

Leadership and Gender: Let Me Count the Ways

Depth Paper

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Introduction

Leadership is a term that evokes strong feelings and inspires spirited debate. Everyone seems to have an opinion on the subject. Leaders themselves are both reviled and revered. More than 30 years ago, Stogdill observed “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (quoted in Yukl, 2002). Even a cursory view of the literature on the topic reveals that situational context, historical time, national origin and many other variables significantly influence our notions of what it is and how it should be exercised. These variables impact our beliefs regarding who enacts it and how it should look literally and figuratively. The intersection of leadership and gender brings us to the locus of powerful, and sometimes, colliding, belief systems with consequences to our society that we still struggle to understand.

In the early 1970s, as head of the corporate-wide affirmative action program for United Airlines, I had a vague notion that 10 to 15 years out, the debates about women in leadership roles would be long over. I was naïve that the issues surrounding this topic could reach so deeply into our collective psyches and make real change in this arena so difficult. Certainly much progress has been made particularly within the middle-management ranks of the corporate world where women now hold about 45% of the professional, administrative, and managerial positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, the idea of women in top leadership roles is still difficult for many to grasp, and the

women who do succeed in attaining those positions need to be both exceptional and exceptionally able to deal with enormous social and psychological pressures. In this paper I want to explore the particular intersection of gender and leadership and the competing theories that strive to explain it, particularly within the context of contemporary organizations.

Bolman and Deal suggest that for many Americans leadership is a word with nearly magical meaning and the power of incantation (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Many definitions of the word imply that leadership is unquestionably good and we need more of it. Many definitions lean towards the heroic and what some authors call the “romanticized” picture of leadership (Klenke, 1996). Others emphasize the pragmatic, rational, results-oriented person able to get others to follow his (or more rarely, her) direction. We may choose to view leadership as a specialized role or as a shared influence process. We may define it in terms of traits or behaviors. We may believe it is innate or view it as behavior that can be learned. We may view leadership and management as distinct or overlapping phenomena or see no difference at all between them. Perhaps we view it as a set of power relationships. Regardless of where we begin a discussion regarding leadership and gender, we all carry some embedded assumptions and beliefs that consciously or unconsciously shape our understanding and interpretation of that confluence. Too often these assumptions are neither acknowledged nor examined as simply one way to view such a broad concept. While it might be a nice goal to develop a universally accepted definition of leadership, it seems unlikely to me that any such goal will be achieved soon. Therefore, I believe that as we look at the confluence of gender and leadership, we need

to be cognizant of how researchers are using their terms and wary of some of the conclusions they draw.

Some of that same caution must be exercised in terms of the definitions surrounding gender as well, although there appears to be more alignment on this topic in the literature at this point, if not historically. Currently, there appears to be widespread agreement that *gender* refers to the psychological and social conceptions of what it means to be a man or a woman (Valian, 1999). Many have noted that “doing gender” begins at birth with the choice of a name and is an “...emergent feature of social situations” as both an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements (West & Zimmerman, 1991). In this conception of gender as socially constructed, gender is seen as suffusing all aspects of our lives. West and Zimmerman argue “Doing gender means creating differences...that are not natural, essential or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the ‘essentialness’ of gender” (p. 24). Leadership, like all social processes, is an occasion to “do gender” as West and Zimmerman say.

The term *gender role* refers to our idea about how men and women are expected to behave. More specifically, Eagly contends that as a subset of social role theory, gender role carries two sets of norms. These are *descriptive norms*, which are consensual expectations regarding what members of a group are expected to do and *injunctive norms*, which are consensual expectations regarding what members of a group ideally would do. According to social role theory, observers infer that there is correspondence between the types of activities and actions people engage in and their inner, core characteristics. Over time, this form of gender stereotyping has created and reinforced a set of beliefs about the nature of men and women. Women are cast as more communal, sympathetic, and

nurturing. Men are seen as assertive, dominant and forceful or what is often referred to in the gender literature as agentic (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This notion of women as communal vs. men as agentic lies at the very heart of the debate about women and leadership in a number of very significant ways. Further complicating this discussion is an observation offered by researchers such as Valian, Ely, Meyerson, and Klenke. They have noted that much of the data on this topic have been gathered from college-age students in laboratory settings who are overwhelming white, middle-class, and not very experienced with some of the nuances of male/female adult behaviors. In these artificial settings and as a group, they may tend to exaggerate gender differences, demonstrating what Klenke calls the “alpha bias” of gender research. This may contribute to confusion rather than clarity of the issues that need to be addressed.

Where does a meaningful conversation start?

To make sense of the issues here, it is important to look at some of the premises that underlie our thinking about organizations. Acker was one of the first researchers to argue that organizations, far from being gender-neutral, are in fact places that reflect the masculine values and norms of the men who have largely created and led them. Acker claimed that organizations are one arena in which “...widely disseminated cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced” and where some aspects of gender identity “...are also products of organizational processes and pressures” (Acker, 1991). Moss Kanter had argued previously that gender stood outside of structure. Acker saw gender as essentially defining it. Acker’s work has proven influential with many of the

contemporary researchers in this area. Thus we have arguments from Fletcher, Valian, Eagly, Meyerson and many others that can be summed up by the view:

“Everything we regard as normal or commonplace...tends to privilege traits that have been socially and culturally ascribed to males... Thus, our understanding of workplace phenomena and our ability to envision alternative structures and systems has been limited by what can be thought of as a gendered set of norms about effectiveness and success...when put into practice, these norms create idealized images of work, workers and success...”(Fletcher, 1998 p. 1).

The gendered assumptions that flow from a deeply rooted masculine view of the world have profound implications for anyone who does not conform to them. Nowhere is this more evident than in the disproportionately negative effect this has had on women seeking to move into leadership positions.

The metaphor of the “glass ceiling” has been used to describe an invisible but very real barrier that prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder beyond a certain point (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1992). Others have noted that the glass ceiling is not one ceiling or wall in one spot, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias that occur frequently in both overt and covert ways (Auster quoted in Oakley, 2000). While the gains in leadership roles have been substantial in the past 20 or so years, particularly in both middle management and the ranks of entrepreneurs, the scarcity of women at the highest levels of the corporate world have caused some to note that the ceiling metaphor could use some fine-tuning. In a widely read and often quoted article, Meyerson and Fletcher wrote “...we believe that it is time for new metaphors to capture the subtle, systemic forms of discrimination that still linger. It’s not the ceiling that’s

holding women back; it's the whole structure of the organizations in which we work: the foundation, the beams, the walls, the very air" (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000 p.140).

Frames for Looking at the Intersection of Leadership and Gender

Various writers approach this topic with different lenses for what to look at, how to look at it, and ultimately how to address it for the purpose of changing it. Eagly and Karau suggest that there are three main categories of data to examine. These can be expressed as attitudes towards men and women as leaders, access of men and women to leadership roles, and evaluations of success for men and women in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). They contend that only role congruity theory has sufficient breadth to integrate the research findings of all three spheres into a coherent theory. In another framing of the data, Klenke notes that the clusters of research that deal with differences focus on how men and women enact leadership style, evaluation of success, and follower satisfaction with male and female leaders. She is particularly concerned that the media and popular culture have tended to overemphasize sex differences and have reduced the complexity of the "gender knot" to simplistic notions with no explanatory power. She cautions that just as leadership theories are bounded by their temporal context, so is the research on gender differences in leadership. In her view, earlier studies are much more likely to show significant differences in all of these dimensions than would data from current studies. This is due partially to methodological reasons. On the other side, she argues that a great deal of that change can be explained by shifts of

context and does not equate to a conclusion that we are now in a situation of gender equity.

From a more pragmatic orientation, Oakley suggests that there are three categories of theories and explanations that deal specifically with the barriers faced by women in the attainment of senior leadership positions (Oakley, 2000). In the first category, barriers are created by corporate practices that tend to favor the recruitment, retention and promotion of males over females. The arguments that women lack the necessary “line experience” needed for senior jobs fits into this category as does the notion that the “pipeline” needed to be filled before the numbers at the top would increase significantly. In the second category are behavioral and cultural causes that center around issues of stereotyping, tokenism, power, preferred leadership styles, and the psychodynamics of male/female relations. In the third category are feminist arguments that deal with questions of power and influence. The liberal feminist view focuses on increasing power and influence for women by working for change within the system through a process of incremental reform. The radical feminist view advocates fundamental restructuring of the current corporate model. They argue that tinkering with the hierarchical and bureaucratic models we have inherited, with their embedded and intertwined power and gender relations, is inadequate. In their view, we need to develop new organization forms that ensure a more equitable distribution of power with a gender-integrated or gender-in-common base of experience. This is a perhaps more controversial point of view and one that I do not see many people currently advocating.

Which Theories Can Guide Us?

From the perspective of providing explanations that are useful, sufficiently complex to adequately address the issues and have validity to me as both a former corporate manager and an Organization Development consultant, I think the two most interesting theories are those provided by Eagly and her associates in the Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice and the work done by Fletcher and her colleagues at the Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO). The latter does not have a single name but is informally called “Fourth Frame” thinking. It shares certain common assumptions rooted in a critical, feminist perspective. I would like to turn now to describing these two ways of thinking about leadership and gender in more detail and explore what value each brings to the dialogue.

Role Congruity Theory

At the core of the view advocated by role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), is the premise that prejudice can arise from the relations that people perceive between the characteristics of members of a social group and the requirements of the social roles that group members occupy or aspire to occupy. In the case of women and leadership, the prejudice towards female leaders follows from the incongruity that people perceive between the characteristics of women and the requirements of leader roles. Building on the large, existing body of work on social role theory and the consequent gender roles that as a society we have ascribed to men and women, Eagly and Karau describe both the descriptive and injunctive norms associated with men and women. A key proposition of

social role theory is that the majority of these beliefs about the sexes pertain to the supposed communal attributes of women and the agentic ones for men. Communal attributes relate to being interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, kind, helpful and concerned about the welfare of others. Agentic attributes have to do with being aggressive, forceful, self-confident, self-sufficient and in control. Eagly and Karau cite extensive evidence from other researchers to show that sex is the strongest personal characteristic for categorizing people, even compared with race, age and occupation. Sex is the first, most obvious lens through which we view others and in the absence of specific details about individuals, we easily and automatically revert to stereotypical thinking to fill in the blanks.

The "...potential for prejudice against female leaders that is inherent in the female gender role flows from its dissimilarity to the expectations that people typically have about leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002 p. 4)". Citing previous research by Schein in 1973 and replication studies by many others that demonstrate a "masculine construal of leadership", Eagly and Karau contend that the constant reinforcement of these beliefs comes about through an "integration of expectations" model where "...the high accessibility of expectations based on gender likely maintains their impact (p. 5)". Paradoxically, female leaders who are rated more like their male counterparts in behavior, may be unfavorably evaluated for their presumed gender role violation and draw epithets like "battle-ax" or other equally unflattering remarks. They also point out that to the extent a woman in a leadership role elicits a mixture of positive and negative reactions, the resulting ambivalence about that person produces a tendency for polarized reactions. Hillary Clinton as First Lady seemed to generate such a reaction.

Women are constrained by the conflicting requirements of leader role vs. gender role. One of the distinctive features of Eagly and Karau's theory is the notion of prejudice towards females taking a double shape. It is revealed both in the form of less favorable evaluation of leadership potential and less favorable evaluation of actual leadership behaviors. They contend that this is due to the perception of leadership ability as more stereotypical of men than women as well as the belief that leadership behavior is less desirable in women. Morrison and others have also noted the very "narrow band of acceptable behavior" for women in leadership roles (Morrison et al., 1992 p.57).

Because role definitions are affected by many contextual factors, numerous variables should influence the two forms of prejudice theorized. Variables affecting the descriptive norms include the degree of perceived incongruity between the gender role and the leader role, the level of the organization at which it occurs, the sex of the perceiver, and the cultural milieu in which it occurs. Variables likely to affect the injunctive norms and cause the behavior of female leaders to be evaluated less favorably include how agentically women behave in the leadership role, that is how assertive, self-promoting, and directive they appear to be. Numerous research studies are presented that serve to illustrate and test the predictive value of the role congruity theory. They largely confirm the expected outcomes.

One important subset of these research studies deals with the reactions of both men and women when female agentic behavior is complemented by the addition of communal behaviors. A review of the data here in both laboratory and actual settings demonstrated that, in general, less favorable reactions towards women's agentic and leader like behavior is mitigated to some extent by the addition of interpersonally facilitative

behaviors generally consistent with the female communal role. Additionally, when looking at the emergence of leadership in small groups with no formally designated leader, men initially emerge as leaders. People more readily perceive men as meeting high standards for competence and are more accepting of them when they behave confidently and assertively. This effect may be moderated slightly when longer periods of time are involved. Presumably, the effect of gender roles lessens as group members obtain more individuating information about one another, or when the tasks of the group require extensive sharing of ideas and negotiation so that social skills are seen as more relevant for leadership.

To evaluate the research on leader effectiveness in terms of role congruity theory, Eagly and Karau reviewed many studies utilizing variations of the Goldberg paradigm, as well as a number of meta-analyses. In Goldberg paradigm experiments, the effect of sex differences can be directly tested by holding all other variables constant and then asking subjects to rate, for example, résumés, job applications, photos of job candidates, etc. that differ only with respect to the ostensible sex of their owner. These studies consistently demonstrate prejudice towards women in leadership roles particularly where those roles suggest male-dominated leadership positions such as basketball coaches. When males are the raters, this effect was somewhat more pronounced. The results of the meta-analyses are generally consistent with this finding, including one where women were found to be more effective than men as leaders in educational and social service organizations. This would not be surprising in that these roles can be more easily construed as within a properly female domain. Further, Eagly and Karau cite Swim and Sanna's 1996 meta-analysis which showed that on masculine tasks, people attribute men's success to the

stable cause of ability and women's success to the unstable cause of effort. Valian addresses this same issue from another angle in her discussion of the attribution process. She notes "...that does not mean that women never attribute their successes to ability, only that they invoke ability less often than men do and invoke luck more often" (Valian, 1999 p.183). As she goes on to discuss, to the extent that women themselves see success as due to random or unpredictable factors, they are less likely to benefit from it in the sense of learning from it. Why would someone spend much time analyzing a "success" attributable mostly to luck or happenstance?

Critics of this theory have contended that the differences demonstrated in many of the individual studies and the meta-analyses are too small to account for the lack of women in high-level leadership positions. Other research on the accumulation of advantage and disadvantage suggests that very small differences over time can have large effects. Valian deals extensively with this notion and demonstrates, quite compelling in my view, the effects of unequal treatment. She reports a computer model that demonstrates how even a 1% bias in promotion rates of an evenly split male-female population at the lowest level within a typical eight-level hierarchy will, over time, result in a senior level that is 65% male (Valian, 1999).

Perhaps a more serious criticism of this theory is the view articulated by Klenke that role theory, and its variations, retains the basic dualism and worldview sustained by gender-related polarities (Klenke, 1996). From her perspective, context and historical time are two much more important variables than gender in any discussion of leadership. She argues that most leadership and gender research suffers from "methodological and temporal constraints" and does little more than perpetuate stereotypes. She contends that

organizational role so dominates the boundaries governing the behavior of leaders that there is essentially no difference in the way men and women lead. She champions the development of what she terms “gender-positive” environments in which there is a strong emphasis on diversity and innovation. She longs for the day when we will no longer refer to people as *women leaders*, but simply as *leaders*. While I agree with some of her observations and her hopes, her descriptions of successful women in leadership roles leans so heavily towards the heroic and mythical (Oprah Winfrey and her Cinderella story of success, for example), that I am inclined to dismiss much of her work in the final analysis. Klenke may be correct that the actual practice of leadership especially at senior levels isn’t all that different between men and women, but she does little to explain the reasons behind women’s failure to achieve a fair share of those roles.

Fourth Frame Model

The other body of work that brings together various streams of feminist research in a thoughtful and provocative way is that produced by the Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO) at Simmons School of Management. The interdisciplinary nature of the scholars drawn to this program, and the applied research and consulting that are a part of their work, contributes to a body of scholarly thinking that feels very grounded in reality. To summarize a number of the papers and articles written by CGO researchers on gender and organizations before dealing with leadership specifically, the framing proposed by Ely and Meyerson is useful. These frames speak to different conceptions of gender and the resulting courses of action organizations would take to address gender inequity issues (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

Frame 1 is the *fix the women* notion. Ely and Meyerson attribute this to a liberal posture which values meritocracy. Gender is viewed as an individual characteristic and sex-role socialization processes as producing individual differences in attitudes and behaviors that have rendered women less skilled than men to compete in the business world. Accordingly, when women develop the appropriate skills and behaviors, they will advance at comparable rates to men and assume leadership roles on a comparable basis. The authors note that interventions using this frame generally leave existing organizational policies and structures intact with minimal disruption of the status quo and existing arrangements of power.

Frame 2 is *value the feminine*. This approach is almost the polar opposite of the first, with its emphasis on celebrating difference rather than eliminating it. In this framing, women have advantages over men that arise from their relationship orientation gained by their experience of handling the private sphere of home and family. Organizations, however, have traditionally placed higher value on the behaviors, values, and styles more associated with men. Therefore, they have ignored the wisdom women could bring into the workplace. Through the writings of more mainstream authors like Helgesen and Rosener, the so-called “female advantage” argument became quite popular for a time and led to many programs aimed at valuing diversity. However, most of these programs are, themselves, predicated on a population that is largely white, heterosexual, and class-privileged. Ely and Meyerson cite evidence that suggests such efforts do little to alter the perception of these female attributes as not being of real value in accomplishing the work of the organization. They may, in fact, perpetuate a more sophisticated form of sex segregation in the workplace. Fletcher expands that notion of

relational work being “disappeared” to use her term, in a large-scale study she did of women engineers over a four-year period. She asserts that women were expected on the one hand to use their relational skills to keep project work flowing smoothly, but then were either denigrated for spending time that way or seen as too fluffy to be taken seriously for leadership roles (Fletcher, 1999). Again, this approach does not speak to more fundamental change in the way organizations are structured or run.

Frame 3 is the *equal opportunity* frame that suggests structural barriers are the real impediment to women’s access and achievement. These include hiring, evaluation, and promotion processes that not only reflect sexist attitudes toward and expectations of women, but also reward men’s greater access to information particularly in the form of social and professional networks. Interventions within this frame are largely policy-based and designed to eliminate or compensate for the barriers. They may include affirmative action programs, formal mentoring programs, constructing a range of alternative career paths, flexible work requirements and other work-family accommodations. Again, while these interventions have helped to improve some women’s lives at work, as well as some men’s, there is considerable evidence that many people resist using them for fear of backlash. This is particularly true at senior levels of the organization. These interventions still assume that the status quo is just fine and that, with a bit of tinkering, the existing systems can be made to accommodate women’s needs.

Frame 4 is a *non-traditional approach to gender*, with “...a different set of theoretical and epistemological positions” (Ely & Meyerson, 2000 p.9). Gender is seen as a complex set of social relations enacted across a range of social practices both within and outside of formal organizations. These practices, largely developed by men, reflect

and support men's experiences, maintaining a gendered social order in which certain forms of masculinity predominate. In this frame, intervention means continuous identification, disruption and revision of that social order primarily through processes of dialogue (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). In organizations, the four categories of social phenomena that uphold or contest the value of (some) men above women include: formal policies and procedures, informal work practices and norms, narratives, rhetoric, language and other symbolic expressions, and informal patterns of everyday social interaction. Ely and Meyerson contend that these kinds of workplace social practices "...operate collectively and in clandestine ways to preserve male dominance by coding activity and assigning meaning as either superior (male/masculine) or inferior (female/feminine), while at the same time maintaining the plausibility of gender neutrality" (p. 11). One example of this may be seen in the typically crisis-oriented schedules of senior executives, where people are expected to be available nearly all hours to deal with unanticipated events and their consequences. In actuality, since women still tend to bear a disproportionate share of the responsibility for home and children, the inability to be always available tends to have a differential impact on them. It tends to get them labeled as less committed to the job. While on the surface, this perceived requirement of the job might seem essential, it actually may be reflective of a poorly run organization and a chaotic management philosophy.

Coming from this basic set of beliefs about how gender operates in organizations, Fletcher explores the transformation of organization practices suggested by Frame 4 specifically with respect to leadership. She notes that acceptance of a new paradigm she calls "post heroic" leadership focuses more on collaborative, egalitarian leadership

practices embedded within a network of interdependencies at different levels of the organization rather than an individual, larger-than-life leader. Some refer to this new model as shared leadership, offering several variations on the basic premise. Fletcher argues that while these new models of leadership are often presented as gender and power neutral, they are instead rooted in a set of social interactions "...in which 'doing gender', 'doing power,' and 'doing leadership' are linked in complicated ways" (Fletcher, 2003p.iii).

At the heart of her argument is the contention that the gender issues of post heroic leadership go far beyond such issues as sex differences in the practice of leadership. She claims, "... gender implications affect the theory and practice of post heroic leadership at a deeper level, because to make the paradigm shift to post heroic models depends not simply on a shift in sex-linked attributes but a gender- and power-linked shift in the very *logic of effectiveness* underlying business practice." (Fletcher, 2003 p.5). She views this a shift from the masculine logic about how to *produce things* in the work sphere to a feminine wisdom about how to *grow people* traditionally linked to the domestic sphere. Traditionally, these two bodies of knowledge have been separate, sex-linked, and unequally valued. The fact that in the new paradigm leadership is seen as a relational process to create conditions in which people can learn, grow, think, and achieve together has significant gender implications. Fletcher argues that these newer images of leadership practice so violate the gender-linked assumptions most people hold, that they account for much of the resistance to post-heroic models and their failure to achieve their full transformational potential. By conflating post-heroic practices with femininity, and therefore with powerlessness as well, strong unconscious issues are likely to be evoked.

She notes, "...it is the hidden underexplored nature of these gender/power dynamics that may account for many of the paradoxes people experience in trying to implement post heroic leadership..." (p. 8).

This notion may well relate to the questions raised about female advantage and why, if newer forms of leadership are so well aligned with women's values and style, women have not benefited, particularly at higher levels. As Valian has suggested, gender schemas influence the way we interpret the same action(s) taken by a man or a woman (Valian, 1999). When women put into practice many of the relational skills and capabilities that they bring to the workplace, they are easily discounted or dismissed as just doing what women do. Further, as Fletcher has argued, "...when women enact the kind of leadership practices that share power or enable and contribute to the development of others, they are likely to be seen as selfless givers who 'like helping' and expect nothing in return"(Fletcher, 2003 p.10). In Fletcher's terms, this then leads to a "disappearing" of the contribution relational leadership practices can make and a lack of recognition for the women engaging in it.

At this point, I am aware of only one specific challenge to Fletcher's work. Locke takes issue with the characterization of leadership as a social process. He argues that by denying the importance of individual characteristics in leaders, this conception of leadership glosses over the fact that some people are simply better at carrying out the processes involved in successful leadership than others (Locke, 2003). This seems to me to be a charge that could be leveled at any leadership model that is deeply grounded in a constructivist view. It also seems to lose the very essence of what the constructivist perspective offers about context and co-creation of reality. I believe both of those are

highly relevant in a discussion of leadership. I do not disagree with Locke's view that individuals may possess different degrees of skill and ability in what might generally be considered important competencies for leaders. However, my observation of leaders in many situations convinces me that many additional variables are at work that ultimately determine the degree of success someone has in any particular role at a given point in time.

Implications for Organization Change

It seems clear that depending on the beliefs one consciously or unconsciously holds regarding the relationship of gender and leadership, there are different paths to thinking about the appropriate steps to facilitate organizational change that promotes gender equity in general, and equity with respect to leadership in particular. There was a long period of time when I would have supported the kinds of interventions suggested by the Frame 1, 2, and 3 views noted earlier in this paper. I now see that those are necessary steps but not sufficient. As Oakley has noted, "The failure of the liberal feminist approach is that it is incapable of solving the underlying causes of the gender and power inequalities in corporations, because it does not address the root causes of these inequalities. In contrast, the radical feminist approach identifies the causes and suggests that solutions need to go beyond incremental reform" (Oakley, 2000). Based on the very comprehensive discussion of the differences between radical and liberal feminism put forward by Calas and Smircich (Calas & Smircich, 1996), this is probably an overly simplistic way of categorizing the difference. The essential point is that gender issues

won't go away until we look more deeply into the gendered assumptions that characterize organizational life. In a study of sixty-one senior-level women across numerous organizations regarding their personal and business roles, the authors conclude that the reason many women leaders leave the positions they struggle so hard to attain is that organizations fail to meet the women's expectations for learning and growth on their own terms. In other words, organizations should stop demanding that the women simply fit in to a male paradigm that denies wholeness and authenticity. They should reexamine the assumption that the only viable candidate for a senior level job is an ideal worker who is willing to sacrifice all for the job (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2002).

One method that is being advocated as a way to accomplish this examination of the assumptions and mental models that shape our thinking in this arena is Collaborative Interactive Action Research or CIAR (Bailyn & Fletcher, 2003). This is a specifically focused action research model that looks at work practices that have implications for both equity and effectiveness, also referred to as the dual agenda. The model asks questions such as, what is considered real work, what is recognized as competency in this setting, and how is commitment gauged? Findings can then be used to redesign norms and work practices that increase work effectiveness while also reducing workplace inequities. This goes beyond the rhetoric of "managing diversity" by fundamentally changing the design of work itself in ways that improve the work environment for everyone while enhancing the quality of the work produced. The model has been used in several large-scale research projects funded by the Ford Foundation with apparently excellent results. I think this is encouraging news for those of us who have not found most organizational interventions centered on "diversity awareness" to have had much efficacy.

Conclusion

This has been a rewarding and fascinating exploration for me. I understand much more clearly now why the work I have doing as the head of a women's leadership development program has felt unsatisfying and why I come away from the programs that we sponsor asking myself what we are really accomplishing. The kinds of programs we offer do not really address the more subtle and complex issues of gender dynamics that show up for women in leadership in what might be thought of as "second generation" gender issues. I'm not sure that all the questions are answered for me about "root causes" for the issues of gender in leadership but both the role incongruity model and the body of thinking developed by CGO in their "Fourth Frame" present ways of thinking about the issue that provide possibilities for change with more transformational power than previous characterizations of the issues have allowed. I think these two views offer complementary perspectives and a set of lenses that helps to explicate the subtle nuances that need to be explored. I would think it more likely that the CGO model will eventually find its way into mainstream thinking because it has a group of researchers who are using the concepts to do action research projects in organizations that can then be written up and published in readily accessible books and articles. The material they have developed is both well researched and documented and much of it has been written with a broader target market in mind than simply the scholarly community. The role incongruity material, I suspect, will remain more within the domain of academics due, at least in part, to its reliance on meta-analysis and lab research data and its less obvious link to

application. It would be easy to dismiss this work as too abstract and not directly relevant which would be unfortunate, in my opinion. Both models I think, offer some hope. With new and richer ways to view the issues, both men and women will be able to shift their thinking and beliefs so that in time, women will be able to lead as fully and productively as their individual potential allows.

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