GENDER, LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the topic of gender discrimination within the realm of organizational leadership is approached in a very specific way. We will not be exploring the various normative frameworks that could support equality in the workplace, such as appeals to basic human rights, social contracts, deontological duties or utilitarian concerns. Instead, we will seek to understand the tacit gender prejudices inherent in organizational practices and the embodied effects of such prejudices for the individuals involved. We will find that despite an overt acknowledgement of equal rights and opportunities, many women and men still experience very real barriers in terms of their access to leadership opportunities. In many cases, the so-called "glass ceiling" or as the metaphor has recently been recast, the "leaking pipe-line" (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2007), cannot be explained by the existence of discriminatory policies. Instead, we will investigate the subtle gendered prejudices and expectations about how women and men lead that lie at the heart of the challenges many individuals face in finding their leadership role in organizations.

We will see that these tacit prejudices and expectations are institutionalized in everyday practices and eventually shape individuals'

embodied existence within organizations. This may cause some women, and some men who fail to conform to gender stereotypes, to feel the urge to leave the organization, refuse leadership positions, or take them on with great discomfort and difficulty. In this chapter, the implications that the interplay between gender and organizational practices has for leadership are unpacked, and alternative leadership models and gender inclusive strategies of resistance and change are explored.

APPROACHES TO SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP THEORY

Within the feminist literature, there have been a number of approaches to understanding the differences between men and women and addressing matters of equality and opportunity. In this section, we try to draw out the implications that each of these approaches could have for leadership theory. It will become clear that our beliefs about the origins and manifestation of sexual differences has implications for our thinking about the leadership role(s) women and men can play in organizations.

For instance, Elizabeth Grosz (2005, 6) distinguishes between "egalitarian feminists" and "difference feminists." Egalitarian feminists were concerned with exposing the injustices of patriarchal societies, and fighting for equal rights and opportunities for men and women. They exposed the way in which sexist prejudices institutionalized inequality, and perpetuated the marginalization of women in society. They claimed equal opportunities for women by arguing that men and women were the bearers of equal human rights and dignity. The gains that these early feminists have made are evident in the fact that at least on paper, most organizations claim to uphold equality in the workplace and have institutionalized non-discrimination policies on the basis of sex, race, or sexual preference. However, the acknowledgment of equality on the basis

of abstract principles of human dignity and respect did not come without a price. In the first place, it made it possible for organizations to overtly claim principled acquiescence with the idea of human rights, dignity and equality, while tacitly perpetuating some of their established practices and prejudices institutionally. Secondly, the fact that the discourse is centered on "equality" made it difficult for women to lobby around issues specific to women in the workplace, out of fear that this might undermine the argument that they are essentially "the same" as men. This approach therefore cannot account for women's unique contributions to their organizations and society in general. Furthermore, the importance of the very real fight against oppression cannot be recognized or acknowledged from this perspective (Ely and Padavic 2007, 1126).

The subtle gendered prejudices and expectations about how women and men lead lie at the heart of the challenges many individuals face in finding their leadership role in organizations

In the leadership realm, the "equality" discourse often confronted women with the challenge to "do as men have always done," or better. As such, they had to adopt leadership practices that existed within the patriarchal organizations in which they found themselves. In the process these female pioneers often unwittingly perpetuated predominantly "male" leadership stereotypes. While these equality-feminists succeeded in making the argument for equal rights and opportunities, their efforts did not allow women to develop their individual leadership styles, nor did they challenge existing stereotypes about leadership.

An alternative approach to feminism is to insist on respect for the differences between men and women, and an appreciation of the unique role that women could play in the workplace. Feminists who have adopted

this approach include important figures like Carol Gilligan, Nancy Hartsock and Nancy Chodorow. These women emphasized the social and psychological specificities of the feminine gender identity as well as the way it shapes individuals' perspective on their role in society. They argue that women have their own unique "voice" or perspective that should be included within societal discourses. From the perspective of these "feminists of difference," it was possible to argue that the unique capacities, traits and predispositions of women were "functional" in terms of supplementing gaps that were typically present within the existing leadership corps (Ely and Padavic 2007, 1125).

The problem with this approach is that it tends to set up essentialist dichotomies between men and women. For instance, it contends that women are more caring, more communicative, and more cooperative than men. Surveys, like that used by the International Women's Forum in 1984, tended to solidify existing gender biases in their categorization of traits that respondents identified within themselves. In these surveys, female traits included being excitable, gentle, emotional, submissive, sentimental, understanding, compassionate, sensitive and dependent. Male traits included being dominant, aggressive, tough, assertive, autocratic, analytical, competitive and independent. Being adaptive, tactful, sincere, conscientious, reliable, predictable, systematic and efficient were considered gender-neutral traits (Rosener 2011, 29).

An unfortunate consequence of this essentialist approach is that women are always associated with the inferior characteristic of the binary opposition: women are emotional, not rational, women are impulsive, not goal-directed, etc. Empirical studies suggest that most respondents regard the various stereotypical male leadership traits as typical of the behavior of a "good manager" (Gmür 2006, 116). Out of the number of ideal managerial traits only two "feminine" traits are considered desirable for managers, i.e. being "adept at dealing with people" and "cooperative."

All the other ideal traits, like being analytical, competent, confident, convincing, decisive, efficient, fore-sighted, independent etc. are associated with the male stereotype. We will attend to these gendered stereotypes in more detail in section three.

Unfortunately these prejudices have been uncritically absorbed into some business ethics discourses. This has led to the claim that feminist ethics essentially pursues "care ethics." Borgerson (2007, 485) has commented on the problematic conflation between feminist ethics and care ethics within the business ethics literature. She (2007, 488) points out that business ethics textbooks like that of Crane and Matten (Oxford University Press, 2004), describe "care ethics" as a feminine approach that solves ethical problems through "intuition" and "personal subjective assessment." Though Borgerson does not deny that certain articulations of care ethics display feminist concerns, she argues that the association of care ethics with feminism tends to essentialize the gendered experience. Because of this, a proper understanding of the causes of gender prejudices and marginalizing practices is never developed. She also points out that there are other "caring" ethical approaches, which are not at all feminist in orientation, such as that of Emmanuel Levinas and other philosophers working on what can be described as an "ethics of proximity."

It is clear that both egalitarian feminism and difference feminism fail to address the origins of the stereotypes that exist about men and women. An important question that animated feminist discourses is whether the differences between men and women were the result of nature or nurture, or both. In other words, are men and women determined by their biology or are they shaped by their personal circumstances and their cultural and social milieu? In order to address these issues, many feminists invested considerable energy into making the case for a distinction between sex and gender. While sex refers to those aspects of physiology and anatomy

that are biologically determined, gender is not. "Gender" is the result of early childhood experiences, societal dynamics, power interests, organizational politics and the social constructions that are inevitably part of all these spheres of life (Ridgeway and Cornell cited in Ely and Padavic 2007, 1128). The same goes for the distinction between female and feminine. The fact that many individuals are born "female" does not necessarily mean that they will necessarily conform to stereotypically feminine ways of being and operating in the world. The powerful implications of this distinction lie in the fact that though we may all be born with specific biological sexual characteristics, much can be changed in the way our gender predispositions develop as we grow older and function within society.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND "THE LIVED BODY"

Helpful as the distinction between sex and gender, female and feminine may be, acknowledging "gender" as a social construction may not take us far enough. In fact, the distinction between sex and gender may rely on an uncritical acceptance of the dichotomy between nature and culture, which posits the body as a fixed entity. As a result, we may underestimate how institutional practices of socializing and enculturation, i.e. everyday habits, impact on our bodies and our physical experience of our world.

The limits of viewing gender primarily as a social construction lie in its incapacity to acknowledge the material reality of being a woman or a man in an organizational context. Here, the work of feminists such as Judith Butler, Iris Marion Young and Elizabeth Grosz becomes invaluable. They help us understand that though we might readily agree that gender is a social construction solidified through discourses and practices, we should not underestimate the fact that these discourses and practices have very real effects on the body. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) has

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convincingly argued that gender is a social performance, and that the sexed body is derived from such social performativity. Gender is therefore not a mere linguistic term that denotes social and cultural perceptions; instead, it is enacted within real-life practices, and as such, physical changes and adjustments in bodily comportment occur incrementally over time.

In her seminal essay "Throwing like a girl," Iris Young (2005) argues convincingly that the way in which women use their bodies, or develop their physical motor skills, has everything to do with how they are physically oriented in the world from a very early age. Girls are often told that they are fragile, may get hurt more easily than boys, that they must seek help when facing physical challenges, or avoid it altogether. As such, they experience the world as a more threatening place, leading to a distinct type of bodily comportment, like keeping their legs close together when sitting or walking, crossing their arms protectively across their breasts, or carrying objects close to their bodies. They also develop patterns of cooperation rather than competition. These practices are not merely social in nature, they lead to real changes in women's bodies and ways of being in the world.

This however need not lead to deterministic or essentialistic conclusions about men and women. Young (2005) argues that we have to understand the interplay between facticity and freedom. Facticity refers to those biological traits and predispositions that we are born with and which develop as part of our physical existence over time, whereas freedom involves the projects that we select to pursue throughout our lives. Both are involved in our embodied experience and actions in the world. Young (2004) employs Toril Moi's alternative to the construct of gender: the so-called "lived body." She defines it as: "a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific socio-cultural context; it is the body-in-situation." Moi disputes the clear distinction between nature and

culture by arguing that the lived body is always encultured. According to Young each individual has the ontological freedom to respond to her facticity, to construct and express herself through her projects. Through her accomplishments, it becomes possible to transform her surroundings and relationships, often in cooperation with others. However, the unfortunate reality is that many individuals experience situations in which their surroundings make them feel distinctly uncomfortable.

The construct of the "lived body" allows us to make very distinct gains: it undermines the nature versus culture dichotomy and also takes us beyond essentialist gender binaries by creating spaces for ontological freedom that could function in our design of our life project(s). However, Young argues that this does not mean that we should give up the concept of gender, since it plays an important part in social structures and their implications for creating or curtailing people's freedoms to pursue their life projects. "Gender" is a conceptual tool that allows us to describe and diagnose the way in which the differences between men and women, and their relationships with one another, are institutionalized. As such, it also creates the conceptual space from within which these stereotypes can be challenged.

The value of combining the construct of the lived body with the concept of gender is that it allows us to pose a series of questions on various levels. On the one hand, gender constructs help us unpack the assumptions that underpin certain leadership expectations that exist in organizations, as well as the prejudices to which they give rise. What we may discover is that a series of binaries are mapped onto male and female bodies in a way that makes it very difficult for individuals to develop patterns that fall outside the stereotypical gender molds. However, without the category of gender, it becomes next to impossible to diagnose the problem and describe it in any meaningful way. One has to refer to the gendered male/female stereotypes to describe their operation in practice.

Such descriptions allow resistance to emerge. We may therefore do well to explore the way in which male and female characteristics play out within their institutional leadership roles, in order to explore the assumptions and prejudices that support it. This may allow us to explore different models and practices by which to incrementally modify the lived experience of both men and women.

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GENDER CONSTRUCTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIVED BODY

One of the central assumptions that have become institutionalized within many organizational practices is the notion that women are society's care-takers. This care-taking takes place primarily as unpaid labor within the private sphere (Young 2005). In the workplace this manifests in the designation of any kind of job that requires care of individuals' bodily, emotional or domestic needs as "female jobs," with a concomitant expectation of it being compensated at a lower level. Since there is general acceptance that leadership positions within organizations typically go beyond care-taking towards roles that require strong direction, control and agency, women may often be excluded from consideration for such opportunities.

It comes as no surprise that gendered modes of leadership are described as either "agentic" or "communal" (Eagly and Carli 2007, 68). Women's concern for treating others compassionately is thought to display a communal orientation, whereas men's agentic orientation makes them

more capable of assertion and control. When women display the traits of the communal orientation, such as being affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, and sympathetic, as well as interpersonally sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken, they are seen as not agentic enough and hence not capable of leadership. But when they display the agentic behaviors, i.e. aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident, and forceful, as well as self-reliant and individualistic, they are seen as not communal enough, and they tend to be accused of inauthenticity.

In terms of leadership research, a gendered binary also seems to be operative in the distinction between an "entity" approach that offers a "realist" perspective on leadership, and a more "relational" approach that offers a "constructivist" perspective. Uhl-Bien (2011) associates the realism/entity approach as more masculine in orientation and the constructionist/relational approach as more feminine. The "realist" approach focuses on individuals and their views regarding participation in interpersonal relationships. By contrast, the relational perspective is primarily concerned with being-in-relation and moving away from hierarchical control (Uhl-Bien 2011, 67).

A further gendered dichotomy in the leadership realm is that between so-called "transactional" and "transformational" leadership styles. Men's leadership styles are regularly described as transactional, whereas women leaders are often seen as more transformational in orientation. Transformational leadership is described as a relationship of mutual stimulation between leaders and followers, which converts followers into leaders and also has the capacity to make leaders moral agents (Werhane 2011, 44). It has been argued that women's capacity to inspire and motivate staff is a result of their enhanced interpersonal skills. Further characteristics that supposedly make women better transformational leaders than men include their willingness to share power and information, their tendency to encourage participation and inclusion,

their propensity to instill a sense of self-worth in others and their ability to get employees energized and excited about their work (Psychogios 2007, 174). Rosener (2011, 28) reports that women are more likely to use power that is based on charisma, work record and contacts than power based on organizational position and the ability to reward and punish others. Women successfully employ interactive leadership strategies, which entail encouraging participation, sharing power and information, and enhancing the self-worth of others (Rosener 2011, 21–24). Unfortunately, the fact that women are considered to be more natural transformational leaders does not always serve them well in organizations. Reuvers et al. (2008) has found that if men display the traits of transformative leadership, it has a far greater effect on innovation than if women display these same traits. Psychogios (2007) comes to the even more disconcerting conclusion that "feminized management" tends to aggravate the exploitation of female labor instead of creating new management opportunities for women. His research shows that if occupations are "feminized" there is a corresponding decline in salaries and wages.

According to Rosener (2011) transformational leadership cannot be exclusively associated with women: some women succeed by adhering to the traditional male model, whilst some men adopt a transformational leadership style. Both men and women describe themselves as having a mix of "female," "male" and "gender neutral" traits (Rosener 2011, 28). However, this does not mean that many women do not identify with gender stereotypes and employ them in their self-descriptions. For instance, further support for associating specific leadership characteristics with the feminine can be found in Nicola Pless's (2006, 248) account of the self-description of Anita Roddick, founder and former CEO of the Body Shop. Roddick personally claimed that: "I run my company according to feminine principles … principles of caring, making intuitive decisions, not getting hung up on hierarchy…"

Unfortunately, many prejudices are perpetuated in and through these gender stereotypes, with real effects on men and women in the workplace. In a recent *Harvard Business Review* article, Hermina Ibarra and Otilia Obodaru (2009), discuss the research finding that women lack "vision." They explore the puzzling fact that studies have shown that women out-perform men on all the leadership attributes considered important by respondents, except when it comes to envisioning. In the INSEAD study on which Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) reported, vision was defined as the skill to recognize new opportunities within the environment and to determine a strategic direction for the organization. In terms of leadership practice it seems as if the intuitive reading of opportunities within the environment becomes less important than the second aspect of the definition, i.e. determining a strategic direction. Ibarra and Obodaru (2009, 67–68) attribute the perception that women are weaker at "envisioning" than men to the fact that women may think differently about "vision." Female executives insist that for them, strategy emerges in and through a commitment to detail and a very hands-on approach to the implementation of action plans. They are less prone to the formulation of lofty ideals and "big ideas," or experiments with "big, hairy audacious goals," as Collins and Porras (2002) refer to it. This may be explained by the fact that many women have a fear of over-promising and under-delivering, whereas men tend not to have the same reservations. Again, girls' early experience of the world as a more threatening place may go some way towards explaining this difference in thinking about what "vision" means. What emerges clearly from this analysis, is an awareness of the tacit gendered assumptions about "vision." In practice, these tacit assumptions may have a very negative impact on how women are perceived as leaders. Holt et al. (2009) explain that the capacity to articulate a clear vision for the organization is strongly associated with the credibility of a leader. If women are not perceived as "visionary" leaders, they may not be perceived as credible either.

Gendered assumptions are also evident in the way people talk about what they expect from their leaders and from themselves as leaders. In a study conducted by Metcalfe and Linstead (2003, 110) the researchers found that the leadership style of one of their female subjects was described by her colleagues and staff as "masculine" and "authoritarian." Not surprising, they argue, if one considers the remnants of the masculinist discourse in words like "man-ager." In her description of herself, Nia displays contradictory views on the role that femininity plays in leadership, which serves to downplay the importance of her feminine traits. Instead, she re-inscribes masculine leadership models in the way she talks about her successes and difficulties. This case demonstrates how difficult it is to develop an alternative discourse on leadership. It also suggests that, in-and-of-itself, a linguistic analysis of this problem is unlikely to precipitate the desired change. More thought needs to be given to how the embodied reality of men and women and their ability to resist the gendered stereotyping of leadership are circumscribed and curtailed by these discourses.

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According to Ely and Padavic (2007, 1129) masculinity and femininity are embodied realities as well as belief systems. It is evident in the muscle tensions and body postures that men and women display, and as such, contribute to a further solidification of gender stereotypes. For instance, "style constraints," pertaining to their way of speaking, gestures and appearance, is a reality that many female executives have to deal with (Eagly and Carli 2007, 64). These constraints impact on the way women can communicate and conduct themselves within everyday business interactions. Women often feel that their less assertive speaking style or

hand-gestures may be deemed inappropriate. Disconcertingly, 34% of African American women feel that their physical appearance is more crucial in attaining career success than their actual abilities (Hewlett et al. 2005).

It is also interesting to analyze the way in which people's clothing and accessories both express and re-inscribe their own personal reading of the power dynamics and expectations within an institution. Women leaders tend to wear corporate suits to suggest formality and control—traits that are often associated with the stereotypical male leader. Wearing high heels and walking with a certain confident stride suggests the power and competence that are assumed to be the ideal characteristics of leaders. In men, suits and ties are carefully chosen to tap into specific states of mind, based on the theory that certain colors signify confidence and calm composure. In her essay, "Women recovering our clothes," Young (2005) discusses the split image that results from women seeing themselves, while at the same time being aware of others looking at them. This split image often gives rise to a complex self-conception involving several different images—not all of them always of a woman's own making. For instance, a woman might imagine that she is seen in a particular way when wearing certain clothes, which may or may not be how she imagines herself to be. Clothing and accessories become various kinds of prostheses that allow us to fashion ourselves to the dominant aesthetic as we experience it. In effect we extend and amend our embodiment in response to tacit messages about what is considered "appropriate" within organizational contexts. The question is who and what informs this dominant aesthetic, and what are the ethical implications of this fashioning? Some feminists resist the objectifying and fetishizing implications of women living "in the male gaze." However, in the leadership realm, this could have further discriminating effects. Could women's mirroring of male attire in the workplace be a tacit acceptance of the fact that men are more desirable leaders than women, that they are

more powerful, more in control, more reliable? If so, everyday dress-code could contain the clues as to why gender prejudices persist in the workplace.

But how is it possible to resist conforming to the tacit expectations we experience in the workplace and to eventually change the stylized practices that perpetuate prejudices? In the next section, we explore alternative leadership models and seek to reconceptualize certain important gendered notions within the leadership realm.

POTENTIAL SITES AND VISIONS OF CHANGE

In this section, we will investigate whether it is possible to transform leadership theory and practice through an engagement with the many different ways in which both men and women approach their leadership roles in organizations. What seems to be required is leadership models that allow individuals to lead in their own unique ways, instead of conforming to some pre-conceived gender expectations. We will therefore explore theoretical models that may create a framework for understanding and adopting uniquely individual leadership styles. In the process, we hope to recast important leadership notions, such as "authenticity" and "vision," in more gender-inclusive terms.

Systemic leadership

In a recent publication entitled: *Leadership, Gender, and Organizations* (Werhane and Painter-Morland 2011), a number of scholars related recent developments in relational leadership or complexity leadership to the way women lead in organizations. One of the interesting points made by these scholars is that even though complexity leadership seems to describe

leadership styles that are associated with the socially constructed "feminine" style of leadership, it is a model that suits many men's leadership preferences as well.

From the perspective of systemic leadership, leadership is not necessarily restricted to individuals appointed to positions of authority. In this respect, it represents a significant departure from so-called "great man theories" about leadership, with their implicit sexist assumptions. Systemic leadership is informed and supported by a variety of discourses—from Peter Senge's work on organizational learning and change to Karl Weick's sense-making theories. The basic contention is that an organization cannot properly learn, change or create meaning without the sharing of information and cooperative agreements. Senge and Kaufer (2000) speak about "communities of leaders," while others make reference to "distributed leadership" (Friedman 2004), or relational leadership (Maak and Pless 2006).

An influential definition of systemic leadership is provided by Collier and Esteban (2000, 208) who describe leadership as "the systemic capability, distributed and nurtured throughout the organization, of finding organizational direction and generating renewal by harnessing creativity and innovation." Understanding leadership as an emergent, interactive and dynamic property allows one to distribute leadership responsibilities and privileges throughout an organization's workforce (Edgeman and Scherer, 1999). Systemic leadership involves a number of different leadership dynamics. Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007, 311) describe these as "administrative," "adaptive" and "enabling" leadership. Administrative leaders play the more formal leadership roles of planning and coordinating organizational activities. It is important to note that though systemic leadership functions are understood in more distributed terms, this does not necessarily mean that formal leadership positions and hierarchies become redundant or have to be abolished. In fact, it is

very important that gender-sensitivity is encouraged in and through key managerial tasks, such as setting performance targets, conducting performance reviews, and performing mentoring activities. As such, it is important that those appointed to formal leadership positions are gender-sensitive and play an active role in thinking through the gender implications of their everyday business decisions. Guaranteeing flexible work schedules and childcare facilities for both working mothers and fathers can go a long way towards distributing the childcare responsibilities more equitably. Setting realistic performance targets for the promotion and retention of female leaders, committing to a certain number of female candidates for each leadership vacancy, considering the composition of selection teams and communicating leadership opportunities more transparently have all been mentioned as ways in which management buy-in and commitment to women's leadership can be communicated (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2007). Mentoring has also been identified as an extremely important factor in the success of women leaders, and both male and female executives must commit to providing it (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007).

Important as the role of administrative leaders may be, real change in practices and belief systems requires the acknowledgement and nurturing of other leadership roles. So-called "adaptive" leadership functions as a "collaborative change movement" that allows adaptive outcomes to emerge in a nonlinear fashion as a result of the dynamic interactions of interdependent agents. The direction and priorities that guide an organization's activities therefore develop inadvertently as an unforeseen and unforeseeable consequence of the daily interactions between many different members of the organization instead of emanating from those at the top of the managerial hierarchy. This approach allows any member of an organization to take initiative and responsibility (i.e. assume a leading role) when and where the situation calls for it. It allows individuals to harness their personal strengths to lead in their own, unique ways.

Adaptive leadership does not mimic stereotypical leadership behaviors, but instead requires a unique response tailored to a specific situation and set of relationships. In this respect it allows women leaders more scope to develop their style of leadership. The challenge however lies in acknowledging this kind of leadership, and not exploiting adaptive leaders by appropriating the positive results of their efforts without any recognition or compensations. Unfortunately, this is what often happens to female leaders who fulfill leadership tasks spontaneously without demanding recognition.

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The third leadership role that Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) refer to is that of "enabling" leadership, which provides the catalyst to facilitate the emergence of adaptive leadership within organizations. It often involves a complex interplay between administrative and adaptive leadership. Enabling leadership often does require some authority, but also entails an active involvement in the boundary situations that organizational members confront. Enabling leaders must be capable of engaging in cooperative strategies, fostering interaction, supporting and enhancing interdependency and stimulating the adaptive tension that allows for the emergence of new patterns. For instance, Vivienne Cox, the CEO of BP Alternative energies, described herself as a "catalyst," who does not drive change, but allows it to emerge.

Uhl Bien et al. (2007) make it clear that all three leadership roles necessarily coexist within organizations. The question that remains however is how adaptive and enabling leadership can be acknowledged,

recognized and remunerated within organizations. Unfortunately, it could easily become the "unpaid labor" that women and men with alternative leadership styles perform without formal recognition. As such, it could inadvertently lead to the exploitation of these individuals in the workplace. Nevertheless, the systemic leadership model is important because it challenges us to rethink certain leadership stereotypes that are often uncritically perpetuated within organizations.

Rethinking authenticity

"Authenticity" is often associated with the consistent way in which an individual acts in accordance with his or her personal traits and beliefs. In practice however, this can amount to a kind of inflexibility that renders the individual incapable of adapting to different or dynamic situations and relationships. From the perspective of systemic leadership, another understanding is required, namely that leadership roles, and hence leadership responses, are fluid. This idea is well represented in contemporary leadership literature. Porras et al. (2007, 198), for instance, explain that the best leaders realize that their role might change over time: an individual who works under your direction and supervision today might become the person to whom you report on another day. In time the same person could even become a customer or a vendor. It is important to maintain the relationship in a kind of "virtual team" even as roles change. This does not amount to "inauthenticity," but instead requires authentic relational responsiveness. In other words, to be "authentic," an individual has to respond appropriately to the situation as it *really* is at any given point of time. It also involves an acknowledgement that *reality*—both in terms of the relational dynamics between people in an organizational context and in any business environment in general—is not static, but always complex and dynamic.

Many women are accused of being "inauthentic" when they mimic a stereotypical male leadership style, or at least try and conform to tacit expectations about the way in which leaders ought to talk, walk and make decisions. The problem often is that women are damned if they do, and damned if they don't. If they conform to the male leadership stereotype, they are seen as inauthentic, and if they don't, their leadership is either not recognized at all, or considered inferior to that of men (Eagly and Carli 2007, 64). This is why it is so important to reconsider the meaning of "authenticity." Women can respond quite "authentically" to the unarticulated expectations that inform one particular situation while resisting these same expectations in another. This does not amount to a lack of authenticity. Instead it is a reflection of the institutionalized prejudices to which women are regularly exposed, and the ways in which particular individuals challenge, resist and navigate them. It is important that organizations pay attention to these dynamics in order to get a better sense of the tacit practices of discrimination that inform the interactions between their members, and to look for ways to challenge and change them. From the perspective of adaptive leadership, it is important to allow individuals to draw on their own strengths, sensibilities and perspectives and to adopt their own unique style as they take responsibility and initiative in leadership roles.

The challenge for gender theorists is to simultaneously challenge socially constructed gender stereotypes and essentialist prejudices and advocate the inclusion and consideration of uniquely female perspectives in leadership discourses. To do so they are forced to argue against the rigid oversimplification of gender roles and traits, while simultaneously insisting that women can offer different perspectives and sensibilities when they are allowed to assume positions of leadership. Linstead and Pullen (2006, 1287) draw on the work of Deleuze and Guattari to address the embodied realities and social practices that perpetuate gender discrimination. This allows them to move away from gender as a social

construction, while still seeing it as a social process. More specifically, they disrupt the gender binaries by emphasizing individual differences. They argue that the variety of women's experiences must be explored. Each individual is engaged in the process of desiring-production, through which social "reality" is produced. By focusing on different interactions and connections between unique individuals over time, our attention is focused on the multiplicity that results from the conception of desire as a force of proliferation. In terms of leadership theory, this research suggests that it is important to investigate the embodied experience of individual leaders in the workplace, and explore all the different ways in which they lead. We will now proceed to explore this possibility in one specific area of leadership, namely vision, especially since this has been indicated as an area in which male leaders typically outperform their female counterparts (Ibarra and Obodaru 2009).

Rethinking vision

In section three we discussed a survey that found that many business practitioners thought women leaders lack "vision." In the course of our analysis it was suggested that because of women's propensity for cooperation, sharing information and power, and their fear of over-promising and under-delivering, they often do not claim any grand idea as the product of their own "vision." As such, women leaders may not always get the credit they deserve. One way to solve this problem is to re-conceive leadership "vision" in more gender-inclusive terms.

This could be accomplished, in part, by simply acknowledging the unique visionary contributions of women leaders. This would help to expand the way in which leadership "vision" is defined. For instance, Vivienne Cox's leadership style has been described as "organic" by those who work with her. Apparently, she designs incentives and objectives in such a way that

the organization naturally finds its own solutions and structures. She encourages everyone in the organization to be thoughtful, innovative and self-regulating. Her leadership style is collaborative, drawing on thought leaders outside of the organization and executives in other business units. Her "vision" therefore emerges through her engagements with others, rather than by means of sketching a fixed picture of what the future of the organization should look like.

This example suggests that "vision" need not be understood as the representation of an envisaged future. In fact, thinking about vision as some possible future state that must be realized fixes an organization's operations and activities in inflexible terms. This makes it difficult for the organization's members to respond appropriately to present or future opportunities and challenges and to properly appreciate the significance of past events. In fact, instead of "vision" with its focus on clear-sightedness, neat representations and mimetic strategies, we may do well to consider the more embodied intuitiveness that some philosophers associate with creativity and innovation. Drawing on Bergson, Deleuze (2006, 15) explains that it is up to intuition to show to intelligence which questions are not really questions, as opposed to those that deserve a response. It does this precisely because it assumes duration and offers towards this end an analytical matrix and a method to which intelligence has no access.

Visionary leadership, from this perspective, no longer requires only the capacity to be able to change one's perspective on the world, or to change the world to fit one's perceptions of it, but to embrace a radically new conception of time and experience (Linstead and Mullarkey 2003, 1). Reality is not stagnant, and hence leaders have to be capable of being part of, and of processing and engaging with, the qualitative variations of experiences over time and in time. Drawing on Henri Bergson, Linstead and Mullarkey (2003, 9) argue that the "*élan vital,*" the vital spirit which appears within our

organizational life, is the human impulse to organize. But since the *élan vital* is a process of creative improvisation, it does not subscribe to the typical organizational strategies of locating, dividing and controlling. These authors (idem 2003, 6) make it clear that the specialized understanding of time as measurable and representable in homogenous units does not allow us to grasp the conscious experience of duration, which is heterogeneous, qualitative and dynamic. From this perspective, something like "vision" cannot be reduced to the creation of measurable time-driven targets, as each unit of time, seen from the perspective of duration, is multiple, unique, and as such not measurable in bits and pieces.

Visionary leadership requires to embrace a radically new conception of time and experience

The kind of traits that are typically associated with inferior leadership, such as being emotional, sensitive, dependent on others, are recast as legitimate ways of operating in the leadership realm. Again here, we can find philosophical support for including these ways of being in the world in our conception of valuable leadership. Deleuze and Guattari (1996, 161) celebrate the unpredictable, uncontrollable overspill of forces that allows us an intuitive grasp of other possibilities of becoming, i.e. different ways of being in the world, and as such, different ways of "leading." Whereas "effective" visionary leadership may direct the course of individuals or organizations to a predetermined goal based on representations, *affective* envisioning draws on that which is not yet evident within the established order, and hence, cannot be represented. This kind of envisioning draws on forces that exist but remain imperceptible. Deleuze and Guattari (1996, 161) often draw on Uexkull's example of the tick, which is blind, deaf and mute, yet is capable of determining its direction quite accurately. The tick is responding to the perceptual signs and significances of its *Umwelt*. There are no direct causal factors that cause the tick to act, but instead a

creative response to a complex range of embodied perceptions. A leader's perception of the direction in which his/her organization is moving emerge from her/his immersion in relationships, participation in society, experimentation with multi-disciplinary insights, and an ongoing openness towards what he/she is becoming in the process. What all of this points towards is the need to develop embodied practices of resistance in our organizations that challenge gender prejudices and expand our conception of good leadership.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it has become clear that the origins of discriminatory practices in organizations lie hidden in our everyday practices, habits and interactions. There is no doubt that gender stereotypes are alive and well in organizations, and that addressing these prejudices is by no means an easy task. In the first place, one has to acknowledge the ingrained social practices and beliefs about the capabilities of both men and women, which play a role from a very early age and are solidified in our workplaces. To address these prejudices, we all have to start thinking about the feedback and advice we provide to our children and students in the course of their early development and education. Within organizations, we have to develop new role models and seek out mentors who have found their own unique leadership styles. Most importantly, we have to start paying attention to how specific individuals have been shaped and formed through gendered practices. A large part of the work lies in no longer viewing nature and nurture as two separate processes. Instead, we need to realize that we are constantly shaping and reshaping ourselves as thinking, feeling and perceiving bodies in, and through, our everyday workplace practices.

Addressing gender in organizations therefore requires a unique type of research, i.e. the kind of research that allows us to observe people in their

various environments, track their developmental paths, and listen to their self-reflections. We also have to create a space within which different types of leadership practices could emerge. We have seen that systemic leadership models allow for a variety of leadership roles and styles to coexist in an organization. The challenge lies in acknowledging these various roles, and making sure that they do not go unrecognized or uncompensated. In the process, we may find that inspiring stories about people's authentic responses to challenges could be told. We may also notice how men and women intuitively came across visionary ideas and practices in and through their engagement with others. We need organizational environments in which people are free to become the kind of leaders that infuse the world with creative new solutions and practices. It is the possibility of continually becoming a new kind of leader that may allow both men and women to explore the full range of their individual capacities. This will most certainly enable them to serve their organizations, themselves and the broader society to the best of their multiple abilities.

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>> In this chapter, the embodied and institutionalized roots of gender discrimination in the workplace are explored. The chapter draws on a variety of feminist perspectives to discuss the implications that various approaches to gender differences have for thinking about leadership in organizational contexts. It comes to the conclusion that combining insight into the embodied practices of the "lived body" with an understanding of gender as a socially-constructed notion may yield the best possible model for thinking about gender within institutions. The chapter ends with an analysis of the "systemic leadership" approach, which may provide a productive space for conceptualizing a more gender-sensitive understanding of a variety of leadership styles and practices. It also argues for a broader understanding of certain leadership characteristics, such as "vision."

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