

Women Leaders' Discursive Constructs of Leadership

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the leadership discourses of fifteen female leaders using a narrative survey. The storylines consistently focused on the fundamental concepts of upholding ethical principles and striving for constructive global transformation. These ideas spark a discussion about the moral dilemmas that are inherent in the job of leadership. The paper proposes the development of a framework for leadership ethics that is influenced by the ideas of a feminist ethic of care. Furthermore, it advocates for the inclusion of environmental and objective aspects while contemplating ethical considerations in leadership. The aim of this research is to determine if there is a connection between the development of leadership qualities and the feminist value of compassion in regard to the professional choices made by women. This study aims to examine the perspectives and firsthand accounts of women in leadership roles by using a narrative survey based on Kenneth Burke's conceptual framework. This research aims to shed light on the complex relationships between women, leadership, and the feminist ideal of compassion by analyzing the narratives of women in leadership positions.

Keywords: discursive constructs of leadership, constructive global transformation, feminist ethic of care

INTRODUCTION

Several female members of the American Psychological Association (APA) were deeply disappointed when a Special Issue on Leadership was published in the American Psychologist in January 2007. These participants believed that the subject matter did not sufficiently address the challenges experienced by women in leadership roles. Chin and Sanchez-Hucles (2007) criticized the publication for overlooking matters related to diversity and the confluence of identities. After the aforementioned discussion, the American Psychologist journal released a public statement in response to the dispute. Several organizations, including the Executive Committee of Division 35 of the American Psychological Association, The Society for the Psychology of Women, and the Women's Committee of the National Council of Schools of Professional Psychology, have given their official support to the proclamation. Furthermore, Dr. Robert Stenberg, the editor of the special issue, and Dr. Norman Anderson, the chief

editor of the American Psychologist, have both publicly apologized for their involvement in the publishing. In addition, Anderson has given his consent for the publishing of the following special edition. The training will provide special emphasis to the development of leadership skills and will specifically focus on addressing challenges connected to gender and diversity. This topic might be educational for two distinct objectives. Firstly, it emphasizes the ongoing exclusion of gender concerns and other types of diversity in the field of leadership studies. The second argument suggests that gender, although it is a socially constructed concept influenced by language and mutually affecting prevailing cultural standards, is still being examined in the field of social sciences as if it were an unchangeable identity. On the other hand, the initial claim suggests that gender is analyzed in a way that aligns with a changing and complex identity. The letter received by J. Chrisler on February 2, 2007 included an attachment that provided details about Stemberg's remorse. Stemberg expressed remorse and offered additional elucidation, explaining that he excluded gender and diversity concerns because he structured the special issue based on leadership paradigms (such as the trait, situational, and systems paradigms) rather than specific demographic groups (such as underrepresented minorities, men, and women). After apologizing, Stemberg proceeded to discuss the situation. After completing their investigation, the person stated a desire to work for a "diverse organization." Furthermore, they forecasted delivering two supplementary presentations, one focusing on "women's leadership" and the other on "leadership in culturally diverse groups." Thorough deliberation should be given to the preposition he has selected. The essentialist perspective oversimplifies the complexities of gender by categorizing individuals into pre-established groups based on specific traits and features, without considering their actual gender (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Emphasizing the attributes of female leaders might be seen as accepting an essentialist viewpoint. Anderson's regrettable comments reflected Stemberg's viewpoint, as he asserted, "There are multiple aspects of this matter from which we can derive contentment!" Unfortunately, Anderson conveyed a viewpoint that closely resembled that of Stemberg. In addition, he said that an official request for the publishing of a feature piece in the APA Monitor had already been submitted. The essay would have focused on the progression of female psychologists in attaining leadership roles. In February 2007, an attachment was included in J. Chrisler's personal correspondence. In an effort to redefine the conversation around the impact of gender on leadership, Additional

players, such as Division 35 of the American Psychological Association (APA), endeavored to change the conversation from a viewpoint that emphasizes inherent qualities to one that focuses on ideologies. This move was taken to redirect the conversation of how gender affects leadership. Chin and Sanchez-Hucles (2007) argued that the listed papers failed to acknowledge the influence of diversity on the development of leadership effectiveness, leadership styles, and leader traits. The desired outcome was successfully attained with this. This essential shift in emphasis must occur without delay. Although the study of women and leadership is a recent addition to the literature on leadership, most previous research on this subject did not recognize gender as a significant factor or include the distinct experiences of women in their studies. It is essential to bear this in mind when reading this. From this, it can be deduced that men have had a substantial impact on shaping and spreading dominant narratives about leadership, primarily by drawing from their own personal life experiences. Two prominent aspects of the male-centric viewpoint on leadership are the limited presence of women in leadership positions in the United States and the widespread belief that successful leadership necessitates masculine qualities. The third element of the leadership community's male-centric perspective is the belief that women are unfit for leadership roles. Although there has been a steady increase in the number of women joining the workforce in recent years, the proportion of women in leadership roles in the United States remains significantly inadequate. Notwithstanding the increase in the proportion of women in the workforce in recent decades, this fact remains unchanged. Brady (2005, Mar. 25a) reports that a very low proportion of women hold high-paying occupations. More precisely, a mere 5% of women occupy managerial roles, 16% engage in formal responsibilities within organizations, and 13.6% participate on boards of directors. In addition, there are only nine women who hold executive leadership roles in US firms that are listed among the top 500. Organizations serve as miniature replicas of society, reflecting and strengthening the power and gender dynamics that exist in the larger social context. Since its first publishing in 1977, Kanter's famous book "Men and Women in the Corporation" has sparked conversations among researchers about the gendered dynamics inherent in different organizational structures. A comprehensive compilation of academic articles has been cited, including works by Fondas (1997), Acker and Tancred (1992), Mills and Tancred (1992), Acker (1990, 1992), Buzzanell (1994), Court (1997), Ferguson (1984), and other others. According to Fine and

Buzzanell (2000), the authors show a bias towards "male ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and developing identity, while at the same time undervaluing their female equivalents" (p. 130). This is because the writers hold the notion that males are superior to girls in terms of intellect, emotion, behavior, and identity formation. Furthermore, they illuminate the several ways in which organizational norms, policies, and procedures give priority to the inclusion of males while marginalizing females. A study based on empirical evidence has shown that organizations tend to highly value and reward leadership styles that display masculine characteristics (Chin, 2004). This is accurate throughout the considerable diversity of leadership ideas. According to Fine and Buzzanell (2000), there is a widely held view in the United States and other Western countries that leaders tend to display traits that are commonly associated with males. Some of these traits encompass forthrightness, assertiveness, supremacy, and authority. Although there has been a recent rise in the proportion of women in management roles, academic studies suggest that men still have an unfair edge when it comes to possessing the qualities that are linked with effective managers (Powell & Butterfield, 1989; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002). Although there is currently an increasing trend in the percentage of women in managerial roles, this situation nevertheless persists. Although masculinity is a notion that is influenced by culture and society, Izraeli and Adler (1994) found a strong association between masculinity and leadership. According to Schein's (2001) study, as stated by the author (p. 682), the results contradict the idea that "think manager—think male" is universally regarded, especially among males. This is especially true when it comes to guys. The widespread assumption that individuals in prominent leadership roles in the United States should display higher levels of masculinity leads to the scarcity of women seeking such positions. However, the idea that leadership and masculinity are closely connected has significant consequences for the field of leadership theory. The insufficient inclusion of women's viewpoints and experiences in scholarly discourse on leadership has significantly impacted the development and understanding of leadership theory. This study primarily investigates the viewpoints and encounters of Caucasian women. Nevertheless, the authors concede that the current leadership theory lacks adequate inclusion or representation of Latinos, Latinas, as well as individuals of color. The aim of this study is to examine the manner in which various discourses portray influential white women. The objective of this research was to ascertain whether women's verbal expressions of leadership offer new perspectives on

the concept and theory of leadership. The investigation was guided by the following inquiries:

Writings about women in leadership roles

Gender issues in the field of leadership studies are often overlooked and ignored. Within the domain of women in leadership roles, a significant amount of scholarly investigation has been focused on understanding potential distinctions in the leadership ideologies of men and women. Several empirical studies have confirmed the idea that women have a unique leadership style, or at the very least, the leadership styles of men and women are not significantly different. The manner in which females achieve leadership positions. As previously mentioned, there are contradictions in the results of this specific investigation. Academic research indicates that female leaders are more inclined to use inclusive, collaborative, and compassionate approaches compared to male leaders when it comes to creating a fair environment and encouraging participation (Adler, 2005; Chin, 2004; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Greenberg & Sweeney, 2005; Rosener, 1990). In addition, the firm utilizes transformational leadership to inspire and motivate staff to take on unconventional and challenging tasks. According to Kouzes and Posner (1990), women's studies in communication is an academic field that strongly emphasizes the significance of behaving appropriately and offering constructive feedback to persons in lower positions. In addition, experts such as Rosener (1990), Trinidad and Normore (2005), Burke and Collins (2001), and others have noted that it forces individuals to prioritize the common interests of the group rather than merely focusing on their own. Empirical study has demonstrated the efficacy of this approach in enhancing group dynamics. In addition, as emphasized by Yammarino et al. (1997), it emphasizes the importance of developing personalized relationships with subordinates. According to a 1996 poll conducted by Bass et al. among Fortune 500 businesses, female CEOs were consistently rated higher by their subordinates than male executives in terms of transformative leadership. Furthermore, a study conducted by Greenberg and Sweeney (2005) has shown empirical data suggesting that women engage in acts of altruism more frequently than men. Empirical evidence, on the other hand, indicates that males have a little lower propensity to participate in acts of charity compared to women. In addition, Fletcher (1999) discovered that women often consider the most efficient ways to contribute to society while choosing a career. In addition, Otten (1995) found data indicating that women engage in intimate and sympathetic communication

within the framework of their interpersonal interactions. Existing research indicates that there are differences in leadership philosophies between men and women. Women tend to prioritize values such as cooperation, communication, equality, and concern. Researchers have also analyzed relevant leadership theories and professional motivations for women in connection with this issue. According to Whatley (1998), female educators regarded their profession as their vocation or calling. According to Smulyan (2004), education is a political effort aimed at addressing social inequality and injustice. Bridges (1989) found that women with ambitious aspirations are more inclined than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds to choose professions in human services, education, social work, and medicine. This choice is in line with their main goal of initiating significant changes on a global scale. The extensive meta-analysis of women's leadership styles conducted by Eagly and Johnson (1990), Kolb (1999), and Powell (1990) reveals that there is no statistically significant difference in the behavior of men and women. This conclusion was derived from an analysis of multiple studies concerning the leadership strategies employed by women. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) contend that the study conducted during that time period, which claimed to uncover disparities between sexes, may have been misleading. This is because studies that did not show these differences were intentionally left out from the existing body of literature. The circumstances remained unchanged throughout the investigation. Pounder and Coleman (2002) contend that despite the constraints of studying gender disparities in leadership, it is imperative to explore the underlying variables that influence individuals' perceptions of these inequalities, even in situations where no tangible differences are present. They assert that this assertion holds true even when there are no noticeable differences. Recognizing the prevailing focus of meta-analyses on gender-specific behavioral differences can help explain the conflicting findings in this area of study. The notion of "divergences in behavior" is crucial and should be preserved in memory. Most of the noteworthy study on the leadership styles of women is based on data obtained directly from women in leadership roles. Adler (2005), Burke and Collins (2001), Chin (2004), Greenberg and Sweeney (2005), Rosener (1990), and Yammarino et al. (1997) have achieved similar outcomes in their studies. The presented material is insufficient to substantiate the assertion that gender discrepancies exist in the practical implementation of leadership philosophies. Individuals who possess the capacity to

However, it is crucial to recognize that Marlene G. Fine 185 may provide a leadership approach that attracts

backing from a particular segment of women. Women's preconceived ideas about leadership, which may not align with this specific understanding of leadership and leaders, are likely to impede their effectiveness in their roles. While opinions and deeds may not always align, the extensive research on women's leadership styles offers a distinct viewpoint that questions previous ideas about men in leadership positions. This concern is consistent with the career choices made by women and their expressed ambition to improve the lives of others. Nevertheless, it is imperative to approach the examination of women's leadership styles with caution and thoroughness, regardless of whether the evidence is derived from self-reports or behavioral observation. The discussion centers on the controversial issue of women holding leadership roles. Prior to examining the differences in leadership styles between men and women, it is necessary to adopt an essentialist perspective. Furthermore, it simplifies the concept of leadership to a collection of contradictory traits. Furthermore, numerous academic studies support traditional gender roles in professional environments by examining how female leadership styles are presented in the larger conversation within organizations about the essential leadership and management skills needed in the modern era. This is accomplished by placing the representation of women in positions of leadership within the larger context of corporate communication. The contextualization highlights the remarkable and distinctive contributions that females bring to institutions. According to Greenberg and Sweeney (2005), modern work environments characterized by values like cooperation, transparent communication, and teamwork can greatly advantage women in positions of leadership (p. 36). Trinidad and Normore (2005) found that women are more inclined to utilize transformational leadership tactics as a result of socialization processes. This belief is based on the writers' strong conviction that women have been the recipients of these procedures. The authors contend that women, by virtue of their exceptional qualifications, possess the necessary skills to effectively manage the increasingly varied workforces found in global organizations. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) contend that in order to uphold the gender-based classification of women's responsibilities in organizational settings, it is crucial to highlight the "distinctive abilities" of women when assigning specific skills to gender-related characteristics. In their inquiry, the researchers used the term "women's unique capabilities" to refer to the connection between certain skill sets and gendered traits. Although it is acknowledged that women bring significant viewpoints to organizations, there are

still barriers preventing them from acquiring and applying expertise that has traditionally been controlled by men. Although women possess the natural potential to overcome these barriers, they nonetheless face difficulties.

Conclusion

This study enhances leadership theory and advances leadership research by examining women's discursive ideas of ethical leadership. An inherent limitation of the study was that the complete female sample comprised exclusively of Caucasian individuals, with the overwhelming majority being Americans. Consequently, the research failed to encompass a broad range of ethnic diversity. Additional inquiry is necessary to examine the leadership experiences of women who exemplify a wide range of racial, national, and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, the findings of this investigation are only temporary. Theoretical notions derived from narrative surveys have the capacity to form the foundation for the development of novel research directions and theories in the field of study. This study provides initial data that supports the idea of including location and goal as ethically acceptable elements in the list of leadership components. Moreover, this research presents a model of ethical leadership that is rooted in feminist care ethics. Further inquiry and the formulation of theoretical frameworks are required to fully explore these two findings.

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