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Leadership: What's
Motherhood
Got to Do with It?

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Leadership: What's Motherhood Got to Do with It?

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*A*bstract

This paper is based on interviews conducted with 60 prominent women leaders featured in *Inside Women's Power* (Sumru Erkut & Winds of Change Foundation). It is an elaboration of two unexpected themes that emerged in the interviews: (1) motherhood and other family roles as training ground for leadership and (2) motherhood as a metaphor for leadership. Recognizing good mothering as a metaphor and training for leadership was unexpected because it represents a radical departure from the early traditional advice for women aspiring to leadership to "become more like men." Some of the leaders in this study were secure enough in their work roles that they could describe leadership using language derived from their lived experience as women. At least among women who have reached top levels of leadership, there was a level of comfort that allowed them to bring to their work a more integrated sense of being a woman and a leader. This is a positive development that contrasts with many anecdotal stories of women feeling the pressure to leave behind their motherhood and other aspects of being a woman when they enter the world of leadership.

“I lead warmly, like a mom.”

“One of the best training grounds for leadership is motherhood and if you can manage a group of small children, you can manage a group of bureaucrats.”

In contemporary U.S. society, leadership continues to be viewed as a masculine activity. Yet, in a study of 60 women leaders (Erkut & Winds of Change Foundation, 2001) close to 40% of prominent women from a variety of fields spontaneously made reference to motherhood when describing a good leader or leadership training. Maternal roles surfaced as metaphors for leadership and women leaders described exemplary leadership and also their own leadership practice using family terms, most often the mother role.

In this paper, I explore the significance of leaders using language that originates from women’s lived experiences for the practice of leadership and its implications for the next generation of women’s opportunities for reaching the top. I argue that motherhood spontaneously emerging in eminent leaders’ language suggests that some women in leadership positions are sufficiently comfortable with the status they have attained that their language can reference women’s experiences in family roles. This is in contrast to masculine references to the military (e.g., the general commanding the troops) or sports (e.g., quarterbacking the team, hitting one out of the park, or referring to a success as a slam-dunk).

The stereotype of the leader as a man that has led to the formulation of the implicit leadership theory provides the backdrop against which the novelty of women using their own leadership language is presented. Researchers have referred to “implicit leadership theory” to describe the fact that we share an understanding of leadership as masculine.¹ This “we” encompasses employers, employees,

researchers, theorists, and lay people who share assumptions about leadership that are embedded in mainstream U.S. culture. For example, the work of Dov Eden and Uri Leviatan has demonstrated that people readily use their implicit theory of leadership to judge the leadership potential of strangers in the absence of actual performance information.² Roya Ayman’s 1993 review of the literature on the perception of leaders shows that the content of people’s implicit theory of leadership is heavily biased toward masculine traits.³ In addition, in a classic series of studies on the gender content of implicit leadership theory, Virginia Schein elicited descriptions of women, men and managers.⁴ The results confirmed the masculine bias in most people’s implicit leadership theory. She found that the descriptions of men and managers were more similar to each other than the description of either group was to the description of women. The set of masculine characteristics contained in most people’s implicit theory of leadership includes aggressiveness, rationality, self-confidence, competitiveness, and independence.⁵ Consequently, since women are by definition female, not male, they are assumed not to possess leadership characteristics required to rise to top positions of power.⁶

The implicit theory of leadership makes clear that the quotations that open the chapter are outside the scope of leadership. The point I am making by drawing attention to women’s references to leadership including mothering is not that it is necessary for women to be mothers to become effective leaders. Rather, contemporary developments in the composition of leadership have expanded at least some women’s views to incorporate metaphors from the family and skills learned in family roles in discussions of leadership. In time, increasing numbers of women – and men – may be able to bring more of themselves in their family roles to their leadership language and practice.

Methods

The scope of the women's leadership study was to conduct semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample⁷ of eminent women from a variety of disciplines across the United States. Participants were recruited based on considerations for diversity in professions, work-place organizations, and such demographic characteristics as race and ethnicity, geographic location, and social class background.

To fulfill these considerations a list of prominent women was generated in consultation with media sources and professional women's organizations. Others in her field vetted each woman who was nominated. The list was narrowed to 130 leaders who received a letter of invitation describing the goal of the project as learning from leaders and inviting them to participate in an interview. Over half (51%) of the nominated leaders agreed to participate. Reasons for refusing to participate in the interviews included having already filled up their appointment schedule for the six months during which the interview was to be scheduled and the need to minimize workload and other engagements because of health reasons. We were able to schedule and successfully complete interviews with 60 leaders from March through October 2000.

The final sample of 60 included 16 women of color (more than a quarter of the sample). One fifth of the leaders reported that their family had limited means when they were growing up. Their professions were in politics, technology, sports, arts, business, law, medicine, science, philanthropy, media, and academics. They worked in for-profit corporations, nonprofit organizations, governmental/ public agencies, non-governmental organizations, elective office, or were self-employed. They represented several generations of women, ranging in age from their 30s to their 70s who had achieved prominence in different periods in the recent social history of this country's acceptance

of women's paid employment. Due to differences in age they were at different points in their career and family formation. To bring a generational perspective to the analyses, they were grouped into the younger cohort (11 women, all of them age 45 or younger, most of whom are in their first decade of leadership), the middle group (24 women between ages 46 and 55 who were at the peak of their careers); and the older group (25 women ages 56 and higher who had been in leadership positions for close to two decades and sometimes longer).

Half of the leaders in the sample were currently married to a man. An additional 13 were in committed relationships, five of whom reported being in a relationship with a woman. Another five reported their relationship status as single, four as widowed, and three as divorced. The remaining four were either separated or checked "other" in response to the question on relationship status. Close to two-thirds of the sample reported having children.

A semi-structured interview format was used which gave interviewers leeway to pursue answers to questions with a request for elaborations and to rephrase subsequent questions in light of answers to previous points raised. Interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length and were audio taped with the permission of the interviewee. Of the 60 completed interviews, four were conducted by telephone.

Overview of interview themes

Following the approach of Glaser⁸, a grounded theory methodology was used to develop a coding scheme for analyzing the interview transcripts. What most differentiates grounded theory from other qualitative research strategies is that it allows the data to speak for themselves without being obscured or prejudged by hypotheses developed from other research. The aim, as clarified by Glaser, is to discover the theory implicit in the data.

The main categories that emerged pretty much followed from the questions in the semi-structured interview schedule. They were upbringing, role models, mentors, significant support during formative years, beginning of career path, challenges unique to women of color, roadblocks to career development, meaning of life, risks, confrontation, power, success, leadership of others self as leader, visibility, success strategies.⁹ Responses that were coded under many of these categories had a common theme: 95 percent of the leaders in the study described what distinguished their own leadership and that of leaders they admired with reference to practices that have been variously called democratic, participatory, or people-oriented.¹⁰ This characterization of leadership captured a democratic attitude vis-à-vis colleagues and subordinates, a concern for the well-being and career development of colleagues and subordinates, the sharing of power and information, a consideration for interpersonal relationships, and the participation of others in decision making. It was posed as the opposite of the old leadership paradigm of command and control.

Within this overarching characterization of leadership, there were multiple subcategories. In this paper, I single out two that were unexpected but emerged repeatedly. One of them was family roles, most frequently motherhood, either as a training ground or as a metaphor for leadership. This subcategory was an articulation of the democratic, people-oriented style of leadership in words borrowed from family roles. The second subcategory was discomfort with such words as power, success, risk, or confrontation, coded as 'resistance to masculine leadership language'. In the rest of the paper, I elaborate on mothering and refer to resistance to masculine leadership language.

Mothering as a Metaphor for Leadership

Language can be used to include, and to exclude, certain groups of people. Powerful groups get to

decide what metaphors will be used to describe experiences that reflect their groups' experiences. An example of this phenomenon in the sphere of work is that military and sports metaphors predominate in men's language on leadership, so much so that men and women who incorporate metaphors and symbols from women's experiences risk appearing less qualified to lead.¹¹ This negative view of motherhood was pointed out by Deborah Tannen, who in her research on workplace language noticed that "women frequently referred to themselves, or were referred to by others, as 'mothers' if they watched out for those who reported to them."¹² The manager-as-mother examples that Tannen cites, however, are clearly pejorative. Tannen then asked why some "women professionals perceive it as demeaning to be characterized as mothers." Her answer was twofold. First, professional women did not want to be associated with the home, their so-called "rightful" place. Second, Tannen argued that white, middle-class mothers "talk to their children" in a way that "helps create the image of mothers as relatively powerless,"¹³ which is an image professional women would like to avoid.¹⁴

What we found in the leaders' use of mothering metaphors is different from Tannen's depiction of "mother" as powerless and from Spender's (1985) notion of resistance. The following quotations illustrate the use of the "good mother" metaphor to describe exemplary leadership:

Women — because we're not supposed to be in control, because we're not supposed to give orders, we're supposed to serve, right? — have a very different leadership style and it really is modeled on the normative ideal for mothering. It's a normative ideal, you know, not that all mothers by any stretch of the imagination do this, but the normative ideal is what I mean... It's empowering rather than disempowering leadership where you inspire others, where you elicit from others their highest capacities.

That's what a mom is supposed to do, guide.... It's drawing the power, it's supporting, it's nurturing the power [and] everybody has some kind of power. It's power to create, power to care for others: the truly human power that we have (Caucasian leader, older cohort).

Also,

The leader I admired was the head of our department. She just set an example. She paid attention to [her staff] and how they were advancing. She made sure to point out when they did a really good job. She didn't say much about a bad job. She talked about a good job and they really responded to it. It's kind of like childrearing... She never was a mother but I thought those were very motherly traits. Taking care of the office, focusing on the positive, watching out for people's personal well being. Good mothers really focus on their kids (Asian American leader, older cohort).

The admired leader described by an African American leader also reinforces the metaphor of good mothering when she describes effective leadership as having a "maternal balance":

I tell you, this woman is amazing. She's so silent, yet so strong.... Here's a woman who's managing the sugar cane industry dominated by men. All these male farmers...look up to her for direction.... When she comes home she's so gentle and so loving but still so strong and so smart financially.... It's a nice balance of being strong but not being loud or aggressive with it, being strong and yet being strong with her femininity and secure with it where she's not going to let someone walk over her...but still keep that wonderful maternal balance at the same time. I think it's amazing. So, she has been one of my major role models (African American leader, younger cohort).

We heard other examples that captured the interweaving of maternal and family roles with leadership in descriptions of their own or other women's practice. This is what a Caucasian leader (middle cohort) who coaches young people to take leadership positions said about her approach:

I look at a lot of young people and I want to showcase them. I want to say, "You know you can do this." In a weird way it's like being a parent at work. A parent that isn't holding on but a parent that's letting go and saying, "You are so good and so capable and I know you can do this and let me help you."

Another Caucasian leader (middle cohort) described that she leads

warmly, like a mom. I try to lead like a, like a parent. And I'm proud of what I consider my woman-like characteristics. I'm warm, I'm very huggy. I have a sense of humor that lets me kind of fit...into very threatening subjects. I listen and listen and listen and listen.

Contrary to Tannen's concerns, clearly, close to 40% of the leaders in the study placed a high value on the mother role specifically, and family roles in general.

In the context of language use, it was instructive to note that none of the women we interviewed used sports metaphors to describe their leadership. This finding was surprising because many of the leaders said that they had excelled in sports as a girl and had had leadership opportunities on sports teams. This is seen clearly in the interview with one of the leaders, a self-proclaimed athletic person, who commented on men's frequent use of sports terminology at work as exclusionary:

One thing I've personally experienced is how male-centric and male-dominated corporate life

is. All the way from the rules and regulations to the language. And language is something I am really focused on a lot. And because I happen to be athletic and the [corporate] language is often sports dominated, I was able to operate in that environment really well. But I was also able to operate in it and call people on it. And there are women in particular who don't know the difference between a quarterback and a coach. So when...you use those words in a corporate setting, you're excluding people who might be from other countries or people who aren't familiar with sports. And so I would call them on that sort of language. So, also, [I] really appreciated leaders who were able to use language that was really inclusive (Caucasian leader, younger cohort).

As this quotation makes clear, the need to make language more inclusive is an equity issue. The results of our study suggest that some aspects of linguistic inclusiveness in the workplace may have already started.

Maternal Roles as Leadership Training

Among the different explanations given for learning how to be a leader, we observed an appreciation of maternal roles and to lesser extent sibling roles as a training ground. This was quite separate from receiving emotional support from family members or learning from them as one learns from role models or mentors. Rather, it referred to acquiring leadership skills through enacting family roles. Peter Senge also claims, in his influential book, *The Fifth Discipline*, that the real skills of leadership mirror the skills of effective parenting. While our findings about motherhood emerged spontaneously, in subsequent studies researchers have asked specific questions about the transfer of mothering skills and have gotten similar responses. As Ann Crittenden's book's title asserts, *If You've Raised Kids, You can Manage*

Anything (2004), parenting skills are transferable to the workplace and there are lessons of leadership that can be learned from raising children. More recently Moe Grzelakowski notes that motherhood is an overlooked training ground for leadership; it can harden soft women and soften the hard ones. Among other skills, mothers learn patience and to be accepting of idiosyncrasies in others.

Here is what leaders said about learning from their experiences as mothers: "When you deal with small children you just...develop a certain level of patience that...makes...dealing with adults sometimes easier. Having kids really forces you, if you're not already pretty good at time management, it just forces it" (Caucasian leader, younger cohort); "I think women are inherently more multitasking than men...any woman that goes through motherhood has to be" (Caucasian leader, younger cohort); and

One of the best training grounds for leadership is motherhood and if you can manage a group of small children, you can manage a group of bureaucrats. It's almost the same process.... It's partly team building. And a family is partly team building, too. Getting kids to work together and to feel the family feeling and not to be hitting each other and so forth (Caucasian leader, older cohort).

Sibling position also provided useful training for leadership for those who had responsibilities to look after their siblings: "I'm in the middle of six children, as number four. The first three were older...so that formed one group, and I was sort of the leader of the next group My mom called me 'little momma.' So I'd been born with sort of a leadership trait from day one, according to her, anyway." This Asian American leader (younger cohort) went on to say that her mother never worried about the younger children because she knew that "little momma" was in charge. In a slightly different vein, a Latina leader (younger

cohort) talked about how she learned to be a forceful person in her family because of her sibling position: "When you're the youngest of four older brothers you become very good at figuring out when and where and how to take your punches." She noted that the lessons she learned in having to stand up for herself in her family continue to serve her well at work: "I don't know what it means to be invisible in the workplace. I think that people manifest in the workplace how they manifest...at home."

Is Reference to Mothering a form of Resistance?

Sociolinguists have also elaborated on the importance of owning one's language as a form of resistance to the power of dominant groups. For example, according to Dale Spender, "Investing the language with one's own different and positive meanings is a priority for all oppressed groups."¹⁵ This raises the possibility that some leaders' reference to motherhood can be viewed as resistance to buying into the masculine notions of leadership. In this study, in highlighting the mothering metaphors for leadership and mothering and sibling roles as leadership training, I have identified a group of women who, I argue, have gone beyond resisting masculine language. These leaders proactively introduced words that affirmed their lived experience as women. They felt established and secure enough to draw on their work lives as women to describe their leadership training and leadership practice as derived from mothering.

I examined if the leaders who honored mothering were the same women who resisted using the traditional words of leadership such as power, success, risk, confrontation, or leader. There was only a small overlap in the groups — 19 leaders resisted one or more of the masculine-identified words to describe their practice using these words; 19 leaders honored mothering; six of these women did both. By and large, the "resistors" were different

from those who describe leadership in women-affirming ways because the majority of leaders who honored mothering did not express discomfort with the words "power," "success," "confrontation" or "leader." Indeed, there was somewhat more overlap in the group that honored mothering with leaders who claim to enjoy having power. Of the 19 who honored mothering and 21 who liked power, there were eight leaders who did both.

What I have identified here is a growing pluralism in female leadership: These leaders reveal that they construct their leadership practice in different ways. Just as they lead differently, they think of themselves differently. The notable commonality is that they are all accomplished leaders. Thus, it appears that these women's reference to motherhood is not so much as resisting male-associated terminology but an expression of their level of comfort with their own leadership.

Patterns in honoring mothering

The elements of recognizing mothering, one as a source of leadership metaphors, the other as a training ground for leadership emphasized two different aspects of leadership. Mothering metaphors for leadership tended to highlight the people-oriented relational practices associated with leadership such as fostering talent and empowering others. Mothering as a training ground, on the other hand, emphasized such leadership skills as effective time management, multitasking, and team building. Taken together, honoring mothering went beyond endorsing the importance of relational skills to include the acquisition of skills necessary to get the work done.

Race and ethnicity patterns. There were racial and ethnic differences in the tendency to honor mothering in leadership. Among leaders who emphasized the importance of motherhood, more women of color were likely to refer to mothering

as a metaphor for leadership and more Caucasian women recognized it as a training ground. Patricia Collins' examination of African American women and motherhood can shed light on why women of color were more likely to use mothering metaphors for leadership.¹⁶ Collins notes that in the Black community, mothers and "othermothers" (a term she uses to credit the women who assist birthmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities) have personified power in their struggles to help the less fortunate. Thus, Collins claims, motherhood is a symbol of power in the African American community. Powerful mothers do not dominate or control but bring people along, "uplift the race," so that vulnerable members of the community will be able to attain self-reliance.¹⁷ Her views on African American mothers may be applicable to other women of color whose racial and ethnic communities have also faced oppression. Thus, for leaders who are women of color, mothering metaphors for leadership allude to mothers' transformative power to bring people along.

There were also cohort differences among the leaders with respect to honoring family roles. Nearly half of the younger leaders honored the maternal/sibling roles as a training ground, while approximately only 10% of the two older cohorts did so. Why were the younger women, who have had many more opportunities to train for their current positions than have the older cohorts, more likely to mention family roles as good training? It is likely that family roles, as siblings or as mothers, are more salient (fresher in their memory) for the cohort who is younger. Therefore, they can more readily recall the lessons they learned in these roles. Perhaps, more importantly, their greater sense of security and comfort in the world of leadership played a role here. The younger cohort was subjected to less severe gender discrimination and faced a more welcoming world than the two older cohorts. They appear to be more at home in their leadership roles.

Motherhood Language versus Leader as a Man: Hope for New Generations

It is in the context of men and masculinity permeating leadership that women leaders' use of motherhood language represents hope for new generations of women. That some of the leaders who participated in this study were comfortable enough in their positions to talk about their leadership in purely female terms by invoking motherhood suggests that today it is possible for women to bring a more integrated sense of themselves to their leadership. This is a hopeful sign for young women who aspire to leadership but do not want to disconnect with their "female side" to become leaders: it is possible to be a prominent leader and remain a whole and integrated woman. When I presented these results to a group of undergraduate women, a senior raised her hand to comment that she had been reluctant to consider a career in management because she did not think she could be herself in a male dominated world. She added that she was encouraged and relieved to learn that these days it is possible to be a whole woman and succeed in leadership positions.

Recognizing good mothering as a metaphor and as training for leadership is a key finding because it represents a radical departure from the early traditional advice for women aspiring to leadership to "become more like men." Some of the leaders in this study were secure enough in their work roles that they could describe leadership using language derived from their lived experience as women. At least among some women who have reached top levels of leadership, there is a level of comfort that allowed them to bring a more integrated sense of being a woman and a leader to their work. This is a positive development that contrasts with many anecdotal stories of women feeling the pressure to leave behind their motherhood and other aspects of being a woman when they enter the world of paid employment.

Highlighting this finding is not about glorifying motherhood — although crediting good mothering with leadership qualities has been overdue. Rather, it is about drawing attention to the “ownership” some women bring to their leader roles. Thus, I am not advancing a new way to conceptualize leadership as primarily maternal behavior. More than anything else, this finding suggests that in the traditionally masculine realm of leadership there are the beginnings of female strongholds where women feel comfortable. Just as men have used military and sports metaphors to talk about their leadership, so some women leaders are talking about it from a decidedly female perspective by using female language.

Limitations of the Research

While I did not report percentages to describe the general findings, I did use them for illuminating patterns of relationships. For example, when I examined whether older and younger cohorts of leaders differed with respect to mentioning mothering and sibling roles as a training ground for leadership, I reported percentages in order to discern patterns across generational cohorts. Even in these cases, readers should not infer that the percentages I reported reflect patterns among women leaders in the U.S. They merely reflect patterns observed in this highly selective sample.

Additionally, the reader needs to keep in mind that the data on which analyses are based are self-reports, which are interviewees' construction of reality as they see it. Because we did not have multiple independent sources of information on each leader, my analyses reflect the strengths and weaknesses of self-report data. The major strength of self-reports is that each person who is interviewed is an expert on her subjective experience, yielding firsthand in-depth information. Its weaknesses include a possible self-enhancement bias, as people have a tendency to place their actions in a positive light. Self-reports

are also dependent on people recognizing and acknowledging events and their views on what caused them. In spite of these weaknesses of self-report data, self-reports are appropriate for our goal of learning from women leaders because the leaders are the experts on their own experience.

Implications

Change in leadership language. As exemplary leadership moves away from the “command and control” mentality to embrace democratic, people-oriented approaches, and as men and women of color and white women occupy more leadership positions, leadership language will inevitably change. What I have reported here can be viewed as a harbinger of that change. Next steps in this process will be greater diversity in leaders. Along with that development will come men's increasing references to language from other parts of their life — including their family life. Here, I am talking about not the “father knows best” notions of command and control, but rather the nurturing, caregiving that men engage in family roles as fathers, brothers, uncles, and grandfathers. In a few years, we may hear men describe their leadership as, “I lead like a father, with patience and caring; I make sure to provide the necessary resources so that my employees can shine,” or, “I learned some of my leadership skills such as time management and setting priorities from waking up in the middle of the night to do a night feeding for our baby son and scheduling being at my daughter's soccer meets.”

I noted earlier that the leaders in the study did not use language from sports to describe their leadership practices or to attribute their skills to the leadership roles they had on sports teams. As more girls and women participate in sports this, too, is likely to change. However, for this to occur, language that grows out of women and girls' unique experiences in sports will need to be integrated into mainstream culture. Today if

women were to use sports language, it would be language associated with men's experiences in the locker room, on the baseball diamond, or huddled around a quarterback. Currently, we do not have women's experiences reflected in sports language that puts women in a positive light. "He throws like a girl," is not a compliment. Perhaps the only exception is the two-handed backhand that conjures up Chris Evert's dominance in tennis. Unfortunately, the two-handed backhand has not yet made its way into leadership language.

Integration of skills learned from family roles into work roles. I noted earlier that some women leaders' use of motherhood and family referents suggests it is possible to be a prominent leader and

remain a whole and integrated woman. Not only does this hold hope for young women aspiring to leadership positions, it is also hopeful for young men. When people can feel that it is acceptable to bring more of themselves to their work, they become more "authentic" in the sense that parts of who they are is not shut out from the parts that show up for work.¹⁸ Authenticity, or bringing different parts of one's self to a task, is a valuable growth engendering process.¹⁹ The more people bring previously closed off parts of themselves – for example their family roles – to their leadership, the more internal resources they will have for doing their job. This kind of valuing and integration of skills learned in different roles can only enrich one's life, whether you are a man or a woman.

Endnotes

¹Hollander and Julian, 1969.

²Eden and Leviatan 1975. See also, Rush, Thomas, and Lord 1977.

³Ayman 1993; see also Lord, DeVader, and Alliger 1986.

⁴Schein 1973, 1975; Schein, Mueller, and Jacobson 1989.

⁵There are a few studies that show variations in the content of implicit theory characteristics.

For example, Ayman (1993) cites unpublished data from Ayman and Bronnenberg (1992), which shows that the gender role identity of the person rating the leadership qualities makes a difference. Women who scored high on femininity and men who scored low on femininity expected ideal leaders to have more masculine characteristics such as controlling and directive.

⁶The critique of implicit leadership theory is not about disputing the fact that there is indeed a widely shared stereotype that supports the exclusion of women from rising to the top of the corporate hierarchy. Rather, the *content* of the stereotype, that women are not suited for leadership positions in corporations, has not been borne out by research. Notwithstanding the prevalence of implicit gendered assumptions about leaders, in actual organizational settings, the results of field studies have shown that there are *few* if any differences in how male and female managers are perceived. Eagly and Johnson (1990) in their meta-analysis of gender and leadership style authors showed that in assessment studies carried out at work settings, in contrast to laboratory experiments, no gender differences in leadership style were found with respect to the tendency to lead in an interpersonal- versus a task-oriented style. However, women were found to lead in a more democratic style than men. This and other findings on the positive evaluations of women managers by people who know them and their work, suggests that implicit leadership theory does not operate when there is concrete information about a woman's managerial qualities. Indeed, male and female managers' *own* ratings of their leadership styles do not show gender differences. For example, Thomas and Littig 1985, who studied leader self-reports, found no gender differences using the Leader Opinion Questionnaire.

⁷Purposive sampling is non-random sampling strategy in which respondents are specifically sought out according to the purpose of the data gathering (Patton 1990; Marshall & Rossman 1989). In our case it was to obtain a diverse sample.

⁸Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1995, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967.

⁹Two trained coders independently applied the coding system to six interviews. Their agreement on the main categories ranged from 90% to 100% while agreement in the subcategories ranged from 70% to 100%.

¹⁰In the last 15 years there have been a number of books characterizing the latest developments in the current business environment as requiring a "new" way of leading. For example, Peter Vaill argues that the constant turbulence that defines the business world calls for leaders who are continually engaged in learning how to manage the fast pace of change and suggests that leaders need to bring their whole identity into work, including their sense of connection and spirituality (1996; 1998). Max DePree in *Leadership Jazz* (1993) defines leadership as an improvisational art in which intuitive thinking, openness, connecting, and caring are necessary components. Peter Block proposes similar ideas in *Stewardship*, in which he urges leaders to accept accountability for the well being of the larger organization — to serve rather than to control (1993). Joyce Fletcher, in *Disappearing Acts*, her 1999 study of female design engineers, details the daily "relational work" that needs to be performed to succeed in getting a job done. Fletcher notes that the ability to function effectively on a team requires relational skills and emotional intelligence — that is, to work effectively with others and to understand the emotional context of the work environment.

¹¹For a review of socio-linguistic research, which shows that differences that distinguish women's language

from men's language men also reify women's subordinate social status, see Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley (1983). Moreover, men's language tends to exclude women by drawing on male experiences that are not part of women's experience. Clarke's (1997) study of women's comprehension of the use of sports metaphors in legal jargon is a case in point. The study found that women attorneys felt pressured to learn the language of sports to function in the legal profession. Clark concludes that sports metaphors were often used during court cases to express the competitive nature of a situation and to enforce male bonding thus excluding females.

¹²Tannen (1994, p. 161).

¹³Tannen (1994, p. 162).

¹⁴When Tannen acknowledges the widespread use of family metaphors at work such as "bringing up a younger colleague" or "placing limits on junior colleagues" (1994, p. 218), she does not view these practices as honoring the family. Her attitude is less affirming of mothering and families as appropriate metaphors. It is as if she acknowledges that family roles leak into the workplace when she observes that "family relationships are probably the model through which we understand all relationships" (1994, p. 216). She cautions that "if you remind co-workers of members of their family, it can have a positive or a negative impact" (1994, p. 216).

¹⁵1985, p. 6.

¹⁶Collins (1991) notes that "within African American communities, women's innovative and practical approaches to mothering under oppressive conditions often bring power and recognition" (p. 133).

¹⁷Collins (1991, p. 132).

¹⁸Michelle Seligson and Patricia Stall have applied the importance of meaningful connections with others, authenticity in relationships, and mutual empathy promote the growth of caregivers in after school settings. Seligson, M. & Stall, P. (2003). *Bringing yourself to work: A guide to successful staff development in after-school programs*. New York: Teachers College Press.

¹⁹Authenticity is one of the growth-fostering processes articulated by proponents of relational cultural theory. See Jordan, J. Walker, M., & Hartling, L. (Eds.). (2004). *The complexity of connection: Writings from the Stone Center's Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*. New York: Guildford Press.

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