

## 2003 DIVISION 35 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: FEMINIST LEADERSHIP: FEMINIST VISIONS AND DIVERSE VOICES

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Although the theories and models on feminism and leadership exist, there has been little study of the intersection of the two. The literature on feminist leadership is scant. Few have defined it and fewer still have researched it. Thus, Feminist Leadership was chosen for my presidential initiative. This initiative kicked off a dialogue about feminist leadership that is summarized in this article. The article is based on my presidential address presented at the 2003 Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in concluding my year as President of Division 35, the Society for the Psychology of Women. It identifies some challenges faced by women in leadership positions and by feminist leaders. It identifies the major issues that emerged during a web-based dialogue about feminist leadership. It discusses the intersection between theories of leadership and feminism. It ends with the lessons learned and implications for the future of feminist leadership.

The context of my presidential year between 2002 and 2003 is important to understand the dialogue about feminist leadership and the issues that emerged. My presidential year began with the anniversary of the September 11 tragedy where terrorists crashed two planes into the New York World Trade Center causing major destruction and loss of lives; it ended with the SARS epidemic claiming lives and threatening our physical health as the American Psychological Association convention was held in Toronto, one of the hot spots for the health alert. During the year, we also saw a downturn in our economy that had adverse psychological and economic consequences. The rapid rise and fall of dot-com companies and the stock market was unparalleled since the depression of 1929. Many lost their fortunes and retirement savings as a result.

These events created a sense of crisis; many experienced a threat to their personal safety and personal fortunes. We were forced to reexamine how small our global environment really is, how interdependent we really are in the scheme of things, and how vulnerable we are. These events fueled a dialogue about the kind of leadership needed during times of crisis.

As President Bush took an aggressive and authoritarian leadership style, and declared war on Iraq, his popularity and leadership ratings rose initially. Media coverage of the

war featured awesome images and powerful statements—the bombings of Baghdad lit the skies; the war was fought from afar using sophisticated technology against a government said to be harboring weapons of mass destruction. President Bush declared the war over in a matter of months, and declared it a victory for the minimal loss to American lives. Our country initially saw a rise in patriotism with support for strong, visible, and decisive leadership.

Yet, the aftermath of the war has claimed more lives than some of our previous wars. Many in the U.S. began to criticize President Bush's unilateral stance in declaring war without the support of the United Nations, viewed by some as an unwillingness to work as a team player. During the post-war and post-9/11 era, President Bush declared a “war on terrorism” and mobilized initiatives for homeland security in the name of protecting our freedom.

There came growing discontent with President Bush's leadership. Many feminists questioned whether an authoritarian leadership style was indeed the solution during times of war. While most would agree that good leadership is critical during challenging times, feminists have questioned whether this meant resorting to an authoritarian style of leadership. Would a more collaborative style of leadership consistent with feminist principles have led to different outcomes during these recent events?

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### PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVE: FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

It was in this context that I developed and implemented my presidential initiative: Feminist Visions and Diverse Voices:

Leadership and Collaboration. As President of Division 35, I viewed many feminist women within the division who had taken active leadership roles—advocating for social change, formulating feminist policy, and managing organizations, institutions, and departments. Many had been articulate about the importance of feminist principles in service, training, and research; many had advocated to ensure that women “get a seat at the table” and to promote a feminist agenda in all venues. Yet, few had studied feminist leadership, that is, how women lead to accomplish these ends.

Thus, this initiative began with the question: How do feminist women lead? In asking this question, several questions were raised. Is leadership different for men? Are there feminist principles in leadership? Can leaders be feminist women? The initiative was intended to understand and define feminist leadership. The dialogue was divided into three sections.

Models of Feminist Leadership and Management Styles constituted Section I with Bernice Lott as the leader. For this section, the major challenges were to conceptually define the central constructs of “feminist” and “leadership,” and to dissect the key components of feminist leadership.

Collaboration as a Feminist Process constituted Section II with Joy Rice as the leader. This quickly became a cornerstone for discussing feminist leadership styles. This section focused on the process of collaboration, bringing together constituencies from within the American Psychological Association (APA), nationally and internationally. This group investigated how collaboration could be used to advance a feminist agenda.

Diverse Feminist Groups constituted Section III with Janis Sanchez-Hucles as the leader. Issues of leadership for women become more complex when considering issues of race, ethnicity, ability status, and sexual orientation. Issues of diversity influence how women choose to be leaders as well as how they are perceived. As the Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health (2001) concludes: “Culture Matters!” Consequently, it was important to examine these issues including the intersection of identities across race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, and profession.

Each of the three sections included five subtopics led by teams of feminist psychologists discussing dimensions of diversity, collaboration, and leadership. Approximately 100 women had agreed to participate in this initiative. These were feminist women, many of who were in positions of leadership. Several were women leaders in management including a university president, provost, and department chair. Many of the women had been active in APA governance in roles including president, Council of Representatives, division president, state leadership, APA committees, and division executive committee.

Web-based technology was used to develop a process of scholarly dialogue on feminist leadership and to promote ongoing communication. This process was intended to promote collaboration and inclusiveness among feminist

women, and to draw on diverse voices and perspectives in defining feminist leadership via an Internet-based website, [www.feministleadership.com](http://www.feministleadership.com). The website was made public and available to all Division 35 members. Marlene Maheu was our E-Editor who coordinated the technology part of the initiative. The use of this web-based methodology helped to generate more questions and enable the participants to discuss these questions at a deeper level while also archiving these discussions.

Several teleconferences and two face-to-face meetings enhanced these web-based discussions because we found that the opportunity for team members to network with one another was important to promote the dialogue on the website. Given that so little discussion on feminist leadership has occurred, the process was as important as the product of defining feminist leadership. Results of the dialogue are described below and are informed by the literature on leadership theory.

## WHAT IS FEMINIST LEADERSHIP?

Given the paucity of literature on feminist leadership, the dialogue emphasized the experiences of the feminist leaders who participated in the initiative. In asking the question, “What is feminist leadership?” participants raised additional questions needing clarification. These include: Are there differences in the leadership styles of men, women, and feminists? Is there good feminist leadership or is it just good leadership? Are there feminist models of leadership? What are feminist styles of leadership? How do we know when feminist leadership is effective?

To understand feminist leadership, participants also addressed the need to deconstruct the principles of feminism and leadership. We need to first draw on existing theories and principles of leadership, begin to examine how they relate to feminist theories and principles, and understand how feminist women use these in their leadership.

### *Theories of Leadership*

There are several approaches to defining, conceptualizing, and studying leadership in the literature. The trait approach is one in which the personality characteristics of a leader are studied. The skills approach is another in which the essential competencies of leadership are identified. The style approach is a third in which the behavior of the leader or how leaders function are identified. Other approaches have examined the contexts of leadership such as the situation in which leadership is exercised, contingencies or the rewards and punishments when leadership is exercised, the goals of leader behaviors, and the power relationship between leader and follower. Northouse (2004) defined leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. In doing so, he emphasized process or a transactional event over the traits or characteristics residing in the leader.

Whereas earlier theories have focused on the charisma or the characteristics of leadership, more recent theorists have described dimensions of team and collaborative leadership. With advances in technology, businesses and corporations have increasingly engaged in an international and global economy; this has created an area of examination into the transferability of leadership and management practices across cultures. Earlier management theories looked at management in Japan with the idea of understanding the interaction of ethnic culture and organization culture and how this influenced management practices, productivity, and leadership with the goal of importing these practices to Western businesses and organizations. At the same time, non-Western businesses sought to learn and import Western practices to emulate Western business management and leadership practices. More recently, there has been a shift from merely adopting Western theories, conclusions, and practices to an approach that cherishes the unique social and cultural factors while using applications from Western theories to non-Western businesses (Kao, Sinha, & Wilpert, 1999). This reflects the complexity of interacting factors when studying leadership theories and practices.

Few of the theories either differentiated or studied leadership among women. How do these theories apply to women? Indvik (2004) is one of few who has looked at women and leadership. Although women make up 46.6% of the workforce in the U.S., they filled only 15.7% of corporate officer positions in 2002. Indvik speaks to sex differences in worldview, socialization, and life experience that may result in different mental models or “implicit theories” of leadership among women. Eagly (1987) studied women leaders and found differences in how women were evaluated and expected to engage in activities and actions congruent with their culturally defined gender roles; leadership was typically not one of these roles. It has been noted that women emphasize planning and organizing work and an empathic approach, while placing less emphasis on the “need to win at all costs” compared to men (“Women May,” 1997).

*“Great Man” theories: Trait approach.* Earlier studies of leadership focused on identifying the qualities that made great leaders. These trait models of leadership are associated with comments such as: “He is born to be a leader” or “she is a natural leader.” The trait perspective suggests that certain individuals have special innate or inborn characteristics or qualities that make them leaders (Northouse, 2004). Consequently, research concentrated on those traits that differentiated leaders from followers (Bass, 1990). Some of the traits associated with great leaders include: intelligence, dominance, confidence, and masculinity (Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986). It is of note that these theories defined and studied leadership among great men.

This approach demonstrates how leadership and leadership theories have been studied primarily in masculinized contexts. As has been the case with feminist theories

and practice, women and consequently their traits have not been included or studied with regard to effectiveness in leadership.

*Competencies of leadership: Skills approach.* The competencies of leadership and the characteristics of a leader define what is to be done by a leader, that is, the roles of a leader. The skills approach emphasizes those competencies essential to good leadership. It enables the measurement and development of those competencies necessary to achieve effective leadership. Northouse (2004) defined three competencies of leadership: (a) problem solving skills, (b) social judgment skills, and (c) knowledge. Bennis (1984) deconstructed principles of leadership and described four competencies of leadership: (a) management of attention (giving the message), (b) management of meaning (developing the vision), (c) management of trust (interpersonal connectedness), and (d) management of self (knowledge of one’s skills). The first three competencies focus on the interaction between leader and follower or situation whereas the last focuses on the skills of the leader.

How do feminist women manage these competencies? The recurring answer among the feminist leaders who participated in the web-based initiative was that feminist women leaders tend to be more collaborative. Inherent in the competencies identified above such as social judgment and interpersonal connectedness are skills commonly associated with feminist relational styles. The use of a collaborative process to manage the competencies of leadership lies in women “being” feminist; this emphasis on use of “the self” or the person and being relational was viewed as critical to effective leadership style.

*Leadership styles: Process approach.* Somewhat different from the skills approach, the style approach focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act, that is, behavior and process. Researchers studying this approach determine that leadership is composed of essentially two kinds of behaviors: task behaviors and relationship behaviors (Northouse, 2004, p. 65). Task behaviors focus on goal accomplishment whereas relationship behaviors help subordinates or followers feel comfortable with themselves, the situation, and each other.

Theories about transformational versus transactional leadership have been prominent in the leadership literature and reflect a process approach. Although there have been many definitions characterizing the importance and advantages of transformational leadership, constant throughout the definitions has been transformational leaders acting as agents of change and being visionary whereas transactional leadership is focused on getting things done and acting with directedness (Bennis, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1984). The leader’s main function is to serve as a catalyst of change, but never as a controller of change (Aviolo, 1994). A transformational leader has a compelling vision, a holistic picture (Tichy & Devanna, 1986), of how the organization should

look in the future, when it is meeting all of its stated goals (Bennis, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1984). That vision guides the leader's behavior(s) and decisions, and serves as a reference point for all activities within the organization.

### *Feminist Leadership Styles*

How do these approaches to leadership help to define feminist leadership? The trait approach would define feminist women leaders based on their "feminist" characteristics. Clearly, the literature has omitted "feminine" traits from the equation of those that make for good and effective leadership. The skills approach shifts to competencies that have promise for women because it focuses on the skills to be acquired to become leaders. The style approach draws on the process of leadership, that is, "what they do" to "how it is done." It is in this area that there was consensus among the feminist leaders participating in the web-based initiative that specific competencies characterized feminist leadership, with a strong emphasis on collaboration. Many define feminist leadership styles as being more collaborative than nonfeminist styles.

*Collaborative styles as feminist leadership.* A collaborative style and process was viewed as essential to a feminist leadership style by participants in the initiative. It is the promise and principle that should be involved in planning and decision-making. As the feminist literature has shown, women tend to use nurturance more often as a way to engage, communicate, and lead. They tend to use consensus building as a way in which to set direction. The use of a collaborative process attempts to level the playing field of leader and follower and to create more egalitarian environments. Theorists have labeled these collaborative and egalitarian processes "shared leadership."

Recently, there has been increased attention to these dimensions of a collaborative leadership style as essential to the skills and processes to be used by the "modern" leader (Cook, 2002). Raelin (2003) introduced the Four C's of "Leaderful Practice," and said that leadership in this century needs to be concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate. Although he recommended a process closely akin to a feminist process, he does not view gender as essential to the process or define feminism among its principles.

Joyce Fletcher (2003a) is one of few to use a feminist style in understanding leadership. In her keynote address (Fletcher, 2003b) and teleconference presentation during the initiative, Fletcher made the distinction between Feminist Attributes versus Feminist Goals. She defined feminist attributes as relational, collaborative, etc. However, environments that ignore gender and power dynamics do not have feminist goals. Although organizations may not intentionally attempt to diminish women, and may try to create more egalitarian environments, it is essential to recognize that they need to challenge the power structure and masculinized framework. Absent that recognition, the

rhetoric may be feminist, but the goal is not. Consequently, feminist leadership models need to have as their goal the achievement of feminist values.

*Power and hierarchical structures and feminist leadership. Collaborative styles as feminist leadership.* A collaborative leadership style is inherent among egalitarian leaders and relationship-based leaders. However, to be feminist, we need to examine the power structures inherent in leadership, and how a collaborative process is possible even within hierarchical structures and masculinized contexts. There is an old Chinese saying: "Women hold up half the sky." In Chinese, this is intended to suggest how much power women carry. At the same time, we need to be reminded that half the sky is also half the equation. Is it women's equality with men or women's power under the sky that we need to address as we examine feminist leadership? Let us remember the Amazon women warriors who once ruled and men's fear of them that led to their destruction.

As Indvik (2004) suggested, men's discomfort with women leaders has taken many forms. Research has uncovered that women perceive a need to adapt their behavioral style so that men could avoid feeling intimidated (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998) and that a narrower range of acceptable behavior exists for female than for male leaders (Eagly, Makhijani, & Kohnsky, 1992). This suggests the importance of context in feminist leadership.

*Contextual leadership and feminist leaders.* In understanding feminist leadership, do we examine how women lead or do we examine the contexts in which they lead? Theorists have suggested that leadership involves managing the benefits to the organization and realizing its purpose. Therefore, it is important to look at the contexts of leadership across organizational cultures. Deborah Kolb (Kolb & Williams, 2000) argued for fundamental change in organizational cultures to create gender equitable work environments. Often women leaders must manage within organizational cultures that tend to be masculinized. It appears that women leaders must learn to adapt their leadership style in accordance with varying organizational cultures.

These perceptions and contexts clearly influence leadership and leadership styles. Often, women are bound by these perceptions that tie them to their gender roles (which are defined bereft of leadership ability) and function within contexts that are masculinized. This is no more evident than my observation in the Feminist Psychologist Fall 2002 newsletter (Chin, 2002): "We are in an economic recession and have seen the fall of dot-com companies and angel investors. What brought us to the euphoria of the dot-com era? The astounding rise of stock market prices during this time was not the result of products or production, but the result of promise, hope, and denial. People bought the stocks because they perceived and expected that dot-com companies would be the portal for the future of communication. The tragedy of September 11, similarly, was the result of

how Americans denied the growing evidence that many terrorists perceived U.S. citizens and its leaders as guilty of evil and aggression.” We will not see the euphoria and boom of the dot-com era for some time, and we are forever changed by the events of September 11. Yet, the leadership demanded and expected was fueled by the context and based on the promise and perceptions that people believed would be the solution.

This leads us to the core question: Do feminist women today need to lead differently given the perceptions held of women and the masculinized contexts in which they find themselves? Is it necessary for women to conform to the expectations of leadership defined from these masculinized contexts and the hierarchical organizations in which they find themselves if they are to get things done? Can women leaders gain respect and credibility if they lead with “feminist styles of leadership”?

Madden (2003) urged us during the web dialogue to recognize that “leadership is contextual.” She stated that a feminist understanding acknowledges that behavior occurs in a context and is influenced by the power relationships among the participants. This contrasts with the “great man” theory of leadership that equates leadership with the personality of the leader—and stereotypic masculine qualities.

### *Diversity in Feminist Leadership*

Issues of leadership for women become more complex when considering issues of race, ethnicity, ability status, and sexual orientation. These diverse feminist groups can differ in their leadership styles and the issues with which they need to grapple as leaders. Issues of how culture affects the ways in which women lead were discussed on the Feminist Leadership website discussion board. For example, an African American woman may identify with the values of straightforwardness and assertiveness in leadership. An Asian woman may identify with values of respectfulness and unobtrusiveness. However, others may perceive the African American woman as intimidating and deem the Asian woman passive (Sanchez-Hucles, 2003).

Garrett-Browder (2003) suggested that African American women leaders may feel they need to be more direct and confrontational. She stated, “African American women throughout history have been able to be effective leaders despite living in oppressive environments and dealing with power structures that do not always include our voice . . . . Consequently, African American women [leaders might tend to use more direct communication styles and] have used our anger as an ally to help us speak the truth . . . even though it may be unpopular.” In a context of oppression and power—value is placed on trust and fairness to accept leadership from an African American perspective. This approach to leadership places an emphasis on parity and social justice.

Asian American women, on the other hand, may use a more indirect communication in their leadership styles. In

Asian cultures, the balance of opposites in the yin and the yang and the richness of different perspectives can bring out the best in leadership. Yabusaki (2003) identified “how the emphasis on hierarchy influences ways in which authority figures communicate in Asian cultures resulting in the expectation and tendency of Asian leaders to teach or convey a moral message when communicating.” Communicating a moral message versus communicating affect operates within a context that values kinship bonds. The benevolence of authority figures ascribed to Asian elders within Asian cultures can place a positive spin on leadership roles and support the expectation of advice giving from leaders.

Interpretation of these behaviors, however, may vary when viewed from different ethnic and contextual perspectives. As multiple identities associated with race, culture, gender, disability, and sexual orientation interact, added stressors bring more challenges associated with diverse feminist groups and make the definition of feminist leadership more complex. Examples of different leadership styles one may follow are influenced by context and difference. At the same time, distinctions between women as leaders and feminist women leaders must be made.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A LEADER?**

What do leaders do? What does it mean to be a leader? How do feminist leaders lead? In discussing feminist leadership, a look at some women in public and visible roles is instructive. Ian Cook (2002) defined six roles as those necessary for the modern leader: (a) direction setter, (b) steward for high standards, (c) motivator/coach, (d) servant leader, (e) role model, and (f) change master. How have women performed these roles as leaders? How did they lead and how were they allowed to lead?

#### *Women as Leaders*

The first lady is by definition a leader, but only because her husband was elected as President. There are expectations and perceptions that drive the roles of women who are very visible and in the public eye. Hillary Clinton was characterized alternately by her unfeminist “stand by her man” stance in supporting her husband and by her perceived opportunistic motives for the presidency. Few would question her brilliance. Her health care reform proposal during her days as first lady was one of the most comprehensive ever proposed. However, it failed apparently because our country never before had a First Lady advocating substantive policy reform. Other first ladies focused on more modest goals such as beautification projects.

Another prominent leader, Dr. Jocelyn Elders, was characterized by her controversial stands on health policy during her days as U.S. Surgeon General. “It didn’t take long for Dr. Jocelyn Elders, the first [B]lack and second woman to hold the position of U.S. Surgeon General, to stir up controversy. In fact, this determined woman in the uniform of

a three-star admiral did it less than a year into Bill Clinton's presidency, speaking out on drug legalization (she's for it) and abortion rights (she wants to keep coverage in the Clinton health plan). Elders has also been just as critical of the tobacco industry as her predecessor, a Reagan appointee, C. Everett Koop" (Motavalli, 1994). Yet, Dr. Koop did not receive anything like the criticism Dr. Elders received for speaking out on similar issues.

Both of these leaders, Jocelyn Elders and Hillary Clinton, were limited by the expectations of how women should behave. While they chose to define policy in their roles of leadership, and were outspoken, they violated the norm of silent, passive, and conforming women.

Andrea Jung, described as an Asian American Wonder Woman, is CEO of Avon Products. She has demonstrated and has been accepted for a leadership style that is both assertive and feminist. Perhaps it is because the business that she leads is viewed as "feminine" (i.e., context) or because she did not behave outside the expectations of the public (i.e., perceptions). In 2001, she was named by Fortune magazine for the fourth year as one of the 50 most powerful women in American business.

Jung (2002) found that businessmen had limited insight into women's abilities. Most still considered women fragile vessels whose self-confidence could be shattered with a well delivered put-down and whose strength would be depleted after eight hours of high-powered deal making. Jung realized that men saw themselves as modern-day Genghis Khans. They believed they could shout through 12 hours of fist-pounding negotiations and afterwards sweat through several games of racquetball without getting winded. Men refused to recognize their own limitations, while women did all too well. Jung thought that businesswomen need not dwell in this world of delusion but should support themselves by accepting reality. They should network to discuss their doubts and find ways to overcome them.

In reality, however, businesswomen rarely did this. It was seen as a weakness in a corporate landscape sculpted by male values. "Women don't support other women as well as they should," Jung stated. Powerful people typically devote little time to assist their underlings. Jung chose to remedy the situation by adopting strategies typically used by her male colleagues while refusing to accept the limitations placed upon her by virtue of her gender. She befriended and cajoled a senior colleague into being her guide. "Some people just wait for someone to take them under their wing," Jung stated. "I've always advised that they shouldn't wait. They should find someone's wings to grab onto" (Jung, 2002). As a woman leader, she was not afraid to seek out mentors and heed their advice.

### *Feminist Leaders*

Although we have made distinctions between women as leaders and feminist women leaders, there is a complexity

of issues faced by women leaders demonstrating feminist leadership styles and the continuing perceptions and expectations that often limit their roles and behaviors. Some examples of women leaders in public office are illustrative.

In the U.S. Congress, House Democrats elected Nancy Pelosi of California as House Minority leader in 2002; she was the first woman ever to head a party in either chamber of the legislature. In Massachusetts, Mitt Romney, with female running mate Kerry Healy, edged out Acting Governor Jane Swift in running for governor and beat out the first female candidate to run for governor in Massachusetts, Shannon O'Brien. As we can see, women are increasingly taking on leadership roles. At the same time, their portrayals are still described within a masculinized context. Quoted from the Boston Globe (McGrory, 2002, p. A12), "He is called the Hammer. She's a velvet hammer. He is Tom DeLay, the newly elected House majority leader, who is all coercion and threat. She is Nancy Pelosi of California, who is all persuasion and smiles."

The majority leader is male and is "the Hammer." The House Minority leader is female and is the "Velvet Hammer." These descriptions reflect the bias about women leaders in masculinized contexts. It reflects the tendency to "feminize" women leaders in ways that suggest weakness or to suggest incredulity when women behave as decisive and effective leaders.

It suggests the need for us to move toward a context that celebrates women's strengths in gender equitable work environments. It also suggests the additional burdens, stressors, and challenges faced by women leaders.

Diane Halpern, President-Elect of APA in 2002, summed it up with her statement on the feminist leadership website: "One example of what I mean by additional stressors for women leaders is the concern that I am not being 'feminist' enough, especially when I don't see the benefit in finding consensus for all issues (e.g., when it means compromise to my values). I am free in this context (an online project on feminist leadership) to think about ways stress may vary for women and men leaders. But in other psychology-related areas, it seems as though talk about these possible differences is not compatible with being a feminist" (Halpern, 2002).

### *Stresses of Feminist Leaders*

The above examples demonstrate how feminist leaders face added stressors in their roles as leaders. Many of the feminist women leaders participating in the initiative have felt that they were expected to behave in ways consistent with "feminine roles." Some felt that they were marginalized in their leadership styles if they behaved in ways associated with gender because they were then viewed as weak. Many of the women felt there was a gender bias influencing expectations of how they should behave as women leaders, thereby creating no-win situations that became impediments to effective leadership.

Many of the women commented about how they are diminished when they demonstrate “feminine traits” in their leadership styles. They often felt constrained in how they should behave by the attributions placed on their behaviors. All too often, behaviors associated with femininity are rated as negative to good leadership. Tears have come to signal weakness (especially when expressed by men) and nurturing leadership styles have been viewed as lacking in substance. Conversely, women are also viewed negatively when they adopt styles and traits characteristic of men leaders. An aggressive and direct man is often viewed as forthright and taking charge as a leader whereas the same behavior in a woman is viewed as overbearing and angry.

The challenge women and feminist leaders grapple with is how to conform to what is “expected” while still retaining their credibility and effectiveness as leaders. Must they change themselves, that is, who they really are, to gain credibility as leaders? Can they use feminist principles and still be effective as leaders if they are functioning in masculinized contexts? What happens when men adopt these feminist styles? Is feminist leadership a construction associated with gender? These are the questions we must grapple with if we are to define feminist leadership.

We need to examine the attributions people make of “strong women leaders.” Think of the images: “she’s a bitch,” “what a dragon lady,” “she acts like a man,” when women behave as strong leaders. What about attributions people make when women act like women? Think of the images: “she’s maternal,” “nurturing,” or “persuasion and smiles.” Is this intended to convey weakness and ineffectual leadership, that is, form over substance? The answer is empirical but there appears to be lingering bias against women because of an implicit comparison with men and masculinity as superior to women and feminism in leadership.

### THE FUTURE OF FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

The process in developing this Feminist Leadership Initiative has been educational and an enriching one. The scant coverage of feminist leadership styles and the absence of a gender focus on the traits and skills important to effective leadership have implications for feminists, women leaders, men, and future leaders. I look forward to the future of feminist leadership as a transformational process. This initiative promoted active dialogue in an area that needs to be continued. The identification of masculinized and homogenous contexts in which definitions of leadership currently occur fails to incorporate the diversity of gender and ethnic differences that also make for good leadership. The promotion of a social agenda and empowerment found in feminist principles contributes a dimension to leadership and leadership styles that has not been explored. Neither the power dynamics inherent in masculinized environments nor the added stressors faced by women leaders have been explored. We have yet to fully explore the ways in which to honor and celebrate the traditions and strengths of what women

and diverse groups bring to positions of leadership and management.

### Leadership as Empowerment

While a feminist approach to leadership emphasizes the context, it also emphasizes the objectives of leadership as promoting a social agenda and defining leadership as empowerment. When we identify the different roles that leaders play, including that of (a) stewardship of an organization’s resources, (b) creating the vision, (c) social advocacy and change, and (d) promoting policy, we need to take a feminist perspective to examine transformational leadership as empowerment to promote a feminist agenda.

Joy Rice did this in convening different national and international groups as well as divisions within APA toward the goal of collaboration for a feminist agenda at the kickoff luncheon of the Feminist Leadership Initiative. Leadership as empowerment from a feminist perspective means:

- Creating a feminist agenda promoting feminist principles.
- Promoting feminist policies (i.e., family oriented work environments, closing wage gap) within the workplace.
- Changing organizational cultures and goals to be more gender equitable.
- Empowering women as feminist leaders.

### Lessons Learned

We learned through the initiative that feminist leaders do it differently, and that feminist women tend to be more collaborative in their leadership styles. The initiative began a dialogue and identified the issues and questions important to ask about feminist leadership. To advance the topic of feminist leadership, qualitative and quantitative research is needed to identify the feminist skills and styles that promote effective leadership. Indicators are needed to evaluate environments in their shift from masculinized and homogenized contexts to more egalitarian ones.

Keep in mind that leaders like Nancy Pelosi achieved extraordinary leadership, but continue to be perceived by feminine constructs such as “she’s a velvet hammer” that suggest weakness. Andrea Jung reminds us not to sit and wait, but to “find someone’s wings to grab onto.” The dialogue needs to continue as feminist women and women leaders define how it is we can and will effectively lead in the twenty-first century.

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