself

Trust is an aspect of a relationship between two parties (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; 2007), and is therefore not static or crystallized. In order to become trusted in a given relationship, one must proactively work on developing trust in this particular situation, with this particular person.

Trust is based on the trustee's behaviors rather than on his or her personality or character. Therefore, someone might behave in a certain way within one particular relationship and be trustworthy, but behave differently in another relationship and be untrustworthy.

For professionals whose performance is based on their ability to inspire trust in others, these two ideas – (1) trust is an aspect of a relationship and (2) trust is based on behaviors – have three important implications. First, someone is not trustworthy by nature; on the contrary, trustworthiness is, like beauty, "in the eyes of the beholder." As a consequence, a trustee-to-be must work his or her way to become trustworthy to the other party in the context of the particular relationship that they have. For example, when a new CEO is brought on board in an organization, the stakeholders may at first be reluctant to trust him or her, even though this person was highly trusted in his or her previous position or company. This new CEO, then, will have to prove to the stakeholders that he or she is trustworthy. Career changers may also experience that their ability to inspire trust in the new field is lower than it was in the previous one, where they were recognized experts.

Second, trustworthiness and trust between two parties do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, the context of each relationship will set the requirements for trust. In each situation, there are specific actions that one party needs to take in order to fulfill the other party's expectations, and become trusted. This is a case, for example, of how different cultures perceive trustworthiness, and the different ways in which cultures signal trust. The behaviors that make someone trustworthy in India may be totally opposite to what is expected in Canada, for example. Therefore, in global organizations, leaders need to be aware of the different expectations that each culture has in order to become trustworthy.

And third, trust in a relationship depends on the domain of the knowledge or skills involved, because different contexts entail different expectations. For example, surgeon XYZ is very good at her profession, but a very bad cook. Therefore, I will trust surgeon XYZ for my surgery, but not for the nutrition of my family.

When someone decides to trust, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman say, he or she is willing "to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (1995: p. 712). A critical part of the definition is "willingness to be vulnerable." It implies that people who trust choose to put themselves in a position where they could lose something important for them. In other words, trustors take a risk as a result of trusting the other party.

TRUST, COOPERATION, CONFIDENCE AND PREDICTABILITY

Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (*ibid*.) also argue that cooperation is not synonymous with trust, nor is confidence or predictability, even though the terms have often been used interchangeably. It is true that trust can lead to cooperation, but trust is not a necessary condition for cooperation to exist. For example, when a graduate school instructor creates the teams for a class project, students are forced to cooperate, even though they may not trust one another.

Confidence also overlaps with trust: in a situation of trust, the trustor must have confidence that the trustee will have the ability to solve the situation. But, in a mindset of confidence, there is no perception of risk. When deciding to trust, on the other hand, the trustor is aware that there is some risk involved and that he or she could lose something important. Nevertheless, the trustor explicitly recognizes and assumes the risk involved in trusting the other party.

For example, a manager, Manager 1 (M1), asks that a project be submitted at a certain time on a certain day. There is enough time ahead, and he decides to assign the project to Employee 1 (E1): M1 knows E1 is competent enough to do it, and is aware that E1 has no other assignments for that period. In this case, M1 is *confident* that E1 will submit the project on time.

A different scenario might trigger a different psychological response in the manager. For example, the employee to whom Manager Z (MZ) assigns the project, Employee Z (EZ), has four other complex assignments and only one week to complete all five projects. When MZ decides nevertheless to give the project to EZ, MZ is *trusting* EZ beyond *confidence* or certainty. In this scenario, we say that MZ *trusts* EZ, because two conditions apply. First, MZ is confident that EZ is competent and efficient enough to do the work. Second, MZ *believes* (but cannot be certain, because no one can predict the future) that EZ will be able to overcome the difficulties – four other assignments and only one week.

Predictability lets others imagine how someone is going to behave in a future situation that is similar to previous situations that they have witnessed. But predictable behaviors may be undesirable. For example, employees are sometimes reluctant to give bad news to certain managers because those managers get too angry. The predictable behavior (some managers get angry when they receive bad news) is not helping employees trust these managers. On the contrary, for predictability to be a precursor of trust, the behaviors that can be predicted have to be desirable in the context of the situation (e.g., Employee Z always delivers work of superior quality on time, and deals effectively with stress and work overload).

Trust, therefore, may include cooperation, confidence and predictability, but stands at a higher conceptual level than these.

Korsgaard, Brodt and Whitener (2002) view interpersonal trust as an “attitude” of one person (the trustor) towards another person (the trustee). When choosing to trust, the authors say, the trustor has already assessed the trustee’s “motives, intention and character, including judgments of a person’s benevolence, integrity, fairness, and reliability”(Korsgaard, Brodt and Whitener, 2002: p. 312). The trustor, therefore, has “the expectation, but not certainty, that (the trustee) will act benevolently” (*ibid.*). The positive assessment of the trustee by the trustor is, then, a requirement for trust to spark in the relationship.

In professional relationships, this idea of a pre-assessment puts the onus on the trustee to clearly display the signs of his or her trustworthiness. Kramer (2009) examines why people decides to trust or not to trust others. In his experience as an MBA negotiation professor, he consistently finds that most people believe they are exceptionally good at assessing other people’s trustworthiness. He describes an experiment in which experimenters fake signals of trustworthiness, and then deceive the participants in a trust game. In his results, participants are consistently deceived by experimenters who display external signs of trustworthiness such as smiling, direct eye contact, or touching the other party's hand.

In other words, professionals need to display that they are trustworthy for the other party to pre-assess their trustworthiness in the first moments of the professional relationship.

Section 2.b., below, explores the characteristics that professionals need to possess in order to be trustworthy, and the role that first impressions play in how trustors pre-assess trustees. And because inspiring trust is a necessary characteristic of leaders, being perceived as a leader implies being perceived as trustworthy. For this reason, Section 2.b. introduces the concept of executive presence (Hewlett, 2014), which is the combination of qualities that make professionals appear as leaders, and hence, trustworthy.

2. Factors that contribute to trust

2. a. Characteristics of the trustor

The trustor's "propensity to trust" (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995: p. 715) is the first, indispensable factor of trust. It is a trait inherent to individuals, nurtured by their personal life experiences, cultural backgrounds and types of personality. However, a given trustor will be more or less prone to trust in different situations, with different trustees and in different contexts. Certain contextual factors can increase the trustor's perception of risk, and therefore, decrease his or her level of trust in the trustee. In such a scenario, the trustee needs to counterbalance the negative influence that the context may have on the trustor. It is his or her task to enhance certain characteristics and fade others (see section 2.b) to reinforce the signals of trustworthiness to the potential trustor. When in a 'psychological state of trust' (Holtz, 2015), the trustor's perception of risk decreases and therefore, can become willing "to be vulnerable to the actions of the other party" (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995, 2007).

The context is important in shaping the relationship between trustor and trustee, because it influences the trustor's perception of risk, and the possibility that trust happens decreases when the perception of risk increases. Therefore, in contexts that could trigger a high perception of risk in the trustor, the trustee must make an active, deliberate effort to appear trustworthy.

Societal stereotypes that give some people a biased view of certain groups of individuals are among the contextual factors that increase the trustor's perception of risk. These can be based on ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical aspect, health, or age, among others.

Giscombe, Agin and Deva (2011) explore how it is more difficult to establish trust for people who are different from the predominant culture. This implies that in work environments where most people are male, female professionals need to make a bigger effort to inspire trust.

Since this capstone explores women's difficulty to generate trust in their male managers or clients, it is worth noting that gender stereotypes can be very powerful in provoking a negative response in the trustor. As Eagly and Karau (2002) analyze, descriptive and injunctive gender norms refer to the beliefs that certain people have about what women and men actually do, and what they *should* do. So, in addition to mistakes that women may be making in their professional communication, this important contextual factor may also play against them.

For example, in a society that expects that nurses are women while doctors are men, some patients could trust only male doctors and refuse female doctors. This bias comes from the false assumption that feminized professions are less difficult (Levanon, England & Allison, 2009), leading to the conclusion that women are less capable, intellectually. In such a case, even before assessing the trustee's characteristics, the potential trustor would refuse to consider the possibility of trust because he or she would assume that a female doctor can put his or her health in danger.

Work environments where women are the majority of workers and men are the majority of leaders reinforce the gender stereotypes of men as 'in charge' and women as 'care takers' or 'helpers.'

2. b. The characteristics of the trustee

In order to become trusted to the other party in a professional relationship, people need to possess and exhibit certain characteristics, that Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995; 2007) categorize under "ability, integrity, and benevolence."

Ability. In the category of ability, the authors include the capabilities that someone has that are aligned with the task that he or she is assigned to perform. As section 1 shows, trust in a relationship takes the domain of knowledge into account. Thus, in order to fulfill the expectation of ability, the trustee-to-be needs to know the principles, techniques and tools, and possess the know-how that enables him or her to do the action that the other party needs him or her to do.

Integrity. For the authors, trustees whose behaviors are in line with the set of values that trustors find acceptable fulfill the expectation of integrity. Gillespie and Mann (2004) analyze the extent to which integrity and shared values between leaders and their followers influence the degree of trust. Their findings show that when followers believe that their leaders are loyal to the same values that they adhere to, they are more prone to follow and unconditionally trust them.

Benevolence. And finally, trustees fulfill the expectation of benevolence when they make a priority of the trustors' needs and objectives and show they care for them. When trust exists, the trustor believes that the trustee will try to serve him or her – the trustor – even if that means doing something that doesn't benefit the trustee.

When trustors decide to trust, they have previously assessed the characteristics of the trustee; the degree or scope of trust depends on this assessment. Therefore, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995, 2007) say, trust is a continuum and not a binary quality. Trustors will slightly or fully trust the other party; or they will trust the other party for something, but not for something else. If trust were a binary quality, the outcome would necessarily be determined by whether trust happens or does not. But, as discussed throughout this paper, trust may happen on various levels, and different degrees of professional responsibility call for different levels of trust.

Trustors assess how ability, integrity and benevolence are combined in the trustee-to-be. They decide to trust when they find that the other party's characteristics fulfill the expectations that the particular situation requires.

In this paper, we propose that the three characteristics of ability, integrity and benevolence belong to three different levels. Therefore, different trusting relationships require that one, two, or the three levels of trustworthiness be fulfilled (see the *Discussion* section).

Professionals who want to inspire trust in others must make these characteristics visible to them. To do so, they need to behave and communicate in certain ways that signal their trustworthiness.

In her book, *Executive Presence*, Hewlett (2014) maintains that the professionals who generate trust in their peers, managers, or followers, are those who have 'executive presence.' She argues that in order to be considered 'leadership material' professionals need to possess "an amalgam of qualities that *telegraphs* that (they) are in charge, or deserve to be" (Hewlett, 2014: p. 1, emphasis mine). The concept that one "telegraphs" his or her qualities builds on the idea that people *actively* project what and who they are. It also implies that professionals should make a deliberate choice about which characteristics they want to project in order to be perceived the way they want others to perceive them.

Hewlett (2014) structures the concept of executive presence into three components that she considers universal dimensions. She proposes three components: appearance, communication, and gravitas (weight, in Latin). The core component of all leaders, the author finds, is gravitas: without it, the other two would be futile. The component of communication is the medium through which gravitas can be expressed. And appearance is the filter that colors the overall perception of an individual. Therefore, we can conceive of the three elements of executive presence as three layers. The most internal one is gravitas, intimately related to one's thinking, behavior and emotions. Of course, because humans reveal some of their internal characteristics through behavior, leaders who have gravitas, the author points out, “exude” or manifest it. This idea is in line with the well-known axiom “One cannot not communicate” (Watzlawick, Batelas & Jackson, 1967). Then comes communication, which bridges one's mind with other minds, and with the context in which they live. Appearance is the external, surface layer. It allows others to form a first impression about us, although this impression is not necessarily accurate. The way in which appearance influences how people perceive others is rooted in stereotypes and individual experiences (e.g., children may be afraid of white coats because they remind them of dentists). These automatic, unconscious judgments, are difficult to defeat, precisely because they are unconscious. Therefore, the author says, professionals need to abide by certain rules, and, as she writes, “look the part” (Hewlett, 2014: p. 81).

In her book, *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office*, Frankel (2004) shows how sometimes women as a group behave and communicate in ways that make them look like non-leaders. The present research matches the mistakes that Frankel (2004) describes with different aspects of Hewlett’s (2014) dimensions. Because each aspect of the gravitas dimension relates to one or more levels of trust (see Table 1), and is manifested through behavior and communication, blunders of gravitas, communication or appearance impair one or more levels of trust. In the following sections, we introduce those mistakes that negatively affect women's executive presence and hence, impair their career advancement.

Gravitas

The concepts that Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995, 2007) label as ability, benevolence and integrity converge in Hewlett's gravitas dimension. Hewlett surveys 268 senior leaders in 75 global corporations across 190 countries, and finds that for 67% of them, the compound gravitas is the most important component of executive presence. The dimension is composed by six characteristics, each one of them contributing to the overall impression of executive presence.

Figure displays 1 the composition of the *gravitas* dimension, and the importance that the survey respondents attributed to each component when assessing the executive presence of women and men.

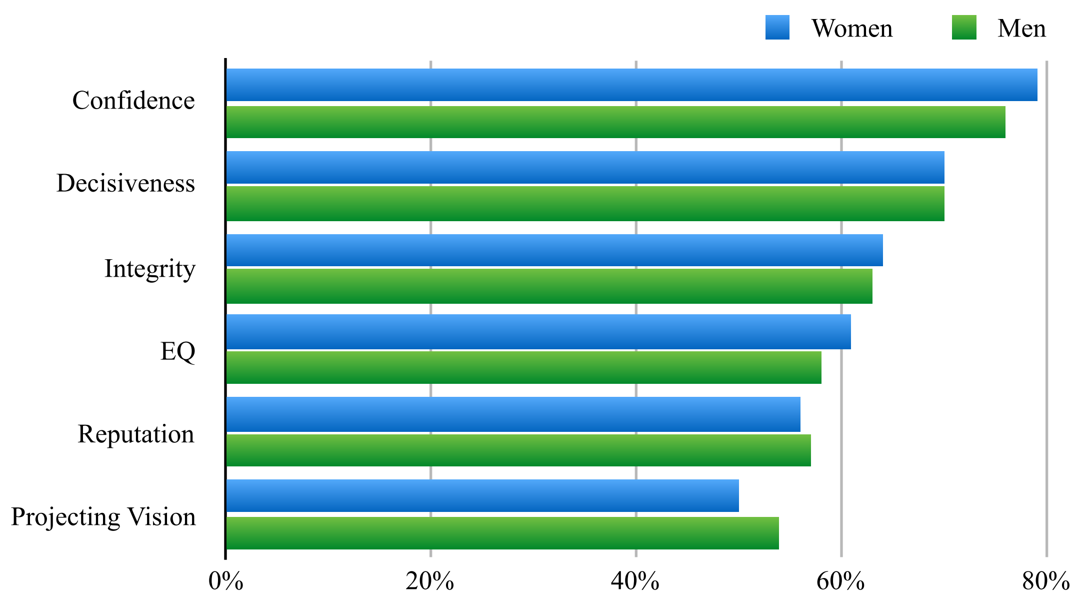

Figure 1. Role of each of the characteristics of the "gravitas" dimension in the perceived "executive presence" in women and men (Hewlett, 2014).

Table 1 shows the description and a short summary of what the components of *gravitas* mean, and how they relate to the concepts of ability, integrity and benevolence (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995, 2007).

	Meaning of the Components of Gravitas	Aspect of Trust Entailed	Relationship between Gravitas and Trust
Confidence	Exuding confidence and being able to keep "grace under fire."	Ability	Professionals who have the knowledge and skills to take control of the situation feel confident.
Decisiveness	Ability to make decisions quick and "showing teeth."	Ability	Professionals who have domain-based knowledge and skills can make decisions fast and stand up to them.
Integrity	Acting according to a set of acceptable principles and "speaking truth to power."	Integrity & Benevolence	Professionals who speak "truth to power" are willing to jeopardize their own position in order to help the other party achieve their goals. It implies not being egocentric and acting within a set of values higher than their own interests.
EQ	Emotional intelligence is the ability to handle own and other people's emotions by: (a) adapting own behavior to the situation, and (b) considering the effect of own behavior on others.	Benevolence	Professionals with high levels of emotional intelligence are not centered on themselves. Instead, they are aware of how their actions and behaviors affect the feelings and behaviors of others.
Reputation	Having a reputation based on their past behavior of ability, integrity and benevolence.	Ability, Integrity & Benevolence	Professionals who consistently behave in ways that show they possess ability, integrity and benevolence.
Vision	Being able to project what they want for the future (of the client, the organization, or the team).	Benevolence	Professionals who focus on objectives that will advance the organization / client / team.

Table 1. Explanation of the six components of "gravitas" according to Hewlett (2014); the trustee's characteristics according to Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995, 2007) to which they relate; and how these two aspects relate.

Communication

Hewlett (2014) observes six communication aspects that are key for executive presence: superior speaking skills, the ability to read a room, the ability to command a room, forcefulness and assertiveness, sense of humor and ability to banter, and body language and body posture.

Figure 2 shows the importance that the survey respondents attributed to each one of the six different components of the communication dimension in men's and women's executive presence.

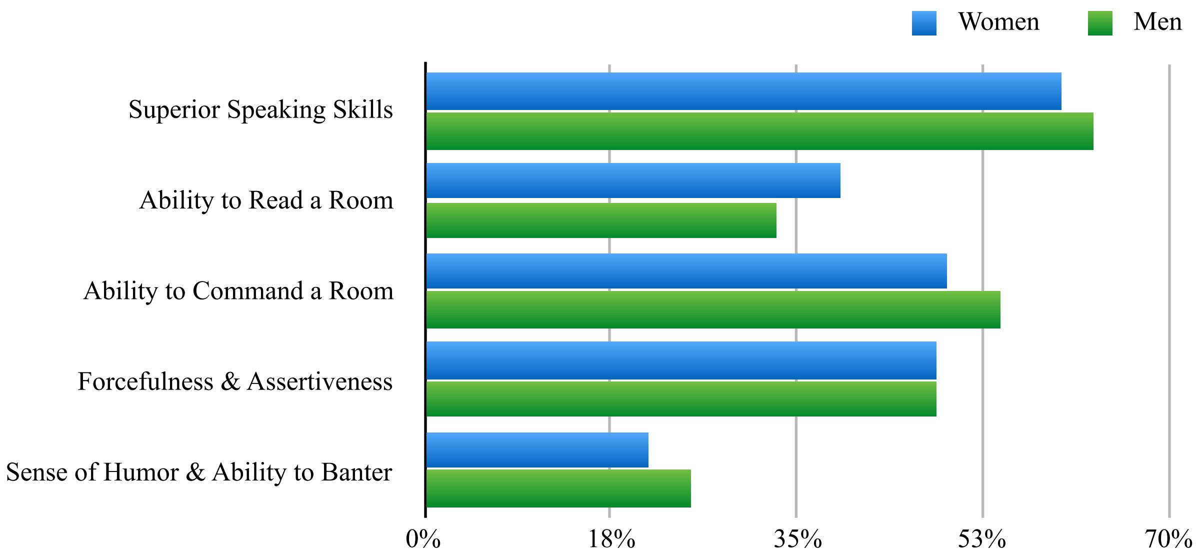

Figure 2. Role of each of the characteristics of the communication dimension in the perceived executive presence in women and men (Hewlett, 2014).

SUPERIOR SPEAKING SKILLS

In speaking skills, the author includes clarity of expression and articulateness, the use of correct and socially accepted pronunciation patterns, and the sound of one's voice. Her results show that features such as raising the voice pitch in the end of a declarative sentence or inserting filler words such as 'you know' or 'like' undermine the executive presence of professionals. Also, using grammar poorly and not being articulate, having a strong accent or a timbre that is too deviant from the norm, prevent professionals to be perceived as 'leadership material.'

Many authors have explored, from different perspectives, the undermining effect that these speaking behaviors have on executive presence. For example, Garcia (2016) points to the lack of conviction that speakers who use "uptalk" (ending declarative sentences with a raising pitch) or filler words project. Anderson, Klofstad, Mayew and Venkatachalam (2014) analyze the extent to which using a glottalized voice, or “vocal fry,” make young women less hirable in the eyes of employers. And journalists, bloggers, essayists and career advisers have recently explained that when women use the words “like” or “just” as mere fillers, they sound as if they are uncertain. The title of an article by Amy Friedman in *New York Magazine* (2015) is an illustrative example: “Can We Just, Like, Get Over the Way Women Talk?” As explored below, this stereotypical speaking style impairs the perceived assertiveness in women who use it. This, in turn, detracts from their gravitas, because speaking without conviction makes them seem indecisive.

ABILITY TO READ A ROOM

According to Hewlett (2014), great communicators adapt their behavior, attitude and speech to the ambience that oozes from the audience, or the mood that they perceive in the listener. This “ability to read a room/client/boss” is a key skill that the author found in the successful leaders she interviewed. Since, following Garcia (2012) the goal of every communication is to trigger some sort of change in the listener’s mind, feelings or behavior, speakers need to be aware of their audience. Only this way will they be able to detect any reactions that signal whether or not that change may happen, and adjust their behavior accordingly.

ABILITY TO COMMAND A ROOM

Some speakers have the ability to attract and keep the audience’s attention. There are many factors that help speakers captivate their audience, and establishing a connection with the listeners is the first, necessary step. To do so, speakers must show the traits that make them human, albeit being careful not to give too much personal information. For women, this caveat is especially important since, as Frankel (2004) affirms, giving too much personal information is one of the common mistakes that women make when they communicate at work. The author finds that women tend to overshare details of their personal lives in a desire to justify themselves for any possible failure.

Then, Hewlett (2014) continues, the delivery needs to help the listeners follow the speakers' ideas. For that purpose, speakers have to be aware of the rhythm, melody, pace and dynamics of their delivery. Is their speech too fast or too slow? Are they pausing enough and allowing time for the listeners to absorb the information? Are they highlighting prominent parts of the speech? Presenting the information in the form of a story and not merely listing facts and figures also helps speakers engage their audience. Other aspects that the author finds critical in keeping the audience's attention are succinctness, relevance, and speaking without props (lists, cards, notes).

The crucial outcome of reading a room and establishing a connection with the audience is the possibility to persuade them. In his book, *The Power of Communication*, Garcia (2012) highlights that leaders' performance depends on "inspiring trust and confidence" and thus they need to be "true experts in the persuasive art." Garnering this expertise, the author adds, requires that professionals commit to their own development as communicators, which implies that they have previously identified a weakness. But, as Hewlett (2014) observes, female professionals tend to receive insufficient feedback regarding their executive presence, and this includes communication. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find women in business who are not aware of the specific communication areas in which they need improvement. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Hewlett also discovers, makes some managers afraid of incurring in what could be tagged as gender discrimination. As a consequence, they are sometimes reluctant to call out behaviors that seem stereotypical in women. They also prefer not to deal with ‘over-emotionality’ when they give women feedback.

At the same time, the lack of confidence that many professional women have, what psychotherapy labeled as the “imposter phenomenon” (Clance & Imes, 1978), makes them set the wrong goal for the communication. Garcia writes, “The only reason to communicate is to change something – to provoke a reaction” (2012: p. 21). But when it comes to business-related communication, many women’s only goal is to “say everything they needed to say,” so that they can prove they know their craft. As a result, they tend to create lengthy lists of points or exhaustive slide presentations (Hewlett, 2014), forgetting “the audience is not an inanimate object to be acted upon but a collection of living, breathing human beings with their own goals, concerns, needs, priorities, attention spans, and levels of desire even to be in a relationship with us” (Garcia, 2012: p. 21).

Garcia (2012) also explains that humans crave connection because they are social animals. For this reason, their brains have neurons that allow them to feel what other humans feel. In other words, human brains are wired to connect with one another. So, speakers need to make an explicit effort to connect with the audience or else they won’t be able to provoke the desired change in the listeners’ minds.

This idea that speakers need to make the effort to connect with their audiences if they want to provoke a change has a phonological/phonetic implication. When a speaker’s objective is to help the listener understand the message, the phonologist Bjorn Lindblom discovers (1990), his or her pronunciation is more exaggerated, or “hyper-articulated,” using his own terms. The author recorded speakers interacting with a machine that made speech recognition errors. So, for example, the speaker would say “table” and the machine would understand “bagel.” Then, the speaker tried again, this time enhancing his or her pronunciation strategies, with wider, stronger and faster movements of the articulation muscles (jaw, lips, tongue).

In the other experiment, when the content speakers had to deliver was difficult, for example complex formulas, they couldn’t focus on the listener that much. Instead, they needed to concentrate on the message itself and, as a result, their articulation movements were softer, slower and shorter. In Lindblom’s terms, they “hypo-articulated.”

Hyper-articulation, in addition, makes that the overall pace of the speech is slower, with more, longer pauses. The hyper-articulating speaker also clearly emphasizes parts of the speech that the he or she considers important and his or her intonation varies. On the hypo-articulation side we have speakers who pronounce fast, don’t enunciate well, and pause only to catch their breath. Their intonation is monotonic and they don’t emphasize any specific parts of the discourse.

We can extrapolate these findings to business communication, and say that some speakers “hypo-communicate”: they speak too fast, endlessly list facts and figures, and enumerate every detail of their knowledge on the subject. Their focus is on their own mind and goal, as opposed to being listener-centered. Communicators of this type make listeners feel that they are disregarded; listeners do not perceive benevolence in these communicators, and, therefore, are not inclined to trust these communicators as leaders.

FORCEFULNESS AND ASSERTIVENESS

Hewlett finds that being assertive and asking for what one needs, wants or deserves, is necessary to be considered as a potential leader. She also finds that for female professionals this is not an easy thing to do, as this attitude is contrary to the way in which women are socialized from a young age. Frankel (2004) maintains that females are raised to be liked, whereas males are raised to be strong. The implication is that men don't expect to be liked all the time, and therefore, they can more forcefully defend their position, even if it is an unpopular one. On the other hand, women are not comfortable when others don't like them, and therefore, tend to pull back at the least resistance they encounter. In sum, men tend to fight and impose, whereas women tend to shy away and acquiesce.

This non-assertive behavior is rooted in socially ingrained gender stereotypes. Eagly and Karau (2002), define two types of gender stereotypes: "descriptive" and "injunctive" norms. They categorize as "descriptive norms" the beliefs people have about what is real – what men actually do, what women actually do. "Injunctive norms" are the beliefs that people have about what should be – what men ideally should do, what women ideally should do (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These expectations include beliefs such as 'women are nurturing' – they take care –, 'men are agentic' – they take action. So, when it is in fact a woman who impersonates agentic, leading characteristics, she is contradicting the expectation, and therefore, she becomes a disruptor. Because most people do not like disruptors, women leaders may get the impression that most people do not like them or approve of them.

Another kind of non-assertive behavior is speaking without conviction, as mentioned in the section about how speaking skills influence executive presence.

Frankel (2004) adds 17 other mistakes that women make in their communication that make them sound non-assertive. They are all related to the idea of speaking without confidence, and the list includes vocal parameters, such as “couching statements as questions” (p.148, also known as “uptalk”), “talking too fast” (p. 164), “speaking softly” (p.176), or “speaking at a higher-than-natural pitch” (p. 178). Other mistakes belong to more internal linguistic levels, and reflect how women frame their communication (semantic level) and how they structure their thinking (syntactic level). Some mistakes at the semantic level are “explaining” (p.152), “asking permission” (p. 154), “apologizing” (p. 156), “using minimizing words” (p. 158), or “the sandwich” (p. 172, the author uses the image of a sandwich to describe how some women frame their feedback: they embed the negative part between two positive statements, which is confusing to the receiver). At the syntactic level, Dr. Frankel mentions “using preambles” (p. 150), “using non-words” (p. 168), or “trailing voice mails” (p. 180), all reflecting a style of communication that is not direct and to the point.

“Using preambles” makes reference to the habit of introducing ideas providing too much information before the point is made. For example, “Because yesterday was a very productive day for the team, and then I realized that we spent less time than other days in our daily meeting, I’ve been thinking that maybe it would be a good idea to start our day with a 15-minute brief meeting instead of..."

With "non-words," Frankel (2004) refers to the insertion of filler words such as “um,” “you know,” or “like.” Insertions of this type affect the syntactic level because they interrupt the discourse in points that require grammatical continuity. An example could be, "I disagree with your point because, *you know*, women are, *like*, equally ambitious as, *um*, men.” The use of "non-words" make the women who use them sound as if they were somehow losing their train of thought. Therefore, they sound disconnected from their own ideas, and as a result, they sound as if they were not fully invested in them.

Frankel also notices that women tend to leave "trailing voice mails" for their colleagues or clients. So, for example, instead of, "Hi, Rick, this is Megan. I want to discuss the budget for tomorrow's meeting with XYZ. Give me a call when you can," some women would say, "Hi, Rick, this is Megan. I want to discuss the budget for tomorrow's meeting with XYZ. Give me a call when you can, so that we can talk about it, but well, we'll talk later. So, yes, call me and we'll see. Ok. I'll be waiting for your call. Bye."

All these mistakes portray too self-conscious speakers, who want to be liked, don't want to appear as too aggressive, and are afraid to say the wrong thing.

SENSE OF HUMOR AND ABILITY TO BANTER

Many of the executives surveyed by Hewlett express that showing sense of humor and being able to do "small talk" is indispensable for establishing long-lasting, trusting relationships. Therefore, professionals need to be comfortable "around the water cooler" because, as one senior executive points out to the author, "It's the conversation before the meeting that establishes whether or not you're worth listening to in the meeting" (Hewlett, 2014: p. 68).

BODY LANGUAGE AND POSTURE

How professionals hold and carry themselves critically affects the first impressions others make of them, the second they see them. Before speakers start speaking, listeners gauge their executive presence before even hearing a sound. Therefore, it is important that the body projects an impression that enhances the aspects of gravitas, and not one that contradicts them. The original etymology of gravitas, weight, reflects the most important nuance that the body has to display in order to exude executive presence. To achieve this, professionals need to have an erect bearing, maintain eye contact, and be steadily planted on the ground or chair. Gestures need to be consistent with the message and proportional to the size of the audience. A straight back, Hewlett adds, also signals that a speaker respects the listeners and is attentive to their reaction.

Many women, Frankel (2004) describes, make important mistakes in this area. The list goes from failing to maintain good eye contact, which displays shyness and insecurity, to tilting the head when speaking, which portrays a desire to appear warm. The author also speaks about how women take up too little space and sit in meetings with their hands under the table. Both postural behaviors signal they excessively defer to authority. Another common mistake Dr. Frankel observes is being too “bubbly” and over-animated, and fidgeting with their hair, reading glasses and clothes. This behavior is contrary to having gravitas, or weight, because heavy things cannot move fast.

Appearance

As known from evolutionary research (Dunbar & Schultz, 2007) and neuroscience (Adolphs, Tranel & Damasio, 1998), the human brain is wired to trust – or to distrust – at first sight. To do so, it uses surface cues such as facial appearance or voice and decides in milliseconds whether someone is trustworthy or not. At one point, this mechanism was essential for the species to survive and thrive. If trusting the wrong individual could be fatal, not trusting a trustworthy one would mean to miss an opportunity for cooperation.

Today, first impressions based on surface cues no longer determine our decision to trust or not to trust someone in the workplace. However, they affect the development of the relationship. Holtz (2015) analyzes how first impressions of trustworthiness color how a trustor perceive the actions of a trustee after a certain event takes place. His results show that when someone is in a "psychological state of trust" (Holtz, 2013; 2015), he or she is more prone to interpret the actions and behaviors of the other party as fair, even in the event of a negative outcome.

In his experiment, the "psychological state of trust" was triggered or not in the respondents by observing a face during a few seconds. Then, the respondents learned what had happened and judged the actions of the person. For example, when someone who seemed trustworthy at first sight had done something that had a negative consequence, the respondents tended to judge it as an unintentional mistake based on good will.

On the other hand, when the person seemed untrustworthy, the respondents tended to judge the action not as an unintentional mistake, but as born out of bad intentions. The conclusion that Holtz (2015) draws from his experiment is that first impressions of trustworthiness play a critical role in the further development of trust in a relationship.

In 2011, Procter & Gamble sponsored a research project to investigate the extent to which wearing make up in different degrees affected the first impressions women projected, in terms of attractiveness, competence, trustworthiness and likeability (Etcoff, Stock, Haley, Vickery, House, 2011). The 149 participants in the experiment watched the faces of 25 women, one at a time, four times; each time, the face displayed a different style of make up. The make up styles ranged from no-make up, to minimal (natural), to moderate (professional), to dramatic (glamorous).

The results show that, at first glance, the more intense the make up, the more attractive and competent the women appear to the viewers. Impressions of trustworthiness, on the other hand correlate negatively with the glamorous make up style, especially when the faces are observed during longer periods of time to viewers. In the study, the impression of trustworthiness is especially diminished by too intense a lipstick.

It is important to note here that impressions of competence and trustworthiness do not go side by side. As noted in the *Discussion* section, appearing competent is oftentimes professional women's most important objective. But, as the results of the Procter & Gamble experiment imply, being perceived as competent does not entail being perceived as trustworthy.

Under appearance, Hewlett (2014) lists the visual aspects that influence the executive presence of a professional. Her research shows that body posture, gesturing, polish, and the quality of wardrobe are the factors that executives and recruiters observe when they assess first impressions of professionalism. She emphasizes that when assessing the visual dimension of executive presence, others do not look at personal factors such as height, weight or beauty. Instead, they pay attention to the impression that the person was intentional and had carefully chosen to appear the way he or she did.

The author highlights dressing too "sexy" as one of the main blunders that women can make in terms of dressing for work. As the *Discussion* section further develops, we propose that being intentionally 'sexy' undermines the perception of integrity in women. A woman who makes her sexuality too prominent in the workplace may seem to have the ultimate intention to manipulate men and gain power.

3. The outcome of trust

Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995, 2007) propose that when the trustor decides to trust the trustee, he or she will assume a risk as a result. For example, if a manager trusts an employee and assigns him/her an important project for a client, he or she is taking a risk. If the employee mishandles the assignment, the manager would face negative consequences, such as loss of reputation, of the account, or of revenue.

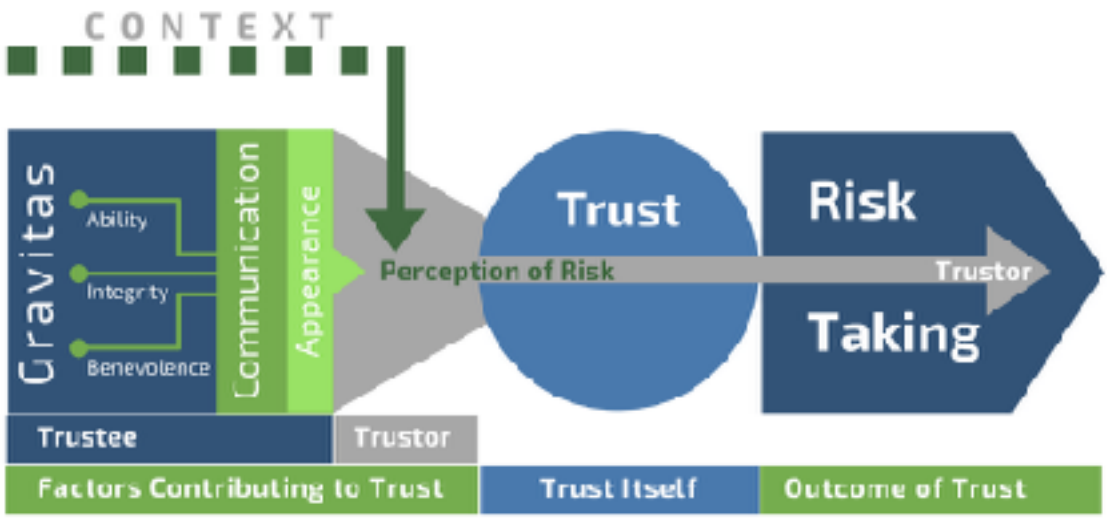

Figure 3. Interrelation of the three elements that compose trust: trust itself, the factors that contribute to trust (including: characteristics of the trustee, characteristics of the trustor, and context), and the outcome of trust (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). Executive presence enhances the characteristics of the trustee (Hewlett, 2014).

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which the ability to inspire trust plays a role in the "glass ceiling" phenomenon (Department of Labor, 1991). As the management literature shows, the ability to inspire trust is a necessary quality for leadership. Thus, women who want to advance in their careers need to inspire trust in their male and female peers and managers to the same degree that their male counterparts do.

Using a qualitative method of inquiry, this study analyzes certain behavior and communication mistakes that women as a group make that negatively affect their ability to inspire trust. And because they are unable to inspire trust at a deep level, their upward mobility on the corporate ladder, particularly in work environments led by men, stymies.

Creswell (2013) defines constructivism as the research approach that aims at creating understanding of a problem by analyzing how different participants view it. The constructivist approach, thus, intends to generate a theory that helps the society understand a problem. And because the problem studied in this research is an existing phenomenon, the so-called "glass ceiling" (Department of Labor, 1991), this research is categorized as phenomenological.

This study attempts to prove the hypothesis that certain behaviors that women as a group exhibit in work environments where men are leaders undermine their ability to generate trust and therefore, stymie their career advancement. And it does it by attempting to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is trust?

RQ2: What are the characteristics that someone needs to have in order to generate trust in a professional relationship?

RQ3: How does the ability to generate trust influence the ability to become a leader?

RQ4: What are the mistakes that women as a group make that negatively affect their ability to generate trust and, hence, be perceived as potential leaders?

This capstone reviews research that analyzes trust from a management perspective, to understand the meaning of trust in work environments, and the ways in which trust relates to leadership. Under that light, we explore the characteristics that the *trustee* in a trusting relationship possesses and displays. Following Sylvia-Ann Hewlett (2014), we study the concept of executive presence, which the author defines as the amalgam of qualities that leaders display that make others perceive them as leaders. By weaving these qualities into the characteristics of the trustee, we construct a model of trust in three levels (see Figure 4). From the book *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* by Lois P. Frankel (2004) we extract the common mistakes professional women make that sabotage their careers. We match those mistakes to the qualities of executive presence, and compare them to each level of the three-level model of trust. The three-level model of trust can explain one reason why some female professionals are not able to reach top leadership positions, despite their high competence and professional skills.

In addition, we interview active male and female professionals who have observed or experienced phenomena related to the problem that the present capstone explores. The interviewees sharing their insights are:

– A female senior executive coach specializing in the development of executive presence of female executives in the financial industry. Her insights are reflected under the code: FSEC-1.

– A male senior executive coach specializing in the development of leadership qualities of male and female executives in the financial industry. His insights are reflected under the code: MSEC-2

– A female senior coach specializing in the development of defining professional characteristics of female professionals in the communication industry. Her insights are reflected under the code: FSC-3.

– A male executive vice president in a large public relations firm, supervising a 35-member team of male and female professionals. His insights are reflected under the code: MSPR-4

– A female senior public relations professional who has owned a public relations firm for more than 25 years, and has around 10 employees, male and female. Her insights are reflected under the code: FSPR-5.

– A young female public relations professional (5 years of experience), partner of a boutique public relations firm, with no employees under her watch. Her insights are reflected under the code: YFPR-6.

– A young female public relations professional, former journalist, who has recently joined a financial technology public relations firm as an account executive. Her insights are reflected under the code: YFPR-7.

– A senior female public relations professional who has owned a boutique firm since 2009 and has around 10 employees. Her insights are reflected under the code: FSPR-8.

– A young female communication professional who works in a large advertising agency as an account executive. Her insights are reflected under the code: YFC-9.

Methods

Gravitas, communication and/or appearance mistakes undermine trustworthiness in female professionals. Therefore, gravitas, communication and/or appearance mistakes are all trustworthiness blunders. Because “One cannot not communicate” (Watzlawick, Batelas & Jackson, 1967), the concept *communication* is considered in this capstone in a broad sense, and includes appearance and the behaviors that signal emotional intelligence (a component of gravitas).

We categorize the mistakes that Frankel (2004) and Hewlett (2014) describe, as well as the ones that the interviewees affirm to have observed, under the characteristics that Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) attribute to the trustee. Each one of the components of the dimension of gravitas of executive presence demonstrates one (or a combination) of the trustee’s characteristics: ability, integrity and benevolence (see Table 1 in section 2.b). As mentioned in section 2.b of the literature review, the communication and appearance dimensions of executive presence are to a certain degree a reflection of its core dimension, gravitas. Executive presence, therefore, encompasses ability, integrity, and benevolence. This is to say that when professionals communicate, they reveal the internal features of their trustworthiness and hence, of their leadership potential.

Findings

This section presents the interviewees’ insights in relation with critical concepts that emerge from our review of the literature. We deconstruct the behaviors and feelings that women as a group show in the workplace into the four categories that the interviewees most frequently mention in their insights. We therefore define these categories as the most serious blunders to women's trustworthiness in the workplace: deference (to authority), perfectionism, crying, and being sexy.

DEFERENCE

All of the interviewees who work in communications or public relations say that women tend to be more quiet than men in meetings, and sometimes do not propose enough ideas.

MSPR-4 states that this behavior is common in the females on his 35-member team, and that he tries to give appropriate feedback to those who exhibit it. He also says that being active in meetings is one of the signs that the management takes into consideration when encouraging the promotion of an employee. In the public relations industry, he adds, it is customary to ask the client's opinion about a promotion, since the employee's billing rate will increase. This implies that team members have to make themselves visible to clients, and it is during meetings when professionals have that opportunity for exposure.

FSPR-5 and FSPR-8, both female owners of public relations agencies, say that they address shyness and deference in meetings directly when they see women showing these behaviors. FSPR-8 states that she requires that every team member, male or female, be proactive in all aspects, from preparation, to participation, to proposing ideas. For her, "Pushing back a little bit" is perceived by clients as a sign of character and trustworthiness. So, she encourages this attitude in her employees, but sees that females need the encouragement more. Besides being seen as weak, saying yes to everything the client proposes suggests, in her opinion, a lack of professionalism, because the client hires them to set a strategy for the company.

YFPR-7 and YFC-9 say that they tend to be more quiet in meetings for which they feel less prepared. YFC-9 mentions that she sees some clients as “intimidating” in that they are bigger, more complex companies, and the job seems more difficult to her. YFPR-7 says that she sometimes feels she has not enough experience to say anything worthwhile, and so she prefers to defer to her male boss.

In relation to strategy, YFC-9 says that the strategist of her team, a female, is consistently ignored in meetings. Her response, she says, is to complain and to be angry and sad, but never to fight back.

This lack of responsiveness when women are ignored or disparaged is also mentioned by FSEC-1 and FSC-3, who say women are educated to acquiesce and not to stand up for themselves. This implies that women tend to put their heads down and move on.

The submissive behavior may have its origin, as Frankel (2004) points out, in the excessive desire or need that women as a group have to be liked and to maintain relationships above all. As FSEC-1 points out, girls receive the constant message that they have to be “sugar and spice and everything nice” while growing up. Frankel’s (2004) analysis of this need to be liked is that women are not taught how to behave as adults, and so, they carry their girlish habits into their adulthood.

Deferring to authority is also reflected by the common habit of women to justify themselves, a behavior that Frankel describes in her book (2004). Women may justify their decisions and mistakes because they feel they are being judged by an authority figure. Also, maybe as a result of their feeling judged, women tend to berate themselves for the mistakes they make, MSEC-2 says.

The attitude of women berating themselves has two complex implications, as developed more extensively in the *Discussion* section. The first is that these women are oriented to details and task performance. The second is that their focus is on themselves and not on finding a solution. The combination of the two leads to the conclusion that these women excel in ability, but lack benevolence (see the *Discussion* section).

PERFECTIONISM

In Frankel's book, *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* (Frankel, 2004), the third behavior in the list of women's self-sabotaging mistakes is "Working hard" (Frankel, 2004). The author writes, "There's a popular saying: *Women have to work twice as hard to be considered half as good*. As a result, women are like little ants – working, working, working" (*ibid.*: p. 24).

The "imposter phenomenon" (Clance & Imes, 1978) is a common feeling of high performing professional women. The expression describes the feeling some women have that they are not supposed to be where they are or do what they do, because they lack the preparation or skills that their position requires. This feeling can also be the origin of women's shyness in meetings, insecurity and lack of assertiveness.

Insecurity and lack of assertiveness may lead them, as Frankel (2004) also describes, to avoid proposing themselves for a job or a promotion unless they know they fulfill every single requirement.

FSC-3 shares the same observation. She says that many of her female clients avoid applying for certain positions because they feel not sufficiently prepared. This implies that instead of looking at the learning possibility the job offers them, they focus on the skills they do not have now. They are unable to see themselves occupying a position because they are unable to foresee their own future development. This inability means that they cannot form and project a vision, a necessary capability of those who are viewed as leaders.

YFPR-6 says that she consistently feels the need to prove to her clients, almost exclusively males, that she knows how to do things. She states that her being quite young adds to her being female in the clients' perception of her capability as a public relations professional. She also believes that clients would not doubt a male her age as much as they doubt her.

Intending to fight these feelings of insecurity and of impostorism, women feel the urge of showing their competence, preparation and skills. Thus, they become thorough to the point of exhaustion: they make endless lists and stick to minute details. That is why, as MSEC-2 expresses it, "Women strive for perfection."

Competence is easily perceived, and thus, it is easy to refer to it as a salient aspect of a professional. For example, MSPR-4 says that he does notice when members on his team are well prepared to do their work. He states that he encourages "Doing their homework" as a way to get noticed by management and clients, and step up to the next level of responsibility in the team. Therefore, women strive to be seen as competent. As discussed below, however, making competence their most important objective constitutes a mistake that impairs their trustworthiness, because competence belongs in the most basic level of trust – ability.

CRYING

The fact that women tend to cry in the workplace, especially when they receive negative feedback, appears in the insights shared by almost all of the interviewees. They say that men, on the contrary, tend to be angry at this type of feedback, or neutral. Being neutral means the understanding that it is the work that is being judged, and not the person. Thus, managers prefer employees who receive feedback with a neutral attitude. Both MSPR-4 and FSPR-5 say that crying was more common years ago. They both see that young men and women behave today in more similar ways than 15 years ago, when young men's and women's behaviors were more gender-stereotypical.

MSEC-2 says that he still sees female executives who cry and are overly emotional when they feel threatened in any way.

FSEC-1 says that one of the reasons why women do not receive enough feedback about their leadership potential and executive presence is that "Managers don't want to see tears."

This point is confirmed by MSPR-4, who says that seeing women cry has made him change the way he gives them feedback. But, he says, the way he does it now is not necessarily better; it is only softer, somehow sugarcoated.

Therefore, the act of crying when facing negative feedback could be perceived as a way to manipulate the manager who gives it.

Manipulation is a failure of integrity for two reasons. First, the person who manipulates is not respecting the limits between the professional and personal spheres. Second, the person is not being loyal to the employer, because working for a company should mean to work to achieve the best possible outcome for it. If, with a certain behavior, a female employee is getting a poorer, more incomplete feedback, she will never know what she can do to improve her performance and results. Therefore, she is not working toward the goal of achieving the best possible outcome for the company, and therefore, she is not being loyal to it.

SEXY

FSPR-5 says that more than 40 years ago, when she started in the profession, females were scarce in the workplace, especially in some industries, such as finance, in which she practiced. She states that she, at that time, felt the need to dress in ways that would help her appear the opposite of attractive or sexy. Her impression is that it was already disruptive enough to be a woman in certain work environments, and so she tried to make her gender the least prominent as possible.

YFPR-6, on the contrary, says that she uses friendliness to the point of flirtation in order to build and maintain smooth relationships with her clients, almost all of them, male. She also says that she is aware that this behavior does not help her be taken more seriously, but she is not going to stop doing it, because she gets something in return. She says that when it comes to build relationships with clients, "being a little flirty helps."

MSEC-2 states that he has noticed that some of his female clients dress too sexy and are inclined to use this flirtatious style. He says that some have gotten offended when he has pointed that out to them.

As discussed below, flirtatious behaviors constitute a serious blunder of integrity, because they seem to aim at manipulating heterosexual men using a non-professional, almost primal source of power. Dressing sexy, therefore, even if one is very demure in her behavior, is perceived as a form of manipulation.

Discussion

The three characteristics that make someone trustworthy in a professional relationship are hierarchically organized in the three-level model of trust described below.

Ability

Ability is the most basic level of trust. It is oriented to performing tasks and represents knowledge and capacity to do. We can summarize the meanings of the characteristic of ability using the phrase 'I can.' For example, when someone gets a first job right after college, where intellectual capacity has been demonstrated only in school projects or internships, she[1] will be trusted to perform tasks that are at her level of preparation, experience and skills. That is to say, employees are trusted at their own level of capacity. This first level of trust is implied for all employees, since their hire proves that someone trusted them. It is also necessary in order for employees to get promoted. For example, in a public relations firm that bills by the hour, the rate that a Vice President charges for her time is higher than what an Assistant Account Executive charges. In this scenario, professionals get promoted to the next career stage only when they have proven they can actually do the job. At a higher level, ability also comes first. No matter how great a visionary one could be, if she does not understand a company and its trade, she can never become its CEO.

Women usually excel in the ability level, because their objective at work is to avoid mistakes and to deliver perfect results. As MSEC-2 states, "Women strive for perfection, whereas men strive for progress." This primary objective of many professional women is at the core of

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[1] The pronoun "she" is used throughout this section, as a gender-neutral way to refer to the third person singular, unless the example clearly states that women have a certain behavior more than men do.

their making endless lists and being thorough to exhaustion in presentations and, in general, being sticklers for details. And because details and perfection are necessary for delivering great results, and women (as a group) are good at that, they get trapped at the lower ranks, perfectly doing their jobs. As a consequence, women are perceived as task-oriented but not able to project a vision.

The woman who berates herself shows that she is oriented to details and performance. Instead of perceiving the mistake as a point in time, she sees it as a complete failure, a full stop. Her excessive self-criticism reflects an attitude of regret, and hence, that she is looking to the past. Because the past cannot be changed, regretting what happened prevents her from looking forward and adjust her present actions to achieve her future goals. Therefore, she is unable to form and project a vision. And therefore, she lacks one component of the gravitas dimension (see Table 1).

Integrity

The second level of trust is integrity. Integrity is related to the ability to keep one's word. When people keep their word, they unconditionally commit to a promise they have made to the other party. For example, an employee behaves with integrity when she shows up every day for work, does her job, respects the company's property, and does not disclose confidential information. Integrity also requires acting within the boundaries of the set of values acceptable to the trusting party, to whom someone who acts with integrity demonstrates an unbreakable loyalty. Integrity, like ability, is necessary at all levels of employment, from the mailroom to the boardroom. However, higher job responsibilities call for higher, deeper degrees of integrity. A clerk may take a notebook from the office, which is an integrity failure, but her action is not critical for the company's overall performance. At the C-suite level, on the contrary, an integrity failure such as disclosing confidential information could trigger an important crisis for the company.

The fact that organizations put in place systems to help preserve employees' integrity may be the result of the idea that lower-ranked employees do not possess the same degree of integrity than leaders do. For example, an administrative aid does not have access to the CEO's agenda, and therefore, does not have the capacity to make changes in it. But a leader has greater capacities and access to more systems and sensitive materials. So, the reach of her integrity is broader than the clerk's, and it is more critical for the company's success that the leader keeps her integrity.

When the sets of values of two different groups in which an employee belongs collide, there's a conflict of integrity. The case of Edward Snowden shows a conflict between two different sets of values. On one side, he and one part of the society have one set of values: the government should respect the citizens' privacy. On the other side, the National Security Agency's set of values states that the government must protect its citizens, and that monitoring phone conversations is one way to achieve this. The same could happen to women who are working mothers when their children are sick and cannot go to school. Under this circumstance, some women may face a conflict of integrity: should they respect the company's set of values (showing up for work every day)? Or should they respect the family's set of values (taking care of their children)? These societal gender expectations that exert pressure over women are what Eagly and Karau (2002) called "injunctive norms": the tacit beliefs that the society has about how each gender should behave.

At the appearance level, injunctive norms also act against female professionals' integrity. There is the societal expectation that women should be good-looking, and it is nurtured in them that they should be attractive. So, when they go into professional environments, they aim at what they know: be attractive, be beautiful. In the workplace, though, they have to look professional, and so, they are pressed between two different sets of values: women are attractive, professionals look 'professional.' Facing such a choice, some women make the mistake of trying to be attractive more than trying to look professional. When a professional woman wears dresses that are too short, or blouses that reveal cleavage, she may look as if she were intending to manipulate the men in the room, and therefore, she may be seen as lacking integrity.

In the same category, the behavior that some women show of being flirtatious as a way of being friendly detracts from their integrity. Both YFPR-6 and SFPR-8 express that some degree of flirtation with male clients helped them in their relationship building efforts. YFPR-6, though, says that she is aware that that behavior is at the core of her not being taken seriously enough by clients. SFPR-8 says, "There is a fine line between being flirty and being friendly," and that she is comfortable with some degree of flirtation.

But again, flirtatious women will seem to be trying to manipulate men by using a type of power that is outside the realm of professionalism. By implication, women who use their 'sex appeal' at work lend the impression of having no other persuasive skills. As a consequence, the perception of their ability also drops.

Benevolence

The third and most complex level of trust is benevolence, and it is characterized by the capacity some people have to put the objectives of others ahead of their own. People demonstrate benevolence when they commit to objectives from which they will not get any substantial return, at least in the short term. For example, people who work as volunteers in organizations that fight poverty, or who spend great amounts of their free time helping others, show their benevolence. In business settings, mentoring junior people, for example, is a way of being benevolent. Some employees, though, may mentor a more junior person only because they have to, but not because they desire to help a younger colleague thrive. In this case, they are not showing benevolence but integrity – respecting the values of the company and showing loyalty to the employer.

Also, when truly benevolent people commit to an objective that is not their own, they are ready to sacrifice something dear to them for the sake of the other party's objective. For example, Lukaszewski (2007) recommends that advisors to C-suite executives always tell the truth, even when they might get terminated as a result. Comparing his advice with our model of trust, what Lukaszewski recommends is that advisors show benevolence. He adds, "Remember, the needs of those you advise must always come first" (Lukaszewski, 2007: p. 52). Lukaszewski also uses the expression 'self-serving' to describe some bad advisors who appear to be helping the management when it is their own agenda that they are trying to advance. These, he says, will never be able to be fully trusted. In the approach taken by the present paper, this failure of trust rests on a lack of benevolence.

Benevolence is, then, the ability to focus on the needs of the other party.

In the case of CEOs, it is expected from them that their commitment to the company be stronger than their commitment to their private life. For example, Marissa Mayer debuted as Yahoo's CEO when she was four months pregnant. Once she gave birth, she immediately went back to work. Some people criticized her – based on injunctive norms (Eagly & Karau, 2002). But with her action, she demonstrated a high degree of benevolence: the company's objective, to which she had committed when she became its CEO, was ahead of her personal objective.

Women are sometimes perceived as non-benevolent. MSPR-4 shares a time when he was about to start in a position in which he would report to a female manager, and his wife told him, "A female boss is not good for you or your career. As a woman, she won't try to help you, because women always put themselves first." Whether that impression is accurate or not, it reflects the perhaps generalized perception that women are not benevolent, and hence, not good leaders. It could be true, though, that women, in male-led work environments, have to take care of themselves because they may feel like outsiders.

Research beyond the scope of this paper has shown that senior male professionals usually establish strong mentorship relationships with junior male professionals but not so much with junior females. Historically, women arrived later in the workplace and occupied primarily helping functions because they would leave when they became mothers. This sense of provisionality could have reinforced the idea that women were not invested in their careers, and therefore, they were left outside of mentoring relationships. As a result, women who have a career focus, would have the feeling that no one is helping them thrive, and hence, they have to thrive on their own. Ultimately, these women are too busy taking care of their own career advancement so as to help others. If this were true, some women would, indeed, show a lack of benevolence.

But there is another reason why women are perceived as not benevolent, and it is the generalized perception that women are “more emotional” than men in the workplace. In fact, many of the mistakes that Frankel (2004) analyzes are a sign that women tend to exhibit low degrees of emotional intelligence.

The concept of emotional intelligence became popular after Dan Goleman released his book, *Emotional Intelligence* in 1996. Following Goleman, the Institute for Health and Human Potential (www.ihhp.com) defines emotional intelligence (often represented as EQ or EI) as “the ability to: recognize, understand and manage our own emotions; and recognize, understand and influence the emotions of others.” Emotionally intelligent people are aware that their behaviors influence how others feel, and that other people’s behaviors influence their own feelings. People with high EQs are able to handle their emotions and, at the same time, adjust their behaviors in order to manage other people’s emotions.

As our findings show, it is a constant in the workplace that women tend to cry when receiving negative feedback. The purpose of giving feedback is to improve the future work of an employee and, as a result, improve the overall company’s performance. But women who cry show that they feel criticized, rebuked, berated personally, and thus, demonstrate they are unable to separate their work or behaviors from their own selves. Women who are unable to forgive themselves show that they are focused on themselves and not on the other party in a professional relationship. Focusing on themselves reflects that they put their own objectives (being perfect) ahead of the other party’s objectives (finding a solution).

Benevolence, as expressed above, is the ability to put the focus on the other party, to show that one cares for the other party’s objectives. However, feeling personally judged when it is the work that is being judged, demonstrates the inability to put the focus on anything else but oneself. This behavior, therefore, displays a lack of benevolence.

The objective of the manager when giving feedback is to improve future performance. But the woman who cries seems not to care about this objective, because she only cares about herself and how she feels.

Simultaneously, the woman who cries is making her manager feel bad, but she does it anyway. Clearly, this woman demonstrates that she does not care about the other party's emotions and that her own emotions are the only thing that matters to her.

Hence, crying and taking professional matters personally reveal a lack of benevolence.

In terms of communication in the workplace, women as a group make another mistake that shows a benevolence failure. Section 2.b of the literature review exposes that the ability to read and command a room are critical aspects of executive presence. As we mention there, and following Garcia (2012), the main objective of a communication event is to trigger a change in the person or group we are communicating with. But, when speaking in work environments, some women set the wrong objective. Hewlett (2014) and Frankel (2004) describe how some women are too thorough when they make presentations: they share endless lists that contain all the data that is available about the subject. By doing this, they appear indeed knowledgeable, prepared and skilled. But going back to Garcia (2012), we can say that these women do not aim at changing how the listeners think, feel or behave and what they know about the subject. Instead, these women want their reputation and image to improve or be maintained. When a presenter's main goal is to prove something about herself, she shows she does not care about the audience, or even worse, that she uses the audience to her own benefit. Therefore, she shows a lack of benevolence.

Lack of confidence and deference to authority seem to be behind women's holding their thoughts in meetings. This implies that they do not want to appear 'stupid' or unprepared in front of the authority figure, which is constructed as a fear of being judged. The objective of these women, hence, is to appear in a certain way, to improve their image in the eyes of the authority figure, but not to improve the work or enrich the meeting. Therefore, they show, once again, a lack of benevolence: for them, it is more important how people judge them than what is achieved.

Conclusions

As shown throughout the present paper, certain behaviors that women exhibit in the workplace, albeit well intentioned, limit their capacity to inspire trust.

The three levels of trust are necessary in order to become a leader, but women, due to their social education or biological nature, seem to get trapped at the level of *Ability*, the most basic level of trust. And although ability is necessary, it is not sufficient to become a leader.

Figure 3 shows the three-level model of trust. The first level, *Ability*, is required of all employees in an organization, and can be summarized by the phrase 'I can,' meaning that one is capable of performing tasks.

Level 2, *Integrity*, is more abstract and reflects an individual's ethics. The present research suggests that women make mistakes that negatively affect the perception of their integrity, but it is not the researcher's intention to affirm that women lack integrity.

Regarding the appearance dimension, for example, we believe that the fact that women mistake dressing professionally and appearing polished with dressing sexy and appearing attractive could be a consequence of the society's objectifying, ignoring and disparaging women. Women, debilitated by this mistreatment, could wrongly believe that their 'power' resides solely in their sexuality.

Benevolence is the highest and most abstract level of trust. Benevolence implies the capacity of erasing oneself and letting go of one's own objectives for the sake of the other party's objectives and benefit. It is the opposite of narcissism, and is revealed when people are able to be dispassionate, or to keep their cool under fire.

But, as the present research shows, women act in narcissistic ways when they take things too personally at work, cry while receiving negative feedback, berate themselves for their mistakes, hold their thoughts in meetings or use public speaking events to show their own skills and competence.

Figure 4. *Model of the three levels of trust. Ability, integrity and benevolence are organized in a hierarchy. Level 1 and 2 are expected in all employees, but Level 2 has different reach depending on the position. Level 3 is required in leaders.*

Even though it is beyond the purpose of this study to uncover the reasons why some women make such mistakes, we infer that the need for approval by an authority figure is deeply ingrained in women. The need for being approved is at the core of the desire of being liked, which compels them to strive for perfection, and to justify and criticize themselves.

The habit of asking permission, a mistake found by Frankel (2004) is also rooted in the need for approval. It is related to holding back thoughts and ideas in meetings, putting their heads down, and acquiescing to other people's ideas.

The other side of asking permission is complaining to authority, and is also related to not asking for what they want, in terms of salary or promotions.

Not applying for jobs unless one fulfills all the requirements is another sign of deference to authority: it implies that one is waiting to be called instead of putting herself out. But, as every successful professional will affirm, stepping forward and raising one’s hand is the only way to progress at work.

Limitations and Further Research

SOCIAL LIMITATIONS

Likeability. Many business settings are still masculine cultures, and sexism is a fact. Women who fail to display “feminine” characteristics – “sugar and spice and everything nice” – can be harshly disliked.

Leadership training. In highly feminized industries such as public relations, women are valued as workers because they are very competent and perfectionist. But because they do not exhibit the same leadership qualities that men display, they are not pulled into the leadership trails to the same extent as men are. And since they do not receive appropriate leadership training, it is more difficult for women to identify their own weaknesses. Hence, it is more difficult for them to reach their full leadership potential.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

An important limitation of this research is that no direct observations were made. As a suggestion for further research, we could conduct guided observations in different organizations, and compare our present findings with the actual behaviors observed.

Also, comparing different types of settings could contribute meaningful data about women's behaviors at work, in:

- Work environments dominated and led by men, such as mechanical engineering.
- Work environments dominated and led by women, such as education.
- Work environments dominated by women but led by men, such as nursing or public relations.

In addition, personal interviews with women who have identified the mistakes the present paper explores would deepen our understanding about their origin. Knowing how these mistakes generate and develop along women's lives, and how the society encourages certain stereotyped behaviors, would allow us to prevent these behaviors from being learned. We could then help girls to be fully empowered without masculine, protective, authoritative figures. And we could teach boys not to perpetuate gender injunctive norms that stereotype girls as weak and in need of their protection.

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