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2008

Abandoning the masculine domain of leadership to identify a new space for women's being, valuing and doing

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**ABANDONING THE MASCULINE DOMAIN OF LEADERSHIP TO IDENTIFY A
NEW SPACE FOR WOMEN'S BEING, VALUING AND DOING**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

**DIANN M. RODGERS-HEALEY, B.A. (Sydney Uni), Dip. Ed. (Alex Mackie),
M.Ed. (ACU)**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
JANUARY 2008**

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CERTIFICATION

I, Diann M. Rodgers-Healey declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

.....

Signature

Diann M. Rodgers-Healey

10 October 2007

ABSTRACT

Women continue to experience a range of barriers in the domain of leadership and have not as yet achieved equality or equity. An empirical and non-empirical literature review showed that the historic evolution of leadership theory and the practice of leadership are male dominated and masculinist with contemporary leadership bearing vestiges of gender prejudice creating systemic inequities for women.

Where research has been carried out into the area of women and leadership, this has consisted of exploring the barriers which women experience at all levels of organisations, how these barriers can be overcome and the effectiveness of women's leadership style. However, this has invariably remained within the boundaries of masculinist leadership and has not resulted in achieving relative change for women even though strategies such as diversity and legislation to eradicate inequities against women in the workplace are being pursued.

With the intent of capturing multiple realities of women and men who advocate for women's empowerment, in relation to how they perceive and experience the phenomenon of leadership and explore what is possible for women, beyond the masculinist boundaries of leadership, this study using a constructivist, phenomenological, feminist and grounded theory approach invited ten Australian women leaders of different age and background and from different workplaces to abandon the arena of leadership to conceptually explore what lies outside it in terms of women's being, valuing and doing.

A grounded theory analysis of the findings of phase 1 interviews resulted in the model of co-existence and 20 principles which applied to a co-existential way of being for women and men. A corollary model of patriarchy explicating the forces that underpin contemporary society and opposing the development of co-existence also emerged.

The model of co-existence was refined in phase 2 when a grounded theory analysis of in-depth interviews with seven Australian women leaders and three Australian men leaders led to the development of an implementation plan for the model of co-existence in new and established organisations. Surpassing contemporary diversity initiatives, the model moves beyond masculinism, feminism, and patriarchy, redefining leadership and shifting the focus from the inequitable disparity between the sexes to self-fulfilment for each person.

It is expected that further research of the model of co-existence in organisations will lead to additional refinement and validation as well as the creation of a discourse about co-existence and its potential to transform work and how we live.

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¹ Australian conventions of spelling have been adopted in this thesis.

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS USED THROUGHOUT THIS STUDY

Feminine: Of or pertaining to a woman, or to women (Cambridge, 2009).

Femininity: Femininity is a product of cultural and historical forces and encompasses the roles females are prescribed by society to undertake. It is not a homogenous or a uniform cultural product, but has many dimensions and discrepancies (Marshall, 1998). Femininity has come to be understood in terms of how women and men having been socialised culturally, feel, think and act.

Feminism: Feminism can be described as a movement striving for social, political and economic equality for women. Its basic tenet is for women and their contributions to be valued. Feminism is connected to activism and the intellectual position (Gramstad, 2000) emanating from the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power and opportunities as men (Cambridge, 2009). There are many different branches of feminism having evolved in different periods in history. However, the common focus is that feminism involves a theory about and a commitment to women being equal with men.

Feminist: a person who believes in feminism, often being involved in activities that are intended to achieve change (Cambridge, 2009).

Masculine: Of or pertaining to a man, or to men (Cambridge, 2009)

Masculinity: Masculinity is a product of cultural and historical forces and encompasses the roles males are prescribed by society to undertake. Masculinity is not a homogenous or a uniform cultural product, but has many dimensions and discrepancies (Marshall, 1998). Masculinity has come to be understood in terms of how women and men having been socialised culturally, feel, think and act.

Masculinism: Masculinism is male dominance. This dominance is of an intellectual calibre where mindsets are influenced by ideologies favouring men. The dominance is also of a physical calibre where men outnumber women. Gendered sex roles prescribed by society give unequal power to men over women thereby creating inequity between men and women. Sustaining capitalism and being fueled by it, it upholds a patriarchal society.

Masculinist: Of or pertaining to masculinism.

Gender: While “sex” refers to the biological division into male and female, gender refers to the socially constructed aspects of differences between women and men. Culturally dominant ideas about masculinity and femininity (Marshall, 1998) are seen as formulating stereotypes that define and reflect roles for men and women constituting gender differences between men and women.

Socialisation: Socialisation is the process by which girls and boys learn to become members of society, both by internalizing the norms and values of the society, (Marshall, 1998) and also by learning to perform socially defined gendered roles. Socialisation processes occur in child-rearing, education, youth, culture (Marshall, 1998), and continue to be re-enhanced in other structures such as employment and family as well as in the ideology that upholds them

Patriarchy: refers to a male-dominated society (Henry, 2003). Patriarchy means male domination in general through social structures and mindsets in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded. Socialisation is primarily responsible for establishing male and female gender roles which maintain women’s position of subservience to men. Gender messages conveyed by social institutions such as family and the media reinforce male power (Henslin, 2001).

Capitalism: Capitalism is an economic system grounded in the pursuit of profits. As shareholders’ interests are put first and foremost in the securing of a healthy bottom line or profit margin, interests of the ‘collective good’ are not predominant. Altruism, justice, equity and humanity are not significant in a capitalistic system which is motivated by monetary gain and economic survival.

Diversity: Acknowledging differences and implementing work practices to create an inclusive environment in which diverse skills, perspectives and backgrounds are valued is what workplace diversity is about. Although diversity is shaped by a variety of characteristics including age, ethnicity, gender, disability, language, religious beliefs, life stages, education, carer responsibilities, sexual orientation, personality and marital status, in this thesis inclusion of women in workplaces is of particular concern (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2007).