

Polarity Practitioners

And

Volume Two: Chapter 4

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*Making a Difference
by Leveraging
Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma
Volume Two: Applications*

Introduction to And: Volume Two and Authors

Barry Johnson

And: Volume One is a foundational book for understanding what polarities are and how they work. Polarities are interdependent pairs that need each other to be successful over time. Because they are interdependent, we connect the two poles of a polarity with the word “*And*.”

One central polarity from Volume One is Claiming Power *And* Sharing Power. Volume One and Volume Two can be seen in the context of this polarity. Volume One is an example of me claiming power while Volume Two is about sharing power. In Volume One, I am talking; in Volume Two, I am joining you in listening.

About the Authors

When it came to inviting people to contribute to And: Volume Two – Applications, I chose those who have graduated from our two-year Polarity Mastery Program at Polarity Partnerships. They are all well-grounded in Polarity Thinking™ and represent a variety of disciplines and life experiences. They were invited to write a chapter and to invite other practitioners to co-author their chapter if they desired. I am grateful for their response and for the richness they have created.

Section One: Polarity Thinking Supports Radical Possibilities for Equity

This opening section directly addresses the polarity Dominant Culture *And* Marginalized Cultures by listening to polarity practitioners who are members of one or more marginalized groups. They are providing us with perspectives from the marginalized about how a polarity lens can be useful in addressing marginalization. This section provides a context for looking back at Volume One and looking forward to the rest of Volume Two.

Section Two: Expanded Applications of Polarity Thinking

The rest of the book provides a wide range of perspectives and experiences from an extended group of caring and creative people. Each has made a solid connection between their passion and Polarity Thinking. It is a feast of thought and experience.

I think I speak for all of the co-authors of And: Volume Two in hoping that you find this book useful in your own efforts to make a difference.

Enjoy, Barry

Find bio and contact info for all lead authors for each chapter at
www.polaritypartnerships.com/certified-polarity-practitioners

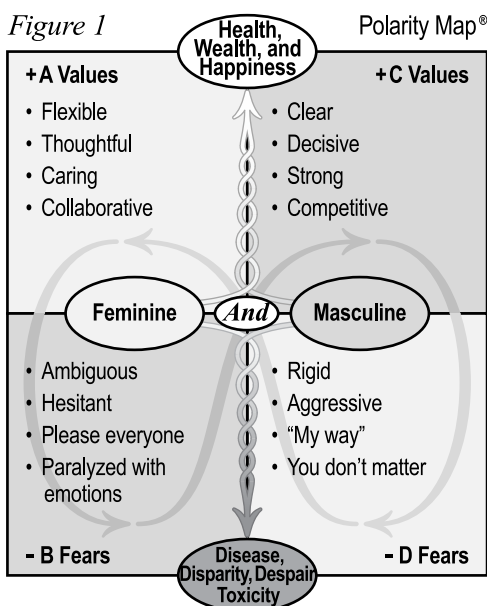
Feminine And Masculine: For Health, Wealth, and Happiness

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Some polarities, like Activity *And* Rest, affect us all. To thrive, we must leverage both so we're not chronically exhausted, allowing for only an occasional nap. Another fundamental polarity is Feminine *And* Masculine, Yin *And* Yang – basic life energies. We need both poles to achieve the greater purpose of health, wealth, and happiness and to avoid the deeper fears of disease, disparity, despair, and toxicity. Even though we may personally aspire to both, our culture values the Masculine over the Feminine. To make matters worse, when the favored group has privilege (automatically assumed to be better/smarter/deserving) and the devalued group has chronic low power (little to no voice or value), the imbalance is worse and the correction, more difficult.

In virtually every global culture there is an over-focus on the Masculine and a trivialization of the Feminine. Clarity and decisiveness are valued; rigidity and aggression over-tolerated; flexibility and thoughtfulness, undermined; ambiguity and hesitancy, feared.¹⁸ Eventually of course, we reap the downsides of both. (See loop in *Figure 1*.) Rigidity is met with ambiguity; aggression with hesitancy. For example, war becomes the answer, coupled with hesitation to argue against it, exemplified by the U.S. Congress' vote to invade Iraq in 2003.

Polarity Thinking™ theory and tools help us benefit from *both* Feminine *And* Masculine for powerful personal, social, and global results. All gender expressions have Feminine and Masculine qualities. However, by virtue of our bodies, hormones, and socialization, males and male-identified carry more masculine traits; females and female-identified,



¹⁸ The first two qualities in each quadrant of the Polarity Map® are from *And: Making A Difference by Leveraging Polarity, Paradox, or Dilemma. Volume 1 – Foundations* by Barry Jonson, HRD Press, 2020, Chapter 31.

more feminine traits. Men, therefore, are valued and paid more, seen as real leaders, and are in charge of decisions in most areas of everyone’s lives.

Warning Signs: Over-Focus on the Masculine

Since women are 51% of the population, how are our voices silenced?¹⁹ NOTE: The silencing acts bulleted here are also seen in *Figure 3*, [p.35](#) as Early Warnings (EW -D).

- The power group (men) **control meaning**. Clear and decisive (*Figure 1* +C) are good, but when over-tolerated, rigidity and aggressiveness (-D) exist indefinitely without correction. The impact of this dynamic is that women who are thoughtful and flexible (+A) are perceived as hesitant and ambivalent (-B); and when taking on the masculine traits of clear and decisive (+C), they are labeled emotional and reactive (-B, -D). Women are disempowered no matter what quadrant they enact!²⁰
- **Toxic** masculinity is reflected in mass shootings, sexual harassment, and abuse; “my way” and you don’t matter (*Figure 1* -D). The #MeToo movement is an attempted correction.
- ‘Male’ is perceived as **leader**. Consider *Figure 2* polarities to see how ‘masculine’ and ‘leadership’ are conflated.²¹ Leaders are often defined by Candor (saying what needs to be said), their Confidence, and being in Control.
- Women are **compensated less** than men for the same work which, when combined with paying higher prices for such things as cars and insurance, means women (and children) are the largest group in **poverty**.²²
- There are few women **role models**, making it difficult for girls and women to imagine success.²³
- Women are **isolated** from each other, blame themselves for discriminatory patterns –*I must have brought it on myself*– thus feel unable to confront the system.
- **Unconscious bias** of women results in:
 - Being slotted into support roles of the organizations, thus being less prepared for promotion.
 - Proving self over and over again.

Figure 2

Feminine	And	Masculine
Diplomacy	And	Candor
Humility	And	Confidence
Other	And	Self
Empowerment	And	Control

¹⁹ See yearly reports by McKinsey & Company, “Women in the Workplace” 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019.
²⁰ For a longer explanation see Barry Johnson, *And: Making a Difference by Leveraging Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma. Volume One – Foundations*. Human Resources Press, 2020, Chapter 31.
²¹ See *Build Your Authentic Inspired Leadership Style* by Lindsay Y. Burr, Chapter 12 in this volume.
²² Women account for 70% of those in poverty. “Empowering women and girls for the benefit of our people and planet” by Paul Polman. LinkedIn, March 8, 2020.
²³ Ibid.

- Having men’s work rated higher when it is exactly the same work as women.²⁴
- Enduring micro-aggressions such as constant interruption (five times more than men) and having their ideas ignored but applauded when offered by men.
- Losing visibility when men report women’s work or claim it as their own.
- **Appraisal** systems are not used uniformly for women and men. Hundreds of women are told to smile more if they want to be successful and deemed uncommitted to work when they must also tend to family.
- Women senior leaders suffer **sacrifices** rarely experienced by men. Almost all are single, have no children, or in rare cases have a stay-at-home spouse.
- Most professional women have full time jobs at home and work, leading to chronic **exhaustion**.
- Women are left out of the succession **pipeline**, a key reason for non-promotion.

When Women Succeed in Spite of the Barriers, Other Damaging Patterns Emerge

- Women’s accomplishments are **reframed**. A dramatic example is the first women’s team to ascend Annapurna in 1978 led by Arlene Blum.²⁵ Male climbers criticized her for using Sherpa and ‘letting’ two women die. Hypocritical, since men used more Sherpa and suffered one death for every summit on Annapurna.²⁶
- With success, **men are competent, women are lucky**. In attribution research studies, homogenous groups are asked to memorize a list of numbers. Men, when told they did very badly, respond “It was a stupid assignment.” Women, “We’re not very good at math and could have tried harder.” Men, when told they did well, respond “We’re good at math.” Women, “We were lucky.” Both patterns retain the gender power imbalance.

Correction to the Upsides of the Feminine: Benefits

- **Health:** As of this writing, the world is in the grip of the COVID-19 virus. Notice the yearnings for connection and touch and the behaviors needed for health: collaboration, caring, and flexibility in how we live. Notice the consequent health of Mother Earth: clearer skies and water. We have been forced to correct to the Feminine.
- **Happiness:** When mama’s happy, everyone’s happy. Studies show that men, who are in a happy, healthy relationship make more money, have more sex, live longer, suffer less chronic illness, and have less cognitive impairment in their later years.²⁷

²⁴ When Hewlett Packard removed names from resumes, 50% more women were considered for positions.

See also Harvard University Kennedy School, Women and Public Policy, for additional studies.

²⁵ Blum, Arlene. *Annapurna: A Woman’s Place*. Random House, 1980.

²⁶ “American Women’s Himalayan Expedition.” Wikipedia, June 22, 2019.

²⁷ Gottman, J. et al. *The Man’s Guide to Women*. Rachel Carlton Abrams, 2016.

- **Leadership and Capacity:**

... individuals and organizations that leverage polarities well outperform those that do not I have found that women, on average, more readily see and leverage polarities better than men If we were to assess the ability to leverage polarities as an essential leadership capacity, we would have more ... (women leaders). ~ Barry Johnson²⁸

Traditional masculine leadership behaviors of control, corrective action, and individualistic decision-making are the least critical for future success. Those most needed are intellectual stimulation, which men and women apply in equal measure, and five other traits (inspiration, participative decision-making, setting expectations and rewards, people development, and role modeling) which women apply more frequently by huge margins.²⁹ National women leaders are also recognized as being the most effective at managing the pandemic with the qualities of truth, use of technology, decisiveness, and love.³⁰

- **Financial Performance:** A global study demonstrated a link between the presence of women in corporate management teams and positive financial performance.³¹ Further, parity for women has huge global economic possibilities. As much as \$28 million could be added to global annual GDP by 2025 with women in the workforce, compensated like men.³²
- **Social Change:** When women are key decision-makers, communities and families benefit.³³ Swanee Hunt has worked in more than 60 countries and measures dramatic social improvement, with significant female leadership, in almost every measurable category of stabilization.³⁴
- **Peace and Security:** The prevalence of violence against women in a country is a predictor of a national predilection toward terrorism and civil conflict.³⁵ That's why 83 countries created national action plans on women, peace, and security.

The structure of the relationship between the two halves of humanity is the basis for the political order of every nation, and if that order allows autocracy, violence, and extortion, a nation will arc in those directions as well. ~ Valerie M. Hudson³⁶

²⁸ Johnson, Barry. *And: Making a Difference by Leveraging Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma. Volume One – Foundations*. HRD Press, 2020. Chapter 31.

²⁹ Catalino, N., Mamane, K. *When Women Lead, Workplaces Should Listen*. McKinsey & Company, 2019.

³⁰ Whittenburg-Cox, Avivah. "What Do Countries with the Best Coronavirus Responses Have in Common? Women Leaders." *ForbesWomen*, April 13, 2020.

³¹ McKinsey & Company. *Women in the Workplace*. 2007.

³² Woetzel, Jonathan et al. "How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth." McKinsey Global Institute, September 2015 Report.

³³ See the achievements of women in Congress www.wcpinst.org/our-work/the-womens-caucus.

³⁴ Hunt, Swanee. "What happens when women rule." *CNN Opinion*, June 8, 2019.

³⁵ The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 asserts that peace is inextricably linked with gender equality.

³⁶ Hudson, Valerie M. "What You Do to Your Women, You Do to Your Nation." *New York Times*, March 6, 2020.

- **Talent:** We cannot quantify what is invisible. We can, however, see examples of female talent that has been lost and found. Consider *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly³⁷ which focuses on Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughan, African-American women who were essential to the success of early spaceflight.

Warning Signs: Over-Focus on the Feminine

Polarity Thinking reminds us that, even though we need a correction to the Feminine, we need to be vigilant about an over-focus on that pole (*Figure 3*, EW -B). In some nonprofit organizations for which we have consulted, for example, decisions are halted until everyone is pleased, making daily processes difficult. In these cases, correction to the masculine is warranted so both poles can be leveraged.

Action Steps

Lessons learned from leading gender and inclusion organizational development projects for 35 years in 30 countries, along with research on best practices, suggest the following Action Steps (AS +A, AS +C) for leveraging Feminine *And* Masculine.

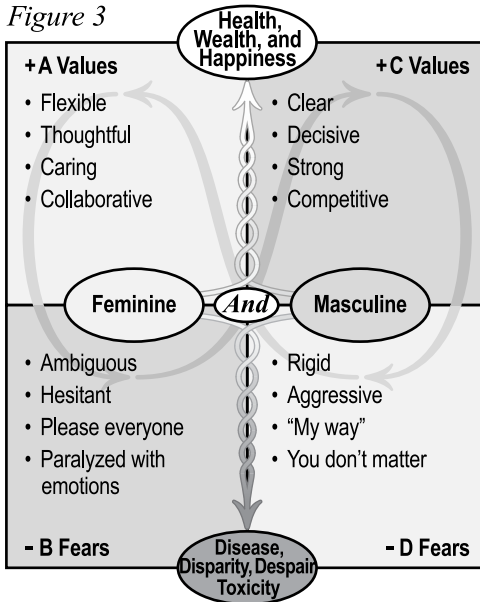
Action Steps +A

- Awareness (HL)
- Learn responses to double bind
- Understand organizational power
- Get male mentors
- Women only training and networks
- Seek women role models

Early Warnings - B

- Low self esteem/confidence
- Belittle other women
- Believe ONLY women are positive
- Depression
- Passive-aggressive for indirect power
- Exhaustion

Figure 3



Action Steps +C

- Awareness (HL)
- Top leader commitment and role modeling
- Get women mentors
- Hold male leaders accountable for diversity
- Lead structural change
- Put women in succession pipeline

Early Warnings - D

- Control meaning of other
- Toxic masculinity
- Lopsided leadership
- Supports poverty
- Blocks role models
- Unconscious bias
- Takes credit
- Omits women
- Reframes women success

Women’s Awareness

There are many designs and interventions for gender equity. Key ingredients, which can be used personally and professionally, for women include:

³⁷ Lee Shetterly, Margot. *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2016.

- Women, especially in their professional lives, can be stuck in over-emphasizing the Masculine because we have emulated men for credibility. So, women often hear any description of the downside of the masculine as “male bashing.” In personal lives, women often over-focus on the Feminine, reaping the downside of that pole as well. Both issues are more easily addressed when using Polarity Thinking since women can see and value both poles.
- Women need to know their own history to gain courage and esteem. Do we know the stories of women in our own families? Their courage and resilience? Do we know how women have fought for our rights historically? Our **role models** need to be uncovered.
- Senior leaders in organizations can be **role models** as they transparently describe their journeys: aspirations, risk-taking, mentors, supporters, barriers and ways around them, and management of family and work.
- Most important is the **role model** of our own lives. When women learn the prototypic woman’s journey, they know they are not alone. With that catalyst, women consider their own lives, and their persistence, resilience, and heroism are revealed. They also increase awareness of the life-destroying messages about being a ‘woman.’ Lesbian and bisexual women are good resources; often they are less restricted by traditional female messages.
- **A walk through the quadrants** of Feminine *And* Masculine, filling in the qualities of the upsides and downsides of the poles, allows women to see the whole picture.
- Because there is a **double standard** for women and men, women need to know how to respond to judgments. For example, if a man says, “You sure are emotional,” a response can be “I AM very concerned about the impact of this decision.” Or “You’re just being bossy,” a response could be “I have expertise on this subject and know it’s necessary for positive results.”
- Women can lower their fear of using the Feminine when they understand organizational power, including: knowledge of the organizational culture and how to frame their communication; support of mentors and sponsors; participation in activities that are visible; and up-to-date alternatives by staying current in networks, developing women’s networks, and being financially solvent enough to weather the storms of inevitable organizational changes.
- When fear is reduced and esteem increased, women can envision the impact they want to have in their lives and are more open to hearing the Men’s Journey that includes their restrictions as well as privilege. In this way, better relationships are possible.

Men's Awareness

Some key ingredients for men include:

- Description of leaders and friends/family they admire.
- Knowledge of the Woman's Journey from women's stories at work and home and from historical data about barriers to women's success and satisfaction.
- Reflection on the impact of sexism in their own families. "Would you want your daughter to work here?"
- A walk through the Feminine *And* Masculine polarity to explore benefits of both. GenX and Millennial men are helpful here as they talk openly about the restrictions they feel striving to embody the traditional Masculine. They want to be different kinds of fathers, husbands, and friends from previous generations. Gay and bisexual men are often good resources for teaching heterosexual men to leverage the polarity.
- Often, we use the 'Getting Unstuck' process so men are reassured masculine qualities are highly valued and that they need not automatically go to the downside of the feminine which it seems they greatly fear.³⁸

Organizational Change³⁹

- **Women's Support of Each Other:** In the early 1990s, we began helping women in a dozen countries form networks where they check reality with each other, clarify their goals, seek encouragement, and learn strategies to open professional pathways for each other.
- **Leadership and Performance for Diversity and Inclusion:** It is important to have women visible in top leadership and also have senior leaders drive diversity and inclusion. The commitment to diversity and inclusion of senior-level leadership has increased. However, only half of employees perceive their commitment. Further, managers under 30 are more likely than older employees to see the biases that undermine those intentions.⁴⁰ Hence, there needs to be a safe, transparent feedback loop to upper leadership about the realities at mid- and lower-level to enhance commitment throughout the organization.
- **Structural Change:** When companies have the right **foundations for change**, they can make diversity and inclusion 'just the way we do business.' Those include:

³⁸ Johnson, Barry. *And: Making a Difference by Leveraging Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma. Volume One—Foundations*. HRD Press, 2020, Chapter 13.

³⁹ A wonderful resource for action steps is *Inclusion Nudges Guidebook: Practical Techniques for Changing Behavior, Culture and Systems to Mitigate Unconscious Bias and Create Inclusive Organizations, Edition 2* by Tinna Nielsen and Lisa Kepinski. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, April 2020.

⁴⁰ Huang, J., et al. "Women in the Workplace 2019". McKinsey & Company, 2019. https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2019.pdf.

- Clear goals for hiring, promoting, and using business partners (e.g., Goldman Sachs refuses to finance organizations who have no women on their boards).
- Work practices that support the lives of women who are still the primary caretakers of children and family.
- Accountability for all managers to build capacity and provide access to the managerial pipeline for women^{41,42}
- **Allies:** Women need men mentors to interpret masculine culture, to speak up when others may undermine women, and to open opportunities. Men need women mentors to teach them about the strengths of women as well as the barriers in women’s lives that block personal and professional development.

Summary

The health of our relationships, organizations, and world depends a great deal on our willingness and ability to leverage the Feminine *And* Masculine. In this way power is balanced between the poles, truth can be told, reconciliation achieved, and a satisfied, productive future realized.

Find bio and contact info for authors Elaine Yarbrough and Lindsay Y. Burr at www.polaritypartnerships.com/certified-polarity-practitioners

⁴¹ The key obstacle for women moving into senior leadership is lack of accessibility to the succession pipeline: See Huang, J., et al. “Women in the Workplace 2019”. McKinsey & Company, 2019. https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2019.pdf.

⁴² See Vision 2020, Equality in Sight, a national campaign for gender equality composed of 102-member congress of women dedicated to building capacity and access to leadership in the current decade. <https://drexel.edu/vision2020>.