

Women in the Workplace - One Man's Perspective

Blog Article: <http://jayball.name/375/women-in-the-workplace-one-mans-perspective/>

Early last year, the women's network at the company where I work held a lunch meeting and "TED Talk Panel Discussion". I wasn't sure what that was, but I was tempted by the offer for a free lunch, so I attended.

At first I hesitated because, well, what reason did I have to attend a women's networking meeting where all they were going to do is talk about women in the workplace, how to recognize signs of discrimination, raise awareness of harmful stereotypes, and listen to women talk about their need to be treated fairly, etc.

I admit I am surprised at what I picked up in that meeting. More on that in a minute.

Women's Networking Meeting

The meeting opened with lunch while we watched a TED Talk video, *Start with Why – how great leaders inspire action* by Simon Sinek. This was followed by a panel discussion with some of the leadership. Finally, in the last 15-20 minutes there was a panel of four men who shared what they recently learned from attending a company sponsored training workshop called [MARC \(Men Advocating Real Change\)](#).

Simon Sinek's TED talk and the discussion that followed was informative. Enlightening. I took notes. I won't take the space here to share all the points of Simon's speech. You can go watch it (14 minutes) [here](#), but the key points of his speech that relate to my thoughts here, were about how the human brain has three parts that align with what he diagrammed as "the golden circle".

"None of what I'm telling you is my opinion," Simon told us. "It's all grounded in the tenets of biology. Not psychology, biology."

He explained,

"Our newest brain, our homo sapien brain, our neocortex... is responsible for all our rational and analytical thought and language."

"The middle sections make up our limbic brains and are responsible for all our feelings, like trust and loyalty. It's also responsible for all human behavior, all decision making, and it has no capacity for language."

"When we communicate from the inside out, we're talking directly to the part of the brain that controls behavior. Then we allow people to rationalize it with the tangible things we say and do. This is where gut decisions come from."

War of Sexes

Then the atmosphere seemed to shift when the panel of four men came forward to share their experience from the MARC training they attended. I say I felt a shift, but this is possibly only my experience. I really can't speak for anyone else. My preconceived ideas about this part of the meeting shaped how I processed the information that was presented. I perceived them as whimpering dogs with a tail between their legs as they were beaten into submission under the hands of the parent organization, [Catalyst](#), whose mission is to "help build workplaces that work for women". I wanted to return from the meeting and tell my fellow male co-workers that the reason I went was because I consider myself a real man and I mistook the name for "Real Men Advocating for Change". In the end I'm happy to say that I have had a humbling shift in my attitude, but not how you might think. I will explain later. But here let me clarify why it is that I feel so uneasy confronting this subject.

My biggest discomfort arises from the many accusations from parties on both sides in a war of the sexes. It disturbs me to realize how easy it could be for a simple accusation from the wrong woman in an inopportune circumstance to destroy an undeserving man's career. On the other hand, it is heartbreaking to hear of sexual harassment that many women endure at the hands of brutish men who feel it their privilege to treat a woman with disrespect as if she weren't even human. When the cries of injustice and accusations escalate the battleground fills with more appalling stories that the other side uses to justify even greater extremes. Who will win and where will it end? Not unlike the fields of war this bloody battleground will continue until it is filled with rotting carcasses of the dead and wounded where there are no winners and we all come out losers.

At the heart of this division is an attitude of accusation and fear. What I'm hoping to explore in this article is where do we find harmony and balance? Is it really necessary to point out the wrongs of the other party before we can find virtue in both?

There is little comfort for me in the promises of those promoting a doctrine of diversity and inclusion using flowery language like this taken from [GlobalDiversityPractice.com](#):

"Diversity allows for the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It means understanding one another by surpassing simple tolerance to ensure people truly value their differences."

Being a peacemaker at heart, it may sound illogical for me to take issue with such a peacefully worded statement. But the statement left me to wonder why we are so quick to assume that exploring differences in "a safe, positive, and nurturing environment" means a guarantee that someone's feelings won't get hurt. My experience is that the greatest moments of awakening

and realization happened for me because someone had the courage to challenge my thinking without fear of hurting my feelings.

Let me back up for a minute. It may not be evident where the statement says anything about hurt feelings, so I want to ask, what does “*surpassing simple tolerance*” look like? Could it look like an effort to temper disagreements? If tolerance requires disagreement (because insisting on agreement is not tolerance, but it’s opposite), then how does one, in an environment of differences, achieve a state that “*surpasses simple tolerance*”?

I don’t want it to appear that I’m getting off topic, but it’s important to establish that to implement diversity and inclusion in the workplace, any suppression of speech in the name of “*surpassing simple tolerance*” will be counterintuitive to the very objectives we are trying to promote. As President Obama said, “*efforts to restrict speech can become a tool to silence critics, or oppress minorities... the strongest weapon against hateful speech is not repression, it is more speech.*”¹

In other words, in an effort to create a peaceful environment, it’s possible that an attempt to suppress conflict can engender a climate where people feel unsafe, rather than feeling safe in expressing their views. The best way to ensure the exploration of differences in “*a safe, positive, and nurturing environment*”, is to allow for the expression of tolerant views, even if those views may offend or give insult to others.²

Take, for example, an experience Eldra Jackson shares at TEDWomen 2018. In his speech, Eldra attributes “*24 years of a life sentence in prison for kidnapping, robbery, and attempted murder*” on “*a disease that has come to be known as toxic masculinity.*”³

He found a cure through *Inside Circle*, an organization founded by Patrick Nolan to combat gang violence in the prison yard. Through an exercise called Circle Time — “*men sitting with men and cutting through the bullshit and challenging structural ways of thinking*” — Jackson learned that “*characteristics usually defined as weaknesses are parts of the whole, healthy*

¹ President Obama's speech to the UN general assembly – full transcript Delivered to the UN in New York on 25 September 2012

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/25/obama-un-general-assembly-transcript>

² “*The clear problem with the outlawing of insult is that too many things can be interpreted as such. Criticism is easily construed as insult by certain parties. Ridicule is easily construed as insult. Sarcasm, unfavourable comparison, merely stating an alternative point of view to the orthodoxy can be interpreted as insult. And because so many things can be interpreted as insult, it is hardly surprising that so many things have been.*” (New Intolerance speech, Rowan Atkinson At Reform Section 5 Parliamentary Reception, October 21, 2012,

<https://lybio.net/rowan-atkinson-at-reform-section-5-parliamentary-reception/speeches/>)

³ Eldra Jackson - TED Women 2018, *How to break the cycle of toxic masculinity.*

https://www.ted.com/talks/eldra_jackson_how_to_break_the_cycle_of_toxic_masculinity#t-29433 (starting at :38 min mark.)

man.” It is because men can share candidly and openly without worrying if their words might offend that the program is able to make such impact in these men’s lives.

There is another reason I bring up Eldra’s story. He introduces the subject of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity refers to certain norms of masculine behavior that are associated with harm to society and to men themselves. In the panel discussion that I attended, one of the men related an example given in the MARC training that made me stop and think. On the playground, when boys want to insult one another they will call the other a “sissy” or “girl”. Think about how it would make you feel if the object of insult among your peers was to call someone “*insert your name here*”.

There is a consensus that as a society we need to stop this kind of behavior. We need to nip this in the bud and stop tolerating such abusive or stereotypically negative language used by our children. For me it begged the question, why is it an insult to manhood to be considered feminine? I’m going to borrow from Simon Sinek and suggest that it has to do with biology, not psychology. I will explore this in a moment, but there was another question that arose in my mind that also created some tension for me. Why is it that we value differences in personality types in the workplace, but when it comes to the sexes, the perception at least, is that we want them equalized?⁴

Personality Types and The Sexes

According to the personality profile assessment from a training I attended at work several years ago, I am primarily Analytical with strong undertones of Amiable. The four types from this particular profile classify personality types into four categories; Driver, Analytical, Amiable and Expressive. Other popular personality assessment tools include Myers-Briggs (MBTI®), the DiSC profile, published by Wiley, and Taylor Hartman’s The Color Code. Employers often use personality assessment tools in trainings or workshops to help employees identify and relate to each other in healthy ways. Organizations conduct such trainings because they understand how it helps to improve communication, avoid and resolve conflicts and improves professional relationships.

⁴ “After all, the most striking lack of knowledge about the opposite sex is how similar the two sexes really are. That may sound like a contradiction. Gender differences exist and these do contribute to the sex partition. However, biological differences aside, men and women are far more similar than they are different.” (Gender Differences at Work: We’re not that Different! Kim Elsesser, <https://hiring.monster.com/hr/hr-best-practices/workforce-management/improving-employee-relations/gender-differences-at-work.aspx>)

“The bottom line is that saying there are differences in male and female brains is just not true. There is pretty compelling evidence that any differences are tiny and are the result of environment not biology,’ said Prof Rippon.” (The Telegraph, Men and women do not have different brains, claims neuroscientist, Sarah Knapton, 8 Mar 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/10684179/Men-and-women-do-not-have-different-brains-claims-neuroscientist.html>)

When it comes to personality types, we appreciate and even try to capitalize on the differences. Why don't we try to do the same when it comes to the sexes?⁵

Characteristics of Masculine and Feminine

Above, I suggested the idea that name calling on the playground could relate to something in our biology, but I confess this is mostly my assumption. My purpose here is to focus on differences between masculine and feminine attributes over differences between the sexes⁶. I would use the word biology only in the sense that generally men are more likely to be dominant in masculine characteristics and women more dominant in the feminine. It is important to recognize that both men and women exhibit characteristics of both feminine and masculine attributes. In other words, we do see cases of men who are dominant with feminine characteristics and vice versa, but we all share moments where we step into one or the other of the two roles. For the purposes of this discussion, I want to disassociate gender from the discussion and focus on traits of the masculine and feminine. For this reason I will use the pronoun "he" to describe one who is dominant in the masculine traits, and "she" for one who is dominant in her feminine, regardless of gender.

Recall that in his TED talk, Simon Sinek spoke about a part of the brain that has no capacity for language.

"Sometimes you can give someone all the facts and figures and they may say, 'it just doesn't feel right'. Why would you use that verb, it doesn't 'feel' right? Because the part of the brain that controls decision-making doesn't control language. And the best we can muster is 'it just doesn't feel right'. Or sometimes you say you're leading with your heart, or you're leading with your soul."

⁵ It appears there has been some notable work done on the topic of appreciating the differences in the sexes that is worth exploring:

"Other scholars believe the gender imbalance exists primarily due to innate differences in men's and women's perceptions, decisions, and behaviors. For example, research has found that men are more likely than women to engage in dominant or aggressive behaviors, to initiate negotiations, and to self-select into competitive environments — behaviors likely to facilitate professional advancement."

(*Explaining Gender Differences at the Top* by Francesca Gino and Alison Wood Brooks, Sep 23, 2015 <https://hbr.org/2015/09/explaining-gender-differences-at-the-top>).

See also *8 Blind Spots Between the Sexes at Work* by Susan Adams,

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/04/26/8-blind-spots-between-the-sexes-at-work/#4c3d6428314d>)

⁶ *"But are these outcome differences due to biological differences? While there are (of course) biological differences between the sexes, social science has shown that men and women are more similar than different on a wide range of characteristics, from personality to ability to attitude — and that these factors have a larger effect on career outcomes than biology does."* (*What the Science Actually Says About Gender Gaps in the Workplace*, Harvard Business Review, Stefanie K. Johnson, Aug 17, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/08/what-the-science-actually-says-about-gender-gaps-in-the-workplace>)

Much of what I am about to say comes from a sense of what “feels right” to me. Language may be a hindrance to me here. What I am attempting to communicate are concepts and ideas without getting too hung up on the words.

Rather than begin by simply making a list of feminine and masculine attributes, I would like to approach this from a different perspective.

If I were to try to paint a picture with words to describe what feminine is, I might use language to say she is elusive like the wind. She is the sparkle of sunlight shimmering off ripples on the surface of a lake. She is uncontained like the ocean. The masculine, on the other hand, could be likened to a ship on the ocean. It captures the wind in its sails and charts a course. It is direction and purpose. It focuses its attention and energy to the accomplishment of a goal. There is power in the feminine. Like the ocean, she has power to crush the ship to smithereens in an instant. When the two work together it becomes possible to reach the desired destination.

Different disciplines from yoga to childbirth preparation to meditation have used breathing as an aid to practicing mindfulness. Many of these practices teach how breath and breathing relates to masculine and feminine attributes. I particularly like the imagery of the breath and what meaning can be drawn from contemplating how it relates to masculine and feminine attributes.

There are a number of meditative practices where the inhalation symbolizes a feminine energy and the exhalation symbolizes a masculine energy. Inhalation signifying the feminine is apt because the very first breath a baby takes when it is born is an inhale, which represents life. The feminine yearns to take in joy and be filled with love. Masculine signified by an exhalation is apt because the very last breath of life is an exhale, representing death. The nature of the masculine wants to draw things to an end, reach a conclusion. It lives on the edge, faces risk, seeks freedom from constraints and aspires to empty itself of stress. We can see the masculine and feminine aspects embodied in the breath. Each breath we take exhibits the working together of both masculine and feminine attributes.

In many cultures, both ancient and modern, the sun and moon are symbols of masculine and feminine. The sun is an example of a warmer working energy representing the masculine. The moon represents the softer cool and refreshing energy of the feminine. From the surface of the earth they occupy equal space in the heavens. Although the circumference of the sun is approximately 400 times larger than the moon, the moon is approximately 400 times closer to the earth. As a result they are visibly equal in size and occupy the same path on the ecliptic. This is why the moon is able to eclipse the sun.

The sun, is stable, unchangeable, reliable and predictable. The sun rises every day on the horizon in the east and sets every evening on the horizon in the west. He is unvarying in his course from day to day and year to year. The feminine, represented by the moon, changes each day. She waxes and wanes. She does not just move from east to west, but the moonrise also constantly moves in the opposite direction from west to east. Every day she reappears further to

the east before beginning her movement to the west. She moves approximately 50 minutes eastward each day.

Her complex movements overhead were part of the reason she was known anciently as “The Great Dancer.” Her movements display constantly changing motions, contrasting with her companion sun. This contrast between the movements of the sun and the moon brings to mind the quip by cartoonist Bob Thaves about Ginger Rogers, the dancing partner of acclaimed Fred Astair, “*Sure he was great, but don’t forget that Ginger Rogers did everything he did...backwards and in high heels.*”

Using some of this imagery, and without making any claim or attempt to be comprehensive, some key traits that we can associate with the masculine include courage, assertiveness, strength, boldness, and confidence. Feminine traits include sensitivity, nurturing, attentiveness, and beauty. Again, this does not suggest that women can’t be bold or men cannot be sensitive.

The epitome of masculine is war. War typifies all the elements we associate with the masculine, like taking risk, facing death, exhibiting strength, pushing past boundaries, and seeking freedom.

We can see the elements of war imagery played over into sports. Constraints are set up and a goal established. Then the players engage in a battle against the other team to take risks and push past boundaries to freedom. May the strongest and most assertive team win. Or, put another way, may the most masculine team win. You hear imagery of these masculine traits carry over into our language. A phrase like “we slaughtered them” is used to describe an impressive win in sports. Succeeding in business is expressed as “killing it”, and in wishing success in a presentation or on stage one may say, “knock em’ dead”. I would suggest that on the playground where it is an insult for boys to be called anything feminine is not as much an indication of incorrect upbringing as it is that, at its core, language is reflecting something from deeper in the brain. Remove gender from the equation, and what I am saying is that it is a legitimate insult to the masculine to be referred to as its opposite. The gift of the masculine is that its power lies in being decisive, acting tenaciously in pursuit of the goal, taking the bull by the horns and getting the job done. When the situation calls for aggression, an effeminate response is not only counterproductive, it can be outright dangerous. Does this mean there is no place for a feminine response? Absolutely not. But in the heat of the game, when the ball is on the 20 yard line, or in a case where the life or death of the business lies on having the guts to take a bold risk, these situations call for a masculine response. It is no insult to the feminine in these cases, in fact it is complimentary. More on that later.

Business as a Masculine Arena

There are countless books and articles that compare business with strategies and tactics used in war, as summed up in this statement from an article from FastCompany, “*Business in the New Economy is a civilized version of war. Companies, not countries, are battlefield rivals.*”⁷

⁷ *Business As War*, Oct 31, 1993, <https://www.fastcompany.com/55076/business-war>

Winning in war or business involves all the elements that make up what I am calling masculine traits. I believe it is helpful to recognize that when you are talking about business, you are talking about a game that is being played in a masculine arena. This can create a certain tension for those who are dominant in feminine traits (naturally made up mostly of women), who are trying to compete in this arena. Instead of feeling weak and helpless in a situation that is beyond one's control, seeing the reality of the picture in its true light should empower, not discourage.

In his Simpleology training, Mark Joyner describes one of the lessons that had the most impact in his military education. When he was a US Army Officer attending the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, an influential military teacher taught one impactful lesson asking "Which one of you wannabe-officers can tell me the single essential skill of a leader?" After the young new 2nd Lieutenants fumbled around with finding an answer for about 20 minutes he finally revealed the answer:

*"What defines a leader, more than anything else, is his ability to see the battlefield."*⁸

What will be most helpful for the feminine (as well as the masculine) in the business arena, is to *"see the battlefield"*.

In a featured MARC article Victoria Roseberry compared feminine traits such as empathy and emotional awareness with masculine traits. She observed:

*"Traits traditionally associated with male gender roles, such as dominance, assertiveness, and confidence, are also those that are considered essential for leadership positions."*⁹

Consider that if you have an all-women's basketball team, the game is still basketball. Forgive the stereotype here, but if you were to run across a men's-only craft show, it would still be a craft show. It's not about who the participants are, it is about what the game is. In this case, the game is business. No matter who is participating, if you are engaged in the business of doing business, it's business. By nature, winning in this arena goes to the most masculine.

To liken this with war, imagine you are battling it out with an opponent on the battlefield. With sword in hand you approach your opponent. Losing means you will die. Winning the battle involves all the characteristics associated with masculine. It may involve strength and courage, but can also include wit and strategy. It involves all the planning and preparation that played a

⁸ *Simpleology 102 Virtuosity manual*, p. 20, 2005, Mark Joyner, Inc.
<http://www.simpleology.com/blog/2014/05/the-complexity-gap.html>

⁹ *How Stereotypes Impact Women (And Men) At Work* by Victoria Roseberry,
<http://onthemarc.org/blogs/22/521#.XBmBLBNKhE5>

role before even engaging in the fight. Recall the scene from Raiders of the Lost Ark where Indiana Jones came face to face with a threatening sword wielding bandit, and pulled out his gun and shot the sucker. I'm not making any argument for or against rules or what is right and wrong. I'm simply saying that everything I just described exemplifies the masculine, and can be applied to the game of business.

This discussion isn't about the reality of the abuses on both sides that take place in the battle of the sexes. We know that sexual harassment against women in the workplace is real. When it comes to competing and winning in the business world, women deal with a higher 'specific gravity' that men simply don't identify with. It's true that men work with a tailwind pushing them forward where women must fight against a harsh headwind. That's why organizations like Catalyst exist. They serve to educate us about these realities. Acknowledging these realities is important, just as it is important to know the nature of the arena in which you find yourself in the business world.

Does this mean there is no room for the feminine in business?

How does this fit with allowing for differences in sexes just like we appreciate differences in personality types? Does this mean that there is no room in business for feminine traits?

Just as every analytical or amiable personality type who doesn't have a desire to work their way into supervisory roles serve happily where they do best in the workplace. Likewise, not everyone with a feminine dominant personality has a desire to battle her way into the top positions, but may happily contribute where she serves best. The workplace needs each personality contributing their best with the talents they individually bring.

If the position you seek and the role you want to play in the workplace requires ambition, drive, strategy, and courage, you may find yourself competing for that position in the same arena with others of like mind. Recall the Always ad campaign [#LikeAGirl](#) where the question is posed, "Why can't run like a girl also mean win the race?" Running like a girl doesn't mean you can't run just like yourself and still win. Just realize it's not about whether you are a boy or a girl running any more than playing and winning at basketball on an all-women's team is about women doing the playing. It's about basketball, and the team that wins is the one who best employed all the elements I'm trying to define here as masculine.

Cesar Millan gives a great example of what I'm talking about:

"I used this trick a few times on 'The Dog Whisperer with Cesar Millan,' but one that stands out for me is a woman who could not control her dog on the walk. This was because she was showing weak energy, so the dog was pulling her all over the place. When I asked her to think of a character who inspired calm, assertive energy, she chose Cleopatra — and once she started to carry herself like a queen, everything changed. Her

*dog followed her immediately, and once her dog showed calm, submissive energy, she became even more confident."*¹⁰

So what is the gift of the feminine?

Earlier, I related the feminine to the ocean, saying she has power to crush a ship to smithereens. But the word power, as I have used it in this article so far, is a term of strength and energy; words I have associated as masculine traits. Is there power in the feminine? When composing my thoughts at this stage in this article, this question perplexed me. In thinking of power in terms of courage, stamina, and energy, I struggled with trying to put my finger on where is the power in the feminine.

So far I have been contrasting power to how it relates to things like war, sports, and business being played in a masculine arena. It's a masculine game. "Game" in the masculine sense has boundaries and rules and a goal. It seeks freedom. Power (or the ability to do) in the masculine sense is the ability to accomplish the end result. Win the game, battle and conquer without dying first, succeed in business, etc.

"Game" in the feminine sense is about play and being in the moment. It is love. It's not concerned with the boundaries, rules or goals. Power in the feminine is the ability to be in the moment. The ability to sense when others are not performing at their best in the moment. The ability to enjoy the game while you are playing it. The ability to be spontaneous as well as attentive, and to nurture. The feminine is not trying to bring things to conclusion, close the book, or end the debate. She just *is*.

The masculine is constancy amid change. The feminine *is* change. Where the masculine gets his bearings by learning from past mistakes and charting a better course going forward, the feminine lives in the present. You may be on time for every meeting consistently for 10 years. But you can be late just once for an important meeting and catch the wrath of the feminine. Your track record doesn't matter to her. This is because the role of the feminine demands you be your best here and now.

When it comes to power in the feminine, we are talking about a different game altogether. I'm reminded of an episode of *Star Trek*¹¹ where Data is pushed to challenge the arrogant Kolrami, assuming Kolrami will be no match for Data's android reflexes and computational ability. When the two play, however, Data is soundly beaten, causing him to become convinced he is malfunctioning. Later Data challenges Kolrami to a Strategema rematch. This time, Data is able to hold Kolrami in check; Kolrami grows more and more frustrated as the match progresses,

¹⁰ *Who's your hero?*, Cesar Millan, Cesar's Way, <https://www.cesarsway.com/cesar-millan/cesars-blog/Whos-your-hero>

¹¹ Episode *Peak Performance* of the second season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, July 10, 1989, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_Performance_\(Star_Trek:_The_Next_Generation\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_Performance_(Star_Trek:_The_Next_Generation))

ultimately throwing down his controls in disgust and storming off. Data explains that he altered his strategy, giving up opportunities for advancement in order to maintain a stalemate, which he believes he could have maintained indefinitely. The feminine isn't trying to change the rules. She's just playing a different game.

What is the ideal form of feminine?

If the epitome of the masculine is war, then what is the epitome of the feminine? I considered the metaphor of the breath, where masculine relates to death and the feminine relates to life. What more apt representation of life than the first breath taken by a newborn baby at birth? What is more completely feminine than motherhood? Then I considered that in the process of bringing life into the world, a mother faces the risk of death for both her and the unborn child. No matter how wonderfully modern technology is able to minimize that risk, the risk is always present. In a way that no man can fully appreciate, in the birth process a woman faces the key elements that I have listed as masculine - risk, strength, courage, living on the edge, facing death - how curious. What is the difference between a woman facing death while giving birth, and a soldier facing death on the battlefield?¹² The most obvious difference to me is the very real and intimate way that she risks her life to bring life into the world.

No woman ever describes birth with phrases like "*killing it*", or "*knockin 'em dead*". Neither will you ever hear the insult "*she gives birth like a boy*". Feminine stands in her own space apart from the masculine with a natural sense of light and joy. There is no prideful glory in motherhood.¹³ The feminine steps up to her calling, faces the risk and endures it nobly.

¹² There is a natural and inevitable affection children hold for their mothers. That affection is close to the hearts of all dying men. There are many battlefield accounts of how dying men call out in their last breath for their mother. Roland Bartetzko, former German Army soldier, when under fire in his first combat experience uttered "Mother" when fire struck others beside him. As he reflected on why he spoke that out loud he concluded, "*Our lives begin with our mothers giving birth to us and on the day when I thought that my life was over, my mind circled back to where it all had begun.*"

Roland Bartetzko, former German Army, Croatian Defense Council, Kosovo Liberation Army, Dec 14, 2016, *Why do some soldiers call for their mother when they are dying on the battlefield?*
<https://www.quora.com/Why-do-some-soldiers-call-for-their-mother-when-they-are-dying-on-the-battlefield?share=1>

See also *A Young Warrior's Last Thought is for Mother*, by Lt. Colonel James G. Zumwalt, USMC (Ret.),
<https://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/05/10/a-young-warriors-last-thought-is-for-mother/>

¹³ I'm reminded of a comic routine by Bill Burr where motherhood is mocked in contrast to the hard working masculine. I agree with the nobility of men who risk their lives in worthy labor, but am disheartened at how this is used to belittle motherhood:

"We're watching it the other day, you know, Oprah's on there. She's interviewing some client, you know. She's giving her this big ridiculous intro, like she's done this, she's done that, she's done this... and 'she's done the most difficult job on the planet, she's a mother'... she continues on... and immediately I just look at my girlfriend like, like really!? Being a mother is 'the most difficult job on the planet'? Oh yeah, all those mothers who die every year from black lung from inhaling all that coal dust... There's just this tornado of misinformation. 'I have the most difficult job on the planet'. What would you rather be doing, drilling to the center of the earth, shaking hands with the devil every time there's a rumble in the brow, you're waiting for the whole thing to collapse down on top of you. Yeah, so they can write that folk song about you? Would you rather be up in the sunshine, running around with a couple of toddlers that you can send to bed

St. John put it well:

“When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.” (John 16:21)

Every infant comes into this world in profound need. The child’s existence is dependent on the nurturing care of the feminine, which care is always given at the sacrifice of other things she might be doing. In that sense it is a selfless act of kindness, because raising an infant is never convenient.

Except for what happens in the womb of the woman, everything else in our human condition is subject to entropy. Women have power to produce new life. Everything else decays and dies. Her power defies the universal effects of entropy.

I do not mean for this to sound like a Sunday Mother’s Day sermon, but I confess it is difficult for me to compose my thoughts on this topic without a sense of reverence. Many women choose not to become mothers. I want to remind the reader that I’m not talking about women, but traits of the feminine. What I am exploring here is the polar opposite of masculine death and war with feminine birth and life. I am suggesting it is in birth where we see the greatest gifts and most noble traits of the feminine.

Motherhood in the Workplace?

So if the topic of this article is dealing with women in the workplace, how does motherhood fit into the picture of the workplace? It doesn’t. Though there are women who seek for careers and who find themselves sacrificing motherhood in order to compete with men in the business world,¹⁴ that is off topic. What I am focusing on is appreciating the differences between the masculine and feminine attributes. As it relates to this topic, motherhood only comes into the picture as it reveals the most dignified traits of the feminine, and how that helps give contrast to its relationship with the masculine.

Mothers are known to have a sense of intuition about what their children are doing in the next room.¹⁵ This intuitive sense is more keen with experienced mothers and sometimes she is able

anytime you want on some trumped up charges. Because you want to have a drink and watch the price is right, you know what I mean? I couldn’t believe it, “it’s the most difficult job on the planet”. Oh yeah. I thought roofing in the middle of July as a redhead, I thought that was the... but these mothers are bending over at the waist, putting DVDs in the DVD player. I don’t know how they do it. I don’t know how they do it. Dude any job that you can do in your pajamas is not a difficult job. Right? Gimme a break.”
(peals of laughter)

(Bill Burr on feminism, A comedian who talks about feminism. https://youtu.be/N0vZhz3sN_E)

¹⁴ See *The Top 5 Sacrifices Women Make For Their Career*, Bonnie Marcus, 29 Aug 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniemarcus/2016/08/29/the-top-5-sacrifices-women-make-for-their-career/#f2617b17d75d>

¹⁵ *Do mothers have a sixth sense?*

to sense when her child is in trouble even when he is far away. This intuitive sense is also seen with experienced basketball players who can tell when an opposing player is right behind her on the court. Or with an experienced fisherman who can sense right where the fish will be biting that day. But intuition and experience are things that contribute to an even greater feminine characteristic I will call wisdom. [Psychology Today](#) gives this perspective:

Wisdom is one of those qualities that is difficult to define—because it encompasses so much—but which people generally recognize when they encounter it. And it is encountered most obviously in the realm of decision-making. Psychologists tend to agree that wisdom involves an integration of knowledge, experience, and deep understanding that incorporates tolerance for the uncertainties of life as well as its ups and downs. There's an awareness of how things play out over time, and it confers a sense of balance. It can be acquired only through experience, but by itself, experience does not automatically confer wisdom.

Masculine Knowledge and Feminine Wisdom

In ancient texts wisdom is referred to as feminine:

“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:” (Proverbs 9:1)

In Hebrew it is called chokmah [חֻכְמָה] (phonetically khokmaw'), which is a feminine noun. In Greek it is sophia [σοφία] which is likewise a feminine noun. Where wisdom has been referred to as the gift of the feminine, knowledge is the gift of the masculine. Only together do they become complete.

I like this description of the difference between knowledge and wisdom from [Diffen.com](#):

“Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” —T.S. Eliot. Knowledge is gathered from learning and education, while most say that wisdom is gathered from day-to-day experiences and is a state of being wise. Knowledge is merely having clarity of facts and truths, while wisdom is the practical ability to make consistently good decisions in life.”

Francis Briers from Integration Training talks about the art of cultivating wisdom in organizations in [this informative 5 minute video](#).

So, to wrap this up...

There may be some grey areas and overlap on some characteristics that we could classify specifically as feminine or masculine. I have made no attempt to define the separate traits comprehensively. My objective has been to acknowledge and point out differences in hope that we can appreciate the beautiful way they work together, where alone they are barren and unfruitful. Knowledge alone may provide a spark of energy, but it can be potentially dangerous if

<https://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/949721/do-mothers-have-a-sixth-sense/>

it is not wisely directed. Wisdom alone is not an agent of action. Knowledge can initiate action, but wisdom is necessary to guide and counsel.

I think the point I'm trying to make is illustrated well with this example of Alexander the Great. I love this quote from Steven Pressfield in his book, *The Virtues of War*, where Alexander is talking:

"How does one make decisions? By rationality? My tutor Aristotle could classify the world, but couldn't find his way to the village square. One must dive deeper than reason. The Thracians of Bithynia trust no decision unless they make it drunk. They know something we don't. A lion never makes a bad decision. Is he guided by reason? Is an eagle 'rational'? ... Great commanders do not temper their measures to What Is; they bring forth What May Be." (The Virtues of War, Steven Pressfield, p. 202)

Alexander and other great leaders were able to trust in a sense of something outside of reasoning or knowledge alone. They had the boldness and courage to take actions in moments that required a split decision where the success or failure of many lives, the army, or even the nation hung in the balance. Yet they allowed this to be tempered by the intuition and experience of wisdom.

Near the beginning of this article I mentioned that my objective is to find harmony and balance. I like how Keith Merron put it:

*"The degree to which the masculine and feminine qualities are represented and are utilized well is the essence of balance."*¹⁶

Yes, masculine and feminine are opposites, but they are meant to be *complementary* opposites. They each have negative and positive traits. In this article my focus has been on the positive traits. Great things can, do, and should continue to happen when we recognize and appreciate the complementary nature of the differences between the sexes.

¹⁶ Keith Merron, quoted in an article by By Drew Gannon, *The Fiscal Times* May 25, 2012, *How Men and Women Differ in the Workplace*.
<http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2012/05/25/How-Men-and-Women-Differ-in-the-Workplace>