Women of Influence in Education

Practising Dilemmas and Contesting Spaces

Nita Cherry and Joy Higgs (Eds.)

Women of Influence in Education

HIGHER EDUCATION HORIZONS

Volume 2

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Women of Influence in Education

Practising Dilemmas and Contesting Spaces

Edited by

Nita Cherry
Faculty of Business and Law,
Swinburne University of Technology, Australia

and

Joy Higgs
The Education For Practice Institute,
Charles Sturt University, Australia

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

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JOY HIGGS

SERIES INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Horizons

This series explores the current volatile context of higher education and examines ways that the higher education sector is responding to and driving these changes. The books in this series tackle challenges facing the sector and question the goals and strategies that researchers, educators and theorists are creating to address these challenges. They explore trends in stakeholder expectations, and evolving pedagogies and different horizons existing and emerging in higher education. The authors in this series bring a wealth of academic practice wisdom and experience to examine these issues. They share their practice knowledge, report research into strategies that address these challenges, and raise yet more questions. Through the conversations in this book readers can enter into the debates, visions and experiences of the agents of higher education.

Joy Higgs
Charles Sturt University, Australia

PREFACE

Frequently books about women and leadership deal with the politics of this discussion space and the statistics of women succeeding to and through the glass ceiling, or not!

In this book our focus is on a different space. We wanted to learn from the experiences of women doing leadership work. The questions we explored in the research underpinning this book were:

– How do women in education, such as university academics and school principals, describe their experiences of exercising leadership in their workplace?
– How do they say they take up formal mandates to lead and/or mandate themselves to lead?
– How do their accounts resonate with accounts of practice as messy and complex?
– What do their stories suggest about gendered social practices, and the relationships and networks in which they were working?

Our strategy was to listen to the voices and stories of 28 women occupying senior roles in education. Half of these women were principals of independent Victorian secondary schools and the other half were in professorial and senior leadership roles in Victorian universities. Through this listening and pondering on their experiences in relating to the research questions we came to recognise that these women of influence were working in contested spaces and facing multiple practice dilemmas.

The two sections of the book reflect firstly these spaces as we set out to richly present their voices of the women in the school and university settings. Second, we reveal the key themes identified across their stories:

– The dimensions of leadership that comprise their lived experiences
– The pursuit of understanding of their roles such as being a CEO and school principal
– Considering the multiplicity of roles these women take on and the various hats they wear
– What it means to take up authority and influence with and without a mandate
– Recognising what leadership engagement in real time entails
– Reflecting on gender issues such as:
    inspiring girls through leadership and teaching
    dealing with gender barriers by "doing it my way"
– Looking at the costs of leadership in these settings and how to deal with the work and environment challenges:
    by surviving and being resilient
    by dealing with the emotional labour of this leadership
    by pursuing practice wisdom in leadership.

This book is not intended to be a generalised view of educational women in leadership. Rather than reflecting all of the experiences of such women or their common experiences, we have sought to provide a very human and rich view of the particular women who participated in this research. Through their eyes, experiences and voices we have entered into their leadership spaces as privileged visitors.

We invite you as readers of this book to consider the stories and themes we have presented to reflect on your own experiences (if you are women in leadership roles or contemplating such roles) or to reflect (if you are men or women in other situations) about the spaces that educational settings create for leaders, and particularly women in leadership.

Nita Cherry and Joy Higgs

SECTION 1

THE CONVERSATION SPACE
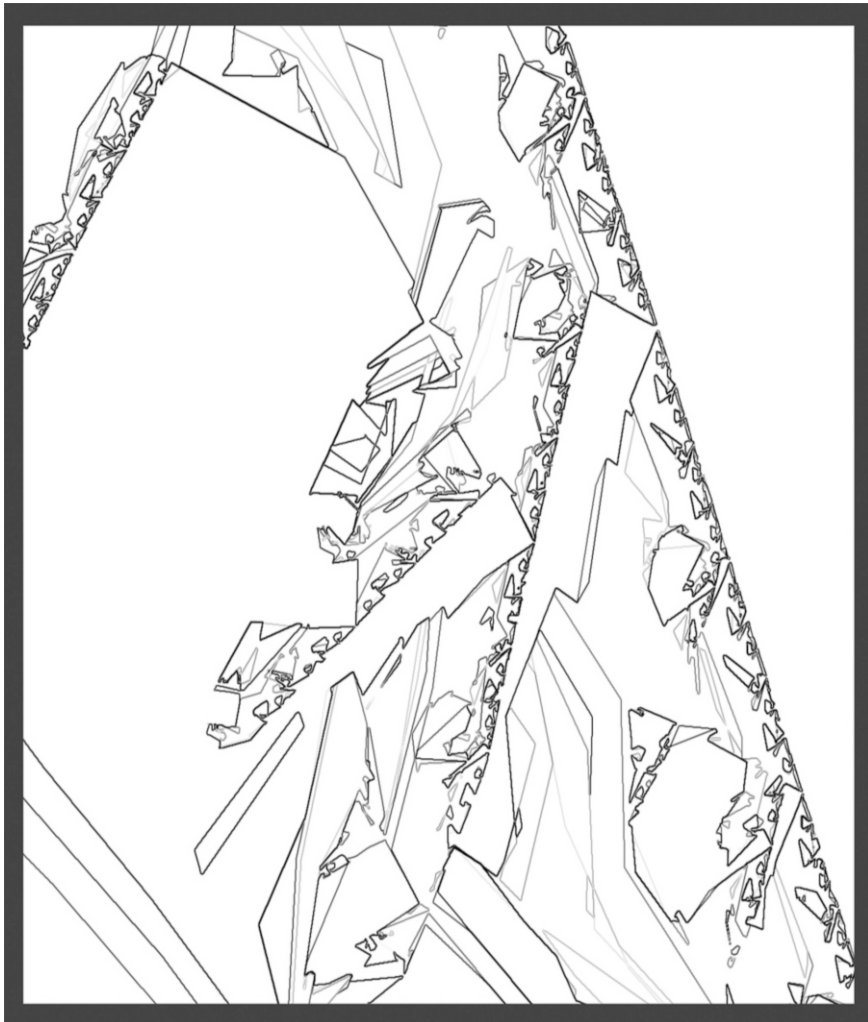
NITA CHERRY AND JOY HIGGS

1. STARTING THE CONVERSATION

The Scope of This Book and Research Approach

This book explores how women in educational institutions experience their leadership work. It responds to calls that such domains of challenging human practice deserve to be considered and understood not only through the lenses provided by existing academic theory, but even more deeply through first hand accounts of what it is like to try to do difficult things and to learn how to do them better. As a result, the book is based on accounts of how women in two different educational settings – universities and secondary schools – have learned to take up authority and how they use it in the context of leadership. Through this research project, we have had the opportunity to talk with 28 women occupying senior roles in education. At the time of the interviews, half of these women were principals of independent secondary schools in Victoria and the others were in professorial and senior leadership roles in Victorian universities.

The conversational interviews were designed to give these courageous women an opportunity to speak freely about how they understand and enact the leadership opportunities that their roles afford them. Their formal roles as chief executive officers and academics are frequently described in policy documents, job descriptions and other elements of the public discourses of their employing organisations. In practice, however, the ways in which these women individually take up and enact the authority and influence possibilities of their roles are frequently different to, and exceed far beyond their position statements, varying over time, shaped by many factors other than the mandates and expectations of their employers.

Our research project sought to "hear inside stories" – meaning both listening to their insider stories of understanding and practice, and really hearing inside their stories – beyond the words spoken, to encounter their experiences, challenges, successes and tribulations. We sought to make their stories both the starting point and the ongoing touchstone for the interpretive work we undertook as researchers. Theory is used inductively to help make further links between the first hand accounts of our participants' lived experiences – their intentions, ideas, feelings and actions – through the interpretations of the researchers and the concepts offered by a range of literatures. There are good reasons to be interested in these inside stories. One is the ambiguity and volatility of the professional practice domains in which such women work. Education at every level is increasingly challenged and stimulated by the range of expectations placed upon it and by rapid changes in the resources upon which it can draw.

Consider, for example the impact of globalisation not just on the interconnect-edness of nations, people, organisations and endeavours but also the increased

international practice standards that demand accountability and raised performance. Alongside and within these performance drivers are unending and escalating technological and information revolutions that make the goals of education subject to rapid liquid change and the task of educational leaders a perpetual battle to stay on top of the opportunities as well as the demands such changes bring. Further, while educational systems strive with utmost dedication to ensure the soundness of the acts, experiences and outcomes of learning and teaching, these same systems and their leaders are increasingly becoming educational market managers, and frequently victims, of educational commodification, as they face tasks of marketing, competition, student attraction to their products and program packaging experts.

The face of educational literature has changed to keep up with practice and system changes. We see, for instance, the emergence of new discourses about leadership under the emergent, messy and contradictory dimensions of complexity (e.g. Stacey, 2012). Another literature focus is on the continuing urgency of concerns to understand gendered differences in leadership practice (see Bostok, 2014). Our participants would strongly support this recommendation. Indeed, many of these developments in educational leadership and directions significantly challenge the ways in which we understand leadership in contexts, well beyond those of education: in corporations, government at all levels, the third sector, military and community settings. Juntrasook et al. (2013) have explored the extent of this challenge of understanding leadership in context, noting the unhelpful ways in which both academic and popular literatures tackle the expectations and formal mandates associated with leadership roles.

These expectations, they suggest, routinely oversimplify the complexities that face contemporary leaders and overestimate the control that individuals actually have over their practice worlds. They echo the comments of Gronn and Ribbins (1996) who famously observed twenty years ago that leadership theorists, not just organisations, have always attached great and exaggerated significance to the agency of individual

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leaders. In contrast, framing of leadership from complexity perspectives more often couches it in terms of influence, rather than control (Stacey, 2012).

The complexity argument is that it is the variable, highly contextual and socially negotiated dimensions of leadership practice from which we have most to learn. This is strikingly different from the preoccupation in the leadership literatures with trying to find a generic set of characteristics of effective leaders – and a catalogue of successful practices for them to use – that can be simply and un-reflexively transferred from one context to another. We have found this complexity argument a vital aspect of study in our research. Women who have succeeded (in the traditional sense) and triumphed in the face of today's academic worlds' challenges and complexities, do so by internal control and control of their environment, not just by the acquisition of accepted, generic leadership characteristics and management and survival of the influences impacting on their working environments.

Perspectives that recognise the ambiguity, volatility and complexity of leadership work call for recognition of leadership practice as being continuously embodied, improvised, adjusted and co-created, in ways that are often unconscious, spontaneous and unacknowledged. If this is the nature of practice, it has some important implications for research. One implication is to step away from the preoccupation with theoretical constructions based on the grand narratives of transformational and charismatic leadership that have dominated the literature for the last twenty-five years. This new approach requires researchers to move towards inductive, open-minded approaches to the study of leadership practice and blending the critical and creative (Higgs & Horsfall, 2010). And increasingly, researchers who recognise the complexities of contemporary practice advocate research methods that attempt to capture the subjectivities of practitioners themselves and the range of ways in which their experiences and understandings are expressed (Cherry, 2010; Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Higgs & Cherry, 2010).

Why write a book about women in education? Women are represented in higher, secondary and primary education in Australia in significant proportions. Education is a very significant industry in terms of employment, and in terms of social as well as economic impact. But this is not simply a question of numbers. In *Women at Cambridge: The Meaning of Success*, Bostok (2014) offers a compelling glimpse of what could be possible if many more women were able to participate fully in their workplaces. She explored the perceptions of a diverse group of women at Cambridge University who were nominated by their peers as being successful, where success was defined as making an important positive difference to their working environment. Bostok argues that fully inclusive workplaces are good for men as well as women, creating environments in which everyone can thrive, do their best work and align their working lives with the things that matter to them beyond work. Her concern is to move debate from its current focus on trying to fix the problem of women at work to a more sophisticated exploration of what it takes to create constructive workplaces that bring out the best in everyone. Our book is based on a similar aspiration. And like Bostok, we see this capacity as a key dimension of leadership work itself. By understanding how women have gone about creating positive differences in

educational environments, our goal is to stimulate more comprehensive conversations in many other workplaces.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE CULTURE OF INQUIRY

In the light of what has been described so far, we focussed the interview conversations with our participants around their experiences and choices rather than directing them around particular theories or views of how these women would respond. Our broad research questions were:

- How do senior women in universities and schools describe their experiences of exercising leadership in their workplace?
- How do they take up formal mandates to lead and/or mandate themselves to lead?
- How do their accounts resonate with accounts of practice as messy and complex?
- What do their stories suggest about gendered social practices, and the relationships and networks in which they were working?

These questions guided the design as well as the focus of the study. The interview conversations were created by the following questions. They sought to open up the participants' thinking about their professional practice. We were basing this approach on the position that practice is a complex phenomenon and experience. In dealing with these complexities practitioners typically operate at a highly automatic level in relation to many regularities of practice, leaving their conscious thinking and strategising to focus on unusual, critical and very difficult practice tasks. To bring the diverse aspects of practice to their minds and allow them to articulate both what they did and why in their work roles, we developed practical questions and prompted them to tell the stories of their practice. Similar strategies have been used in our other research projects such as Joy's research on practice wisdom (Higgs, 2016) and Nita's research on policing (2014). In this project we asked the participants:

- What is your (academic/work) role?
- What are your responsibilities?
  Could you give an example of how you influenced an outcome or a decision before you had "positional" power? What strategies did you engage? Why do you think you were successful or unsuccessful?
- For your current position please give one example of a time when you successfully influenced an outcome or decision by "lateral" means. What was the work or meeting or other setting for this incident? Why do you think you were successful?
  For your current position please give one example of when you were unsuccessful in influencing significant outcomes. What was the work or meeting or other setting for the incident? Why do you think you were unsuccessful in this case?
- In the last 10 years what factors have impacted on your willingness and ability to take up leadership roles in the organisations you have worked for?
- Do you experience gender differences being a dynamic in the leadership work that you do and if so how do you experience it?

These questions proved to be very useful in encouraging the participants to reflect and understand their practices and underlying rationales. They were comfortable telling stories of their roles and leadership experiences.

OUR READINGS

This is an inductive study and the stories of our participants are offered as our interpretations or first readings of the data, for which we take responsibility, acknowledging that other readings are possible. Our readings are inevitably selective but we sought to stay with the participants' language and descriptions. A useful word to describe what we have done is the curation of stories, both large and small: selecting from the material to create arrangements of data and narratives that stimulated and challenged our reflections and interpretations. In turn, our readings can provide a stimulus for the reflection and thinking of others. Different selections and arrangements would create very different possibilities for further thinking. This sort of curation also opens up very many possible ways of engaging with theory. A range of different theoretical frameworks that cross several different disciplines can be used as a series of lenses to highlight different aspects of the texts created through the curations.

The use of plot discourse analysis suggested by Juntrasook et al. (2013) not only turns attention to the socially negotiated and contextual dimensions of leadership practice, but also to what they argue has been marginalised by research on academic leadership: those who are not in formal roles of leadership but who enact leadership at a range of levels within educational institutions. We have tried to create active plot lines, meaning that we are not just creating laundry lists (here is a thing, and here's another thing) or piling up a series of snap shots. Our intention has been to create a sense of how people's practices develop over time, of intense engagement with practice situations, whether in times of crisis or more mundane experiences that nonetheless shape practice.

The intention of the presentation of the stories is to open up lines for further exploration and inquiry, rather than offer findings based on rigid codes and categories. In this sense, the presentation is meant to be suggestive rather than definitive. For the same reason, it has not been our intention to resolve or smooth out inconsistencies or tensions in the data. Indeed, we have been keen to retain the messiness and contradictions of practice stories. In these ways we explore what women say about their practice experiences of leading in educational contexts, and explore how they understand themselves as leaders. We seek to capture their subjectivities and the range of ways in which their experiences and understandings are expressed. And we explore how the women's practitioner selves are constructed through telling their stories.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Chapters Two and Three of this book present the voices of the women, first in the academy and then in the schools, with a minimum of interpretation. The material is grouped under some broad headings but the intention was not to distil or reduce the voices of the women but rather to represent the full range of what they shared with us.

Chapter Two describes the varied and significant roles, contributions and achievements of the university women and represents what they said had motivated them to try to influence things and to make a difference in their university settings. It also describes the range of ways in which they have developed the bases or foundations on which they can be influential.

The chapter goes on to present the specific ways in which they have gone about being influential, either in face-time encounters with others or more indirectly, over time and at a distance. The chapter also describes the challenges they have experienced as they sought to establish and exercise influence. Some of these challenges specifically concerned issues of gender. The themes in this chapter directly reflect the first three drivers of the research project: to understand how these women choose to describe their experiences of exercising workplace leadership; how they say they take up both formal and informal mandates to lead; and how they experience differences in positional and non-positional leadership practice.

Chapter Three does a similar thing in relation to the voices of school principals, beginning with a description of their working settings, roles and contributions. It describes why leading schools has been important to them; how they have developed their leadership base for being influential in their schools; and how they have tackled challenges in exercising leadership, including those related to gender. Chapter Four explores the dimensions of leadership itself, beginning with an overview of some of the ways in which leadership is commonly understood, and then comparing these with the ways in which the school principals and academics describe leadership. Across their conversations with us, they discussed the attributes and capabilities of leaders, based on their experiences and observations rather than on theory or book-reading.

Between them, the women generated a range of leadership dimensions that are aspirational for any one person but represent a catalogue of the various attributes of leadership that might be useful in particular situations. The chapter then moves to an exploration of the actual choices that these women have made about the leadership work they undertake, and how those choices are negotiated and enacted in actual practice settings. The chapter concludes with a statement of leadership as a field of practice activity that incorporates the knowing, doing, being and becoming dimensions of professional practice.

Chapter Five presents some specific examples of an influencing strategy that, intriguingly, was used but never named, by many women we interviewed. Changing frames is a powerful way of inviting a group to "look again" at what they think they see, know and understand. It can create discomfort, even anger, as at least one story in this chapter relates, by upsetting the status quo of power, status and perceived order. It can also create fresh possibilities for consideration and action, re-kindling energy, offering new solutions to problems or even changing what is thought of as a problem.

The interesting thing about changing frames is that it can be accomplished without carefully constructed intellectual arguments, or comprehensive processes of consultation, but by simply changing seating arrangements, adding a new agenda item that gets regular attention, or inviting new people into existing conversations. Changing frames can be made explicit and important, but equally it can be subversive, subtle and

modest. That so many women offered very clear examples of it but did not classify or announce it, might well say something about the ways in which women lead.

In Chapter Six, leadership work is put in a broader context, understood in terms of the many different hats that senior women in universities and schools wear. The diversity of these roles is explored in terms of the skills and insights used to prioritise and manage the time and effort that is committed to each of these roles over time. Contributions explored include teamwork, program management, research programs, system leadership, student supervision, mentoring and role modelling, communicating, and external representation and liaison.

One of the key aspects of leadership practice is the way in which an individual chooses to take up and exercise authority. Chapter Seven is concerned with the negotiated and contested dynamics of authority, calling up the messy, often unconscious and gendered dynamics of leadership. Accounts of leadership in much academic and popular literature simplify and rationalise leadership theory and practice, overstating the agency of leaders and their capacity to understand and control the increasingly complex environments which impact upon them and their organisations. By contrast, these practice-based accounts reflect the politics, the competitions, and the constantly evolving and contested nature of authority in organisational settings. Most popular and academic accounts of leadership also focus on people in public or organisational life who occupy roles right at the top of organisations, so it is inevitable that they more frequently describe the ways that men take up authority. This chapter explores the accounts of women who have grappled over many years with the messy and contested dimensions of using authority, and with the consequences of challenging traditional cultural norms that both men and some women use to reinforce the authority practices of men and challenge the right of women to be authoritative in the same ways as men.

Chapter Eight continues to explore some of the themes raised in previous chapters, which alerted us to the many different ways in which leaders can attempt to influence the behaviour of others and the events, environments and processes that shape their practice. This plays out in their efforts to exert influence either in face-to-face situations or at a distance, in real-time or over time, with small numbers of people or many. We also glimpsed in previous chapters some of the challenges involved.

This chapter further explores the challenging dynamics of engagement suggested by the academic women's accounts of face-to-face situations. They were very aware of many aspects of real time influence dynamics, and mentioned them in the context of challenging encounters that very often involved men. This led quite a few to speculate about the deep drivers of practices that appear to be gender-based and reflect entrenched habits of both women and men.

Reading of the transcripts led to the conclusion that many women are well aware of the real-time dynamics they associate with both male and female behaviour, but prefer to take their concerns and assumptions about what is going on off-line during actual conversations, preferring instead to find ways of working around the difficulties that real-time encounters present them with. Only a very few spoke about actually confronting or naming the troublesome dynamics in real time. One possible implication of this is that women must not only deal with the discrepancy between

what they would like to happen and what is actually happening, but they must also work harder after the encounter to achieve their goals in other ways. The other issue explored in this chapter is the difference in real time behaviours that seem to emerge when reading the individual accounts of those academics in executive roles with the accounts of academics whose authority was less clearly defined. These accounts strongly suggest that having significant formal authority that is recognised by others enabled these academics to enact a number of very effective strategies in real time, regardless of whether they were dealing with men or women.

Chapter Nine unpacks more detail in relation to one particular hat worn by the school principals. This group were very clear that as well as being CEOs, they saw themselves as directly leading the learning of girls. For all of them, this was a passion and deep commitment. They believed that they were role models to their students, seeing it as particularly important for girls to observe women in leadership roles. And they were keen to explain how they had come to hold that view of their roles.

Most of the women in this group headed up single sex girls' schools and they emphasised their commitment to supporting girls' life-long success. However, the principals of co-educational schools in our sample shared these beliefs. All principals were concerned about the girls' futures after they left secondary school, and described the newer ways they were thinking about, and actually implementing, to support girls to continue achieving their potential as adults.

Chapter Ten provides compelling evidence of the principals' concerns about gender practices among school leaders. Most of them related specific anecdotes about the differences in the way they have seen men and women leaders of schools behaving, even now when they are senior leaders themselves, mingling with senior men and women leaders at conferences. Along the way, they had encountered and had to deal with leadership environments that when dominated by men have taken on an uncompromising "blokiness" that has been relatively intolerant of different styles. Ironically, however, one of the major motivators for these women in wanting to help young women become strong leaders is actually the behaviour of women, including some women leaders, whom they perceive to collude in supporting male power behaviour. Most of these women have been in the system for some time and having grown up with male and female gendered leadership practices, were very alert to unconscious acceptance that women should adopt more feminine modes of authority and not challenge the status quo in ways that make them, and the men, uncomfortable.

Chapter Eleven explores educational settings as contested spaces that can be fraught with challenges brought about by constant and often conflicting changes. From the accounts that were offered to us, taking on a leadership role and performing its challenging tasks was seen as a space that requires courage, particularly for women. Courage is manifest in action, decisions and assertive behaviours that look admirable and leader-like in men, but can be criticised as being aggressive in women. In a world where *easy* is rare, perseverance is also thought to be a key role in achieving leadership goals and pursuing challenging tasks, whether self or system imposed. Most of the women who spoke with us were also clear that trying to survive leadership work on one's own is very difficult over the long haul.

Having support networks of peers who are walking the same path and engaging with the same challenges provides the support of someone who knows what it is like to lead (in good times and bad) and someone who can share ways of coping and succeeding that have been learned from actual practice. Support networks can also include the people who report to leaders. There is a great advantage in having networks and colleagues who are outside the immediate workplace and the employing institution's communication space, and beyond that institution's power consequences. Having such people, trusted friends and professional support and development companions is vital in enabling leaders to survive and sustain energy.

Continuing the themes of the previous chapter, Chapter Twelve uses the concept of emotional labour to further explore significant strains involved in undertaking leadership work. Emotional labour means limiting or hiding spontaneous feelings like anger, irritation, nervousness, sadness, or delight and excitement. In some situations, employees are expected to modify the extent of their feelings or express them in ways that are culturally acceptable to their organisation, colleagues, clients and other stakeholders. And in others, they might have to pretend to be friendly, optimistic, interested, or calm.

Commentators on emotional labour make the point that although significant work is involved, often this is not acknowledged or explicitly rewarded by employers, for several reasons. Sometimes successful and sustained emotional effort is mistaken for so-called "soft skills" or "emotional intelligence" that it is assumed come easily or naturally to the person. If, over time emotional work becomes more difficult, then work that could once be readily accomplished through reasonable skill, turns into work that requires considerable emotional effort and strain. Or it might be that organisational culture prohibits the acknowledgment of emotional labour, so that it becomes undiscussable or even out of awareness. Some would argue that this is most likely to happen when there are significant power differentials in play, so that some portion of the workforce takes on labour that is not expected of others.

Some of the emotional work that women take on in organisational settings is of this kind. We observed in their accounts that a significant number of the women leaders – both academics and school principals – in this study regularly undertake emotional labour, and they realise that they are doing it, and that it is not valued or supported, yet they collude with the power dynamics that generate it.

Chapter Thirteen concludes the book by exploring three questions: Where does practice wisdom fit in relation to educational leadership? How does it relate to women in educational leadership? How do women in senior educational positions understand and develop leadership wisdom? Each of these questions opens up intriguing territory, inspired by the subtle and elusive notion of phronesis or practical wisdom, valued by ancient society and still relevant and powerful today. The women in our study have been engaged for decades – and are still engaged – in a domain of practice that inherently demands constant re-negotiation, that is emergent and arguably complex. Educational leadership is never going to be an easy ride in a world of liquid modernity which entails accelerating understanding of how learning might happen but not how to make it happen. And it is not easy in the context of the domination of the market models of educational funding and delivery including the commodification of learning

and teaching. The idea of practice wisdom in connection with educational leadership offers not only a powerfully and refreshingly different way of understanding the experiences, opportunities and dilemmas of our academics and school principals, but creates a portal for readers of this book to step into this space themselves.

You might have had experiences that resonate in some way with those of the women who participated in our study. Your experiences might be quite different, located in times and places that bear little resemblance to what you have read about in these pages. We invite you, nonetheless, to consider what part does practice wisdom play, and whether it is valued, in your experiences so far in education and leadership. How might your own practice be inspired and illuminated by a desire or curiosity to engage wisely? How might educational leadership by men as well as women, be enhanced by appreciating the role that practice wisdom can play?

We hope that the honesty and wisdom of the women we spoke with, and in turn shared with you, will provide many fruitful triggers for your own practice journey.

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Nita Cherry PhD
Professor of Leadership and Organisation Studies
Faculty of Business and Law, Swinburne University of Technology

Joy Higgs AM PhD PFHEA
Strategic Research Professor in Professional Practice, Charles Sturt University

NITA CHERRY

2. THE VOICES OF THE WOMEN IN UNIVERSITIES

This chapter presents the voices of the fourteen senior university women who were interviewed. It intends to represent what these women had to say about several issues. The first issue is the sorts of things that have been important to them and have motivated their efforts to influence things and to make a difference in the university setting.

The second is the range of ways in which they have developed the bases on which to be influential in that setting. The third is the specific ways in which they have gone about being influential, either in face-to-face situations or more indirectly. The fourth issue concerns the challenges that they have experienced in establishing and exercising influence, with a particular focus on issues of gender.

The themes chosen reflect the first three driving interests of the research project: to explore how these women describe their experiences of exercising leadership in their work place; how they say they take up formal mandates to lead and/or mandate themselves to lead; and how any differences in positional versus non-positional leadership practice are experienced.

The chapter attempts a minimum of commentary to interpret or explain the words of the women. The intention in writing the chapter was to use a light touch in selecting, arranging and presenting what they had to say. Readers are encouraged to make their own sense of the words of these women, and then to compare that understanding with the interpretations offered in other chapters of this book.

The chapter begins with a description of the roles taken up by these professors and the contributions they have made. In each group of quotations from the transcripts, individual quotations are from different women.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND PATHWAYS

The experience of these women spans several decades in a range of positions that have offered them many significant opportunities for leadership. All have professorial status, with three occupying senior roles in the executive team of the Vice-Chancellor of their university. In the course of their careers and to the present time, the women in this sample have been heads of academic groups in universities and of major projects in industry, directors of research centres, and leaders of national and international disciplinary councils. They have been leaders of significant research teams funded through the competitive discovery and linage grants awarded by national research councils or sponsored directly by industry. Many lead other significant engagements with industry, government and the

community; supervise large numbers of graduate students; and have operational responsibility for the day-to-day management of academics involved in research, teaching and consultancy.

As well as being disciplinary leaders in their university, in some cases they are international experts who have pioneered innovations in practice, developed new theory and established institutes that continue to offer global leadership. Their discipline strengths include mathematics, engineering, science, information technology, biotechnology, education, business studies and social sciences. The three members of the Vice-Chancellor's executive team work at the centre of the University and have responsibility for developing and leading major strategic projects. These include academic quality and accreditation, and the transformation of the focus, marketing strategies, skills, culture, technology and processes of the entire university. The other eleven are located in faculties or research centres.

Most of the fourteen have occupied multiple roles simultaneously, either in Australia or in previous roles overseas. Many are career academics who have worked their way through the ranks. A few have started in industry or government, reaching executive positions from which they have managed hundreds of people and/or very considerable budgets and policy development. Most have changed institutions at least once. Most described themselves as having significant levels of leadership experience, including a small number who achieved senior levels of executive leadership in industry before taking up academic roles.

THE DRIVERS FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH LEADERSHIP WORK

This section of the chapter explores the ways in which the women were drawn into their leadership work. Specifically, they were asked to reflect on the sorts of issues, people and situations they had been particularly interested in influencing over the course of their careers. For two of the members of the Vice-Chancellor's executive team, their enduring interest has been in thinking and planning at organisational level, getting organisations to be effective in what they do, setting challenging strategic goals and transforming organisational capacity across the board to achieve them.
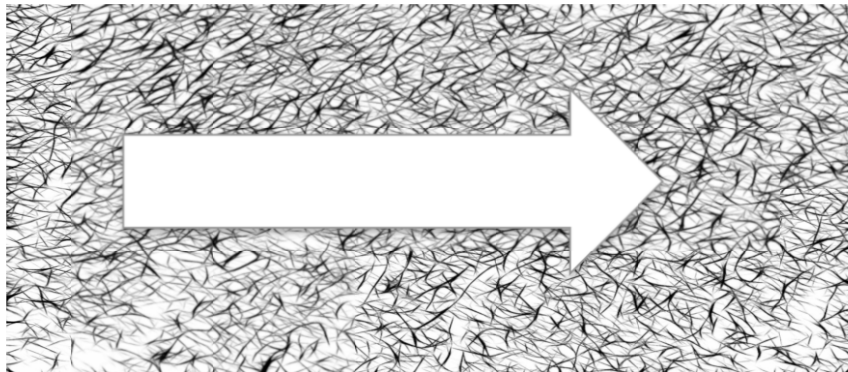
I liked knowing about what's going on, and I think that's what happens ... even when you do your first little Deputy Head of – or chairing a Committee ... Then at each level you start to see a broader slice of the organisation and I really like seeing ... how the whole system works. By the time I was Deputy Dean, you sort of see the Faculty as a whole, but you also see the Faculty's connection with the university. And by the time I went into corporate, you can see the whole university. And I really like that sense of ... not just looking at my own teaching arena ... I like that understanding of how the whole system's ticking.

> *The success of actually making a difference in how institutions advanced ... and the environments in which people were working. And that doesn't mean that it's making a comfortable environment, it's actually making a dynamic environment. Ensuring that people had a clear direction, and the outcomes of that have been very rewarding.*

They have also actively enjoyed exercising formal authority:

> *I guess I also quite like the fact that ... you do have some influence. You have a bit of power if you like ... You kind of have that opportunity to have your voice heard, and sometimes I think "oh; I quite like that". Occasionally when you don't get invited to things you think, oh damn, would have quite liked to have been in that ... Not addictive, that's the wrong word but ... it's nice to see how everything's working. So ... I guess I also quite like organising and managing staff ... Maybe it's actually more that the leadership role is more now about being a positively influential member of a team. And maybe that's really more important.*

> *I was one of those people, who instead of sitting there complaining about it, proactively engaged with the leaders to actually find solutions and have that voice representing people.*

During their conversations, these two women spoke little about their own views about research and education. Rather, they emphasised the importance of being detached from particular agendas:

> *Women who are influential leaders are people who are very comfortable usually in their position as leaders. They feel very responsible for the role that they hold and they are very considered in the way that they influence. So they are not necessarily agenda driven. When I say agenda driven, somebody who's a leader who's on a soapbox about issues is less likely to be influential than someone who provides opinion and comment in a contextual forum. That doesn't mean that they don't lobby but it's not about agenda. So ... women leaders who do make a difference and influence will do so (using) ... balanced opinion*

> *and argument and persuasiveness ... And that's how you influence.*
>
> *And it's about not personalising it I guess. Where your own ego is in relation to it. I think it's not about having your own ego too attached to it. It's about saying, what's actually going to achieve the outcome we want here.*

A third executive described her involvement in organisational leadership as being based on her career-long interest in a particular area of education. She described her commitment to transforming academic practice on an organisational scale, based on thorough academic research:

> *And I was asked to go there and completely change the way they operated to put (this approach) in campus ... And I had a lovely time there. Um, you know so it was intended to influence, so I actually wrote the strategy and that sort of thing. So I was doing that ... but I was also doing research to provide the evidence to underpin it, which is the main thing that influences academic change ... I have been doing this for a very long time. I was one of the first people in the world to (do this).*

For most of those in non-executive academic roles, the drivers for being actively influential over the years have been the fascination of progressing their own particular interests in research and education.

> *So for me it is all about the science. I look for scientific opportunities so I ended up being recruited to (this university) because of the science that I could do with another collaborator here.*
>
> *I just wanted to use research, to do research and be paid for it.*
>
> *We understand the nature of the University has changed, but we need to stay true ... to ensure that the students keep being given the best education ...*
>
> *Universities can care for human beings as well as educating them. And I think if we want to develop them into really good corporate citizens ... we'd demonstrate some behaviours we want them to exhibit in their future lives. And I was absolutely shocked at the level of dysfunction some of our students, both local and international, are dealing with in their personal lives. And it seemed to me that you know, education is their only way out of that dysfunction in many respects ...*
>
> *... just doing what we can to be a mentor and be a teacher in the broader sense ...*

However, when asked how actively and deliberately they had sought to be professionally influential there was a continuum of responses, ranging from a very purposeful interest in formal leadership roles from a young age, through to a firm rejection of the notion that they had deliberately sought to be influential.

> *Look I worked in the public sector for a long time and I had jobs in which I managed up to 800 people in one case with very, very substantial budgets.*

> *So I have done a lot of management and you know, it is really interesting, I did it from a young age and I was in the Senior Executive Service in the (State) Government. It is not the only government I have worked for, … and I was under 30 when I went into it.*

> *Yeah, well I mean I fell into things that happened.*

> *I think I would not have even applied for a promotion, because my personality is not like that. I don't know whether what I achieve is good enough for anything, but I've had a pretty reasonable boss, who can see my struggle and who is appreciative.*

> *One does not have a designation to actually have leadership. One can do that within (one's) own microsphere.*

Several others were very clear that they were either not interested in taking up formal authority or were ambivalent about it:

> *I don't want to control people, I just want to assist them in their, whatever their goals are …*

> *I don't want to be the Vice-Chancellor by the way. That is too much worry for me.*

> *But then why should we fall on our swords and give up jobs that we really enjoy doing just as a means of advancement … do you want to end up doing, I mean the deans in the new structure, it seems to be a pretty awful job.*

> *I also really like working with other people. So, look, I don't like just being the lone person. And here it has been a bit, the last two years it has been a bit lonely (in a leadership position). And so what I am really keen to do is to be more part of a leadership team. That is the issue.*

DEVELOPING THE BASES FOR LEADERSHIP

The women's accounts suggest quite contrasting differences in the authority bases from which they exercise influence. For the three executives, a clear mandate to

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lead is quite formally vested in the accountabilities, duties and key performance indicators associated with their role statements.

Membership of the executive team not only gives them personal authority but formal and informal access to the authority of senior colleagues and to the power invested in the Vice-Chancellor, both of which can be invoked when needed. Two of these had early experiences of exercising formal authority and successive opportunities and promotions reinforced both their liking for these role and their confidence in using the authority vested in them.

> *I first came on to committees years ago because I kept saying, you know this policy is not working, so people of course say well why don't you come on the committees and get involved. Which of course I then did. And I think what happened is I started working with people a lot around the policies … And I think what happens is that I built a bit of a reputation … which then allows you to influence more …. You get invited to the table …*

> *It's a bit hard to define how it builds up … but it's that recognition that you are someone … with a clear and reasonable idea and listen to all sides but still kind of push through to something. You know like I just keep going at it I suppose.*

And success continues to breed its own authority:

> *It would be a long time since I've had an unsuccessful …. Now unsuccessful doesn't – it depends on what you define as unsuccessful. So there will be situations where I might have come with a particular perspective to a particular issue. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that that's what the outcome that is achieved actually looks like in the end. But you will have influenced what is the final determination of where you end up*

The third executive has built her authority to lead at organisational level on her international reputation and experience:

> *I do about 40 keynotes a year … and the role of a keynote for a professor means that you have got something worthwhile to say … And I very rarely have to jump in with both feet and wave flags.*

> *But sometimes you know, I will say I am sorry, the evidence of what you are suggesting is wrong, you know and here is the evidence … And long experience, you know. I have been doing this for a very long time …*

> *So it is very difficult for someone to come around and say, oh but I know better … I don't think I do that in a bombastic, what*

> *might be considered a male way, but sometimes I will … And of course that is accumulative. It is not a one off.*

By contrast, the stories of academics working in faculties and research centres suggest they largely self-mandate, authorising themselves to lead, exercising influence in a range of ways, building and claiming the confidence and credibility to lead, sometimes over quite long periods of time. Their stories also suggest that they need to continually re-negotiate that authority as other players seek to stake their own claims for leadership.

> *I think, you know, there's so many different types of leader, so what do people want?*

> *And there's quite subtle little games go on all the time, (both) to achieve things and to not acknowledge what we do achieve.*

A very small number of those academics have occupied leadership roles from early in their careers although not always by choice, at least initially:

> *Well, I have always had leadership roles. I would rather be in that position than just following blindly along … in situations. I think my thing that is probably quite unusual is that when I was appointed as lecturer, which was only about 10 years ago, I was appointed to a leadership role.*

> *So I was thrown in the deep end. It was horrible, it was fabulous, it made me who I am.*

But for most of the women interviewed, it has meant building up demonstrable individual expertise and achievement over time:

> *Because I have a strong track record in (research funding application proposals) … one might presume or conclude that I have a knowledge about how to do it and … But at least I have been involved in a lot of reviewing of research grant applications and so I can give some insight at least to provide beneficial feedback or feedback that might be beneficial for young, more junior staff members.*

> *I gradually worked my way through the ranks and that includes milestones along the way of those promotions that include demonstration of leadership: supervising students, becoming involved in professional organisations not just involved but leadership positions, that is chairing conferences, inviting people.*

In some cases they also spoke of leveraging the authority and influence of external groups, to achieve goals that really mattered to them but were not be supported by their own university:

> *I was able to do that and get it going. It was a bit of a subversive project at that stage because we just appointed ourselves as, you know, being able to run the enquiry and we raced around the countryside doing so. But a lot of people came on board and joined in that quest. I became the convenor of the … Inquiry. Because I was working for an academic institution … we did it through the Australian Council of Heads of Schools.*

Another professor described what she referred to as working laterally:

> *… another discipline perhaps didn't perceive a way forward for a funding proposal … because they were unaware … about a particular avenue that we could take. As a result of my … coming from a different background but seeing what they were trying to do … (I) suggested … why don't we do this together … This has happened in a few examples where we went in a completely different direction to which they would have gone. They were quite impressed … Together we were tremendously successful.*

Building credibility and confidence can take a long time and requires patience and persistence:

> *I also worked in the field for a very long time as well and it takes a long time, took a long time for me to convince them.*

> *But, because I haven't aspired, here, to try and to be a leader, I don't know how to go about it really. It would be nice to influence things here, but I am not in a position where it is that easy and I have not got the networks here.*

Over time, though, a reputation can be built that gets implicitly acknowledged, to the point of being taken for granted:

> *I am sort of like, the wheel-in … person. The wheel-in link, so whenever somebody wants to talk about (topic deleted), they can Rent-a-(Professor). So, I get asked to give a lot of talks. I get asked to go to international and national conferences, I get paid … to talk.*

> *I'm not necessarily the manager of a person, but I may be called upon by other people to work out some details because I am the workhorse, one of the workhorses in the place.*

Some of the women have been deliberately strategic and political about the ways in which they have built their bases for influence:

> *We have been very active. I say we because it is about we, rather than promoting individuals, it has been about we. You know, promoting our research through, for example the Faculty has*

> *what is called data blitz which is like speed dating for researchers.*

> *And so we had to educate him in what we did and how we did it.*

> *And so we worked hard but the other thing we worked hard at was to achieve a lot and that makes people look good and they really like it ...*

However, simply hunkering down can also create the freedom to act:

> *My sort of work is, does not bring in, it's too political. People don't like to fund it. And, yet, you know, the University supports me in those endeavours. ... You know, it' a little bit off the main stream. They facilitate, they don't try and block what I do ... I am a bit bunkered here, because you know, we are all in our little corners of the world here.*

SPECIFIC APPROACHES

This section presents the ways in which influence is actually exercised in the practice of leadership. For the three in executive leadership, there are some clear strategies for orchestrating large scale organisational change:

> *The first thing you have to be seen to be doing is developing the case as to why you need to change ... And so there was a process put in place to enable people to independently and collectively have a voice in that process ... But you can't just come out with a blank piece of paper ...*

> *So one of your first things that always makes you successful is for you to at least give people some information as well as exemplars of what you might seek ... And then have them understand by the nature of the questions you ask of people, for their input into that.*

> *So ... we then convened a second group that looked at ... the different elements of feedback ... So after we had that and knew what it looked like, you then move into a steering group, and you move into a task-orientated implementation team, so you delegate tasks to other workforces and groups. Important to it all is the continued communication strategy. You communicate, you communicate, you communicate again when you think you've done enough.*

> *In the short term it didn't work out but ultimately you were able to get something that was a good enough outcome ... in that it got rid of what I saw as the major risk.*

The authority vested in the position also mandates direct and decisive intervention:

> *Some information came to me that I then put a halt to that ... because that new information has come to my attention I am now redefining how that will actually end up being successful. So sometimes you have to go out with haste and other times you actually have to say, well we're ready but I need to actually put you on pause.*

Using some quite specific skills:

> *If you're a solutions and outcomes orientated person, you will influence. Whereas if your only sphere of influence is to identify issues and having no mechanism by how to actually address those issues, then you won't be influential.*

> *I think it's sometimes the capacity to interpret ... and I mean to some extent if you read that stuff around language or – it gives you a way of looking at it that depersonalises it ... It doesn't solve it, it means you have to deal with it ... (and) sometimes you're putting in more effort because you're actually thinking: 'I've got to go into this meeting and I've got to make sure I talk in a way that is going to be listened to by these people'. So it's like talking across cultures.*

However, working with peers requires collegiate consideration:

> *For me to operate in a senior peer team, I have to be able to have an effective working relationship with all my peers and it's not a win or lose situation.*

The approaches most commonly mentioned by women in academic roles involved trying to assist others, in a variety of ways.

> *Yeah, guide them and help them and help them make tough decisions too, on occasion. Be a part of that decision-making step. They make the decision but I can give them information that might assist in that decision.*

> *But Yeah, mentoring people is, helping them ... along their path. It is their journey but I like to (help), if it is possible.*

> *It is not necessarily my success but I really enjoy watching people, helping people get to where they want to go. So there is that mentoring.*

About half spoke of the importance of being genuinely open to the needs and perspectives of others:

So generally my strategy is to put myself in that person's shoes. If I don't do that ... it is very hard for a person to appreciate what else that person might be feeling. So then I have that kind of perspective. Then I go and talk to my colleagues and say here is the situation .... These seem to be our options ... So I've learned to just sit on something for 24 hours ... and then really come up with what is the best way to accommodate three or four people's requirements and still be able to meet the rules of the course and the Department.

I do like mentoring. I am kind and I do listen and I make sure there are, make sure that the road blocks that I face are not necessarily the road blocks that my staff face so if I make (it my) responsibility to remove those road blocks ... if there is a road block they often don't know about it because you know, I try to protect them ....

Some are knowingly political:

But I was very aware, I have always been very aware of not challenging big egos which are often weak egos. And this particular person I think is quite vulnerable in terms of their ego. I was also really aware that by trying to change the dynamics by being quietly persistent was going to be the best way... not confronting but choosing a number of opportunities where I could get some change.

So the first year I actually did two things that were in a more support role ... and I did that purposely. It was lots of work but in part it was to get his trust and to have him see me as not a threatening person who came in to take over his role.

A few in the sample spoke about the use of assertive influence skills:

Well I suppose, in general, there are a thousand ways in which I tend to be most influential when I am both positive and assertive. You know there are a lot of people who are very quick to find problems, and I tend to try and turn that into what is the solution

And so my own little strategy was two things. I learned to wear something bright so you didn't actually meld into the background.

So you had to be noticed and the second thing was that I had to say something within about the first five minutes. And I found that has been quite effective through my life.

He went more than bloody purple. He was absolutely furious with me. And ... I guess I was being a bit provocative but I think

> *really it was a great threat ... because he said "Ooh no I can't do anything about it". And I said "Well actually what you could do is ...*

> *I get really ugly and that is something I am not very good at. I am not good at hiding what I think ... and I broadcast which I don't think is necessarily a great thing.*

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

The stories of the professors directly involved in academic work suggested that there have been significant challenges in developing the bases for influence over time, and then in exercising it. For some, this has involved serious anguish as a result of being pulled in different directions career-wise:

> *I have a kid, oh my God I don't even want to think about what happened to my heart, let alone my pocket, dropping off my kid to day care. I don't want to think about it, it was really, really painful. But if I hadn't put her in the childcare, and if I hadn't come to work when she was young, I think I would have really lost my career opportunities big time.*

> *But there are more than one female professors in the Institute who could have gone for it but actually we are all happy doing research. So the dilemma for us is, you know, can we whinge and complain about them recruiting all male leadership in this new structure.*

Women get disadvantaged just generally in academia because if they go and have kids then they get behind in their research and … it takes a special mentor to kind of get people through that.

A couple of my staff have had children. I am very happy that they want to stay on and I encourage that but it is very difficult for them once they have a year out to get their publications back on line, get their grant applications back on line and so on.

For others, the challenge lies in the character of organisational processes and culture:

University bureaucracy is very heavy … so getting anything done around here is very difficult.

I can't even jolly well sign a piece of paper that enables my student to apply for some of the funds that are allocated to them.

Nobody stops and thinks "what was she doing that made you think that? what do you think her intention was?" There's nothing like that. It's "oh well, you were wrong when you did X". And you think, hang on a minute, aren't you even going to say to me, what were you trying to accomplish? …

So there was no development, no sensible feedback, and I think pathetic understanding of human beings you know, because I was in a very technical, rational Faculty.

When directly asked about gender issues some women say they have never let gender be an issue:

It is the capacity to do it and the desire to do it and the passion to take things forward that I was, I find important to me. I don't, it didn't have anything to do with my gender … I wasn't fighting for women's rights or I wasn't … pushing things … It was what I wanted to do as a personal thing, as a personal journey.

I think that it hasn't been something that I've felt that I've had to battle with in the workplace. So I think I've been very lucky … whatever teasing there's been, has been fine … there hasn't been that kind of (negative) teasing, it's been the shared banter with colleagues. I can give as good as I get then.

To be supportive, to be willing to compromise when you need to. All that's very gendered in many ways. But … it doesn't seem to have held me back in my career.

Some think that things are changing or that gender is no longer an issue at executive level:

> *And I think that there's probably more push for men in the senior positions these days to actually be able to listen and take on board different opinions and not be you know, not be quite so absolutist.*

> *I can't say that I witness it at the more senior levels where gender disappears.*

But most said that they still experience or observe gender dynamics that challenged their capacity to build a basis for credible influence:

> *I feel that some of it comes from the men actually not thinking that the women … were just as able. And it also comes from women such as myself. I think we are very non-combative. So if you feel that you're being pushed aside, you say why – I'll just get on with my job.*

> *So you say oh forget it, if you think I can't do it, fine … Whereas men are, I can't say they are show-offs, but I feel that men notice another man more easily than they would notice a woman …*

> *As Chair … I got no time allowance whatsoever. When I stood down, I think a man was voted in immediately and became a sort of 50% role, and OK did I accomplish that by saying 'This is ridiculous' for three years?*

These challenges also play out in real time:

> *I've certainly been in cases where I've raised an issue in a meeting, it's been completely ignored and about 10 minutes later, you know the men actually wake up to the fact.*

> *But I think that I do worry that people see behaviours that I see in men and they see the same behaviour in a woman and it is objectionable to them. They wouldn't comment on it in a man.*

> *It's just what we perceive as bullying, I think the threshold from a woman is much lower … Well, not so much being careful with language, but being careful with what I do.*

> *The greatest gift that I have acquired in later life is listening, the capacity to listen. Men don't have that. I will sit in a meeting and … just three persons perhaps sitting at a table. And I won't get a word in edge ways … and they all spoke simultaneously for one hour … and I walked out of the room thinking well I didn't learn anything there. And nor did they.*

Most commented on the ways in which the behaviours of women actively limit their own capacity to be influential:

> *I think women are far more likely at lower levels to be the good and willing corporate citizen and then wonder why they don't progress ... So the one thing I have observed in the delegation of duties at more junior levels and this can be a poor reflection of leadership within those units ... in general making more demands of women than they have men ....*

> *Yeah. I see massive differences and the ones that worry me are the women who really don't get it. Don't understand where they sit in the bigger picture and so end up sounding very selfish and sounding very me, me, me ... (who say) "Oh you need to support me" and I am like, no we don't. If you can't make a case for yourself then (trails off). And then there are guys who, you know, the male equivalent of that is somebody who is demanding all of the time.*

Two felt that women can be uncomfortable when authority is taken up by other women:

> *And she's not the only one (who) often likes to introduce me as you know, she's feisty.*

> *And particularly, I mean, particularly with another woman,*
> *because it never seems to get forgotten There is no way of*
> *actually clearing the air on that.*

And one of the executive women is still looking for a way of leading that is different from either the male and female leaders with whom she works:

> *So maybe there's a part of me still looking around saying surely*
> *there is somebody there that I can aspire to be like.*

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to offer a comprehensive representation of the views of the senior university women who were interviewed. Its intention has been to keep interpretation to a minimum, so that readers are able to make their own sense of their words, and to compare their sense-making with the interpretations offered in other chapters of this book.

Nita Cherry PhD
Professor of Leadership and Organisation Studies
Faculty of Business and Law
Swinburne University of Technology

DEBORAH TOWNS

3. WOMEN PRINCIPALS

Voices in Non-Government Schools

The voices of fourteen women school principals are presented in this chapter. In our conversations with them, they were invited to describe and reflect upon their roles as leaders of successful non-government schools. The chapter begins with a description of their contributions and work settings. It then explores three issues, the first being why leading a school has been important to them. The second was how they have developed their leadership base so they could be influential in their school. The fourth issue addressed challenges they may have had which prevented them from exercising influence including issues of gender. Like the previous one, this chapter is designed to present the women's voices with a minimum of interpretation by the author. Quotations presented for each theme are from different women.

ROLES AND WORK SETTINGS

The principals we interviewed were leading either very large schools of around 2000 students (plus staff)) or of medium-size (around 800 students plus staff). All these schools, involving multi-million budgets, are non-government schools. Most are single sex girls' schools, while three others are co-educational. Most of them led schools which included early learning centres for pre-school age children and every level through to Year 12.

Most of their schools had begun as small private establishments established by women over a century ago. Others were established by religious or community organisations. In drawing attention to this history, one principal remarked: "How many businesses today are 114 years old?"

The girls-only schools belong to the Australasian Alliance of Girls' Schools (AAGS) which is a strong advocate of single-sex schools as providing the best learning environment for girls. All these schools emphasise the provision of leadership programs for their students. The principals belong to the Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia (AHISA), and other national, state and local professional organisations.

All principals were appointed through their school's council, although formal arrangements governing their working relationships with councils varied. However, all principals have the power to hire and fire. A few of the schools are multi-campus and provide boarding facilities, and all have international students and provide international exchanges. These are schools that have high public

profiles, very sophisticated marketing strategies and websites, and high standard facilities for teaching, sport and a range of cultural and other activities, in beautifully tended settings. As school principals they are leaders of large numbers of teaching and other professional staff as well as administrative and support teams. Many of those we interviewed have post-graduate qualifications.

The principals described themselves as educational leaders or the "leading educator" as one described herself, while most also described themselves as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). All spoke about the need to hold the tension between the demands of contemporary business management and the purpose, timeframes and traditions of educational institutions. They also described the classic executive challenges of constantly shifting attention between long term vision and planning, and day-to-day issues of implementation and change. They talked about dealing with multiple stakeholders both within and beyond the school community, including its governing body, parents, regulators, professional bodies, as well as international and local markets and communities. One commented that "you have to be all things to all people". For this woman in a larger co-educational school, being principal is:

> *... both to be an educational leader, and, a business head ... to be the CEO of the organisation. Certainly during most of my time as the Principal, the area of being the educational leader has predominated.*
>
> *However, there has always been a pressing need to have some involvement in, and certainly cognisance of, the business side; so, as the Principal, and as an educational leader, you are the one who is setting educational directions with the staff, working with them to develop educational priorities, then enacting those educational priorities and ensuring that they can be met through the budget.*
>
> *Then there is a lot of day to day stuff in terms of involvement with students. A role model, really, for heads of school and for other senior leaders in the school on how to interact with students, how to interact with parents and there is also the industrial relations side of it ...*
>
> *(On the school council) .... I am a non-elected member and a non-voting member, but I think that the Principal has a very significant role in influencing the School Council or Board because ... certainly the President and the other members of the Board look to the Principal to say what it is, to be setting that direction and to be arguing for it, advocating for it ...*

A principal in a smaller school saw it this way:

> *And I quite like having the responsibility of the, you know, educational leader as well as the corporate leader … in that sense but we are a school first and a business second. That is kind of how I see it. You know, I have, people call me the Principal mostly but sometimes I get CEO and I like to think of that as Chief Encouragement Officer.*

Others elaborated on varied dimensions of the role:

> *The management responsibilities specifically … if we consider a flow chart of the school with lines of reporting and responsibilities of other people … I basically have oversight of the whole school but I have people in positions of responsibility with delegated authority for the roles that they need to carry out.*

> *At the same time, I have regular reporting from them to maintain oversight concerning completion of the job, standard of the jobs etc. … the first line down is to my Deputy Principal and Business Manager and then a group that totals seven in number that makes up the senior executive of the school and it includes deans of studies and students, the curriculum and pastoral care arms of the school and heads of campus of junior school and year 9, which we have (on a separate campus), and the Chaplain is part of this too.*

> *So they are (all) quite critical as far as my management is concerned. That senior structure within the school … is the managing of areas that I have under directive positions: the IT servicing of the school, the learning technologies area and the information resourcing of the school. They are three very, very big areas for us. And then my management role then filters through those people to other layers.*

> *So, for example, heads of department, coordinators of year levels, the Junior School Head take responsibility for oversight of class teachers there but reports through to me and then, of course, there is the, through the Dean of Students with pastoral care, there is the whole oversight of students in that area and oversight of what is happening in the curriculum and teaching and learning. So, professional learning, I have oversight as well but through those key wonderful staff members that I have. And then the other part of the management would be of parents. That extended community and that … layer of communicating and accountability basically is to the parents of the children.*

> *I am on the Board ex officio and as the Business Manager as well. I do very detailed reporting through to the Board … I suppose how I manage the school helps the Board and informs them with what they are doing and so there is, I mean they are responsible for policy. A lot of it though comes from my feedback to them.*

> *So the discussions we have are quite critical with where they see the policies of the school going. So it is almost a guiding role upwards and an informing role upwards that is quite critical. So we are looking then at the future directions of the school and including programs plus property development.*

The Principal of the largest school in the study, with approximately 2,000 students and almost 1,000 staff, included in her role:

> *… the oversight of the education and the wellbeing of the students and staff in the college and … also the oversight of the financial, business, side of the school as well. We also have here … remote sites, so our education isn't just limited to the one site.*

> *We also have a boarding house on site so my responsibility extends as far as residential programs too. So there is, if you like, many compliance issues, and you know compliance is such a big part of our role too, ensuring that we do have the processes in place and that we are adequately fulfilling those roles.*

The principal role's responsibilities have shifted in recent years according to many of the participants to a greater involvement in engaging and directly working with the school community. This was explained by one principal in a medium sized girls' school:

> *I think that the leadership of teaching and learning is becoming a far more prominent focus for principals … as part of the movement of general educational reform, prominence in terms of improving pedagogy in a school … and leading teachers in terms of professional development. I think once upon a time it was a lower level kind of role where, certainly I have spoken to principals and they said they spent 50 per cent of their time working to council, school council instructions on managing budgets and administration.*

> *… So there is a bit of polarising, too, because we are becoming far more accountable. So there are just far more ways in which we have to report to government or to other bodies such as the VRQA and so on.*

And really, I see my role as providing the right environment for great learning and growth to occur. So that is resourcing, it is removing obstacles. It is providing a compelling vision. It is encouraging people to know that, you know, while at times the work may be really hard, it is still worthwhile. And that they are part of something bigger.

THE DRIVE TO LEAD A SCHOOL

Leadership of a school was a long standing and clearly defined goal for some of the women we interviewed, but not always actively sought by others. Regardless of this difference, most of these women described the importance of networks and collegiate relationships in facilitating appointments as school boards and head hunting companies searched for the best 'fit' for particular schools. One woman described this process in action:

I am not an ambitious person ... I have never plotted out that I am going to be a school principal. When I became a deputy principal I sort of grew into that job because of other things I was doing.

So I went from Head of History to Year Level Coordinator to Director of Staff to Deputy Principal. And then I sort of moved sideways (to another school) ... to do this staff development role because it interested me. I took a pay cut and went sideways. And then I saw the job ... because I always look at the Saturday Age, just to have a look at what is happening, not necessarily for me, but you know, I still look.

You know which schools are still advertising, who has had a surprise resignation because they are advertising late, you know. But I didn't apply for this job. And then I got a call from a friend of mine who said, I have just been rung by the search company ... and I have given them your name but they can't contact you because of (particular protocols) ... So if you are interested you are going to have to give them a call ... And I gave them a call and ... I was offered the job after a couple of chats and a couple of meetings in front of a panel. And here I am.

Another principal, who had clear ambitions for the role, was invited by the school she was already working in to apply:

I was invited to apply for many principal's jobs and I waited for an invitation that was the right alignment for me ... and that is my advice to some of the young educators I mentor. That, you know, if you are aspirational, you have the skills, you have the

> *talent, you are putting in all the work, it should be about going to the right school with the right agenda for you. And ... that match in not only your leadership style but your leadership interests is very important.*

Similarly, for another:

> *It was about fit. This school is a good cultural fit for me. My advice for applicants is to make sure if you get an interview that you give the answers that are your own and not what you think the panel wants to hear. My Principal was looking for principal jobs for me and he said that this is a good one for you so I applied and here I am.*

> *However, I was not and never have been ambitious. I was the head prefect at school. Later, I would notice in meetings that there were better ways of doing things and would point it out. I travelled and worked overseas. I could not get work as a teacher in the UK but got work in a science museum and after seven years I was the Director. It was a business environment but a not-for-profit organisation.*

Some were previously principals of other schools and applied for their current schools because they liked what they had heard about the school. For one woman a "number of factors came together" when she applied for her current school.

> *A colleague told me the job was coming up and so then, yes, I applied. In terms of my ability, you know I think you learn as you go. You learn on the job but also I attend to my professional development and so on. So I do read, I do think about current educational thinking. I am involved in other bodies outside the school, so you know I was involved in a consultative group with Australian Institute of Teaching and school leadership, with a heads association and so I know sort of what is current in the scene.*

For many of the women being a principal was seen as giving them greater opportunities to be an influential educational and business leader, and to fulfil their belief that they could make a difference.

> *I did seven years training for this job. I was seven years as a deputy headmistress in a leading girl's school in Sydney, an independent girls' school. And in those seven years it informed and encouraged my aspiration to be a principal because I understood that whilst I could do many things as a deputy headmistress, most remained operationally influential rather than politically influential.*

And so I had a desire to contribute more significantly to the education of girls but hopefully more broadly, the education of children in Australia.

Early in another woman's career she decided that …

… the opportunity to be a principal was never going to come my way. But I didn't want to … at that stage, I thought oh, who would want that job? I mean seriously, you would have to be mad.

However, almost a decade ago she began her current principal position in a medium sized Prep to Year 12 girls' school. In this role she can influence not only the school's development but also national educational development:

And I felt that I not only needed to gain that position of principal to allow me to use that as a platform if you like, but being a principal would also bring me other opportunities for growth and development that hopefully would inform my capacity and grow my capacity for influence. And since coming into the role I have had several exciting opportunities to be involved in national conversations around education and I have appreciated that. I have grown from that and I hope that my voice is making some impact.

But education is a business where influence is over the long haul. It rarely happens in one episode. Um, and at a national level where really the locus of control now is in terms of the big agendas for education we are at the mercy of political parties.

For another:

In terms of being a principal, the point is you can have maximum impact. You know, as a deputy you are answerable to other people and you have a portfolio but your impact is limited. Whereas as a principal, both in making your own decisions but also in working with others, you can transform a school so that is a sort of journey I have been on to change the ethos of the school.

To build student pride in the school … to turn around its finances and enrolments, to change the outlook. So the girls themselves through learning Asian languages, through being exposed to different cultures, see themselves not only as citizens of Melbourne, or Australia, but global citizens. So that is really the task that I have set myself.

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> *I really felt the desire to be instrumental in making a learning environment that was fair and supportive for children because they are so often powerless and I had witnessed, very often, as a student, and, then, a parent, the powerlessness of children, and I think that a major part of our role is to empower them, to give them the tools to enable them to be the powerful change agents in their life. And, I think that is pretty important because that is a life skill. Because ... in the end you don't always succeed, and sometimes things go on being unfair. But you give it a jolly good go. ...*

> *Young people are so incredibly vulnerable and they are an enormous responsibility ... and now that I have grandchildren of my own, and I realise they are so precious and fragile, particularly adolescents. I know that sounds funny. Most people say to me, oh, you know the littlies are so cute; yeah the littlies are cute, but the adolescents are too ... I think it is about, I think it's about profound respect.*

She considered her encouraging role incorporated the "school community" which included students, staff and parents.

> *It is kind of a privilege and a challenge to, you know, to support young people as they grow, as they learn. So I think you need a lot of encouragement to do that and persevere with it. And be a good role model for them. ...*

> *And really, I see my role as providing the right environment for great learning and growth to occur. So that is resourcing, it is removing obstacles. It is providing a compelling vision. It is encouraging people to know that, you know, while at times the work may be really hard, it is still worthwhile. And that they are part of something bigger.*

STRATEGIES FOR BEING AN INFLUENTIAL LEADER

As appointed principals of significant schools, these women all had formal mandates to lead and to exert influence in a variety of domains, as we have seen. Exploring the way, they chose to take up their authority was a key purpose of our conversations with them. The participating women principals were all articulate about their influencing behaviours and how they adapted their approaches according to the particular aims and circumstances they faced. At the time they were interviewed, some had been principals for more than a decade and had been principals of other schools, while some were in the first year in that role.

Common to all was that they had participated in leadership programs, had led a range of activities within schools and community organisations over time, and had observed other principals' leadership practice. The nuanced language used when describing their leadership work reflects many years of deliberately thinking and reading about it, discussing it with other principals at professional meetings and conferences, and talking directly to their students and other stakeholders about its importance.
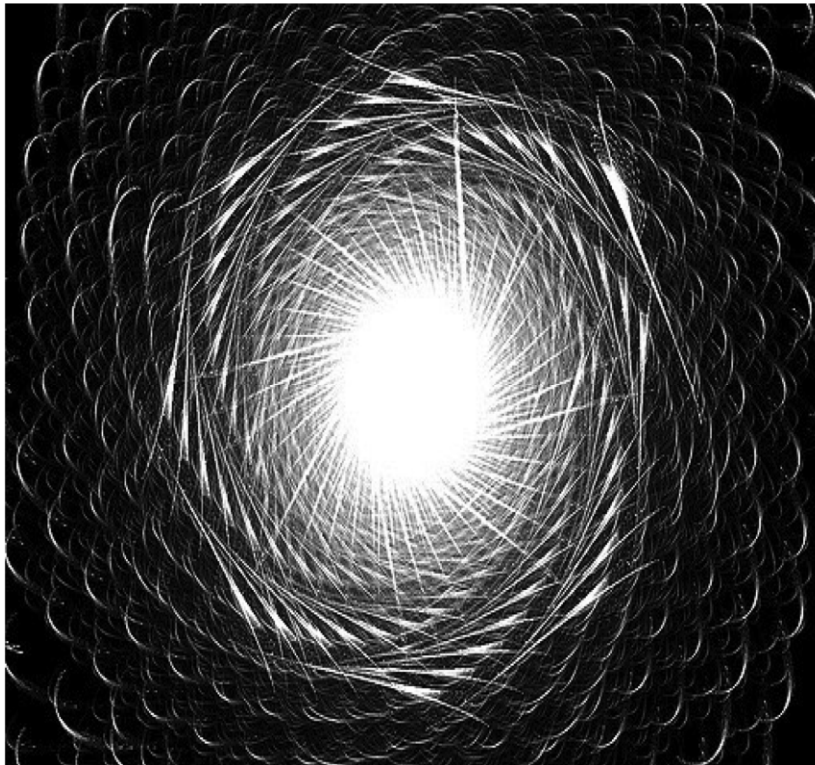
Though they were leaders of businesses, with hundreds of staff (one had a thousand staff) they framed the heart of their work in terms of educational goals and their students' welfare. As we have seen, they saw themselves as "learning leaders" providing a learning environment which was happy and productive, and in most cases carried cherished values into a twenty-first century context. Many of their schools retain their original motto which could be over a century old. At the same time, these principals pursued successful learning outcomes as a key source of competitive advantage.

One principal wanted to radically change the school for what she believed were educationally sound reasons while keeping the school financially viable during the global financial crisis (GFC). It was a difficult time and some independent schools closed. Upon her arrival at the school she found that the school might not be viable in the following five years and convinced the school community that they had to do something else to "keep this school".

> *I got a consultant in … we had a series of focus groups of parents and students and staff about what they value about the school, what are the core things they want to value. We surveyed every parent. We surveyed all our Year 12 students. We surveyed all our staff to say what the things were.*

> *And it actually threw up some quite confronting things for the Board to hear. It threw up the key items the school valued and we said we had to take the core essence of what the school valued about the school and reframe it for the next, you know, 50 years.*

> *We came up with a visionary statement from the school going forward. So I suppose you talk about influential leadership, one is convincing the Board we had to do something significant, something different for the long-term future of the school. And then, getting, capturing what the essence was of the school and how we could restructure it for the long-term future of the school. So we have actually sold (one of the school's sites) … selling that land must have been scary because it is opposite to what I think every other school is doing.*

Another principal who had studied and worked directly in developing leadership programs in schools before she took up a principal role was "really attracted to the notion that you lead so that people you are leading think they have actually done the things themselves". She explained:

> *You have to walk the talk … and that is often a challenge … But I don't ask anyone to do anything that I won't do myself so if, for example, we have someone who does bus duty for us, we had a woman who was ill for a long period of time, I did bus duty. And I did it every night for a month and I have been the lollipop lady and have got out in the middle of the road with my big orange stick and, you know I will do some classroom extras because I know teachers hate doing those. I think it is really important.*

> *So I don't set myself up as some, you know holier than thou kind of leader, and I don't think leaders who do are very impressive at all. It is really important that people feel comfortable coming into my office and feel that they can come and see me anytime.*

> *So, you know, if that door over there is open it means, and it is only closed when someone is in here with me, then anyone can come in and have a chat about anything. I would like to think that people saw me as approachable. Kids as well. And parents. So that is really important.*

In a smaller school, another principal had a similar opinion

> *Well, I know this is going to sound bizarre but I don't think I am any more important than the man who, you know, sweeps the paths in this school. So I would say all the staff are my peers.*

> *I know I have got more responsibility and I know I report to a board and they don't, so ultimately in terms of the board, you know, the principal is the person who actually has to do a report and answer board questions. But I guess, I guess in a school like this, it is not particularly hierarchical … though I meet weekly with our management team … which includes the Business Manager, the Deputy Head of School, and Head of Senior School.*

Another went into a long established school as a "new broom". She had found in schools that the brighter ones always did well and the weaker ones were helped along the way but the middle band were not being supported as much as they could be. She went into classes and saw that teaching could be changed by "influencing kids to believe that they could do better". It is important that we have an open and honest dialogue.

A first time principal explained how she went about change in her first year:

> *… there are things that are just set and we do things this way because that is the way we do them. And obviously I wanted to make some changes to this place. But I know enough about leadership to know that it is not wise to go in and start … by slashing and burning so to speak. So you go very gently over a period of time.*

> *So, let me see, one of the things that I do almost immediately … I did here was I closed a site that was operating as an IT centre … It was incredibly expensive … it just didn't work. It was really easy because there were no educational benefits for the children. And there were no benefits for the school. So when I closed that I didn't say to anyone what do you think, I just went to the Board and said, this is a disaster.*

> *So now if I look at something that required getting people on side … when I came here they had, they had these little personal development lessons and then they had Religious Education*

lessons. And you know they were disjointed and I thought we could do a whole lot better. And in my view RE and Personal Development are pretty much the same thing, or you know. I mean all the world's major religious are on about how you treat people and how you relate to one another and that should be the basis of personal development. So we rolled the RE and Personal Development into one. So every student from Prep to 12 does these lessons.

I am a great believer in putting something on the table when you go to a meeting. When you have a good idea. Never go in with a blank page.

And so I implemented lots of things that wouldn't have been seen as directly influencing that but things that I did and said in assembly, speakers got in, some work I did with staff … I sometimes teach in the classrooms … we have ended up with a (consistent) trajectory. Over seven years it has gone steadily up.

Some principals described interventions that required particular sensitivity:

Our Business Manager (BM), who is a very sort of "crash through" style of person, has been laying down the law to the heads of school, about how vigilant they need to be next year about their budgets. So, one of the heads of school wrote back and pointed out that he was being expected to cut back a greater percentage than he was told earlier by the BM. That head of school copied me in, so, clearly he is asking for my support in some way.

So, I went to the Business Manager, well, I emailed the Business Manager, and I said, look, is this accurate? Well, the guy (who had written to me) had "the wrong end of the stick".

(The Business Manager was unhappy initially with the Principal's questioning him). So, I did two things: I wrote back to him and I also copied in the School Council President; but I also went to see him. I wrote back and said, my role as Senior Education Officer, my concern is to educate this person to come along with us on this budget decision. And, if there is an issue of factual inaccuracy, then it needs to be addressed because otherwise we can't take that person with his heart and mind, we can only wield a "big stick". I don't believe that is very effective.

… so I need you to give me the data, because if it needs to be explicated so that this person understands it, then so be it. That's the way to get the compliance. He was pretty unhappy with that, but ultimately he came around, so that when we had the meeting

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> *with the heads of school, ..., actually his tone was much more conciliatory and reasonable ... So, instead of being crashed through, he talked about, you know, why this needs to be happening here and there.*

Others described spending considerable time influencing and developing the insight and capability of their most senior staff so that they could more fully share the difficult leadership work that needed to be done:

> *So, it was really about starting to share ... an issue such as too many staff and (we) could not afford them, that I was working on but I wanted to give them a bit more information because I could see a time in the future where I would need their input as well. So really, the first period of time was an exercise in helping to bring them up to speed but also with individuals, discussing it a little bit more so they could see how it was related to their work.*

> *I probably spent a fair bit of time on it because that was the time when I had to present the information a couple of times in a different way to convince some people that it really was an issue and that was a time that I did meet with some people individually as part of a normal meeting structure about putting it on the agenda one to one.*

> *Looking at competitor information that we get and just in terms of our own financials, it was very, very obvious. But you know, this person (Business Manager) actually had a lot of influence with department heads.*

> *So I challenged him to ask me questions and to, you know, challenge, challenge it and that was a good thing to do with him because in the end I needed him to deliver some messages. I spent about six months, if you like, preparing people for the discussions that we had to have. And getting the facts as well.*

Other principals also expressed the need to work in a similar way:

> *My philosophy is that you need people to have ownership of the idea. Then they have ownership of the decision. I plant the seed. You need to have the conversation with the other people who are going to be the ones who have responsibility for the decision.*

> *From the previous director I learnt that there was another way of working in leadership which was distributed leadership. This was group decision making which I had not experienced in schools. Everyone had a voice even the cleaners. Like a school with parents and students, the museum had visitors.*

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One principal used the phrase "a moment in a context" to describe how she was not always successful in bringing about a change she believed in and would try other strategies and learn from her lack of initial success. While others commented on how sometimes by observation it was seen that the wrong person was in the role and you could bring about immediate change by changing well-meaning competent people into different roles.

CHALLENGES TO EXERCISING INFLUENCE

Several of the principals we interviewed offered very specific examples of the contextual dynamics which surrounded their leadership practices. Their examples were mostly concerned with gender dynamics and illustrate how these are embedded and reinforced in the practices of both women and men, and also how they are sometimes challenged. This chapter concludes with a sample of the stories told and in this way introduces themes that are taken up in later chapters.

One principal related that when she was a younger teacher, her Principal said she was "kind" and that:

> *… he could not see a place for me in middle management in the school which was the pathway to principal. He could not see me taking the tough decisions. He felt I would not be able to performance manage people. He could not work me out, yet he saw me as having principal potential. However, I know now that there is another way to do it. You do not need to make people scared of you.*

Gender was used to discourage another woman from applying for a leadership position in which she was interested. It was as the Director of Leadership in one of Australia's famous boys' schools which is over a century old. Her Principal said "You are a woman; you will never get over the bluestone wall". However, she applied for the job and got it:

> *I was kind of really interested in leadership … Mostly because I had seen it done so badly. And I think bad leadership teaches you as much as good leadership does. I really do.*

> *I had a really interesting time and set up some really interesting programs and I don't think the school was quite ready for it actually because I don't think the staff, you know "this is not the way". I mean it was an interesting and innovative idea being put into an institution that was still solid and whatever and then … had a history.*

Another principal thought rather differently:

> *I do not believe there have been barriers for me because I am female. However, that may be why I did not get x or y. But then I would never apply for a headship of a boys' school. I would not*

> *get it. It's a job but you would get resistance with an all-male environment.*

As the new head of her school, another described how:

> *I planned the same structure I had participated in, in my previous school. It was a flat management structure and worked very well. We were equal. We collaborated and then advised the head. But in my new school it was difficult to implement as perhaps it was a male thing but initially I was unable to implement a distributed leadership model as staff wanted to know who had the most perceived power. Parents and other staff needed to know who had the most influence and so as no-one stood out they all came to me as the Principal.*

> *I wanted to share the Acting Principal role and rotate the role, when I was away, amongst the senior management but they would want to know who had the most days. The flat structure did not work here. I needed to have an understanding of the culture. One in particular wanted his title clear as this would help him to gain a principal position whereas to me its how you do the job … Some of the leaders have left and now I am building a team.*

Another who was the first woman appointed as principal of her co-educational school said:

> *I was surprised when I found out that the younger women on the staff considered it was so important that a woman got the principal position. They saw me as a role model, not only for the staff but for the girls. It was important for the young women.*

Finally, the imbalance of men and women at senior leadership levels across the entire system of school education was pointed out:

> *Certainly when the broader group of principals in independent schools get together … you will see that there is a network of men and there is a network of women. And it is very clear.*

> *And if we look at the leadership of Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the leadership of Australian Institute of Training and School Leadership (AITSL) … the majority of the leadership there are men. And if you look at the state apparatus for education … it is predominantly men. And if you look at the independent school's network, which is not only the schools but … the principals are the members of, it is men who dominate.*

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to represent the voices of the fourteen school principals as clearly as possible, as they shared their views and experiences of the nature of their roles and contribution, the things that have been important in their desire and willingness to be leaders, the ways they go about it and the dynamics which surround and shape their practice. Like the previous chapter, it has tried to keep interpretation to a minimum, so that readers can make their own sense of their words, and to provide a transparent foundation for the interpretations offered in other chapters of this book.

Deborah Towns PhD
Research Fellow, Centre for Workplace Leadership
Faculty of Business & Economics
University of Melbourne

SECTION 2

CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS
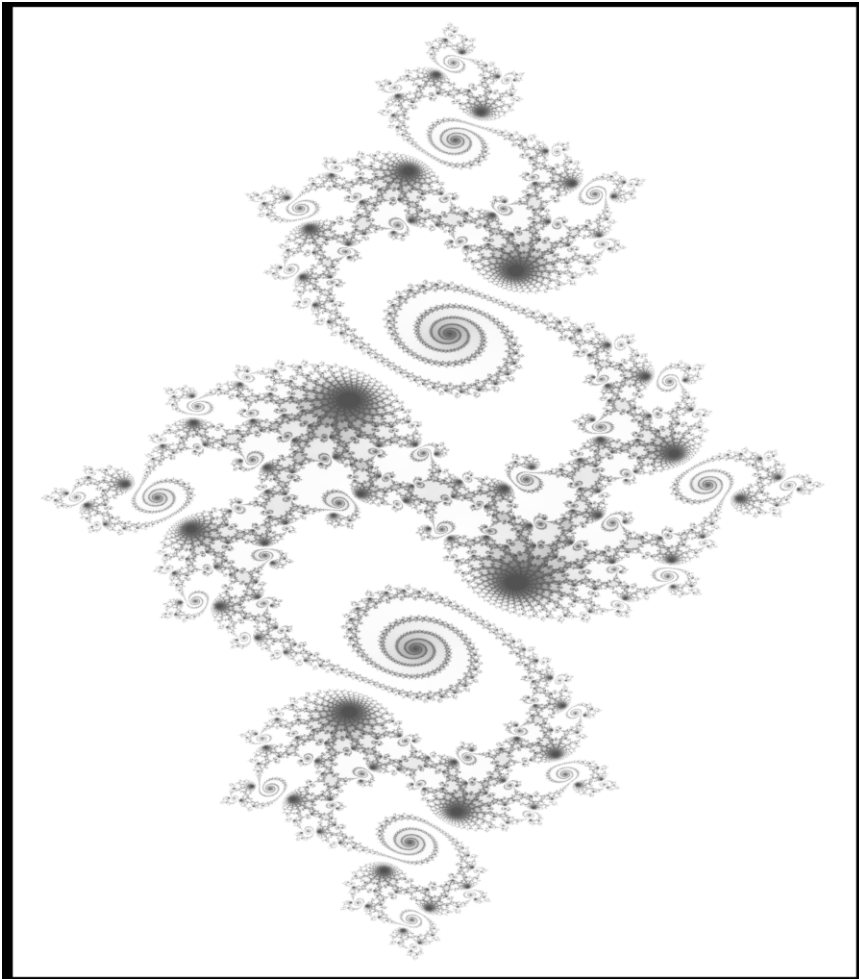
JOY HIGGS

4. DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership and its dimensions is the subject of this chapter. I began exploring the notion of leadership, then I read deeply the stories of the women (university academics and school principals) who were interviewed in the research underpinning this book, listening for what they had to say about leadership, and then I constructed the chapter around their experiences and ideas.

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP

Leadership, as an abstract concept, can be classified and interpreted in many different ways: in terms of power relationships, traits and skills, group management, and effectiveness. According to Northouse (2010) the phenomenon of leadership demonstrates the following central components:

> (a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals. … (so) leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. (p. 3)

I would argue that the essence of leadership is that it involves influencing the behaviour (including the actions, learning, and transformations) of others. Leadership can include task-productivity, system-organisation and relationship-people leadership. The role of leadership may be taken on voluntarily or involuntarily, with alacrity, caution, foreboding, reluctance or humility.

Leadership may come with power and mandates, it may influence through personal as well as positional leadership power and it may offer opportunities for change agency. In all cases, leadership brings with it responsibilities and consequences.

Thus leadership has many modes, faces, possibilities and interpretations. And, it is one of those ideas that we unthinkingly conceptualise as positive and effective. However, it would be better to think of a range of leadership styles and approaches, ranging from aggressive, dictatorial, punitive to shared, democratic, collegial to supportive, empowering, self-sacrificing. Leaders can guide, direct, influence, suggest, refer, defer, challenge and dictate. Leadership may be nominal, agentic, innate and imposed; effective/successful, inert/inconsequential, or poor/unsuccessful.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In educational settings writers, researchers and practitioners often make a distinction between leadership and management. Drucker (1974) argued that leaders do the right thing while managers do things right.

McCaffery (2010) emphasises the symbiotic relationship between the two terms and practices, saying that "there is limited value in doing things right if you don't know where you're going ... (and that) it is little use knowing where you're going if you haven't got the wherewithal to get there" (p. 79) and that they draw on complementary abilities as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The Leadership and Management Challenge (from McCaffery, 2010, p. 80)

Leadership

Style	Strategic vision	Team building	Influencing	Environment building
e.g. making a personal impact, leading by example	e.g. creating a vision of the future and deciding how best & to meet objectives by focusing on outcomes	e.g. inspiring people to work together and give of their best	e.g. using negotiation and persuasion to achieve desired outcomes	e.g. creating the conditions to foster creativity, innovation and risk taking

Management

Change	Complexity	Networks	Ambiguity	Learning
e.g. assessing drivers, communicating, envisioning, and delivering	e.g. processing information and ideas	e.g. using others to leverage results, share best practice and learn	e.g. handling difficult situations with limited information	e.g. drawing on experience, and new ideas to improve results

GOING BEYOND THE ABSTRACT NOTION

For leadership that moves beyond abstraction into the real world of being, it becomes a matter of experience, choices, interests, agency, consequences and reality. Many of these ideas were evident in the lived experiences and stories of the participants in this research.

As these educational leaders reflected on their experiences of leadership, as women, leaders and followers, and resistors and critics of other people's leadership, a number of themes emerged that portray leadership dimensions of being, doing, knowing and becoming:

– What good leadership is like: leadership attributes
– What successful leadership requires: leadership capabilities
– What sustainable leadership demands: leadership choices and evolution
– What embodied leadership feels like on the inside: lived leadership.

UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP – ATTRIBUTES

Through a series of personal stories and anecdotes, the women who shared their leadership visions and experiences with us in this project portrayed leadership by women as (ideally) a positive and constructive phenomenon. They saw leaders as having multi-faceted attributes. They were viewed as being:

– **assertive**: able to use authority firmly but not aggressively; they can say no
– **capable**: they are good managers
– **collaborative**: they facilitate inclusivity in team participation and leadership
– **negotiating**: they can negotiate/compromise to address shared interests
– **communicative**: they are articulate, listen well and share communication
– **confident**: they are self-respectful, self-reliant and comfortable in leadership
– **creative**: they can use imagination, innovation and creativity in leadership
– **critical**: they question rules, restrictions and taken-for-granted practices
– **effective**: they achieve (with others) targets and quality outcomes
– **empathic**: they show empathy for others (colleagues and clients)
– **expert**: they have expertise in the field in which they are leaders
– **experience**: they have rich life and work experience
– **flexible**: they can adapt to different people and situations and change direction
– **influential**: they can influence management and leadership decisions
– **motivated**: they have drive and get on with the job
– **open**: they are open to new and alternate possibilities and use open practices
– **people-oriented**: they put people's needs as a high priority
– **political**: they can act astutely within the educational system
– **professional**: they act professionally and ethically
– **purposive**: they act intentionally
– **resilient**: they cope well with good times and bad; they survive and persevere
– **resourceful**: they can use available resources efficiently and with ingenuity
– **respected**: they have a good reputation as leaders among work community
– **respectful**: they value/acknowledge others' needs, interests and achievements
– **risk taking**: they take calculated risks
– **role model**: they demonstrate good leadership practices
– **supportive**: they are willing to support those who are struggling or thriving
– **visionary**: they are able to see big pictures and future possibilities.

Collectively, all of these attributes pose "a tall order". These women in educational leadership roles described neither themselves or other leaders as universally capable or endowed with all of these attributes. Rather the "complete picture" of a leader of this type was aspirational. Some very advanced and experienced leaders were seen as being closer to this epitome of leadership, and others were progressing along the journey.

I think what happened was that I built a bit of a reputation I suppose, which then allowed me to have more influence. It's very informal, it's got nothing actually to do with my position, but it's that recognition that I am someone (to listen to), because I've had people say this to me, well you'll come in with a clear and reasonable idea and listen to all sides but still push through to something.

Well I suppose, in general, there are a 1000 ways in which I tend to be most influential when I am both positive and assertive. You know there are a lot of people who are very quick to find problems and I tend to try and turn these problems into solutions.

My role here is as a professor which is an expert, an alleged expert, in certain areas. And my fields of research are in the fields of xxx and the biological sciences area in general.

A lot of it is about having empathy and valuing people. You should know what it is like to be in the classroom rather than reading about the theory in the book.

Schools are different and student cohorts are different so if you can understand the way your school works and what your student cohort is like I think you can do really good creative work about things like curriculum changes and implementation of IT because you can almost sense what is going to work and what isn't before you go down the path spending a huge fortune on something and then discovering it doesn't suit the cohort or people aren't interested in it.

And it helps, I think, with your relationship with the staff because they know you are going through the same things that they go through.

And you have got to understand the ethos of the place, whatever it is, whatever the institution is, you have got to understand the staff. You have got to have some clear idea of where you are trying to get to before you start doing things. So I would be very cagey about embarking upon anything I didn't think was going to have a fair degree of success. In such situations - I would consider that I had embarked with poor information.

UNDERTAKING LEADERSHIP – CAPABILITIES

Beyond their attributes (What are they like?) these women in educational leadership roles told us much about the capabilities (What can they do? What do they need to be able to do?) required of women in leadership. Leadership capabilities, they related, need to include effective skills and capacities in:

– task and people/relationship management
– self-promotion
– dealing with difficult situations and difficult people
– capacity building and mentoring,
– helping people to identify their strengths
– role modelling
– change management
– interpersonal communication
– cultural competence
– empowerment of team members
– presentation of sound and balanced cases and arguments
– providing constructive feedback
– building bridges and negotiating
– problem identification as well as problem solving
– challenging hegemonic practices and powerful actors
– keeping people (team members, work communities) informed
– networking
– resource acquisition
– blending information, reputational and positional leadership
– performance management (with both difficult and cooperative staff)
– dealing with environmental dynamics
– strategic thinking and planning.

> *I think I'm successful as a leader because I've got a way of being influential, or a pattern of influential behaviour that others probably understand and don't feel threatened by. I think the non-threatening bit is a really important part. I'm not seen, I don't think, as particularly threatening. I'm seen as someone who will work with the team. I will certainly have my opinions and be clear about them, but not be ... You know - sometimes you just listen to people and you think, will you just shut up, you're not helping here. ... I mean it's basically the communication strategies isn't it?*

And it's about not personalising it I guess. Where your own ego is in relation to it. I think it's not about having your own ego too attached to it. It's about saying, what's actually going to achieve the outcome we want here. And I like that because I get that sense of achievement.

The role of a school principal is very broad. It's is both about being an educational leader, and, a, a business head, in a sense, to be the CEO of the organisation. Certainly during most of my time as the Principal, the area of being the educational leader has predominated.

However, there has always been a pressing need to have some involvement in, and certainly cognisance of, the business side; so, as the principal, and as an educational leader, you are the one who is setting educational directions with the staff, working with them to develop educational priorities, then enacting those educational priorities and ensuring that they can be met through the budget.

Then there is a lot of day-to-day stuff in terms of involvement with students. You need to be a role model, really, for heads of school and for other senior leaders in the school on how to interact with students, how to interact with parents and there is also the industrial relations side of it, which is also my responsibility as well.

And the principal has a very significant role in influencing the school council or board because certainly the president and the other members of the board look to the principal to be setting that direction and to be argued for it, advocating for it, whatever the direction is.

Working with teams is a critical part of my job. The closest working relationship I have at the college is with my management team, and particularly I would say with our Director of Corporate Services or the CFO. We have a very important working relationship because we need to ensure basically the viability of all the things that we do and you know, that we have fulfilled all our requirements from health, safety, financial perspective.

The other key relationship is with the Vice-Principal; they have all of the people who are looking after the curriculum and wellbeing of the students and staff reporting to them.

So they are my two key people and the next layer down is the management team which is 15 people and they cover really every aspect of the school; they include our Director of Boarding, Director of Technology, Director of Staff Development and Learning, Director of Learning and Curriculum, and human resources; all those roles. And they are really, if you like, the people that I work with most closely.

My role is principal of a secondary school. And my responsibilities are really the oversight of the education and the wellbeing of the students and staff in the college and then the oversight of the financial, business side of the school as well.

We also have remote sites, so our education isn't just limited to the one site. We also have a boarding house on site so my responsibility extends as far as residential programs too. So there are many compliance issues, and compliance is such a big part of our role, ensuring that we do have the processes in place and that we are adequately fulfilling those roles.

ACCEPTING LEADERSHIP ROLES AND GROWING INTO THEM – CHOICES

Leadership at multiple levels is omnipresent in educational contexts: in structured hierarchies, devolved roles like course coordinators, distributed leadership activities and personal leadership embedded in various roles like committee membership, research supervision and work teams. Acceptance of leadership can vary from a momentary to a sustained commitment, from being nominated to seeking leadership opportunities and from making choices to unwillingly accepting the job.

Choice plays a big part in attaining and accepting leadership. Some of the participants in this study made strategic career choices such as completing higher degrees or taking on departmental headships in pursuit of future more senior leadership appointments. Others chose a quieter path and, for them, leadership was an occasional role. Choices in their lives, like decisions about family and location, was also influenced and, at times, conflicted with career choices. People tended to pay a high price when they "try to have it all".

You know, we engage in leadership all the time; it is a part of your practice. It is just an integral part of it, it is not something separate. Sometimes the university talks about engagement and they see it as an add on activity that other people do but we do it all the time. It's the way we are, the way we choose to behave.

Being successful in academia – well things ebb and flow. In any one day a whole lot of things have gone right and a whole lot of things have gone wrong. So I think success is a pretty long term project. It's always about making choices.

When I found myself working in schools, I was often asked to take on a leadership role. So I didn't necessarily seek those out initially. I guess people noticed things about me. I think people who wanted jobs done thought that I was a soft target as a young teacher. And so I held positions of responsibility from my second year of teaching and then moved schools and again moved into a position of responsibility and a series of positions of responsibility relatively quickly.

And I think I enjoyed the challenges that that brought. I enjoyed the complexity of leading adults as well as leading children. I felt a responsibility that if I had the capacity to do it then I should. And if people needed someone to lead them then if you could do that then why wouldn't you.

Then when I applied for the Deputy Principal position here I guess it was about wanting to have a role in an organisation where I felt the values of that organisation were aligned with my own. And once I got into the Deputy position which I held here for ten years, I developed, I guess, a feeling of responsibility for the school itself.

It became my vision, my girls, my educational philosophy as well as part of that executive team and so that is why once the position of Principal became available, yes I was asked to apply for it.

For me there are two types of factors that have impacted on my willingness and ability to take up leadership roles in the organisations I have worked in: the inner and the outer factors. The inner factor is that I have always had a huge amount of energy and I feel that life is a very precious thing and you should, live it to the maximum.

And then on the outside, people have always shovelled me into things. You know, people will just say why don't you do it. I guess people look at me as being a leader person or responsible. Well, I think we are all capable of doing lots of things and you have just got to take the risk really and not be afraid. I was encouraged to apply for this job.

The agent who was looking for the principal already had a pretty good knowledge of me and I think I probably had the job before I even applied for it. I think she just knew I would suit the school.

So I came here and I thought well, they wouldn't have made me the Principal unless they thought I was okay so I just thought I can do it, I have done it before in all different places so it will just be the same and just, it is a different environment but it has the same characteristics.

I think what you do is you learn about the organisation and then you implement the things. I don't think you should come in with a fixed vision before you get to know the place.

BEING A LEADER – LIVING LEADERSHIP

Living leadership is inherently a situational adventure. Leadership is shaped by the context in which it is enacted. It is a creative response to influences of people and events in current, past and future settings, and it can be a proactive creation of next steps and outcomes. To pursue successful leadership roles requires credibility; without which leadership is neither genuine nor respectful. Leadership, also requires colleagues, whether they act and are treated like followers, team members or co-leaders. Leadership is not realisable or sustainable without collaboration.

I think women who are influential leaders are people who are very comfortable in their position as leaders. They feel very responsible for the role that they hold and they are very considered in the way that they influence others. So they are not necessarily agenda driven. When I say agenda driven, somebody who's a leader who's on a soapbox about issues is less likely to be influential than someone who provides opinion and comment in a contextual forum. That doesn't mean that they don't lobby but it's not about agendas.

I was first promoted to professor about twelve years ago and most of my positions in the last ten years, have had a very strong leadership role. I find this very satisfying by the way, and it impacts on my willingness and ability – a key factor is having the opportunity to be a mentor to very exciting younger more junior staff members. I mean that is one of the greatest things I do. More satisfying to be truthful, is watching the people grow through their careers. I look for jobs where I can do that.

I am the Principal of the school, and in an independent school that is kind of principal/CEO. And I quite like having the responsibility of being the educational leader as well as the corporate leader.

But we are a school first and a business second. That is kind of how I see it. You know, I have, people call me the Principal mostly

but sometimes I get CEO and I like to think of that as Chief Encouragement Officer.

I take a key role in collaborations with other people, striving for the same goals. It is a collaborative form of leadership that, to me, is the most important thing – rather than me being the leader. My approach is built on the liberalist paradigm of leadership. It is a more collaborative, non-hierarchical leadership from behind.

MEANING MAKING ABOUT LEADERSHIP

The living and breathing phenomenon of leadership as well as the abstract notion is multi-dimensional, as this chapter has portrayed. Both the lived phenomenon and the conceptual phenomenon are socially negotiated and constructed. One way of drawing all of the ideas in this chapter together is to understand leadership as a practice (or set of practices) that are situated in given spaces, places and choices.

In Figure 4.1 four core dimensions of practice (see Higgs & Titchen, 2001): doing, knowing, being and becoming, are presented as four quadrants of practice that are translated as four core lived dimensions of leadership: dealing well with self and others, having vision and work-related wisdom, getting things done effectively and demonstrating strength of character and resilience.

Surrounding these core dimensions are the six composite elements of enacting educational leadership identified in the stories of these women leaders: capabilities, embodiments, attributes, sustainability, evolution and choices.

Consider the above model in relation to the following example.

I am really interested in leadership, mostly because I had seen it done so badly. And I think bad leadership teaches you as much as good leadership does. You know, the principal in an independent school is the CEO. And in this small school you can get a really good handle on the whole organisation. It is not like in some much larger schools where the CEO is more akin to a CEO in a company.

So, teaching and learning is the core business of the school so I have to be the lead learner if you like. And I need to really ensure that we strive for excellence and that the teachers are as good as they can be and the outcomes for students are as good as they can be. But then there are the other things, to make sure that buildings and grounds are maintained and there's OH&S.

It's good that I have people to whom I can delegate responsibility. But the buck stops with the principal. A mentor said to me – as principal you will have to be all things to all people at all times. And I now realise that yes, you never, never stop doing this job. There is no such thing as going home and turning off.
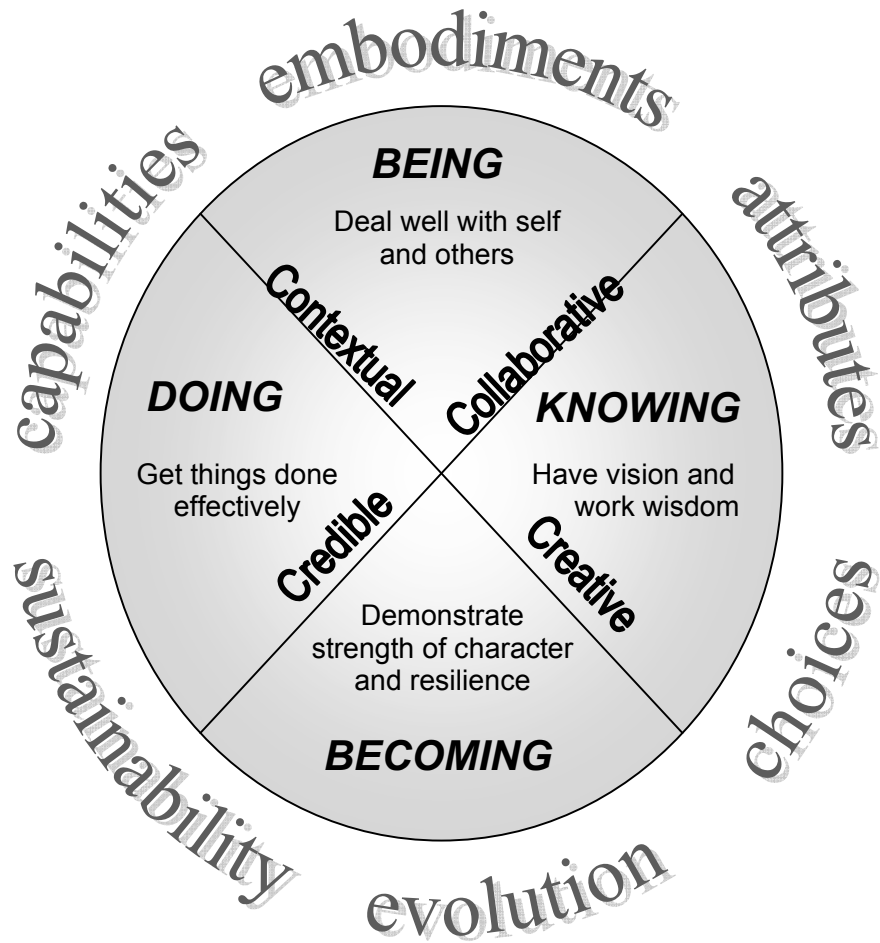
Figure 4.1. Dimensions of Leadership

I am really attracted to the notion that you lead so that people you are leading think they have actually done the things themselves. I am not, from the "bark and command school of leadership". It's important that you "walk the talk" and I think that that is often a challenge.

But I don't ask anyone to do anything that I won't do myself. So when someone who does bus duty was ill then I did bus duty every night for a month. So I don't set myself up as some, you know holier than thou kind of leader, and I don't think leaders who do that are very impressive at all. It is really important that people feel comfortable coming into my office and feel that they can drop in anytime.

I don't think I have been as influential as I would like to have been in getting good communication going about some key projects but I am not giving up. Obviously I wanted to make some changes to this place. But I know enough about leadership to know that it is not wise to go in and start your principalship by slashing and burning so to speak.

So you go very gently over a period of time. I set out to understand how things worked and why and found a way of getting staff onside. But I don't go into bat unless I have done my homework and I don't put forward a half formed idea.

In this example the educational leader (a school principal) has spent time throughout her career reflecting on what type of a leader she wants to be and how she wants to relate to people she works with and why. By creating a leadership vision and seeking advice from mentors, as well as learning from positive and negative role models, she pursues her "becoming".

She consciously endeavours to match her behaviour and actions to her goals and leadership aspirations, by in relation to dealing with people and helping to achieve task expectations. Her behaviour demonstrates the capabilities, embodiments, attributes, sustainability, evolution and choices needed for leadership as a woman in education.

CONCLUSION

The women academics and principals interviewed in this project portrayed leadership as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that provides a rich field of study as well as a challenging but fruitful way of doing, knowing, being and becoming in educational leadership practice. These findings have merit for reflection in other fields of operation also.

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Joy Higgs AM PhD
Strategic Research Professor in Professional Practice
Charles Sturt University

NITA CHERRY

5. CREATING FRAMES

The chapters presented so far in this book have offered many examples of the different ways in which women leaders in universities and schools have sought to influence the situations in which they practise. Later chapters take up and explore the specific issues that engage them as they do their leadership work. This chapter takes a particular example of influential behaviour that is implicit in several striking descriptions these women provided of how they go about their leadership work. The influencing strategy they are using is that of re-framing the way issues, processes, information and experiences can be comprehended, engaged with emotionally, imaginatively and even spiritually.

To frame something, whether a picture or a view or an idea, is to put structure or context around it which significantly influences the way it is perceived and understood, or even whether it is noticed at all. A phenomenon tends not to stand out from the rest of our experience if it lacks a border or container that guides or claims our attention. Without frames, experiences are difficult to make sense of. On the one hand, this can make it easy to not engage with them at all, to let them slip by without disturbing in any way our dominant and unchallenged view of things. On the other hand, the absence of a frame or container can mean that we over-engage with aspects of our experience because they threaten to overwhelm us. They are all too much *present* and central in our lives, and they become the only thing we notice.

As well as framing their own behaviour, leaders often frame the behaviour of others. And, the framing of the attention and energy of other people is a profound way through which to potentially influence what they do, how they think, what they feel, what they imagine, what they believe in and what they will commit to. While the activity of framing is not often acknowledged as such, it is fundamental to leadership work. It takes many forms and having a broad repertoire of framing behaviours means that a person has the potential to be influential in a range of ways, not just a few.

Some leaders are very aware of the effectiveness of particular kinds of framing and deliberately use them. Others use them spontaneously without much intellectual appreciation of what they are actually doing. The phrase re-framing was not specifically used by any of the women in our study during their interviews. Nonetheless, several of the stories they told about implicit re-framing are most instructive.

STORY ONE: SITTING IN THE MIDDLE

So I would do things like you know – everything was rotated around – so if I was chairing the meeting I would go and sit in the middle of the table and … some of them (the people at the meeting) were so uncomfortable with it. You know, it was such a little thing.

(It's all) because you are supposed to be at the head of the table. And if you were in the middle of the table you were actually picking up different sorts of things. It is quite interesting but it made them profoundly uncomfortable. And we kept sort of having these peer reviews and they kept reading back to me, feeding back to me – could I stop doing it. They didn't like it, you know. Couldn't I chair a meeting? Couldn't I be a "proper" chair?

In some ways, this is the most striking illustration of re-framing appearing in any of the women's accounts. It did not begin by the academic offering to her colleagues a description or an explanation or an argument or a justification in words. She simply enacted a behaviour that seriously challenged the expectations and comfort of others. She changed where she sat as meeting chair, with the result that others (men in this case) had to declare their mind sets in ways that they normally didn't have to, and which sounded rigid and almost child-like when they did: could she not be a "proper" chair, they asked?

The story beautifully illustrates that disruption to current frames of what is allowable and appropriate does not require carefully crafted conceptual arguments, or meticulously designed processes, or consultative committees, but simply (in this case) a change in the seating. The power of seating is recognised in many other contexts, especially those that are sensitive to status and power hierarchies in political and corporate settings. But elsewhere, the importance of certain protocols

might be more implicit, less advertised and less overtly worried about – until someone decides to break the implicit rules.

The value of the intervention is that a new frame is brought to bear on the situation, one that reveals just how dependent we are on working out who is in charge by the seat they are occupying. And it reflects the extra effort that needs to be expended to catch the eye of that person or engage others sitting at the table. Instead of flowing along the usual easy lines of association and affiliation, intentions are expected to be declared differently, and negotiation of when the meeting's discussion is "over" might become clumsier than usual. Intervention might be differentially opened up to a range of people who might not usually be invited to join in or who might not usually find it easy to "get into" the conversation. We don't know what happened next in that particular story but it is not hard to imagine two very different outcomes: an insistence on the old ways and the enforcement of "the rules" about chairing meetings; or an enduring change in practice that created a more flexible and adaptive way of doing business.

STORY TWO: MAKING THE DATA CENTRAL

Where we have … reports on various issues, firstly I tabled it as an agenda item and I gave them a very brief overview. And really in our management team meeting two weeks later, (I provided) just another update. And that really went on for a good … month and a half, where I kept it fairly low key to start with. Because I wanted them to buy in (to the problem and its solution) but each time I sort of, I suppose, exposed a bit more of the issue, wanting their feedback. (And) … wanting their observations, wanting their thoughts on it.

So that meant I was helping them to start thinking about the problem and I suppose after the first month and a half I was able to give them some more hard data on why it was an issue that we needed to address and (to give them) some comparative data on where we needed to go to or where, for this issue, we should be sitting, in the market place.

I probably spent a fair bit of time on it, because that was the time when I really got a bit of sort of push back, oh you know … some of them wanting to buy into it because they could start to see the implications if they did buy into it. That it would mean some change and change that they would have to be involved in which wasn't necessarily pleasant change. So we actually spent a fair bit of time on that and I had to revisit it a few times; I had to present the information a couple of times in a different way to convince some people that it really was an issue and that was a time that I did meet with some people individually as part of a normal meeting structure about putting it on the agenda one to

one. I had one of the members of my management team that really almost flatly refused to believe that this was an issue. And in the end I actually did meet with (that person) who ... did not want to accept that we had a problem. This was a key person in, I suppose communicating some of the change to other members of staff.

This story of re-framing illustrates the power of presenting new data to a group of people in order to influence their professional practice. Universities, of course, are places where data sets are constantly being refreshed, analysed, critiqued and argued over. However, the research processes through which this happens are explicitly understood as work that needs to be done. Indeed, there are many conventions and protocols through which that work is undertaken. But the use of data described in this story is a different kind of process: a managerial process. The people who were offered the data didn't feel obliged to examine it carefully, to analyse the implications, or to be open to the possibilities it might open up. Quite the reverse: they felt free to reject it outright because of the negative consequences it might have for them personally.

The women leader who tells the story says she had to persist, presenting the data in different ways and working with some people individually. This is the use of information and data to persuade, by drawing attention to aspects of the situation that would otherwise remain invisible and unattended to in the shadows. It is much more like the use of data sets in consulting, marketing and influencing change in community behaviour. In the hands of really skilled people, the selection, assembling and presentation of data becomes a mixture of art and science, which has as much to do with the cultivation – or manipulation – of feelings and mind sets as it has to do with the construction of logic. In the story told above, the academic is well aware of what she is doing, deliberately starting in a low key fashion without making a big issue of it, perhaps hoping that people would "get" it. She didn't rush into discussing the problem, but was persistent. She eventually decided to escalate the process, by increasing the depth and amount of data provided, thus declaring her intent to make this a key issue for discussion and heightening the intensity of the focus on a couple of the key players.

STORY THREE: SETTING THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

But you can't just come out with a blank piece of paper and say please design it, because then people don't have a starting point. So one of the first things that always makes you successful is for you to at least give people some information as well as exemplars of what you might seek, that gives a basis from which to work from and some options within that.

And then have them understand by the nature of the questions you ask of people, for their input into that.

Then you take that on board, and then you need to evaluate the merit of each of the positions that you hold and then redefine it (your proposal) in accordance with these. So the process of the next stage was in taking the feedback. We then convened a second group that looked at the merit of the different elements of feedback and how they might fit with a range of the options that came forward.

So after we had that and knew what it looked like, you then move into a steering group, and you move into a task-oriented implementation team, so you delegate tasks to other workforces and groups. Important to it all is the continued communication strategy. You communicate, you communicate, you communicate again when you think you've done enough.

You will also have received more information by that time so you will identify that something has a particular issue and it needs addressing. Now sometimes you might like it to be addressed today, and without going into detail. On Tuesday I was ready to go with something that I felt we were right to now follow through a process. On Wednesday, some information came to me that (meant) I then put a halt to that and I said, I don't think this will be positioned well until it actually is the right time.

So you know you can change the way things happen and how you influence things by saying OK that might be a priority today but in the scheme of things that's not necessarily going to be our highest priority. It may be better positioned after we've done this, this and this because that new information has come to my attention and in the context of that information I am now redefining how that will actually end up being successful.

So one of your challenges in this type of role that I'm in is being able to make sure that you've got a fuller picture. So sometimes you have to go out with haste and other times you actually have to say, well we're ready but I need to actually put you on pause.

This story reflects the practice of a very senior and skilled executive who creates an informal but coherent and structured social process that is her own managerial device. It operates in parallel with the formal consultative, decision making and communication processes through which strategic options are seen to be developed, presented, negotiated, revised and promulgated across the organisation. This "behind the scenes" process offers a flexible and trustworthy frame for handling the emergent, unpredictable, messy and contradictory dynamics of complex change processes. As described in her own words, her strategy presents as a frame that creates confidence in the people who work most directly with her, wherever they might be placed across the university. From experience, they know

what her process is, that she will use it reliably to handle the conflicting needs and demands of different stakeholders, and that she will not hesitate to rapidly change the sequences of work and formal announcements if need be.

These are dimensions of change that most formal organisational processes labour with in clumsy and rigid ways. The public narratives that they can carry are, of necessity, incomplete, simplified and restricted to the headlines. By contrast, the frame that this executive has created allows for a much more calibrated sharing of information and flexible consideration of alternatives, involving only selected people at times which she can control. But her ongoing management of the informal framing is always anchored firmly to a set of strategic intentions that she will refer to as a strong rationale for what is being done and why. Sometimes labelled by the much more operational term "agenda management", the establishment of robust alternative processes for analysing and deciding on significant options, is a highly strategic form of re-framing.

STORY FOUR: FORGING NEW CONNECTIONS

When I came here, I was working with two professors in our area who are like chalk and cheese. They really, on a whole bunch of different levels, are completely different. And I have really tried to bring that group more together. I co-supervise PhD students (with them) and the style of supervision with one of them … who is a man, is a very paternalistic talk down mode.

And there were lots of issues around research that weren't particularly collaborative – and supervision that wasn't particularly collaborative and a very rigid way of going about doing things. Not necessarily a male way but this one person is very set in their ways and has a very particular way that they want all the PhD students (to work). I mean there are a lot of people who are actually afraid of him.

With junior staff or PhD students, what I have always tried to do is to make sure that everybody has input – not necessarily that everybody in the end gets their way, but to really consider the directions and where we are going in decisions. I have always worked with either an early career or new career researcher and I have always attempted to pair with them and to mentor them.

And I do that specifically by sharing with them, for example, mistakes I have made or failure. So (for instance) I can submit an article and it gets knocked back, one, two, three times, or you put a grant in and it doesn't get up. (I talk to them about doing) … both what is good and what is bad. And we have kept that quite open, you know.

*Now, that might seem like a really minor thing but it was an
explicit strategy that I used in order to shift the dynamics.*

The frame changing that is suggested in this story challenges paternalistic
supervisory practices by putting in place relationships that work quite differently.
This academic leader does not spend time explaining or preaching about her vision
for a different kind of supervisory relationship. Rather she puts it in place, enacts
and role models the change she is looking for. Elsewhere, she describes the ways in
which, over time, students themselves came to set the expectations and standards
for the ways in which they wanted to connect with their supervisors. Students
spoke openly with each other and shared their experience of more adult working
relationships.

One of the most challenging aspects of paternalistic practice is to find effective
ways to actually demonstrate their restrictive and unhelpful dynamics. Merely
talking about them can provoke denial or incomprehension because the frame that
makes them acceptable also makes them invisible. In some cases, like the one
described in this example, the situation is made worse because people are actually
fearful of the way others behave. Rather than getting caught in unproductive and
scary conversations, the frame chosen by the leader was enactment and
empowerment.

The power of this approach is that it side steps the usual exchanges that take
place when the subject is raised. In many organisations, including universities and
schools there has been no shortage of attempts to describe, explain and argue
against paternalistic practices. An alternative frame, brought to life through action,
can literally speak more than a thousand words.

STORY FIVE: FEELING AND ARTICULATING PAIN

*Because we understand the nature of the University has
changed, it has become more corporate and people very often
drop the ball as to why we are here. I would say that happens
above my level I suppose, but we need to stay true to what we
are as lecturers, and we need to ensure that the students keep
being given the best education that we are aware of as the
students need that education for future perspectives.*

*(Students) have that strange combination of understanding the
freedom but not understanding the responsibility and the long
term prospects. So the loan they accumulate, the time they spend
on nothing – it just pains me.*

*The most precious thing one can have is time, and I feel that the
students sometimes don't understand the value of time, until they
reach the time when they are starting to apply for a job, and then
they say, I have nothing (to offer) to get a job. And it pains me, it
really pains me.*

If they are not made aware of the basic requirements of being a student, such as being attentive, then it plays a bigger role in their future career prospects. I am trying to get the University, our boss, the head of our Faculty and other people to give me a bit of money to run a pilot project where students who are sitting on the borderline, can do something before we put in the results to see if we can make them commit to something.

This story is perhaps more aspirational than the others, in the sense that it is not offered as an example of successful influence, resulting in the actual adjustment and development of professional practice. Rather it is an academic's account of something that really matters to her and which she offers in conversations with others in professional settings. It is included here because it clearly demonstrates someone doing two different things at once that have the potential to powerfully reframe the way that colleagues look at one aspect of their world.

She mostly presents an alternative intellectual frame for understanding the work that students need to do while they are still at university. This of course has consequences for what their teachers, her colleagues, need to do. She is trying to rally their support for something that she considers of great importance. What she suggests to her colleagues is that they confront students with the long term consequences of the choices they are making now. She nominates a number of things that she believes students need to pay attention to. The vignette omits the more detailed rationale that drives her arguments but her logic is that many students are creating – and limiting – their financial futures and professional identities without even realising it, until it is all a bit late. For very many academics, framing their responsibility to students as including this sort of territory is a very big shift indeed.

But the other thing she does, which is still apparent above, but was undoubtedly much more striking when talking with her, is that she puts her own emotional anguish into the framing she offers. She says several times that it pains her. Such a direct reference to personal anguish, coupled with a repeated intellectual argument, is a forceful way of re-directing attention to issues that are not usually spoken about at all. She makes life slightly uncomfortable for whoever she is talking with by re-shaping what she sees as their responsibility and raising the stakes by putting her own pain on display.

In some professional settings, the use of dual emotional and intellectual frames is common, and might be routinely responded to or just as routinely ignored. But in a university setting the sudden appearance of personal emotion in the midst of an intellectual discourse is relatively unpredictable in terms of impacts.

Skilled communicators in any setting, however, would not leave this to chance. Deliberately switching across intellectual, emotional, creative/imaginative and spiritual frames, and contrasting the perspectives of the past, present and future, are all ways of using multiple-framing to support effective leadership practice.

STORY SIX: MOVING LATERALLY

This sort of lateral or sideways (movement) ... (can work) in a multidisciplinary area, where another discipline perhaps didn't perceive a way forward for a funding proposal. (Yet there was) an avenue they could have gone down because they were unaware or, un-knowledgeable about a particular avenue that we could take as a result of my being, coming from a different background but seeing what they were trying to do.

And I suggested, well listen, you are doing this, I am doing that, why don't we do this together. And we did go in a very different direction as a result of my commenting about what could be done. So these people were unaware what could be done. And so we did move in a direction. This has happened in a few examples where we went in a completely different direction to which they would have gone.

I have been in a situation like this on more than one occasion.

I was comfortable about talking to these people because I had actually had an interest in the areas but the engineers hadn't thought that they could do things using a different disciplinary perspective. They were quite impressed.

Interviewer: You were successful because you had this different way of looking at solving problems and different knowledge.

Yes, so they looked at it from a black box perspective and I said well, let's go in and have a look at the box and discover what is in there. And they said, how do you do that, and I said well you can.

This is a very positive story of significant change in research strategy that was triggered by offering a new lens through which to see a familiar problem. As the story was told to us, it was ultimately a "both, and" use of lenses, rather than an "either, or" usage. This "both, and" approach to framing and understanding old issues and emergent ones is becoming increasingly common in the repertoires of complexity and paradoxical thinkers. However, it is not easy to persuade people who are used to categorical and contingent thinking strategies – which may well be most people who are the product of modern education in business sand science – to try to sustain the tension of working with two or more fundamentally different perspectives.

Effective re-framing can look a little bit like magic: something that seemed quite impossible when seen from one perspective suddenly becomes entirely doable when seen from another. In this example, the tight frame of one disciplinary perspective placed some possibilities in the dark. The more stringently that perspective was applied, the less likely it was that any other light would be shone

on the issue. A collective mindset held by a largish group of people would seem, on the face of it, to be impervious to the efforts of just one individual. So what was the other little bit of magic that was used by this academic woman, from a different discipline, to even give her the chance to demonstrate that a new frame could work wonders? What did she do to get them to listen to her at all?

She was clearly confident that her approach could make a difference and although it is not mentioned in the vignette presented above, she had a history of dialogue with this group that seems to have earned her respect. So this is not a random act of street magic that attracts the passing interest of strangers.

However there are occasions when that is exactly what happens. Something is demonstrated in a different context that captures the imagination or minds of others, and triggers the dialogue of "what if …?" When re-framing is offered as a free public gift, or as a calculated bait in entrepreneurial activity, or in political and religious campaigning, it can attract the energy, the hopes and fears, and the significant resources of others.

STORY SEVEN: FLYING UNDER THE RADAR

I found the way the management structure was working, so, I am not the only one who says it, was quite problematic. You know, the culture in that organisation wasn't conducive to … forging

good relationships, or encouraging leadership that was perhaps a bit innovative. So, yeah, I think I had a lot more struggles there in trying to bring about innovation and change because I found there were pressures from above, from sideways, from below, wherever it was, and, it was hard to get, to bring people along. But, while I was there, I was President of an organisation known as the Australian Council of Heads of Schools of (name deleted).

So I was head of that organisation and it had been floundering a lot up until that time I took it over and I can't say it was just me, but there were a group of us I think worked very hard to make sure it was a strong organisation.

Because what was important for them was not just looking at the micro stuff and how it is delivered in universities but trying to engender a sense of responsibility as a profession. So we took on a major role there, initiated a project which was huge and took three years. I did not know what I was in for.

Anyway ... I was able to do that and get it going. It was a bit of a subversive project at that stage because we just appointed ourselves as ... being able to run the enquiry and we raced around the countryside doing so. But a lot of people came on board and joined in that quest.

Oh, there was hardly any funding, but it gained a lot of credibility because it was through an academic institution. So we got bits and pieces of funding from Trust Funds and things, but it was small amounts of money. Enough for a bit of travel and to employ a research assistant.

This final story illustrates a very different form of reframing from the previous one. It describes a strategy of keeping things small in scale, at least initially, and not framing issues in such a way that people are asked to make big decisions, or commit significant resources, that will have to be justified to others. The approach is described as subversive by the academic who told the story.

While engaged at the same time in a national role that was high-profile for her profession, she re-framed a project process from one involving asking for things and gaining permission, to one of continuous inquiry. Without fan-fare, she started conversations that eventually attracted the attention of key players, so that they were drawn to approach her, rather than the other way around. The project snow-balled, drawing modest amounts of money from numbers of different sources. This was not highly visible, well publicised, conventional project management, with clear action plans, stages and key indicators. It was however, a carefully crafted alternative way of engaging with lots of people who were happy to contribute ideas and views, and whose commitment in turn attracted the commitment of others.

To call something an inquiry rather than a project has great significance in the public space when particular people are authorised – even given legal power – to investigate things in which lots of people have an interest. It is quite a different frame to self-authorise an activity, run the process on one's own terms and invite others to contribute as they wish. Yet a process that is framed as a generative one, taking shape as it goes, can produce a reputation for credibility, and credibility that takes its creator eventually into the public space, into things even she "didn't know she was in for".

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the range of ways in which women in this study used re-framing in their leadership work. As a process of influence, re-framing of perspectives opens up the possibility that groups of people will experience differently all sorts of situations, issues, events, encounters, problems and opportunities. Even their own behaviour and intentions might be experienced and understood in ways that make it possible that they will, at the very least, have new options as to how they feel, think and act as professionals.

The examples presented here are concrete representatives of different types of reframing, in use in situations ranging from the strategic and organisation-wide to the moving of chairs in a meeting; and from the public and explicit to the implicit, quiet, and even subversive. All of them have the potential to be generative and powerful in the aid of leadership work. The women did not call their efforts reframing, and it is unclear how they learned to do what they do. But they do it in diverse and effective ways, and their stories suggest that formal development processes for both women and men in leadership roles might well include explicit training in the practice of reframing.

Nita Cherry PhD
Professor of Leadership and Organisation Studies
Faculty of Business and Law
Swinburne University of Technology

JOY HIGGS

6. ALL THE HATS I WEAR

Working in educational settings is not a solitary role. Educators wear many hats and play many roles, both simultaneously and sequentially. Managing these diverse roles requires considerable skills in time management and considerable insights into self-management. Consider the ideas in this soliloquy created from the voices and experiences of the participants in this research.

I wear my hat of ceremony and achievement;
they call it a mortar board.
It symbolises achievement of studies completed
and a readiness for the jobs that lie ahead.

I smile to myself each year
when I wear that same hat,
celebrating the success of each new graduate year.
Yet, completion is a myth – you're never prepared
for all the hats you're going to wear.

People ask me what's an academic?
What do they do?
And I feel like saying – do you mean today?
Well most of us teach, and then there's research
and administration
and service to the university and to the community.

But there are so many other jobs to do and hats to wear.
We chair committees, and join teams,
mentor colleagues and support friends,
supervise students,
write reports, communicate,
lead project teams,
develop policies,
meet with stakeholders,
build our teams
and … and … and …

The roles of the two groups of participants in this research, university academic leaders and school principals, are broadly reflected in the following quotes. From these general roles more specific roles of these women in educational leadership are explored below under the headings of the various hats these women wear. Not all of the hats or roles described below are equally applicable to both academics and school principals but I have merged both groups in this discussion to provide a rich landscape of experiences to give us space for reflection about the challenges facing women in educational leadership roles.

> *My role as a university academic occurs in three different ways; one is academic responsibilities related to the teaching which is core (I hesitate to use the term) business but that is the core intention of a university which is higher education. So I have significant responsibilities in undergraduate and especially postgraduate courses.*

> *I have significant responsibilities as the researcher and research supervisor and then built in within these two schemes is the significant responsibilities of an administrative nature which is related to subject management, course management, research funding management, student progression management.*

> *My role is School Principal and my management responsibilities involve me in managing all staff. So all of the staff within the school report either directly or indirectly through to me. In effect, I am the CEO, which means I am also responsible for the operational management of the school expenses. I work with a business manager but at the end of the day they are my responsibility - obviously, with the Board overseeing those as well. I'm responsible for building projects, the oversight of the master plan, everything really.*

HAT ONE – TEAM WORK

A significant role reported across the research participants related to team work. Women in senior educational roles regularly engage in team work as leaders and team members. They learn, typically on the job, how to manage teams and team work. This role is particularly important since much of academic work (like designing and implementing curricula) is conducted collectively.

People who seek, or are requested to take on, team leadership and management roles cannot afford to 'let the side down' or perform their roles poorly. Where people are appointed as heads of units (like academic schools or disciplinary teams) they acquire many complex task responsibilities related to their team members. People-oriented roles include:

– **team work – working effectively with teams**

> *In relation to the immediate group of my Senior Executive I believe I function very respectfully with these staff; I really wanting to recognise their responsibilities, authority and input that they can have. So those people really are functioning as my peers. And so I would expect to be able to work very openly with them, not disclosing things that are Board confidential level of the school but certainly for the daily functioning of the school there is a very, very open communication that we have.*

> *So I count them as peers. The term peer is an unusual one because one tends to think equality in the role or equal status. But that doesn't tend to be philosophically how I view things. For instance, I work very closely with an administration group and the role of my personal assistant is quite critical.*

> *One of the directors is Director of Enrolments and Marketing, a very key administration position and that person is on this (peer) level with me. And we are working closely together the whole time.*

– **performance management**
One of the most challenging hats to wear for people managers is the appraisal and management of their team members' performance. This role encompasses monitoring staff performance, comparing the staff member's performance to expectations set by the institution as well as individual targets set with the staff member at review points, knowing when to stretch staff who are performing well or when to present unpalatable news to staff performing poorly. This role can be particularly challenging since people's careers and job fulfilment are on the line and this may be complicated when junior department heads need to critique their more senior colleagues.

> *We decided that we preferred this flatter structure and a project management model. Having said that I do their performance*

review and development. So in our team, people had a particular focus of research and as long as we were successful we had latitude in a way. And that was reflected in my reviews.

I have a big role to play in managing professional. An important part of this is being informed, being able to share information with the staff and influence directions for discussion amongst the staff.

We have what I think has been a very well structured, Professional Standards Scheme and we have been doing a lot of work in this area, such as, trialling of classroom observation, looking at means of gaining student feedback and peer sharing. We have moved forward with quite a lot of staff enthusiasm to implement new directions for next year.

– **development of staff capacity and capability**

Mentoring and helping others can be a rewarding part of leadership. It requires working with staff to build their capacity to do their jobs well and helping them match work to their capabilities.

It's about empowering others. Influential leaders empower others to contribute and give them permission to actually contribute to solutions as well.

Because of my position at the professorial level I am a role model for others and I facilitate mentorship of those more junior staff members.

Well, we are externally funded, apart from my salary … but a lot of the money we generate is through research grants and then we employ people out of that. Generally speaking, if you have got the money, there is no problem with employing the person, and, you have to employ the people with the right skills to get the grant. As long as I can fund it, we deliberately recruit people who are builders rather than doers.

– **pursuing staff rewards**

Academic rewards, such as promotion and advancement, can be self-pursued. It can also be very gratifying to receive positive feedback from managers via nominations for departmental awards, representational tasks or leadership roles.

One of the things that we all need to do as leaders is to directly offer rewards to staff, but also put them up for institutional awards. If you say you're doing well, - well that's one thing. But if you say – I want to recommend you for a VC award – then that gives people more external recognition. It's a good thing for the person and the whole team.

– **management of staff workload**
Managers of units face the challenging task of ensuring that all of the work (e.g. course teaching, program management, research, administration) is allocated appropriately across unit staff. Typically, this is more about being *staff relevant* (to ability, experience) that is equitable rather than (numerically) *staff equal*.

> *It's an important part of my job to make sure that the jobs are covered and the workload formula is properly and relevantly implemented for everyone.*

HAT TWO – PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The participants reported that they spent considerable time, as leaders, in program management. This work included management of part of a larger overall workload (like management of one course or school section), distributed leadership and delegation of sub-program management to team members.

– **task/role delegation/negotiation and program management**
Academic tasks and roles often operate through devolution or negotiation of leadership roles across several people. This enables the unit leader (e.g. head of school, head of discipline) to keep the higher level unit/team management responsibilities but delegate the management of programs to 'lieutenants'.

> *A lot of teaching happens by negotiation, so you end up in situations where you would like your peers to lend you a hand in undertaking the teaching of a particular subject. And there's a lot of negotiation especially when the courses undergo changes.*

> *Managing programs has lots of parts to it: getting the plan right as well as the doing. And it needs good management of resources and good use of time.*

– **quality promotion**
Accountability and quality control are essential ingredients in academic life. Academic leaders spend much of their time monitoring, promoting and reviewing quality of the work, programs and outcomes they enable.

> *One of the pro vice chancellors is responsible for quality and there is a lot of push coming from the external environment with quality standards in universities and so on.*

– **promoting team engagement**
Promotion of team engagement in educational settings can be a challenging endeavour. The idea of professional autonomy can promote independence rather than collaboration.

Individuals in teams may have differences in approaches and goals; so interpersonal dynamics impacts on team work. Often individuals have to juggle

their overall work responsibilities with participation in multiple teams. For leaders, a key role is to inspire engagement in group projects.

> *It's all about engagement. Leaders need to have their team members on board. If they're sitting around doing their own thing and not working together – then you don't have a team, and it's hard to get the whole job done.*

HAT THREE – LEADERSHIP OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Research in universities is a central part of the purpose of universities to generate, and disseminate knowledge. Frequently in the power and hierarchy arenas of universities, research occupies a prominent space. Research leadership may be an individual pursuit on a daily basis with influence outwards to the research community. It may involve the leadership of research teams working on particular research projects. The key roles of research leaders identified by the women interviewed were as follows.

– **building the team**
  A significant challenge for research leaders is drawing together a group of people with the collective capabilities, knowledge and research credence to conduct their research – from grant acquisition, project implementation to reporting, as well as the capacity to work well together.

> *One of my key roles is capacity building for my team. That includes helping them with research funding application proposals. Because I have a strong track record in that area, one might presume or conclude that I have a knowledge about how to do it and, but it is always a bit of a lottery of course.*

> *I have been involved in research grant applications and so I can give some insight at least to provide beneficial feedback or feedback that might be beneficial for young, more junior staff members, or staff.*

> *Part of building a team is recognition. Well you know when we hit goals or when we reach certain targets, celebration and recognition is really a key element of team building. So you look at who is in your immediate team and then how do you take that out wider to the school level and make sure that you are acknowledging people well along the way.*

> *I think that is really important because many people work hard and the risk can be that they feel that their hard work has gone unnoticed.*

> *And it keeps them, that keeps the fires burning for the next challenge. And so the more people get recognised the more they*

practice doing challenging things and practice making decisions which is a really big leadership capacity in this world of choice. You know, it is hard to make decisions. So, if you can get recognised that you have achieved those sorts of things – this is what I see helps to make them work even better.

I think being a research leader is more relevant to me. So you know, running your own lab and team is really the key. And absolutely, that gives the opportunities to be more influential and I find that very valuable.

– **chairing project meetings and teams**
Someone, often the designated research team leader, takes on the role of chairing research project team meetings. Such meetings provide the momentum for the research; the lack of which could make the project stall in the midst of competing work priorities. Meetings and teams provide a vehicle for the planning, communication and progress monitoring of the project.

So, we often had projects involving people across different teams, but someone is always the project leader - it's their grant, or it's their project. And so they are responsible for performance in terms of getting the job to quality, to time, to budget for that project. And they chaired the meetings.

– **managing project schedule, resources and workloads**
Projects are visionary, people-oriented and logistical endeavours. The research leader or a project manager takes on the role of keeping the schedule on track, managing the resources (including funding, material resources) and team responsibilities and workloads. Most of these things require accountability and reporting to funding agencies and heads of department; they need to be managed to achieve effective and efficient completion of the research task.

But that is okay. That is just fine. My responsibilities were in leading the group and that included managing workload models. So some people were very over committed and some people were very under committed according to the model. The target model of hours. And it was a very big challenge to address this in a short time but over a longer time it will probably be addressed more easily.

– **research leadership**
Beyond the roles described above, there is a leadership role of "leading" in terms of providing vision; conceptualising the research focus, its need and the gap the research is seeking to address, the core research questions, the researchability of the topic plus the means and strategy of the research.

I am the Director of xxx which is the University's research centre in the xxx area. So, in that role I have both a management

role of leading the Centre and leading the strategy development in the Centre, reviewing strategy planning, reviewing and trying to coordinate activities of the researchers within the Centre towards a common goal, as much as we can.

So basically what I have been doing is managing the research teams in my area of expertise and PhD students. Which is also quite a bit of networking outside of the University because most of my collaborators are outside the uni. So I am a bit of an anomaly because I have specifically negotiated a contract here that is probably less management and leadership than I have had in the past.

– **research reporting, publications**
Ethically, research requires accountability, particularly due to its impost on people's time and participation and through resourcing of the research, often by the public purse or research contributions. Reporting of research through progress and outcome documents and through publications in the academic literature is a substantial and expected role of research teams and leaders.

Some of my key roles are researcher and publishing, and institutional leader. ... actually, these things fit together more than you would think. I am not researching something else that doesn't impact on my practice. So there is also a huge community probably across the world that I would relate to as a professor if you like.

I had two goals that I really wanted to work towards – supporting the students to publish and me getting published. ... And so I really pushed on a publication that has myself, this other person, this other professor, and two PhD students. The students have a role in publications too.

HAT FOUR – SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

For some individuals in senior academic roles, their major responsibilities lie around system leadership.

– **organisational leadership and management**
Senior academics influence the way the institution operates, and directions it takes. They report to external agencies such as government departments, set up collaborations with industry partners, establish partnerships and funded projects with national and international partners, and liaise with external regulatory authorities. They are accountable to the institution's governing body (such as an Academic Council) which itself bridges internal and external, organisational and society, plus current and future accountabilities.

Within the University, all the faculties report to me. The learning and teaching development area transformations are my responsibilities. I deal with the area of academic quality and accreditation ... and the areas associated with student development and advancement.

My role is all encompassing. It is basically a CEO role, a position in charge of the whole school, that is from early learning centres through to Year 12. A position that is responsible to the Board with the reporting structures that we have. If we consider a flow chart of the school with lines of reporting and responsibilities of other people, I basically have oversight of the whole school but I have people in positions of responsibility with delegated authority for the roles that they need to carry out. At the same time, I have regular reporting from them to maintain oversight concerning completion of the job, standard of the jobs etc.

The first line down is to my Deputy Principal and Business Manager and then a group that totals seven in number that makes up the Senior Executive of the school and includes Deans of Studies and Students, the curriculum and pastoral care arms of the school and heads of campus of junior school and year 9, and the Chaplain is part of this too.

And then the Deputy Principal and Business Manager. So they are quite critical as far as my management is concerned – the senior structure within the school. And then there is the managing of areas like the IT servicing of the school, the learning technologies area and the information resourcing of the school. They are three very, very big areas for us.

And then my management role filters through those people to other layers, for example, heads of department, coordinators of year levels, and the Junior School Head takes responsibility for oversight of class teachers but reports through to me. And then, through the Dean of Students with pastoral care, there is the whole oversight of students in that area and oversight of what is happening in the curriculum and teaching and learning.

I also have oversight of professional learning. And then the other part of the management would be of parents. That extended community and all of that layer of communicating and accountability basically that there is to the parents of the children.

- **portfolio management**

  Senior academics are frequently appointed to designated positions (such as Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research) which bring with them portfolio management responsibilities. Not only do such people have tasks, goals and targets to accomplish, they frequently have a team of staff (or several work or project teams, committees etc.) to manage; they need to develop effective strategies to draw the work of all of these teams and individuals together to achieve the overall portfolio objectives.

  > *My role is xxx (senior executive). I have a portfolio of strategic responsibilities in the University. This covers professional development, learning technology, scholarship of learning and teaching and entrepreneurial partnerships to develop on line learning. My key role is as a change agent. And I was specifically brought in to effect change.*

  > *My role is the Senior xxx and in that capacity I have responsibility for quite a range of areas within the University, but to bring it down to an essence – (my job) it is all the matters that fall under an academic remit of the University. So (I deal with) vocational education, the higher education area, ancillary delivery partnerships with countries like xxx. I sit on their governing and management boards.*

- **chairing committees**

  Chairing committees for this group, as with others in leadership roles is about bringing people together to achieve tasks assigned to or pursued by the committees. In addition, senior academics in portfolio roles lead committees to carry out strategic leadership responsibilities.

  > *I sit on a number of committees. But I also work (outside the meetings), for those committees often talking with people, perhaps as the prime mover of the policies or actions.*

- **strategic planning leadership**

  Senior institutional leaders draw the rest of the working population into choices and operations around strategic planning and the implementation of the tasks and responsibilities of the system.

  > *So, in that sense, I've actually enjoyed the capacity to bring people along. The previous institution I was at had, when I first went there, a very poor research performance track record. Over that period of six years we set a strategic objective, set the operational elements that took it to a stage of winning national competitive grants and developed the capabilities of the academics.*

Some new people came and other people went and in addition to that it went to achieving, it got five high rankings in the ERA sense was over a six year period. So there was a change in the culture, change in the attitude, change in the reward system. And developing the capability of the staff, so that in itself is reward, because people who can see what they've achieved in the end.

I sit on all the sub-committees of the School Board – we have finance, property, marketing. When we are in the mode of strategic planning we work across these areas through a small core group including the Chair of course, and myself. And that is really quite critical because that group will guide with my input. And we work with a Governance Committee where we would link in usually senior staff as well. What we do with governance discussions is quite critical for the Board. So we are looking then at the future directions of the school and including programs plus property development.

– **change management**

Leaders in organisations are frequently the change managers which could include serving as a middle manager to pass down change imperatives from above or from external agents (such as government departments), providing their own leadership influences and directives and facilitating the organisation members to engage in leadership.

Leading the management of the school and engaging and working with the community is a key part of my role and it often involves change. I think there has been a shift in recent years in terms of the way these responsibilities play out. I think that leading, teaching and learning is becoming a far more prominent focus for principals as part of the movement of general educational reform; prominence in terms of improving pedagogy in a school. And this is linked to leading teachers in terms of professional development.

– **policy development**

Institutions require rules, policies and procedures. Senior academics typically lead the development of these norms and regulations. Such roles require significant insight, meticulous attention to detail, consideration of consequences (such as impact on students' progress, staff freedoms and responsibilities), and cross system connections (e.g. balances needed between staffing levels and timelines for project completion, budget allocations and infrastructure development).

I'm involved a lot in development of policy; I've done a lot around policy in the last couple of years.

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> *How I manage the school helps the Board and informs them with what they are doing and for the policies they develop. A lot of policy development comes from my feedback to them.*

> *The discussions we have are quite critical with where they see the policies of the school going. So it is almost a guiding role upwards and an informing role upwards that is quite critical.*

– **corporate citizenship**

Senior academics face an important expectation to "set the tone" for the institution. As role models and leaders of policy and institutional strategy, they shape corporate citizenship. They help the institution say to itself, to prospective staff and students, and to the current community, "who are we?" and "what do we stand for?".

> *I think one of the things that distresses me a little bit, I mean I've been in the university sector now for 25 years or so, all told. I think when I first came up, there genuinely were places where there was free and open debate, people weren't scared of voicing an opinion.*

> *I think as they've become more and more corporatised, there is this notion of "you've got to comply", "you've got to think like this", "you've got to believe the rhetoric that comes out of the Vice-Chancellor's office". And there's fewer opportunities to actually express differing opinions without being punished for it in some sense.*

> *We were seen to be a bit like a conscience of the University. So, because there was support from the team and support from the hierarchy of the University and support from the community I felt my leadership potential could flourish a lot more in that supportive environment.*

– **systems resources and infrastructure development**

Leaders often face a particular challenge, especially when they have little training for the task, in seeking funds for and managing the development of systems' resources and infrastructure.

> *And with IT in the school, I think we are really, really well placed. I don't think we have ever been better off. But part of that influence has been through the potential of drawing on some consultancies for how we were setting up our IT in the school and then working through to getting the right staff in configuration and so with IT servicing and learning technologies.*

HAT FIVE – STUDENT SUPERVISION, MENTORING AND ROLE MODELLING

Research leaders frequently supervise postgraduate research students. This is a role of building future generations of researchers, building the capacity of the individual research student and contributing to the generation of new knowledge.

– **student supervision**
Supervision is leadership, mentorship and a form of academic companionship. The supervisor accompanies and guides students on a significant journey, helping them to travel the path from novice towards expertise about their topic area, to answer research questions and contribute knowledge to their field, and to gain research capability to become independent researchers and, ideally, future research leaders themselves.

> *When there is a research student, for instance, who has done a body of work and they can get a little bit lost in the sort of nitty gritty of their work. I guess my ongoing role is always to take that mess and turn it into a story and persuade the student that that is a valid story and then bring it to publication.*

– **program design and management**
Research supervision occurs within government and institutional research training agendas. To achieve the goals of these agendas requires an approach to research training and supervision that goes beyond the individual student and the individual project. Typically this requires a team or program strategy that the research supervisor or group of supervisors manage.

This could occur through the acquisition of grant funding to support programs within which several students pursue projects that contribute to the overall research goals. It could be programs for teams of students and supervisors where individual students pursue individual projects, often in a broad theme or discipline (e.g. early childhood research) and students benefit from collective training beyond their own projects and methodologies and from opportunities for presenting their work to and gaining feedback from their research community.

> *My role was to build up my lab to get some PhD students (I had 14 at one stage - which was a bit much) and to work with industries. I had been working a lot with industry and brought my students into that kind of work.*

> *I have led some different activities to try and move things forward in the Faculty, to develop skills and to really engender strategy and, I suppose, a culture within the Faculty; so there is a cultural role there of ensuring that we are translating the University's vision to the Faculty level.*

– **student support**

Research communities provide support for students; this can encompass nurturing and mentoring as well as challenge and critique in a constructive environment, preparing students for the external, objective and potentially harsh external world of academic critique. Individual student-supervisor academic relationships and peer networks are central to student success and persistence, across the challenging journey of postgraduate research candidatures.

> *And my primary role is to steer the research direction of students and post-doctorate fellows and research assistants in my groups. That group can range from six people to twelve depending on funding and so on. So, for the PhD students, of course, I'm involved in mentoring in all kinds of ways, making sure they get a thesis at the end of it and have learned how to design experiments and so on.*

– **management of students' administrative requirements**

Research candidatures don't just operate in an idyllic (or dramatic) world of research alone. Administrative requirements (progress reports, project approvals), thesis examination procedures and processes linked to research activities like conference presentations, are also part of the program management tasks of research supervisors and research program coordinators.

> *I have responsibility for all the graduate students in the Faculty so I have oversight over every graduate student, and the processes that we put in place there. I am responsible for strategy in the Faculty to do with research training and to do with funding for research and all of the types of things. I sign off a lot of stuff and check and those sort of things.*

– **role modelling**

Educational institutions, particularly primary and secondary schools play a key role in forming the attitudes of young people and emerging adults. The school culture and the behaviour of teachers as role models plays a key role in this.

> *The girls and boys come together in the Senior College and we talk about working in a respectful adult relationship. We used to have two separate colleges, a boys' Senior College and a girls' Senior College and for a whole lot of reasons we have combined them. Before we had to have twice as many adults supervising the kids because we had all the hair flicking and so on.*

> *Like – oh look at me, and the boys would be silly and now that they are used to working respectfully with each other, we have actually halved the amount of supervision they need. So they learn to work together and are building confidence in their own gender specific learning area and you know, avoiding stereotypes.*

– **teaching and development**

Working with students inherently involves helping them learn and facilitating their development, including promoting their agency, self appraisal and leadership.

> *Teaching to me learning is a passion, you know, after two other degrees and I found myself working permanently in schools.*

> *Working with students is very rewarding for me. I love to see them learn and take control of their own learning.*

HAT SIX – COMMUNICATOR

Communication is the breath of life and belonging for all academics. For leaders this is even more the case since it is through communication that people can influence, inspire, control, critique, update, educate, inform, report and be accountable. Leaders may well be seen as the hub of communication networks.

– **listening and being empathic to team members**

Academic leaders need to have emotional intelligence and be empathic.

> *People act in different ways in teams – I mean the things I would say (would differ) across different teams and situations– it involves communication skills obviously, it's the kind of capacity to listen, to understand. I think it's sometimes the capacity to interpret. More than empathising, it's actually just sometimes being able to interpret what one person is saying to another.*

– **bridge between senior institutional staff and managed teams**

Senior academics often become a bridge or point of liaison between senior institutional staff and the teams they manage. They pass messages and represent viewpoints up and down this hierarchy.

> *People sometimes talk in such different languages you know. If you can be the bridge that allows people to talk, to understand each other, then I think that's part of where your influence comes in as well.*

> *So after the senior staff had (our plan) and knew what it looked like, you then move into a steering group, and you move into a task orientated implementation team, so you delegate tasks to other workforces and groups. Important to it all is the continued communication strategy.*

– **report writing**

Much of communication is verbal, informal and every day. Academic leaders are frequently called upon to also put their work and positions "on the line" through report writing. Reports document achievements, present proposals and record process and engagement statistics.

> *Trying to influence the executive – that's one of the things you need good reports for – generally with a nice, short executive summary for time limited executives.*

– **information and decision dissemination**

Organisations, particularly large and complex ones, need communication systems (including newsletters, local area networks, staff meetings) to share information and share decision making.

> *You communicate, you communicate, you communicate again – in many different ways – even when you think you've done enough.*

– **representation of teams at committees/projects**

Teams of workers often have representatives on wider institution committees. Such representatives attend committee meetings taking forward ideas, discussion points and proposals that reflect the interests and views of their teams. And, they bring back committee matters and decisions to the team. Similar roles are assigned to representatives on project teams.

> *I learned the hard way I think, to speak at committees. If you wait to be invited to speak – you wait a long time. Another part of committee work is not knowing whether you have to – or knowing how to – get other people's opinion before the meeting. Or – whether you're able to speak on their behalf.*

HAT SEVEN – EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION & LIAISON

Educational institutions do not work as independent entities. Instead, staff frequently operate in partnership with stakeholders (including students' families, industry partners, professional bodies) and in shared or negotiated collaboration with bodies or organisations with which they share overlapping interests (such as regulatory authorities, funding bodies, government departments, quality assurance agencies). Academic leaders play a vital role in fostering these collaborations and achieving these outcomes.

– **working with my peers, colleagues and communities outside the institution**

Where educational leaders are working at the level of running institutions, such as school principals, a key part of their role is liaising with peers and external bodies plus stakeholders and communities.

> *My peers beyond the school, are my School Principal colleagues and also key people outside in various educational groups, for example, I am involved with the Board of the Centre for Strategic Education and I make good use of Independent Schools Victoria.*

> *There are a couple of key people there whom I see as professional peers for dealing with some industrial matters.*

– **working with industry partners**
Industry partners of tertiary education providers, as future employers of graduates, want to have a say in courses and are invited by tertiary education institutions to comment on curriculum entry requirements, goals, content, processes, length, and outcomes. They frequently collaborate directly in fieldwork education. They have a strong interest in research targets, locations, participants and outcomes.

> *My work is very, very multi-disciplinary, but I'm used to being in multi-discipline situations. So my responsibility is to ensure that all our systems and services are usable and (that they) do the right thing for the right people (including community people and industry partners) at the right time and so on.*

> *I do quite a bit, of other overseas work, which I think is influential, but they are nothing to do with management structures or anything within the university. I mean, I see my role as bringing about and contributing to social change.*

– **participation in professional and community association leadership**
Typically universities list community service as a core goal. Collaboration between *town* and *gown* is seen as a desirable and essential endeavour. The town includes local communities, society more broadly and the world of practice including practitioners and professional association. Senior academics are seen as key people to foster these collaborations.

> *My role operates quite heavily in the area of engagement with external communities, in particular, industry partners.*

> *Engagement is part of the practice of what we do and how we do it. It is an integral part of our practice, engagement with community, engagement with government, engagement with other universities.*

– **having influence across the sector**
Leadership doesn't stop at the institution's walls. It can be about influencing the education sector.

> *I have used my influence chairing that committee amongst my peers, to push down a very contemporary road and to link up with the notion of intercultural understanding. And that work has an Australia-wide influence in that the work flowing from that committee influences certain academic articles that are being produced and agendas around professional learning for teachers in schools across Australia. I think the first thing I did*

was making my time available to be involved in networks and committees outside of my job as Principal in the operational running of a school.

And I do that because I am committed to having an influence beyond my own community. I work with my School Board to ensure that they understand what it is I want to get involved with, what it is I want to influence, so they are supportive of that. Because without that support I perhaps would not be so able to work outside and beyond my community.

Once I place myself in a network or on a committee, I make myself available for the work that has to be done and I think that is important. Authenticity is not just about the opinions you have but the work that you are prepared to shoulder. So I am prepared to do that on top of again, the significant and complex role of being a principal. And then it is a matter of being involved in designing opportunities and taking the lead in designing opportunities for others to be in that sphere of influence that I wish to be a part of and to have an impact on.

CONCLUSION

Educational leaders frequently talk about juggling many different roles. In this chapter this is reflected in the discussion of what hats women educational leaders wear. For the women in this project, the multitude of their roles is extensive and the task of dealing with them all consistently well was reported as a challenging experience that women in leadership needed to accomplish.

Joy Higgs AM PhD
Strategic Research Professor in Professional Practice
Charles Sturt University

NITA CHERRY

7. TAKING UP AUTHORITY

This chapter explores how our group of university women have engaged with a central concern of leadership in organisational and community settings: how to take up explicit and implicit possibilities to exercise authority. Many contemporary framings of leadership focus on its socially constructed dimensions, and especially on the negotiated and contested dynamics of authority. These perspectives necessarily draw attention to the diversity of leadership practices, and to their informal, unconscious, messy, contingent and gendered nature of leadership dynamics.

Despite these developments, both the academic and popular literatures continue to be dominated by the testimonies and self-reports of those who sit near the top of organisations, in formally defined and endorsed roles of organisational leadership. These theories and accounts of leadership mostly focus on recognised leaders occupying significant public roles.

It is inevitable, then, that these discourses most frequently represent the use of authority as understood and practised by men, and by men who are at the top of their organisations. By contrast, this chapter presents and explores the accounts of a group of women who describe their efforts, over long periods of time, to acquire and exercise mandates to lead that have not always been clear and that have required, in some cases, significant and continuing negotiation.

DYNAMICS OF AUTHORITY

One of the central issues of leadership in organisational and community settings is how individuals acquire and exercise the authority to lead. In the broadest terms, there are two ways that such authority is acquired. One is by taking up a formal mandate to lead: an individual is invited or directed to exercise authority, and expectations and limits relating to its use are set out in various formal statements of the leadership role and the rules that surround it.

Another involves individuals mandating themselves. Without directly asking anyone's permission, a person enacts authority that is "allowed" by others, often without any explicit negotiation or even direct acknowledgment.

Just how authority is conferred, claimed, negotiated, sustained, challenged and lost – both explicitly and implicitly – remains one of the most intriguing dimensions of leadership behaviour and practice. It is a key issue because some of the most important of human transactions lie at the heart of it. These are transactions of influence and control, of freedom and dependency, of trust and doubt, of security and confidence, pride, autonomy and competence. Any leadership action, whether

or not it is conscious and intended, can be viewed as a series of mutual behaviours, in which people influence others or allow themselves to be influenced.

It is inevitable that these issues provoke anxiety if not resolved, and because they seldom can be resolved definitively or for long, they can remain simmering not far from awareness, revealed in the sudden sensitivity that we might have to adopt a certain tone of voice or a particular kind of direction. But sometimes more drastic ways are used to deal with what cannot be resolved, as happens when explicit rules and implicit cultures are developed to make it unlikely that anyone will challenge the way authority is being taken up and used. Gender practices have historically been one way to deal with issues of authority that would otherwise cause almost intolerable anxiety if continuously aired and contested.

More generally, one of the prime tasks of both formal and informal organisations is to create predictable house rules for leadership behaviours so that members of the organisation mostly know what to expect and how to behave in relation to leading and being led. Leadership practice in organisations is significantly influenced by the specific social and cultural contexts in which it occurs. These contexts don't simply provide the setting or stage for leadership, but they also significantly influence the range of things that are tried, what works, and

perhaps the circumstances under which a person will attempt to lead in the first place. The context defines, through its embedded normative rules, the range of behaviours that, at the very least, will be understood and tolerated. But context is not passive and certainly not static if understood as the web of reciprocal interpersonal responses that come into continuous play as soon as – and for as long as – people occupy the same social space. If a situation is novel, or a person is just inclined to try something different, leadership practice – including the way authority is taken up and enacted – is a very fertile ground for experimentation.

AQUIRING AND EXERCISING AUTHORITY

Chapter Two offered some interesting insights into the ways in which the senior university women in this project had engaged with authority in the context of their leadership work. Three of the women had been appointed to senior executive roles within the university and all three expressed longstanding interest in exercising formal authority to significantly influence the strategies and processes of organisations as a whole. They spoke of wanting to transform organisational practices, and of their interest and satisfaction in controlling very substantial budgets, offering expert framing of key issues and making their voices heard. Two of them were clear about the active enjoyment they got from exercising the formal authority conferred on them, and the pleasure to be had in organising and managing people, giving them clear direction and challenging them.

> *I was one of those people, who instead of sitting there complaining about it, proactively engaged with the leaders to actually find solutions and have that voice representing people.*

> *From that, the success of actually making a difference in how institutions advanced, progressed and the environments in which people were working, and that doesn't mean that it's making a comfortable environment, it's actually making a dynamic environment. Ensuring that people had a clear direction, and the outcomes of that have been very rewarding …*

Their deep interest – and the personal source of authority that earned them the formal right to lead – is the use of robust organisational processes to get outcomes.

> *So (effective leaders) are not necessarily agenda driven. When I say agenda driven, somebody who's a leader who's on a soapbox about issues is less likely to be influential than someone who provides opinion and comment in a contextual forum.*

> *That doesn't mean that they don't lobby but it's not about agenda. And it doesn't mean that they don't have a sense of dogged determination … but they do it in a far more considered and balanced way … rather than in a dictatorial way.*

So they're usually solution oriented, they usually can articulate the issue and they can identify approaches to dealing with it. And that's how you influence. If you're a solutions and outcomes oriented person, you will influence. Whereas if your only sphere of influence is to identify issues and you have no mechanism to actually address those issues, then you won't be influential.

One senior executive gave a detailed account of how such processes work:

So one of your first things that always makes you successful is for you to at least give people some information as well as exemplars of what you might seek. That gives a basis from which to work from and some options within that. And then have them understand by the nature of the questions you ask of people, for their input into that.

Then you take on board that, and then the positions that you hold you need to then evaluate the merit of each of those and then redefine it in accordance with that. So the process of the next stage was in taking the feedback, we then convened a second group that looked at the merit at the different elements of feedback and how it might fit with a range of the options that came forward.

Once appointed to executive roles, the incumbent's job specifications spell out the responsibilities, accountabilities, and key performance indicators that clearly announce to all stakeholders the formal mandate to lead. There are certain decisions and actions that the executives are authorised to make and take, and these are generally well understood by others.

At the same time, being a member of an executive team adds considerably to the personal authority of individuals in more informal ways, through the power of association. The authority of other senior colleagues, and of the Vice-Chancellor, can be channelled by very subtle invocations – such as dropping the Vice-Chancellor's first name in the course of a conversation with a more junior colleague – or by quite explicit reminders of previous directives, decisions or announcements made by "our Vice-Chancellor".

Understood as part of a continuous negotiation and re-negotiation of mandate, these invocations and reminders represent a challenge to others, who are being invited to either agree with the speaker or argue with the authority of the Vice-Chancellor.

A small number of the university women in our group who were not in executive roles, were however in management roles that also came with some formal mandates to organise and lead. These women were in roles of Associate Dean, Head of Academic Group, or Director of a research centre. They described themselves as having oversight of students and processes, and as being able to sign off on certain things. Some of these said they had had experience of formal leadership roles relatively early in their careers, even before coming to the

university sector. And they were well aware of the functional importance of acquiring the money and other resources to pursue their interests.

> *I think the research that I do is incredibly important and I am very passionate about my research and I think the better the leadership role I have, the more influential I can be about getting the types of research done that I want to do.*

> *It was what I wanted to do as a personal thing, as a personal journey … my research I am very, very passionate about (it), to get my research done by as many people as possible, with as much money as possible.*

Strikingly, most of the other women in non-executive roles agreed that their leadership mandate was the result of pursuing their own personally defined interests in specific areas of research. They were not interested in balanced organisational decision making and detachment from the issues, or in being part of a management story. Rather, their deep – often described as passionate – interest was in finding out more about particular phenomena, sharing that knowledge and helping to put it to good use, in ways that transcended the boundaries of any particular organisation. Their domain was that of professional knowledge, and they were well aware of its transformative and powerful potential for different fields of endeavour and practice across the world.

   As we saw in Chapter One, the research participants' interest in becoming professionally influential varied considerably, from taking a keen interest in formal leadership roles from relatively early in their lives, to a clear rejection of the idea that they had deliberately sought to be influential. Several were adamant that they were not interested in taking up formal authority:

> *Distinguished, I don't try to look distinguished. I hate being called Professor. You know, I hate it. It is elitism to me, but other people might like it. You know. I just don't like elitism, particularly.*

> *I am probably not a good person to interview. I don't do the bureaucratic stuff. I had a prior career in the public sector and I have done a lot of line management and operational management and frankly I am over it. And, you know, the thing that attracted me to research was to be able to work in a more collegial way.*

A number were quite explicit about not wanting to control people but rather, they wanted to offer resources that others could take up and use for themselves.

> *And I very much like working in a collaborative team way. We are all professors. And I have always not liked working in a top down way … I have always tried to make sure that everybody has input. Not necessarily that everybody in the end gets their*

way but to really consider the directions and where we are going in decisions.

And the second thing ... is that I have always worked with either an early career researcher and I have always attempted to pair with them and to mentor them. And I do that specifically by sharing with them, for example, mistakes I have made or failures.

These accounts alert us to significant differences in the authority bases from which the university women exercise influence. Most of them have created their own claims to authority through many years of self-directed effort. While academic success eventually and progressively created its own authority, recognition of their expertise and achievements has generally not come quickly. Even when translated into the role of professor, that recognition is not accompanied by a mandate that is as explicit as the authorities and powers contained in the job descriptions of the executive women.

An extensive professional curriculum vitae can document a collection of achievements but the self-crafted mandate that it suggests is implicit, rather than explicit. Being a world expert in something does not prescribe how that authority can or should be used, even in the most artfully prepared academic profile. A professor might be expected to make significant contributions – broadly defined – to research, teaching and the larger communities of industry and society. But the individual must continue to personally negotiate what her mandate actually means. Sometimes personal authority is introduced by reminding others of the successes, contributions and reputation that the speaker has already accumulated. This can be done in very subtle ways, by referring to a paper one has written, the time one spent in a particular role, or to the management of a particularly tricky issue that would be known to others. Sometimes, however, other people need to be reminded or told quite explicitly about the value and extent of one's expertise. As when one person tells another that "I am considered a world authority on this subject" or that "my work really established the world's best practice benchmark on that".

You know she was trying to tell me that she knew all about something that I was actually the expert in, and she was trying to claim that she was the expert ... Now that is a problem because neither of us is are going away ...

I took it as a power thing. We both want to, you know, she works in a very different way to me. And wanted to be recognised for something. And I went fine, that's fine. But don't try and make me not recognised for my bit.

So a crisis meeting was called ... and at this meeting was the DVCR, the Chief Financial Officer, the Faculty Manager and the Director ... and I just ... said this has been an impossible

> *situation for the last four years ... No one wants to take any responsibility for this account.*
>
> *I am not taking any responsibility for this account. You should have given a budget to start with ... (W)hen I presented my case by bringing everyone together about this, it was decided ... that from next year I will be having a budget ... Because I was sick, I was sick of it ....*

Even when reputation is built to the point where a certain amount of authority is commonly – if implicitly – acknowledged, some of the women described the political sensitivity with which it needs to be used:

> *And he is the Dean and he gets the credit for it, so, um, even though a lot of people know he is not doing it, we are doing it, but it makes him look good within the University. And so I think that is an important strategy too.*

Deliberately lateral ways of working were described:

> *Yeah, everything is team, every single thing I do is in a team. I have done very little by myself. And so the interest I have is in working with other people and that is why I love working with people from other fields. Because they can tell me all this stuff that I have no idea about and I can tell them stuff that they have no idea (about) as well.*
>
> *And I guess for a little while I made sure I sat on all those committees ... And it was interesting that over the time, our practices spread, because I think partly the admin staff were helpful in going back and talking to other administrators.*

And sometimes, as we saw in Chapter Two, it is enough to hunker down on one's own patch of turf:

> *My sort of work is, does not bring in, it's too political. People don't like to fund it. And, yet, you know, the University supports me in those endeavours. ... You know, it' a little bit off the main stream. They facilitate, they don't try and block what I do ... I am a bit bunkered here, because you know, we are all in our little corners of the world here.*

The stories of academics working in faculties and research centres suggest, then, that they largely self-mandate, authorising themselves to lead, exercising influence in a range of ways, building and claiming the confidence and credibility to lead, sometimes over quite long periods of time. Arguably these non-executive university women now have a good deal of autonomy, which is acknowledged in their accounts of their careers.

They have been free to do the things that reflect their own passions and interests, following their own sense of what is important. But it can also mean that they are not guaranteed of support, even in their own universities. Their stories suggest that they need to continually re-negotiate that authority as other players seek to stake their own claims for leadership. Establishing and sustaining one's own mandate can require continual effort, and can come to represent significant amounts of time and effort that could have been used more productively. Stories of continual negotiation were far more common among the non-executive women than were stories of sustained and undisputed recognition.

GENDER PRACTICES AND AUTHORITY

Chapter Two detailed a range of specific ways in which influence is exercised in the practice of leadership. It should be stressed that not all influence processes involve the use of authority and the exercise of formal and informal mandates. Many influence processes are based on employing real-time skills that successfully mobilise the energies of other people. People can be very influential because they are charming, entertaining, assertive or scary, and not because they have any authority in the situation.

And similarly, authority can be effectively invoked in a situation by someone who is completely lacking in charm, in wit or in any kind of empathy. This separation of interpersonal skill and authority is perhaps clearest in situations when a person who possesses significant authority doesn't even bother to be polite. However, most of the women we interviewed were very conscious of the need to be interpersonally aware and skilful in the way they exercised authority, however that authority had been acquired. One of the executive women described these skills strategically in the context of the management of organisational change:

> *The first thing you have to be seen to be doing is developing the case as to why you need to change and you need to engage people in that dialogue as to intent and purpose of the change.*

> *To have people not be passive but active in the process you have to provide them with the opportunity to be active for them to have a voice.*

> *And so there was a process put in place to enable people to independently and collectively have a voice in that process and importantly is your ability to actually receive those messages from people ...*

The message here seems to be that listening to the views of staff and acknowledging them is an important thing to be seen to be doing; that it is a strategically important process that serves a useful public purpose, even if views are not acted on. On the other hand, a non-executive woman described the practical importance of interpersonal skill in face-to-face influence situations:

I think I have a good skill base. I think I am very personable. I think I have a reasonable emotional IQ and I think to be in a leadership role you do have to have a range of different abilities … They involve being a person that can communicate with other people and can sit back and listen.

Whether it is a strategic process playing out across an entire organisation, or a real-time encounter limited in terms of space and the number of participants, listening is seen to be an important aspect of effective influence.

Many of those interviewed then went on to remark that they thought women were more likely to listen than men, and it should follow that this would make women more influential. Ironically, it seems that this can put women at a disadvantage when dealing with men. Some of those we interviewed thought that this happened because men were more assertive, talking over women, ignoring their contributions and not seeking out their ideas and expertise. However, others thought that women did not help themselves enough, were too diffident or not clear enough in their communications:

I think there are pervasive gender difference., I have specifically noticed in the last few months … that women are more diffident. So women will often suggest something almost as a question: Do you think it should be this or this? Whereas men are much more likely to say I think it should be this.

And women already have an opinion but they don't necessarily offer that opinion and throw it out for discussion and then maybe steer it towards their opinion. So I see that almost on a daily basis. And I think that is very relevant to the degree of influence that women have and the degree of credit that women get for the influence that they have.

Where the whole of the way you use language … you know that women will come out with a language that's "Oh well, I think perhaps it's like this". Whereas men will come out with "It needs to be done this way" … And I think that's quite noticeable in a lot of the committees.

We were allowed to send our draft applications to this woman who was also pretty influential in the University and … she went through the cover letter that I had written, and I had written it in a very neutral manner … (And) she said I want you to start every line where possible with "I did this" and it was really hard and I felt embarrassed to actually write it like that.

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For some of our women, these are not just differences in interpersonal style but reflect deeply entrenched cultural practices that enact, to varying degrees, longstanding patriarchal authority and dynamics. They offered quite specific examples of these cultural practices at work in their immediate contexts:

> *Their behaviour is quite arrogant in personal demeanour, usually. And the other sort of behaviour is the nature of the language they use can be quite condescending. I have actually had situations where I have seen, it hasn't personally happened to me so much, where there was quite an attitude that women's places are in the home …*

> *I watch, and in my research field, the boys' club, exists. They don't even realise that they are being a boys' club.*

Others were very much prepared to reflect on how they are dealing with those dynamics themselves:

> *If the gendered behaviour is the more masculine, hard, task, fast, decisive, don't over discuss it, don't waste time, don't do all that, just get to the point, that kind of stuff that you actually have to think harder about how am I going to approach this than going into a room where it's people who you know you're more comfortable with.*

> *This woman who had obviously thought a lot about it, said to me there is sort of no word to describe a woman who is really successful that is not a gendered word … (F)or a man you say these words, you describe him. He is dynamic, he is this or that but anyway you immediately picture a man. But for a woman she said there doesn't seem to be, there isn't a word to describe both people who are really, really successful leaders that you wouldn't know whether it was a man or a woman. That is what she was trying to say.*

> *And I think she is definitely right in that way. Because she was told she always gets her way with people because she is charming. Whereas, you know, you and I have talked a bit about it and it is strategies and it is this and that and that and the other. But you know, I mean you wouldn't say a man was charming, you would say he was something else.*

> *But I think that I do worry that people see behaviours that I see in men and they see the same behaviour in a woman and it is objectionable to them. They wouldn't comment on it in a man … What we perceive as bullying, I think the threshold from a woman is much lower.*

Several women in our group described ways in which they thought women collude with these dynamics. This collusion was expressed in a number of quite different ways. One way is simply to roll over and comply with dominant male behaviour, even while resenting it. Another is a reluctance to learn to do some of the constructive things that men do:

> *The women are very un-strategic. I am probably un- strategic too … Like a lot of the men I have worked with, the junior ones, they know that they will do five articles this year. One of them will be co-authored with so and so who is a really key person in their discipline … And then in year two they will do this and in year three they will do this.*

> *And there are only two women I have worked with who are strategic like that. And one woman who I have been mentoring … I said look, if you want to get ahead in this game, you have got to set your agenda. She says she always takes the opportunities that come up. And as a consequence she is still in a part-time position at the age of 40.*

Another form of collusion noted in the interviews occurs when women do emulate men, but copy the worst features of their behaviour:

> *I find women are more likely to be more honest and up front with you than perhaps some of your males and so that's a different style. The other style that you tend to see in women is when they try to emulate a more masculinised and aggressive style …*

In theory, the cultivation and enactment of one's own authority to lead, as a woman, opens up the opportunity to create distinctive ways of doing this, that do not simply replicate those of men. But at the same time, as we have seen, there are significant challenges. The taking up of authority, in itself, can challenge established gender practices in ways that trouble both men and women. It is worth repeating an example already offered in a previous chapter.

> *If I was chairing the meeting I would go and sit in the middle of the table and … some of them were so uncomfortable with it. You know, it was such a little thing … And if you were in the middle of the table you were actually picking up different sorts of things.*

> *It … made them profoundly uncomfortable. They didn't like it, you know … Couldn't I chair a meeting in a proper way. And I went: "I am chairing a meeting in a proper way." So it did them good I reckon. So I can chair in both ways but … the point that I am making is that the gender behaviour is a set of practices that are the norm.*

This provides a very clear illustration of how something as basic as a change in seating arrangements around a table can shift the ways in which authority and influence are enacted. But what is even more striking is the way in which those shifts were perceived, representing threats to the established and "proper" ways in which order is established and maintained. When both men and women share these perceptions of the established order, they are actively involved in perpetuating gender practices that pose formidable challenges to women seeking to express their authority in other ways.

> *I feel that some of it comes from the men actually not thinking that the women, within this setting were just as able. And it also comes from women such as myself. I think we are very non-combative. So if you feel that you're being pushed aside, you say why – I'll just get on with my job.*

> *Because we don't have that much space in the mind to actually keep on things like this, especially if one is not actually keen on those things. So you say oh forget it, if you think I can't do it, fine.*

> *Find another person and we just get on with things. So we are reluctant to make ourselves visible until somebody takes notice of us. Whereas men are, I can't say they are show-offs, but I feel that men notice another man more easily than they would notice a woman.*

For some women, this perpetuation of gendered practices can go well beyond behaviours that actively limit women's' capacity to be influential individuals. It can extend to actively creating obstacles when other women strive to take up authority in new ways. Examples of that were mentioned in Chapter Two, when women introduce their female colleagues to others as being "feisty" or "unconventional" or "out there". One of those we interviewed described the demeaning ways in which women can discuss other women:

> *And they can be catty in the way that they talk about others, and in … the type of conversations they might have … assuming that you know that this is a female (being talked about).*

These strands of thinking also highlight the challenges that beset women in finding role models or concrete examples of how women might distinctively and constructively take up authority. Several of the women in our group spoke directly of this difficulty. Some had no choice but to learn from men:

> *Most of my role models were men. That is not necessarily a bad thing. There are things to be learned from them.*

Simply taking up obvious male role models can, of course, lead to "more of the same" but it can also lead to distorted versions of male behaviour:

> *I think it is a tightrope, you know that the role models, between looking for you know, the model of being a woman without turning into Margaret Thatcher who was, you know a pseudo man, if you like.*

Others had to largely make their own way when it came to learning to take up authority:

> *I can remember when I was quite a lot younger, if somebody seriously challenged me and wasn't very nice about it, I used to find tears come to my eyes. And it was partly because I was actually upset and partly because I was angry and I had to really work on that not happening because that was the worst possible thing that could happen. You know, I used to say sorry, we need a bathroom break.*

Such learning can take a long time. One women in her mid-sixties commented:

> *I don't think I do that in a bombastic, what might be considered a male way, but sometimes I will. Sometimes I will even sit there and think about, well if I were a man what would I do with this challenge. But mostly I don't need to do that. It is sufficient. And of course that is accumulative. It is not a one off, as other people have said to you, you actually gradually get better at it with individual people and in a particular context.*

CONCLUSION

Some of our women said, or implied, that they are still unclear about what they are looking for in terms of authority practices that sit well with them or that they would like to aspire to in their own practice. Or they might know what they don't like, but be still looking for approaches that they can identify with:

> *I also really hate, I will use the word schmoozing. I am not a good cocktail party, dinner person. I, you know, I had a really good mentor when I, I was a Deputy Director at another centre and the Director, a woman very, very successful Professor. She was a great mentor but she was out every single night. She was at all the functions doing the meet and the greet.*

This aspect of our conversations with academic women highlights the extent to which the taking up of authority, even among very well educated, very experienced professional women, might still be a work in progress.

> *But, I think that sort of attitude, or how women often took that on, just remains part of your psyche. You have just to keep proving yourself or being better.*
>
> *I think it is fraught with the fact that you can be undermined in so many ways that would never happen to a guy. Now, it might happen to, I am sure in minority statuses and things like that they can be equally undermined whether you are male or female, but as a white Anglo-Saxon female, which has got to be the top of the pile for females, I suspect, it is always going to come down to personal stuff that is used to undermine you rather than capability or what you are actually doing or saying.*

It is equally interesting to speculate as to whether this generation of academic women collectively offers strong alternatives for younger women who might be actively looking for new and different role models.

Nita Cherry PhD
Professor of Leadership and Organisation Studies
Faculty of Business and Law
Swinburne University of Technology

NITA CHERRY

8. LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT IN REAL TIME

Previous chapters have considered the range of ways in which the women in educational leadership roles that we interviewed have developed and used their leadership authority. Over time, and in a range of circumstances, they have done this through exercising the formal mandates associated with their roles, by taking up authority on their own terms in self-defining ways, or by enacting some combination of the two. Their descriptions of just how they have gone about this alert us to the many different ways in which leaders can attempt to influence the behaviour of others and the events, environments and processes that shape their practice. This plays out in their efforts to exert influence either in face-to-face situations or at a distance, in real time or over time, with small numbers of people or many. We also glimpsed some of the challenges involved. This chapter further explores the dynamics of such engagement suggested by the accounts of these women in educational leadership positions in face-to-face situations.

NOTICING WHAT IS HAPPENING IN FACE-TO-FACE SITUATIONS

The range of situations that our women in educational leadership positions have engaged with as leaders over the course of their careers is impressive. They have influenced individual lives and professional practices, as well as helping to shape and sustain entire practice communities. Some of their influential interventions have created major organisational units and centres, substantial international and national research projects,

new ways of conceptualising and understanding physical and social phenomena, and new approaches to teaching. While many of their efforts involved strategic and indirect interventions that have played out over very long distances, and over long periods of time, at specific points along the way all their achievements and activities have also involved influence work in real time, face-to-face with other people.

Nearly twenty years ago, Hallowell (1999) highlighted what he referred to as the human moment at work: the face-to-face, here-and-now psychological encounter that can happen only when two or more people are present in the same physical space. Hallowell was particularly concerned with the loss of such human moments caused by technology which compresses and delays communication in its creation of virtual worlds. Since the time when Hallowell first wrote about this, many forms of email, text, Twitter, Facebook and voicemail have made the possibilities for virtual communication very diverse, further truncating and distorting the possibilities for what he called authentic human moments. At the same time, such technologies have also vastly extended and enriched the ways in which people can hear and see each other in real time, even if they are not physically together. It is debatable as to whether Hallowell would recognise these as human moments, but his point is well made that encounters in shared physical space allow – even demand – a level of intimacy and mutual engagement that is just not possible when people are in different places at the same moment.

Productive human moments do not need to last long to be incredibly powerful. People both remember and re-construct the quality of certain conversations and carry those memories into future situations and conversations. Sometimes, their recollections of particular conversations can last decades, and are able to be recounted in great detail. These recollections can themselves influence how confident or competent the person who holds them feels well after the event itself.

No matter how human moments are defined, when people are engaged in mutual influence processes that are face-to-face, they are highly unlikely to be fully aware of all the multiple dynamics involved. These dynamics include intellectual, emotional and physical dimensions of behaviour that are deeply entwined with one another. The dynamics are not only multi-layered but reciprocal, so that what one person says or does affects the other, sometimes in ways they are unaware of or completely underestimate.

This can make it extremely difficult for anyone to fully comprehend an encounter they are participating in themselves. Attending to the behaviours of even one other person in real time is challenging; and attending to one's own behaviour at the same time is harder still. But attending to both simultaneously, and to their reciprocity, requires a very high level of awareness and skill.

In its essence, being attentive means being aware of what is going on in the moment. This includes awareness of your own thoughts, feeling and actions, as well as awareness of where your own attention is. It is very different from trying to "out think" or outsmart the other person, or spending time working out what you are going to say next. Yet these are very common things that people do when they are feeling under pressure in face-to-face situations, often driven by the need to feel in control of – or at least equal to – whatever is happening. In effect, they are taking things off-line in real time: trying to make sense of things by themselves, doing their own work-arounds, and trying to be prepared for what is likely to happen next in the conversation. These tactics all have the

effect of taking attention and energy off-line, away from the immediate action and so avoiding or limiting the conversations people can have with others.

When things are taken off-line we start to imagine what the other person is thinking or feeling, we make assumptions that are not supported by hard data, and we can start to worry, get angry, feel hurt or disappointed. If we start to act on those imaginings, or make decisions or commitments without involving others, we can create self-fulfilling prophecies. Or we can start to feel isolated and uncertain, even though we are standing or sitting quite close to another person. By refocusing on the human moment, and paying deep attention to what is actually happening between us, as it happens in real time, we can at least create new possibilities for how we might focus and redirect our own energies in our engagement with others.

Several of the women we interviewed offered very clear examples of their capacity to pay attention to things happening in real time between themselves and others.

> *The greatest gift that I have acquired in later life is listening; the capacity to listen. Men don't have that. I will sit in a meeting and it will be in this building by the way and we will be three of us, just three persons perhaps sitting at a table. And I won't get a word in edge ways. And I can, I could participate in the same game and I could jump in and ignore everything that they are saying and I have been in meetings, again all men, here in this building where we were talking about something and they all spoke simultaneously for one hour. And I walked out of the room thinking well I didn't learn anything there.*

> *Nothing got done but they weren't listening to anybody. They were, I could watch them and they were just waiting for that second where there was one millisecond of silence and they would jump in and start their blah blah blah part of the conversation, discussion, whatever. And then of course, if they so much as drew breath for a millisecond then somebody else would jump in and you could see that. And I mean I could have had a conversation all by myself speaking and nobody would have heard me.*

> *He went more than bloody purple. He was absolutely furious with me. And ... I guess I was being a bit provocative but I think really it was a great threat ... because he said, "Ooh, no, I can't do anything about it". And I said "Well actually what you could do is ... I get really ugly and that is something I am not very good at. I am not good at hiding what I think ... and I broadcast which I don't think is necessarily a great thing.*

UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING DYNAMICS

Most, but not all, of the women leaders mentioned gender-based differences in practice that they associated with challenging and pressured face-to-face encounters:

> *I've certainly been in cases where I've raised an issue in a meeting, it's been completely ignored and about 10 minutes later, you know the men actually wake up to the fact. I have a very clear recollection of one meeting when we were given all this data from the central corporate area. I said, it's wrong, you know they're assuming that all units run twice a year; most of our post-grad units only run once a year, these calculations are wrong. Everybody ignored me, it would have been 15 minutes later, when finally ... the Deputy Dean says wow look at this, I've just realised that it's not right, and I thought, wow!*

> *I think a lot of the time women might actually steer the conversation in a meeting but that, you know, they will say something in a quiet way and somebody else, a man, will often reinforce it in a much more aggressive way. But I talk through stuff. So, my way of coming to working on a problem is to actually talk it through. And, I don't know the answer, and I am working it through and I am fertilising it to work it through and discussing it with people and getting opinions and weighing it up. Whereas, I have a large number of colleagues who would never open their mouths.*

> *Well the same thing at the beginning of every meeting. If there are people meeting so often, there is a quick exchange of information about what football team you care about and that is a little bonding thing that women tend to not get that advantage.*

> *I don't know how important it is but it probably doesn't hurt. Whereas, you know there is certainly no way I want to be talking about what a nice dress you are wearing before we start or whatever.*

Some women spoke of frustration in trying to challenge these dynamics in real time.

> *Nobody stops and thinks what was she doing that made you think that, what do you think her intention was or, there's nothing like that. It's oh well, you were wrong when you did X. And you think, hang on a minute, aren't you even going to say to me, what were you trying to accomplish.*

> *Maybe you didn't do it well. So there was no development, no sensible feedback, and I think pathetic understanding of human beings ...*

> *But that the point that they never grasp, because this particular person I tried to talk to them about it. I said look on one hand I know you think you're not doing any harm and I said that, but don't you understand actually that the context in which someone finds themselves fundamentally affects the way they can be.*
>
> *It's not just, I have this attribute of feistiness, it's in a particular context. Maybe you perceive me as feisty and maybe I am but in another context I can be very different. They didn't get that. So you know, I'm always like this, I'm always like that.*

As observed in Chapter Seven most of the women used indirect strategies to deal with these dynamics:

> *I think it was non-confrontational. But I was very aware, I have always been very aware of not challenging big egos which are often weak egos. (Laughing). And this particular person I think is quite vulnerable in terms of their ego.*
>
> *I was also really aware that trying to change the dynamics by being quietly persistent was going to be the best way to get, not confronting but choosing a number of opportunities where I could get some change.*

In effect, they took their reactions and concerns off-line and tried to design work-arounds that would eventually get them some of what they intended or wanted. But a few were prepared to be more direct and to use real-time conversations to challenge what was being said or done:

> *And ultimately, ultimately it came down to I was not able to give him what he wanted and that was evidence to support funding and evaluations. And it was, also he wanted to appoint a person without any academic qualifications into a key research role, which was going through the university. And I just said, no.*

On the other hand, a few of the women interviewed said that women sometimes create difficulties for men through their real-time behaviour:

> *... but then you can also have the reverse. I've actually seen the reverse too, where there has been discomfort where you've got a very feminised workforce and where the behaviours of the some of the female staff have been such that it has made the men in that area feel very uncomfortable.*
>
> *And they can be, where women can become quite possibly catty in the way that they talk about others, and even in the nature of the type of conversations they might have that assume that you know that this is a female. And in the same way blokes can start blokey conversations …*

Some had clearly spent time thinking about the patterns and underlying structures of these gender-related differences. For several of the women interviewed, these differences reflected deeply entrenched habits in expressing identity and accomplishments:

> *But if you interviewed 30 women and 30 men, the answers to those, my hypothesis would be that the men would give you a specific example of when they actually achieved something and more of the women might say, "Well, I don't know".*

A few thought that issues of gender and age could get mixed together and that it was not always easy to work out which was the key driver:

> *I think yes, there are some older males around here who don't like it if there is a woman in charge. And they can get quite aggressive and they can get quite stroppy at meetings but is that because I am female or is that because I am younger than them or is that because they didn't get the position. I don't know, you know, I don't know. There are some difficult characters anywhere that you work, and so it is difficult to know whether it is because of gender differences.*

Others had taken the trouble to seek answers in the psychological literature on preferences and temperament:

> *At the time we were using masses of things like MBTI for example, you know the Myers-Briggs thing, and I can remember us actually all deciding what type these blokes were. So there was a way of intellectualising it I suppose that actually helped deal with the behaviour I think. And I think that's the thing maybe. It's interesting you going back to the people who've read about it or thought about it or not. I mean to some extent if you read that stuff around language, it gives you a way of looking at it that depersonalises it. Maybe that's part of what helps.*

> *It doesn't solve it, it means you have to deal with it. I guess that's what I mean that sometimes you're putting in more effort because you're actually thinking, I've got to go into this meeting and I've got to make sure I talk in a way that is going to be listened to by these people.*

> *So it's like talking across cultures isn't it, so you are a bit more, but I think we did a lot of that anyway. We used to run leadership training courses for managers, most of whom were blokes, and take them away for a week.*

And others probed even more deeply, exploring some of the deepest connections between women and men:

> *I still think some men at a deep level sort of still regard women as mothers and you know they're not quite the same as them in terms of pursuing their career. I still feel as though all the things that men tend to do are more valued than the things that women do, whatever it is.*

For some, overt behaviours in women associated with the use of authority attracted some very fundamental negative reactions in men:

> *Because you know if you've got a woman, you've got your classic your Thatcher problem haven't you, of a woman who is a very, seen as hard, tasky, aggressive, whatever. Tough as nails, you know that sort of woman is seen as really tough whereas you still think well a man doing the same thing probably wouldn't be seen in anything like the same way.*

> *I don't think we've changed much from when Thatcher was having all of those issues to women now. And I guess the same with a man. If they're a bit too feminine in their behaviours they'd be seen possibly as wishy-washy.*

One described how disturbed she was by the ways in which the persona of individual women in positions of power attracted public as well as private hostility:

> *I think that since the Julia Gillard experience which was profoundly shocking, I was profoundly shocked by it, but these things are still, women in leadership who didn't conform in a number of ways. You know because she wasn't married, she didn't have children, had red hair, you know whatever it was that they could find about her.*

> *The hatred, absolutely, sort of like the witch hunts of Salem. It was absolutely disgusting. Underbelly of Australian life. So I think it is, I would have thought we were making slow but gradual progress but I am not as sure now. You know, because she stood up pretty tall and that was the reaction and for a lot of women, why would you put yourself through all of that.*

> *Even though she herself I thought dealt with it quite well. Saying that she doesn't want to put people off. I mean that is at the very high profile end. But I think that you have to be quite tough and I think it is quite interesting that, what we were talking about, that Tanya Plibersek in her role, well she is a deputy so it is sort of like everybody breathes a sigh of relief.*

> *And yes she is a clever woman but she is back in her normal place. And they don't have a go at Tanya because she has got kids, she has got married, she is friendly, she is pretty, got blond hair. You know so they don't have a go at her at all. In the same way. And I think it is really interesting.*

In the face of this sort of negativity, some respondents said that it was not surprising that many women were ambivalent about taking up authority and expressing it in real time – or less directly – in professional or public spaces. Indeed, there was one who described herself as adopting less assertive approaches, but believed that over time, if she worked hard, she would be in a position to be influential:

> *So sometimes you may take slightly longer than another person, to get to a certain level, by either being a woman or by your boss not noticing you for the reasons I have just mentioned. For just the way people interact, but I think the world is there, and I think one day people will get noticed.*

> *So people should not get too caught up in a competitive thing too early in their career. They should get to the point where they are able to have this solid outcome and say, here is what I've done. Here is my whatever, course structure, research projects and I think people will notice. I don't think the world is that bad at all.*

In contrast, a few thought that some women become confused and overly competitive in their behaviour, including their behaviour towards other women:

> *I think some women haven't quite figured out what it is they want from their career and how it should be and so on, so I think some women I've encountered have been so bloody ambitious, you stand aside and say OK off you go. Really quite viciously so.*

This sort of statement was offered by a small number. While they searched for deeper insight into the drivers of the overt behaviours that seem to differentiate women and men in encounters involving authority and influence in professional settings, few of the educational leaders spoke about differences in behaviour between women. None offered specific comments on differences they might have observed between females with clearly defined executive authority and those without. ONLY one alluded to it indirectly:

> *And so I managed in the six years I was there to not have to take a very senior executive role. The problem with it, of course, is that you start to become frustrated at you know, where you haven't got influence or haven't got a role influence. You have to do it all by personal influence. Which is what I did there.*

However, Chapter Seven of this book goes into some detail in describing the range of strategies that women in both groups said they use, over time, to cumulatively build and enact their authority. It was noted in that chapter that women who were not members of

the executive faced ongoing contesting and negotiation of their authority, with colleagues and with stakeholders inside and outside the university setting.

It was also very noticeable, from reading all their separate accounts, that there are significant differences in the way that the women with high levels of formal executive authority said they went about influencing situations, compared with those used by women whose authority base was more ambiguous. In both Chapter Seven and this chapter, we have already gained some insight into the ways in which academics whose authority is more contested go about being influential in real time. In the remainder of this chapter, we look at what those with formal authority had to say about their real time influence.

USING FORMAL AUTHORITY IN REAL TIME

When someone has significant formal authority that is recognised by all parties, this could be expected to amplify whatever specific influence strategies are being used by that person. From the accounts offered in this study, the women who had executive authority seemed to rely on at least three general real-time influence strategies: having a good story to tell, based on cumulative expert experience and hard data; being purposeful and confident; and controlling the real-time dynamics. The following account demonstrates all of these dynamics in action.

> *And occasionally, I mean mostly I do it quite naturally and I very rarely have to jump in with both feet and wave flags. But sometimes you know, I will say I am sorry, the evidence of what you are suggesting is wrong, you know and here is the evidence. So I probably, if it would sum up it would be that I subtly use, if you like, my academic reputation in terms of understanding the context.*

> *And long experience, you know. I mean I am in my 60s now, I have been doing this for a very long time. Generally, I grew up with (identifier deleted) technology. I was one of the first people in the world to use that technology. So it is very difficult for someone to come around and say, "Oh, but I know better". So, and I don't think I do that in a bombastic, what might be considered a male way, but sometimes I will.*

> *Sometimes I will even sit there and think about, well if I were a man what would I do with this challenge. But mostly I don't need to do that. It is sufficient. And of course that is accumulative. It is not a one-off, as other people have said to you, you actually gradually get better at it with individual people and in a particular context.*

> *So it becomes part of the way you do things. It is very rare, I think that is why it is difficult to think about it, because at this stage, I have been doing this a very long time now. At this time it kind of feels like natural behaviour to me but I probably did at some time have to think about it or think about tactics or strategy. It is easier, it gets*

easier and easier because when you have done that half a dozen times people come to you and say, well what is your view of this, so you get invited to contribute as opposed to having to assert your contribution.

I can remember when I was quite a lot younger, if somebody seriously challenged me and wasn't very nice about it, I used to find tears come to my eyes. And it was partly because I was actually upset and partly because I was angry and I had to really work on that not happening because that was the worst possible thing that could happen. You know, I used to say sorry, we need a bathroom break.

Generally if you are in a situation then that would weaken your position quite dramatically. So I think that you gradually always had, I always had to have a rejoinder if you like, or something where I stood up to it. Generally, I stay very cool and calm and collected and use an evidence base to assert my argument. So, if that is what you mean by behaviour I suppose that is what I do.

Another of the senior executives succinctly demonstrated the confidence that comes with a long track record of success:

It would be a long time since I've had an unsuccessful (intervention). Now unsuccessful doesn't – and it depends on what you define as unsuccessful – so there will be situations where I might have come with a particular perspective to a particular issue. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that that's what the outcome that is achieved actually looks like in the end. But you will have influenced what is the final determination of where you end up, so ...

Another spoke of having the persistence and confidence to directly challenge decisions made by others that she saw as risky:

And it had been something we'd been working on for months, and a whole lot of stuff had been working fine, but we'd got to this particular spot where we really were stuck, and you know in some ways you could say it was a minor issue but I don't think it was because it was going into a policy and it was going to have a significant impact if it was allowed to go through in the way that it originally was.

And I kept thinking, I can't let this go through because this is going to cause no end of problems if it goes through in its current form. So you could say it was both successful and unsuccessful.

It wasn't successful in me getting exactly what I wanted, but the ultimate outcome was successful enough, in that it got rid of what I saw as the major risk and it didn't get us to the point where I would

like us to be and in the future I would still hope we might get there, but it got us out of the major risk.

When asked about gender dynamics, one of the most senior executives said that "gender disappears" at the more senior levels. But added that at other levels:

I think sometimes there tends to be more clustering around what might be a female versus male type of environment. So women in general, ... there are two things that I generally observe with women leaders. One is an almost, it's working with their natural tendencies where they take their ability to help, encouragement, bring people along, identify strengths in people as well as then having fairly robust conversations around the things that are not doing as well, but you balance that with the things that are doing well.

That doesn't always happen sometimes, so I think there's a different language approach that often women will use. But that's not all women, there are men that will do that, but I'm talking about in general and then you actually have a different side when you know, men will actually apply a different style.

Women are likely to – I find women are more likely to be more honest and up front with you than perhaps some of your males and so that's a different style. The other style that you tend to see in women is when they try to emulate a more masculinised and aggressive style and ....

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the dynamics of real-time influencing, as they have been described conceptually and as they have been observed and described by the women in educational leadership positions. They were certainly aware of many aspects of real-time influence dynamics and mentioned them in the context of challenging encounters that mostly involved men. This led quite a few to speculate about the deep drivers of practices that appear to be gender-based and reflect entrenched habits of both women and men.

Our reading of the transcripts led us to the conclusion that many of these women in educational leadership positions are well aware of the real-time dynamics they associate with both male and female behaviour, but they prefer to take their concerns and assumptions about what is going on off-line during actual conversations, preferring instead to find ways of working around the difficulties that real-time encounters present them with. Only a very few spoke about actually confronting or naming the troublesome dynamics in real time.

One possible implication of this is that women must not only deal with the discrepancy between what they would like to happen and what is actually happening, but they must also work harder after the encounter to achieve their goals in other ways. The emotional labour involved in both of these things is explored in Chapter Twelve.

The other issue explored in this chapter is the difference in real-time behaviours that seem to emerge when reading the individual accounts of those women in executive roles compared to the accounts of those women whose authority was less clearly defined. These accounts strongly suggest that having significant formal authority that is recognised by others enabled these women in educational settings to enact a number of very effective strategies in real time, regardless of whether they were dealing with men or women.

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Nita Cherry PhD
Professor of Leadership and Organisation Studies
Faculty of Business and Law
Swinburne University of Technology

DEBORAH TOWNS

9. INSPIRING GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND TEACHING

In this chapter, the school principals in our study share their passion and commitment to influencing the education of girls through their leadership work. Most believed that despite girls performing very well in formal schooling, successfully completing year 12 and university, they usually did not accomplish the same rate of subsequent career advancement as boys. Most of the women in this study headed up single-sex girls' schools and they emphasised their commitment to supporting girls' life-long success.

However, the principals of co-educational schools shared these beliefs. All principals were worried about their girls' futures after they left secondary school, and were considering and practicing strategies to support girls to continue achieving their potential as adults. The chapter shows how the women principals saw their responsibilities as educational leaders, the issues they emphasised for girls in schooling and the wider community and finally their understanding of strategies to sustain girls' leadership potential after they leave formal schooling.

LEADING THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

The women principals generally saw their role as a school leader as being similar to a CEO but were clear that their role included being a leader of learning. They emphasised that they were role models to their students, seeing it as particularly important for girls to observe women in leadership roles. Some were at pains to explain how they had come to that view of their roles. For example, this principal had observed the behaviour of her female colleagues in schools, as well as that of her female students:

> *As a student and a young teacher and then right through my career really, the majority of other staff I have worked with have been women. So men have been in the minority and the leaders that I have worked with have also primarily been women. Which does mean, I guess, that I have witnessed a lot of what I would call classically female behaviour.*

> *Where there is a tendency for people to talk about, you know, human emotion and what she said and what she might be thinking and what she did and all of that kind of girl world stuff that seems to go from year 9 through to the adult world.*

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So I guess there has been that kind of gendered behaviour. And that would have been the case right through that period but I have also worked with strong female leaders who have, I don't think been particularly, I don't think their behaviour has been particularly influenced by gender.

Another emphasised why she particularly wanted to teach and lead girls:

... well over my career when I worked outside schools in influential networks in education, I have seen males in charge predominantly and, of course, you ask the question where are the women? ... I have always known that that is the case as an aspirational woman.

You know, coming through the university system where males dominated, then coming through into the school system where males dominated. You know, it is something I have known and understood and it has not deterred me at all. And a significant reason for me to choose to be an educator of girls and then to be a leader within the girls' schools network is to do something about that.

Others began by discussing how they saw their role and its relationship to their students:

Being in the school is a real privilege because you are not only working with adults in the school but quite critically we are all working with and for young people. And so when you consider influence, it really is substantial and at times you can be underestimating the level of influence that you are having ... not just what you say or what you support or what you require of them, the standards and the values that you function with, but it is just a subtle observing that I believe goes on in any given day with how young people see the adults that they are functioning with.

Even someone who is in the principal's role who doesn't have that sort of really close daily interaction all the time with them, they still see you and they still know how you think, what you expect. And that, very much is building young people's values: an incredible level of influence.

Another saw her role in these terms:

It is kind of a privilege and a challenge to, you know, to support young people as they grow, as they learn. So I think you need a lot of encouragement to do that and persevere with it. And be a good role model for them. And really, I see my role as providing the right environment for great learning

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and growth to occur. So that is resourcing, it is removing obstacles. It is providing a compelling vision. It is encouraging people to know that, you know, while at times the work may be really hard, it is still worthwhile. And that they are part of something bigger.

Because I think, you know, there is a real key to developing adults who want to contribute to the education of young people and it has been girls for me for the last 15 years. And to just, you know, as we say grow remarkable people. And I think the world needs that. So, in your little corner of the world, if you can make that sort of difference that is a higher goal that I find really exciting.

And I like to do it in an environment where, you know, there is a playfulness and there is fun and you can show to some people that, you know, adults can collaborate really well and laugh together and have fun together and be challenged and still achieve great things in a way that brings joy. Because I think (that way) young people can see that it is worth growing up.

The principals also explained why they thought that the design of educational experiences for girls is still a very significant issue. Several spoke about a number of dynamics that they had observed in the educational participation of girls. For example, some commented that girls usually worked harder than boys in school and were more compliant: "And I think it is that girls are cooperative and they comply and they work hard and they don't rock the boat."

The principal of a co-educational school observed:

Girls like to please. The other fascinating thing was when I came from (a co-educational school) to (a single-sex girls school) I actually did a lot of classroom observation and I was in a class and this teacher set up this activity and the girls were very compliant and it was quite a tedious activity.

And I was thinking to myself if you tried to do this at (a co-educational school), the boys would have been climbing off the walls. So girls because of their compliance sometimes I don't think we raise the bar high enough on the educational offering. Because we know they will be compliant.

The principals then spoke about the ways in which they had set about influencing educational practices to challenge some of these dynamics. One principal changed her school's organisation as a way of improving girls' (and boys') learning and future opportunities. She changed the school's senior classes to co-educational classes (rather than parallel classes) for boys and girls to learn together because of her prior experiences in single-sex girls' schools and co-educational schools.

I ran this seminar for the student leaders from 400 Year 12 students who were leaders across the independent sector in a big hall at ... and I got (a leading former political leader) to speak. And that was a bit controversial.

Some of the staff didn't think he should. I was fascinated, he had them eating out of his hand. And we got to the question time and the boys just called out the questions. Not one girl got a question out. And we had 40 prefects from leading single-sex girls' schools.

And afterwards I said to the girls (of the large single-sex girls' school where she taught) girls aren't backwards in coming forwards. I said, what happened, and they said, they didn't put their hands up. I said well next year you are going to be at uni and they, they still won't be putting their hands up.

It was absolutely amazing and really having that conversation (that) within 12 months you are going to be in the same room as these young men and you have got to get your voice heard. You could be waiting a long time for them to get their hands up.

Several others raised this:

> *What is needed with students is, I suppose, constructed conversation and strategies to get your voice heard. Girls (just) follow the rules. So this is the hidden curriculum. But I found over the years, there is sometimes the activity you set up for the children outside the classroom is the richest learning opportunity ... So I believe a lot in authentic learning. But what is the authentic activity you are going to give the children to give them the confidence to grow.*

> *Well, I think we need to start with confidence. I think women need to enter a room with powerful men and have the confidence to stand shoulder to shoulder with them. And when you enter a room and the statistics are that there are more men with more formal influence in a room,that can be daunting. And research does show that young women entering the workforce, when they see advertisements for jobs that you know would take them higher up a tree, don't go to it with the same confidence.*

> *And that translates right through one's career or can translate right through one's career. And so I think we need to start by looking at how we grow that confidence in women as early as possible and fortify them so that they start to change those odds and they start to change the numbers. And we need male and female educators in boy schools and co-ed schools where the boys are to be having those gendered conversations as well.*

> *In very authentic and powerful ways. And you know the sisterhood that needs to exist in the workplace around gender is that we need to encourage one another to be confident, to aspire, to follow that through.*

> *But you have to be able to communicate, you know, in a way that is going to advance your mission or advance your career because having the bits of paper isn't going to be enough. And that is what we try and instil in young people here.*

> *It is no matter how good your grades are, if you can't communicate with impact, you know, male or female, you know maybe you won't reach some of those goals that you are thriving for.*

> *So, you know, it is a really important for them to be aware of it and then decide to what degree they want to play, you know they need to know that it's a jungle out there.*

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Some described the contemporary leadership programs that were in place in their schools. Some of these were centred on activities within schools, while others were for older students who joined in programs with other schools. Practical leadership opportunities came from being a form captain, a house captain, music or sporting captain. Some students participated in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and the Alliance of Girls Schools Australasia organises regular leadership events for teachers and girls.

There are many opportunities for students to learn the theory and practice of leadership. As one principal stated, "We are endlessly talking about leadership. We have never had so many leadership courses and we give them to kids as well". However another observed, "you don't learn leadership skills from doing a leadership course. You learn leadership skills from dealing with an issue and taking the lead. You know, it is experience it is not, it is not all that theory stuff." Others described specific coaching conversations:

> *Last year there was a year 9 student being interviewed for a travelling exchange scholarship ... she talked about the other girls all being great, but if it was a boy he would say because I am great.*

> *I said to the girl you must sell yourself ... say I am this and I am that ... why should you be selected? She tried very hard ... women tend to be hesitant about themselves.*

> *So the girls themselves through learning Asian languages, through being exposed to different cultures, see themselves not only as citizens of xxx or Melbourne, or Australia, but global citizens. So that is really the task that I have set myself.*

The principals also considered it important to encourage girls to study the harder maths and science subjects to enable them to broaden their access to what are historically non-traditional careers for women, in what is termed the STEM area, which is the acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths:

> *So my push has always been to open the girls' eyes to what sort of opportunities they have if they study something like maths, science and physics. You know where you can take it in terms of engineering. Because civil engineering is something I considered myself.*

ISSUES FOR GIRLS IN THE YEARS BEYOND SCHOOL

Some principals noted that girls' success at school and university when compared to that of boys does not translate into similar success in workplaces. One observed that "It's still a man's world", and another that "I think that women still are disadvantaged in society". Another said that despite girls gaining high marks in year 12 and having leadership experience as prefects or in sport, and repeating such success in university, they are left behind by young men in the workplace. According to one principal:

> *Look I have just really been doing a lot of thinking about this. Girls now outstrip boys at school and university but they are still decapitated in the workplace. So over their lifetime they will earn a million dollars less than their male counterpart. You know all the statistics. So, I think what we have got to do is start here and try and look at what characteristics are making them successful at school and then not working in the workplace.*

Others said:

> *I think in the workplace without turning into sort of, Visigoths, they need to be more assertive and I think we need to be able to help them to do that.*

> *And again I think that is something we need to be working on and our girls need to be much, much more politically aware and politically savvy and understand the sorts of influences they can bring to bear on society through political influence.*

Some of the principals referred to the girls' possible futures as mothers and how the reality of this responsibility could impact upon their access to leadership opportunities. A number of them explained how they had only been able to take up a principal position because their children were older and at university. Others mentioned that they knew of schools that interviewed males for principal jobs and interviewed the wife too, as she was expected to put his career first and support him. A women head of a co-educational school was retiring after more than ten years in her position. She was a grandmother and was being replaced by a young man in his 30s. She commented:

> *And, one of the things that is interesting is the guy who is replacing me, lovely, talented young man, he is in his late 30s. Now, most women aren't ready to be stepping into these positions in their late 30s.*

> *Most women aren't ready to step into these positions until they are at least in their late 40s, because, most women, not*

> *all, but most women, do child rearing, and if they only do it part time or combine it or whatever, it is difficult to be a principal.*

Another discussed how girls need to know that future choices may need to be made about leadership and motherhood:

> *Well, how we have got there is an interesting thing. I came from the generation that really we were told we could have it all. And I think a lot of us have worked out that was a lie. (Laughing). Because I think it is, you know you come to say that for most of us, with very few exceptions, it is about choice. And some of that choice is dictated by gender.*

> *So I think it is hard for women to balance a really big leadership position and family and, you know, whatever else it is they want to have in their lives, and I think we have to be honest about that with young women. So that they can understand they can have a range of opportunities but they can't necessarily have all the opportunities that they want. They will have to make decisions and choices and I think that is something they may need help with.*

Several spoke about the opportunities for principals themselves to exercise leadership by participating in broader national conversations:

> *And what I see as an employer is that it is a very, very small number of women who have babies and feel that they can manage the balance between work and children. So that means that, things are not in a shape that are good enough for women.*

> *And I don't necessarily think taking time out from work to be with your children has to set you back. But I don't think the workplace necessarily sees it that way. So there is an agenda around talented women that is not nearly well developed and that is something that I would be very interested to be a part of, you know, a national conversation and how we move that forward.*

We could lose talented women from leadership … It is not to exclude others or to say that there are other women with no talent but when I am saying talent I am talking about that percentage of women who choose also to have children, who we know could be the peak leaders of organisations. Who could be peak members of certain boards of certain organisations. Not all women want to be that but for those who do and have the talent I think we should do something additional, extraordinary special to make sure that they get there.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN LEADERS IN SCHOOLS

Most principals described the importance of the influence of women as leaders of schools, whether same-sex or co-educational. One principal of a co-educational school commented:

> *In a co-educational environment there is a normalising of student behaviour (but) it is still very important for girls to have a woman principal and female leaders in their school ... Girls need them as role models. If we lack women, who is preparing for the next generation of leaders?*

> *When she took up her role, she was the first woman Principal in the history of the school. The younger women staff considered that her appointment was extremely important for the staff and for the girls.*

Others made similar points:

> *I don't think a male voice makes anything more legitimate. But I know that, you know, if you look at the number of males that are heads of girls' schools for example, it surprises me that school councils would even contemplate that. I think it is really important that girls see women as leaders, that they see that is a possibility for them.*

> *And I have been on the board of the Alliance (Alliance of Girls Schools Australasia). I have worked with them for a long time. So I am a proponent of the education of girls in girl's schools not surprisingly. But we as the board of the Alliance actually contemplated sending letters to school councils when there was a notice that a female principal was retiring or leaving, that they should be considering ... just that they should be looking for a female.*

> *And then people thought, oh no, maybe that was too strong so they backed down from that position. But I often wondered how a male principal stands up in front of a group of females and tells them they can do anything. Well, yes they can but they can't be principal of their own school if they see a male standing there.*

Another observed:

> *I think that is a really important question for society. Because unless we do address it, the issues of violence and so on, I just see them intimately related. I am not saying that heaven forbid, that any of these men who are leaders of schools are violent against women, but it endorses the view that males*

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are superior, that they are somehow more entitled and that women are there, somehow, to be second fiddle and to observe and to propitiate.

However, the opportunities for women to enact this role at the highest levels were seen as declining, with fewer women thought to be leading co-educational schools and more males being chosen to head up single-sex girls' schools.

It was noted that there is a lack of women on the executive of national educational bodies such as Australian Heads of Independent Schools Australia, as well as other senior leadership roles in the wider community. Some of them thought that the economic climate affected school boards and decisions about choosing male or female heads of schools. One principal suggested that the prevailing mind set is, "It's tough out there so you need a bloke".

Another offered this observation:

And, yet, you know, the funny thing is, I mean, not funny, but if you look at say, for example, the schools that get higher marks in VCE, and I know that that is probably you know, probably one of the most significant ways schools are judged by parents in the community. I think it is (named one of the very top single-sex girls' school in Victoria), and you know it has a woman principal.

Now, the thing is you don't ever see a front page advertisement showing the top school in Australia, or the top school in Victoria is headed by a woman, and yet, and yet, that should be a significant thing, because schools these days do advertise their VCE results, they always say that every year.

However the principals were clear that their schools could not change girls' lives by themselves. Even the principals of girls' schools which promote the singular success of girls in single-sex environments were emphatic that single-sex boys' schools and co-educational schools are influential in the future lives and careers of girls and women:

I think also boys' schools and schools where there are boys need to assist here too. We could be working until we were blue in the face and it is not going to make any difference until men join us in that search for some sort of equality and I also really strongly believe that unless there is political leadership it is not going to happen. Because in the end it is all about laws and political stuff, agendas.

One principal was concerned that equality for women had "gone backwards". She emphasised the importance of education to bring about equality in the workplace:

> *It's just horrifying that we have gone backwards since the 70s. We made all this progress and then we have gone backwards. But it is not about women's rights, it is about human rights. It is about us walking together but it is also the work we do here. It is no good addressing workplace issues. You know, it has to start in the kindergarten.*

And yet another observed:

> *It is just not logical. Women aren't suddenly not as interested or not as capable or whatever. There has to be some active, pro-active work done to change what people recognise as an issue and we know that some of this stuff is hard wired in and again there is some interesting, you know, biological stuff, that we know that says that we are predisposed to look to taller people and to endower them with qualities of leadership whether they have them or not.*

> *We just give them credit for it until we are disabused of that idea. Similarly, with good looking people, and so I think these are sort of animal, biological things that are hard wired in, into us, and as people we have to try to correct against those things and to look for qualities of mind and qualities of character.*

> *Girls need to learn about how to lean in at the (business) table and women need to put their hands up ... and not opt out. It's 2014 and look what we have all achieved but it's a hard struggle and it's for men too. We need to change the culture, open the culture up. We need to work with men and boys.*

Another believed that girls in single-sex girls' schools need male staff too. She said:

> *I don't know whether female principals choose a certain kind of man. But the men in this school get along very well with women and they are sensitive men and they are not, they are not big jock sort of blokes and they wouldn't work here if they were.*

> *So I am wondering ... where you see a school that has a lot of jocks and you know, g'day mate, and that sort of stuff, whether you choose people you feel more comfortable with.*

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I think there might be something of that in there. I am very careful here because it is important that a school like this has men. And you know, boy schools tend to have fewer women than men and visa-versa. And certainly, if I can't choose between a male and a female, I will choose the male. Because it is good for girls to have good male role models as well.

A principal of a girls' school called upon the wider school community to support change at the systemic level:

Look obviously in my role in a girls' school I do think about gender and power. I worry about the lag in time in Australia between women being in an equal position but I take the view that it is not about just women driving this agenda.

It has got to be about men and women driving the agenda. And that is a conversation that I deliberately have whenever I can in the places and spaces that I inhabit where I know that I have the privilege of, through my role, of having an influence.

And I am an optimist. I do believe that we edge closer and closer and I think that the successive generations of girls that I have the privilege to influence their education and therefore influence their outlook, they will be the sisters, the mothers, the grandmothers of not only girls but boys. Who will push deliberately in that direction.

But ultimately we need policy as well. And I think that the next phase for female leaders in schools is to tackle that. Is to be more involved at influencing policy development. Now how that will happen and what shape that will take I don't know.

CONCLUSION

The principals we interviewed shared a passion for the education of girls and young women, framing it not only as an area of professional interest but as a social obligation. Many of them lead schools that belong to the Alliance of Girls Schools Australasia established in Melbourne, 25 years ago to promote single-sex girls' schooling.

Today it has over 150 school members from six countries. Some of them cited a key message set out in its website: "We support the distinctive work of girls' schools in their provision of unparalleled opportunities for girls. We contribute to the development and promotion of education in Australasia and the empowerment of young women to reach their potential and become influential contributors to our complex and changing world."

While very ready to describe and share their own experiences and approaches to teaching and leading girls, they were concerned about what they saw as a slowing of women's advancement into leadership roles, despite the dedicated activities of girls' schools and many other equity-based activities. While recognising the impact of workplaces and communities in perpetuating gender inequality, they were very clear about the critical impact that educators in schools at every level can have if they commit to challenging gender practices that ultimately disempower women. This is work not just for girls' schools and the women educators and leaders in those schools.

The principals believe that women and men need to work together to bring about change. To quote one of them, "This is work that needs to begin in kindergarten." Another commented that both formal and casual sexism is hardly ever challenged in our community despite decades of ant-discrimination legislation: "I think there is a lot of bias we don't even realise is there because it has become so entrenched that we don't see it. You know, and it has become, you know, that is just how it is. So much part of how we live that you don't even think to question it."

Many of the schools involved in this project were over a century old and were established to provide the best education, particularly for girls. However, all of them have educated girls for many decades. Even though girls' schools were traditionally places where girls learned about being ladylike and parents

liked their daughters to be educated separately and protected from boys, they also produced the earliest women lawyers and women doctors. This was considered quite radical at the time.

Today, the challenges remain. As expressed by the principals, enabling their students to fulfil their potential as leaders after they have left formal schooling is a major driver of their own professional efforts, as well as being a critical collective agenda for educators and the wider community.

Deborah Towns PhD
Research Fellow, Centre for Workplace Leadership
Faculty of Business & Economics
University of Melbourne

DEBORAH TOWNS

10. GENDER IN LEADERSHIP AND WORKPLACES

This chapter explores the perceptions of the women principals interviewed, in relation to gendered leadership behaviour and the school as a workplace more generally. Women principals continue a unique leadership tradition in Australian workplaces. Significantly, in comparison to other workplaces, women have held influential leadership roles as principals or headmistresses of schools for over a century. The women in this study are principals of independent schools. In the past, most women principals in independent schools headed up single sex girls' schools while very few were heads of co-educational schools. This pattern of educational leadership continues for women.

What also continues is the search for models of leadership behaviour through which women can enact their authority and influence practices without having to regularly debate and justify what is appropriate for women leaders. Arguably, the range of ways in which women can present themselves as leaders is broader and more varied than it was, and becoming more so.

Another issue that emerged through the interviews was that most of the participants in our study had no long term or early ambitions to be principals. A number recounted their experience of stepping up to leadership roles primarily because other people told them they should, or actively encouraged them to do so. One who actually did have long term ambitions, observed:

> You have just got to take the risk really and not be afraid. I think women feel that they have to tick every single box to assume a leadership role. Men don't. They just think, oh yeah! I can do that, even if they have no real track record or any reason to believe it. I think women shoot themselves in the foot in that regard.

Despite the challenges they faced, the women we spoke with represent a group of highly successful leaders and executives. Their commentary is very valuable in helping to understand how women can thrive despite the challenges of their working environments.

One thing that was very clear from their accounts is that context has certainly informed their teaching and leadership goals, making them passionate about educating girls and preparing them for the adult working world where inequality in workplaces continues to impact on women's leadership opportunities across the full spectrum of careers.

GENDER AND CAREER

When they spoke about gender and their career, some principals noted the difference in the career ambitions of men and women in schools and in leadership roles, and also revealed how those differences become normalised and taken for granted:

> *We don't see bias. We just accept it as is and don't question it! I think that sort of plays a factor. It's so entrenched. It is just how it is.*

> *Women want to be teachers; men want to be principals. On the way, some women will become principals but some men will choose education with a view to becoming head of school, or a deputy so you have a different mindset about the way you make decisions right from the start.*

> *Most men have got their eyes on the prize more than most women.*

> *Institutions have a lot to do with the way that gender roles play out and if you take a school like an elite boys' independent school, it was from the 1850s a male institution, a very male institution.*

In describing it as "just the way it is", the first voice is setting the scene, not with a view to agreeing that that is how it should be, but to signal that these differences are so entrenched and so much a part of day-to-day practice that changing them represents an enormous shift in how women and men understand themselves, not just one another. And for women, that self-understanding is not implicit or simply enacted; rather it can be a constant work in progress, as the anxiety of making choices about how to look and what to do:

> *I think it is harder for women, because you have that constant societal influence of how they should look or behave. You have so much choice. It makes life so much more difficult. It creates anxiety. Have I chosen the right thing? How much time will it take?*

> *Men can just put on a jacket and tie. I mean the actual job description to be a principal of a school would not be for a biologically thriving person but you are such a public figure. You would have to be at least reasonably photogenic. For women it may be sexualised.*

The question of how a woman presents herself physically takes far more time, thought, energy and money across much of her life – and not just her work life – than if does for men, in most cultures. Knowing what to wear and how to look

can be as much an issue for senior women leaders as it is for less experienced ones. The creation and refreshment of the corporate wardrobe sooner or later becomes an issue for most professional women who do not wear the apparel of the health sector or the uniforms of the military. The continuing focus in the media on how female politicians dress is a powerful signal of just how disproportionately important a woman's appearance has come to be in informing public opinion about her leadership capability.

A psychodynamic perspective on gender dynamics would suggest that the focus on how women look is a very convenient way of avoiding engagement with a much more complex issue: the issue of how both men and women feel about women taking up and using authority. While this is the conversation we need to have, it is a very tricky one, and not one that is common. Arguably, clothing is a much more tangible and concrete thing to focus on, to plan and control than the more ambiguous issue of how I shall be, what my use of authority will look and sound like, and how I will exercise authority when it is contested under pressure.

Several principals highlighted other ongoing dilemmas facing individual women in deciding how they will behave:

> *I think there is a different communication style. Now whether that is because of this context, or you know nature versus nurture. It kind of is what it is. And you try and understand people so you can get them to give ... you their best work ... the males are, you know, a lot more direct and perhaps not as aware of the impact of, you know, their communications.*

> *But I can equally think of some females that are in that space ... So I think it has a little bit to do with your role ... Do you adjust your behaviour then ... do you change your way of influencing people because of different gender or do you see it as an individual thing, you change according to an individual?*

Most of the women in our group of principals also described specific occasions when gendered behaviour created difficulties for them that they certainly could not ignore, because they had to make sense of them and control them in real time. One discussed an experience when she was confronted by staff early in her career, and male staff "tested her". She had gained the position of inaugural director of an outdoor experience centre, at a relatively young age. The position was seen as a man's role. She said that the males thought they were the "top dogs", playing games and behaving unprofessionally:

> *I pushed back. Their behaviour was sometimes not nice ... In the long run I think back on the male principal as he recognised my potential and it taught me lots of things for today. And one is to look carefully at my staff's skills and aptitude and not judge on age, for example, when promoting people.*

Two of them discussed how certain words were used to describe their leadership in ways that were clearly diminishing and gendered. They saw themselves as showing qualities of "steeliness" in difficult circumstances. But they were described as showing "nice", "lovely", "kind", and "caring" behaviour that did not reflect how they believed they actually performed their successful leadership work. One said that while she saw herself as "respectful", earlier in her career, her male principal had told her that, "You will never be a principal as people are not scared of you." The other one believed her strong leadership in a crisis was described in a way which would not be used if a man had shown strength. She continued:

> It's about how women are viewed. And I wonder when the school's history is written about this difficult period ... how will I be described? So are we described by our achievements or our personality? How do you acknowledge really strong leadership of women but not in a masculine way?

> Where are the adjectives to describe women who maintain a sense of, you know, care and compassion and those sorts of things but underneath also can move a whole community or keep them focused in a direction under times of difficulty ... I just don't think we have the right descriptors in our language. Because, are we described by what we achieve or are we described by the personality that we are?

As a result of these experiences, the principals were also very conscious of how the implicit and unquestioned self- confidence of men put them at an advantage when it came to intentions to take up leadership roles. For many women, the work of building confidence would be the major developmental work. This was developmental work that most principals said they were keen to support:

> There is no doubt for the women you need the inspirational story and the learning ... for men it's different ... men see the status in the position. There is a greater presumption ... seeking authority and recognition in the position.

> Male staff put up their hands more readily than some of the females ... there are a lot of women that you have to help them to see their strength. We do question ourselves a little bit more.

> I get the impression you know, for whatever reason, men are you know more risk takers than women ... and that pervades different aspects of their lives. You know they are more likely to die young but you know, they will take a risk on, you know, serving on a board or taking, you know, a position of leadership and in some ways I think women sort of think it through a little bit more and I don't know whether it is because they are smarter.

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(We're) not prepared to do that role and so that is probably why there is some disparity ... the number of men and women in leadership ...You know, whether they are prepared for the level of scrutiny that is required ... when you get into leadership ... maybe for them it's, "I want a different sort of lifestyle outcome". So, I don't know to what degree that is the case and how assertive they are prepared to be for those sorts of things.

Others said they not only had to support women to take up leadership but be mindful of rewarding them for working well. The gender pay gap was discussed generally by a number of the women who knew that in the wider community women earned less than men. It was particularly concerning for them that women principals in independent schools earned less than male principals of comparably sized schools:

The disparity in wages. I just don't get it. So you have the top girls' school principal earning less though her students achieve more.

GENDER IN SCHOOLS AS WORKPLACES

More generally, the principals noted gendered differences and gendered behaviour operating in their workplaces in a range of ways. When commenting about principal meetings and conferences, one of the principals told her husband "… oh well, you know the boys do it differently or this happened and he goes: well just suck it up princess".

The AHISA blokes might do a round of golf before the conference while having a discussion, you know. I don't think there is an equivalent of that with what women do.

It is often body language, but it is often verbal as well ... if I think about the national principals' associations ... I do think that men use anger ...

(Although) I don't want to over-generalise it: I worked with a group of heads from a range of independent, heads of schools, and in one of those, one of the women was extremely ... testy and shirty at a particular meeting, and you know people step back.

Another considered the "boys club atmosphere is not intentional but at the Association of Heads of Independent Schools where the majority of heads were male, even on our School Council which is predominantly male, it is a bit boyo in style ... like parliament".

One principal summed up many of her meetings as "men in dark suits and blokey":

> *You know I can go to one of my meetings where there might be 2 women and 24 male principals ... I have been the secretary to the group and now another women has been given the secretary, the girl's job ... I would say I am probably fortunate being a larger woman. By the time you put a pair of high heels on, you know, you can match it with the best of them.*

While this woman was able to be moderately humorous in her description of the issue, another woman shared how very demeaned she felt when she was deliberately physically intimidated by a group of men at a meeting. Others spoke again of the sheer scale of the problem:

> *Blokeyness. It is everywhere, not just education!*

> *Certainly when the broader group of principals in independent schools get together, you will see that there is a network of men and there is a network of women. And it's very clear. There is a perception in the hierarchies of education that men fill more roles, more influential roles than women do.*

Another participant described what she called "invisible women leaders", who worked in schools, boys' schools, co-educational schools and girls' schools but whose leadership was never recognised, because their job titles did not have leadership labels.

However, several principals were critical of the ways in which women themselves can collude with these observable differences in behaviour, thus entrenching and normalising, certain practices on the basis of gender even though they are not particularly productive ways to behave:

> *Women ... they would much rather go and have a whisper in someone's ear, rather than be upfront in meetings ... one of the things I was keen to stamp out when I came here ... I didn't think it was particularly helpful or honest. I think you should be really direct with people. With men there can have been a previous conversation too, but at the meeting they say, right oh, this is the way we are going to approach this.*

> *I have been surprised ... by the number of women (principals) who still defer to men ... Even if they have legitimate power or authority through their role. If there is a man in the room, the behaviour changes ... Even here, there are women who are in positions of leadership and yet they might pay more attention to a male voice ... I don't defer to men.*

> *Women are a little bit more reticent to put themselves forward for opportunities or to consider that they are capable of, you*

know, various projects and sometimes it is good, you know, that they have an advocate or someone in their corner who can give them a little push and increase their confidence.

In order to achieve something and exercise or build power, women often try to build some friendship element into it. Whereas in an environment where the friendship is less of an issue ... more about business and getting the job done than being friends ... men will be influential or practise being influential and they don't care whether or not they have built up this friendship first. They might go out and play golf later or something but whatever, they don't fuss about liking each other or commenting on each other's clothes or something.

Some principals were clear that the differences of women and men in some areas of leadership practice need to be appreciated and leveraged, rather than changed. These women were clear that diversity of leadership practice is to be encouraged, and that a one size fits all understanding of leadership both diminishes and de-values what women and men have to offer, but also fails to recognise the increasing complexity of the work of leadership in schools and the need for nuanced repertoires of leadership style and action:

Women can bring improvement to the work environment ... are able to be influential in their careers but I believe if I am not being too sexist in my comments, I believe that women ... have some distinctly strong personal characteristics that can enable really wholesome relationship building in a work environment ... compassion, capacity for empathy, but still retaining authority in the role and sufficient distance so that people maintain that confidence that you are in charge.

And it is with that personal understanding to still be able to make the hard decisions but to have people understanding that you have thought them through as a human being and there is that level of understanding in it. Not just the use of your power.

I do think women lead in different ways ... it is really important that I get out in the yard with the kids ... know their names ... spend time with them. Not be scared of me.

Why should women change? You know why is it that we have to go and learn how to play golf? Why don't they learn how to come and have a cup of tea and shop for shoes? ... But also, if you are going to a conference and you are a woman and you have got a family, well you would rather spend that day with your family because you are going to be away for four days, rather than play golf one day.

> *We have all moved on but perhaps women make the mistake … if you are going to be a leader you have got to assume male characteristics. And I don't, nothing I have ever done has shown me that that is right.*

> *I think there is a different energy between … how a male and female would interact to how a male and a male would interact, and how a female and a female would interact. Look I don't know if it is millions and millions of years of hard wiring …. being aware of that in combination with people's unique temperaments and their sort of personal context.*

> *I think, you know, it is a nice layer to be aware of rather than seeing everyone as, you know, a one size fits all, you are a human being category … It is just kind of one factor.*

> *Just to be sensitive to differences … get the best out of that, use that. I think those things are sometimes innate and we put too much emphasis on it, we can work with the differences.*

One principal also described changes she had observed in men's behaviour over the period of her teaching career:

> *I think that I would have seen that in the past that there were more obvious differences and, and certainly in my earlier years of teaching, I would have said that men are good teachers, it's usually because they see it as an aspect of their own performance and their career advancement, their ability as teachers. Whereas the women were motivated more by the interactions or the relationships with the students. But, I don't think that that is necessarily the case anymore. Because, I see a lot more men who are very comfortable with and very overt about their own softness.*

A recurring theme in many interviews was the need for women to actively support each other in their development of the skills, confidence and appetite to lead.

> *Women need to support each other more.*

> *Working in girls' schools, one's voice is not taken as seriously as if one works in boys and co-educational schools. Women in leadership face enormous battles that no men never have to. So women have an enormous influence on sustaining other people at the top of the tree …*

WHEN WOMEN THRIVE

This chapter has focused so far on the challenges that issues of gender present to women, both in leadership roles and more generally. However, it is also important to represent the circumstances and ways in which these very senior and experienced women are able to take up their authority without being constrained by gender practices. An earlier chapter described the full range of very significant contributions these women make and the ways they go about influencing others.

One participant summarised it in this way:

> *Whether principals or not, women teachers have an influential role as they carry the schools from the classrooms where they dominate in all schools.*

Another explained that she was the lead learner as well as a business leader. In particular, she saw herself as a role model:

> *I influence students whenever I am involved with them; and I role model for heads of school and for other senior leaders in the school on how to interact with students, how to interact with parents.*

As already observed, other chapters have described the ways in which women principals go about influencing in their school environments. These are rich descriptions that do not need to be repeated here, but between them they offer an impressive catalogue of what influential women look and sound like at the top of their game. However, to get a complete picture of school principals thriving in their leadership work, it is useful to include their vivid descriptions of their effective use of formal and informal authority in their dealings with School Boards.

This is very different from leading staff and students, and because the stakeholders largely come from professional worlds that are different from school environments, they represent forums and environments in which principals are not constrained by the usual expectations of how they will behave. This was acknowledged by the principals themselves. One observed that she could be more direct in her influencing. Others highlighted other possibilities for influencing that took them into a different realm of effort and impact:

> *You are sort of the conduit between the Board and the school. But they are very aware of the fact that I do a lot in my role as Principal. And I am able to report at a more detailed level about things that are going on in the school and perhaps explain the rationale behind it more readily.*

> *… how I manage the school helps the Board and informs them with what they are doing. So the discussions we have are quite critical with where they see the policies of the school going. So*

it is a guiding role upwards and informing role upwards which is quite critical and then there are the sub-committees of the Board and I sit on all of those sub-committees so we have finance, property, marketing, strategic planning and governance committees.

A small group including the Chair, and myself. And that is really critical because that group, will guide with my input what we do for example with governance discussions which are quite critical for the Board.

Another area of substantial influence is the wider educational community. A principal who had sought leadership from the very start of her career saw the role of being principal as supporting her to influence others beyond her immediate school community. She had influenced her Board to enable her to spend time away from the school so she could influence the development of a national leadership project. Her description of how she sees her leadership contribution in this sphere is quite compelling:

Well I think the first thing is that I am making my time to be available to be involved in networks and committees outside of my job as Principal in the operational running of a school. And I do that because I am committed to having an influence beyond my own community. And I am, I work with my school Board to ensure that they understand what it is I want to get involved with, what it is I want to influence, so they are supportive of that.

Authenticity is not just about the opinions you have but the work that you are prepared to shoulder. So I am prepared to do that on top of again, the significant and complex role of being a principal.

And then it is a matter of being involved in designing opportunities. Taking the lead in designing opportunities for others to be in that sphere of influence that I wish to be a part of and to have an impact on.

While another who had gained over 20 years as an experienced and highly regarded principal worked interstate influencing others in relation to a major state curriculum project. She explained that although her first efforts were not successful, she learned valuable strategic lessons and now knows how to operate in such a space:

I don't take that as defeat ever ... I learned from that experience what they were thinking and I learned why they were thinking that. And when the agenda comes up again, which it will, I will be prepared in a different way to tackle it.

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CONCLUSION

It is very easy to see the work of women principals simply through the lens of history, and to understand them as single women who devote their whole lives to girls' education. One principal identified that these early women principals saw their roles as "their mission". It was largely impossible for married women to gain leadership roles then. And one of our participants actually said:

> *I need a wife to pick up after me. The school is my life.*

The weight of history can be carried emotionally and unconsciously for long periods of time. Similarly, gender practices of the kind described in this chapter can be so embedded that it requires a very high level of self-awareness to contest and challenge them. The principals we spoke with demonstrated that it is possible to do this, Between them, they present a very impressive picture of women thriving in the maturity of their leadership work. However, they were realistic about the continuing need to actively support other women on their leadership journey.

Since the 1970s, with radical adjustments of Australian government funding to independent schools, their numbers have increased from 400 to over 1,000. Of these 88 percent are co-educational, five per cent and seven per cent being for boys and girls respectively (Towns, 2014). Women continue to be very successful in leading independent schooling, with many girls' schools recently gaining superior year 12 results to boys' schools and co-educational schools.

However, arguably women have not benefitted as much as men from the growth in independent schooling in recent years. Women are not being chosen for leadership positions in comparable numbers to men or according to their proportional numbers in teaching. Even very recently, we have been reminded that schools and leading educational organisations need to face up to "the merit trap" in order to benefit from gender diversity[i] (Broderick, 2016).

This is a reminder that change requires effort at many levels. It is not enough to rely on the efforts of individual leaders to support other women. Systemic change requires effort in the macro spaces where policy and practices are debated and designed. For example, perhaps it is time to be more realistic about the nature of leadership roles in schools and to take more seriously the possibilities

of distributed leadership which have been touted for some time as being most appropriate for educational settings.

The adoption of the managerial model that prescribes corporate executive teams and corporate governance arrangements for schools now represents world's best practice in developed and developing countries. It might be a model that in the end forces a serious reconsideration of what genuine team work needs to look like at executive level for both men and women.

At the very least, it is timely to acknowledge, catalogue and share the insights and experience of women who have made it their business to accept and engage with the challenges of being an effective leader at the very top of organisations that make a tremendously important contribution to modern society.

NOTE

[i] In the eye of the beholder: Avoiding the merit trap, http://cew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/MCC-CEW-Merit-Paper-FINAL-for-web.pdf accessed 21 September, 2016.

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Deborah Towns PhD
Research Fellow, Centre for Workplace Leadership
Faculty of Business & Economics
University of Melbourne

SECTION 3

COSTS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES
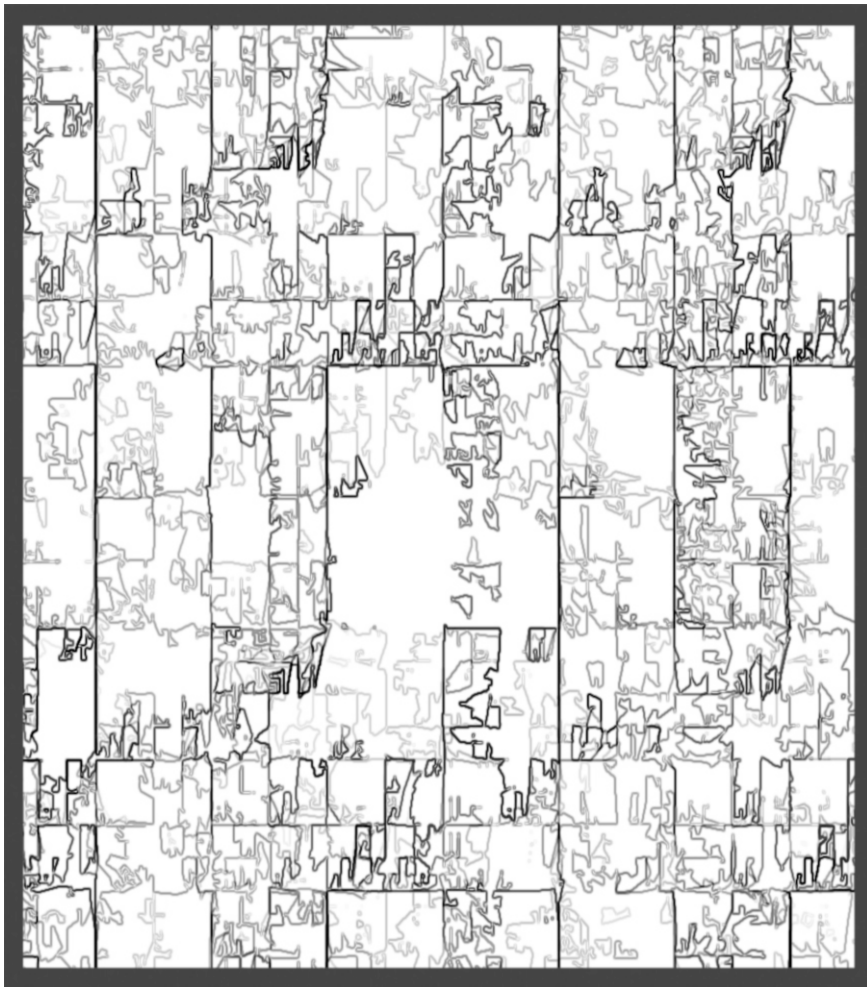
JOY HIGGS

11. SURVIVAL AND RESILIENCE

This chapter highlights the challenges educational leaders face and the way they cope with these challenges. To survive and succeed as leaders requires personal strategies and resilience. The need for such coping mechanisms and personal dispositions is grounded in the nature and challenges of leadership.

For example, virtually all of the research and literature on faculty across the career stages identifies numerous challenges to professional success and personal well-being (Sorcinelli, 2008). "In their struggle to balance it all, the place that most academic women … start is at the individual level, with a range of inspired, inventive and resourceful coping strategies. However, personal strategies are not enough" they need support from family, friends, networks and institutions (ibid, p. xv). The authors in this book would support this contention also.

The picture of women and leadership is one of considerable complexity in which women face a number of dilemmas (Middlehurst, 1997):

First, a central message is that the concept of leadership is strongly embedded in gender stereotypes. The language of leadership has masculine connotations, images of leaders are often male heroes (Great Men) and

> popular contexts for leadership encompass traditionally masculine scenarios (Church, King, State and Army). Common perceptions of appropriate leadership behaviours also carry stereotypically masculine overtones of command and control, of autocracy and dominance, of personal power or charisma, decisiveness, initiative and courage. Second, the result of this embedding is that perceptions of leader appropriateness and leader effectiveness are difficult to disentangle from the stereotypes. … Because management and leadership have for long been predominantly male enclaves, the picture of the ideal manager is grounded in masculine attributes. … the general cycle of disadvantage (and challenges in performance) for women in relation to leadership opportunities remains unaltered (pp. 12-13).

Educational settings are contested spaces fraught with challenges and bombarded with constant and often conflicting changes. So how do educational leaders survive in this space; how do they remain resilient? And, even more how do they survive the challenges and consequences of leadership and sustain their leadership as the world shifts beneath their feet (for instance through policy changes and funding shakeups)? Part of this answer is learning to balance endeavours (risk taking, acting on visionary leadership initiatives, pursuing brave actions) with responsibilities (assigned roles, duties and consequences) in a way that is sound, defensible, responsible and sustainable. Anne Dickson (2000, p.1) speaks of the "extraordinary paradox" that is evident in women in management positions.

> On one hand is the high level of academic or professional qualification and experience of these women, their intelligence, their talents, their commitment and their dedication; while on the other is a vivid picture of internal doubts, misgivings and anxieties stemming from an abiding, and sometimes disabling, lack of confidence. … (The book deals with) how to develop a genuine belief in your own ability to communicate, to be effective, to manage your authority and weather the storms of working life with more confidence.

In her book "Women at Work: Strategies for Survival and Success", Anne considers a range of strategies such a being assertive, speaking up, taking yourself seriously, dealing with feelings at work, coping when the answer is "no", setting limits at work, being angry not aggressive, managing criticism, handling authority, giving criticism effectively, dealing with gender and culture of work and understanding "the value of crazy". A number of women participants in our research have developed a range of ways of coping with work challenges, demonstrating resistance to work tribulations and learning good survival skills.

In this chapter the research participants' voices and experiences "sing out" their resilience and survival in academic leadership in a rich array of quotes from their interviews. To highlight the raw, unvarnished emotions and experiences of these leading women their actual words are portrayed as the dominant voice below with my reflections as the author providing a metanarrative.

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FINDING COURAGE

Taking on a leadership role and performing its challenging tasks requires courage, particularly for women. For, while courage may be an internal thing, it is manifest in action, decisions and, often, assertive behaviours that look admirable and leader-like in men, but can be criticised as being aggressive in women. How many times do people leave a problematic status quo situation in place rather than acting, through courage, to redress it?

> *There was this gifted learning program that the girls really thought of as a bit of a day off. And I started over time questioning the stringency of the programs and the challenge of the programs. It was not simple to challenge the status quo. I felt that elective choice too early was detrimental to children's overall learning and that we should really keep the program broad. We introduced a new program with interdisciplinary inquiry-based learning but it was a lot, a lot of change at once. I have a Head of Campus that is maximum ten years, always five years, and someone who had gone into the role had locked into the earlier configuration. And there were others who had locked into the program regardless of how good it was, not unlocking it to embrace changing directions. And so that has been a bit of a challenge to change it, and it has taken to the end of this second year, to actually have the person in the leadership role really understanding the intent and drawing on the resources of other key staff. So that certainly has been challenging especially when staff can't see the need to change – they can't see the writing on the wall. Feedback is pretty good and people can look at something really thoroughly and embrace change knowing it is the best way to go.*

PERSEVERING

In a world where *easy* is rare, perseverance plays a key role in achieving our goals as leaders, and pursuing challenging tasks, whether self or system imposed. We may start small or slow, mentored or self-motivated. Through perseverance we proceed step by step. We cope and survive, don't give up and, hopefully, flourish.

> *You know I just keep going at it I suppose. There are times when there's a perseverance thing. And of course the way that academics have to earn their brownie points meant that I couldn't get people to work on anything that smacked of being applied. And this is applied research. And I knew that we wouldn't have time to keep up with the literature and do the research that was needed to give us the input that we needed in*

order to design the best user interfaces. But somehow we needed to hang in there and make it work.

How do I sustain leadership roles? Well one (way) is the pragmatic, one is the interest. I enjoy the interest and one is that I think that it get's a little bit self-sustaining. Not addictive, that's the wrong word but it gets something where you know you just develop more of an interest in understanding, you know it's nice to see how everything's working. I guess I also quite like organising and managing staff. I don't mind taking that role on.

It is easier, it gets easier and easier because when you have done that half a dozen times people come to you and say, well what is your view of this, so you get invited to contribute as opposed to having to assert your contribution.

BEING RESILIENT

Strength is not the same as resilience. The first is overt power and can be used or abused. The second is endurance and an inner strength of character that holds you to your purpose when your power is low and you feel like giving up. When facing barriers and knockbacks resilience can be your last resort. Resilience is an essential strength and survival strategy in the face of the relentlessness of change that is constant, or chaotic or often so immobilising that it feels like drowning. There are times when resilience is about strength and agency, and other times when it is about having a place to just "hang in there".

When I was a graduate student, the Prof in our department, he was simply arrogant. And he basically said – well you know, women who choose an academic career lose ten years if they have children. Just like that. And we had a very, very capable, very excellent researcher and team leader, who was Oxford educated, who did some fantastic work, never went beyond

(being a researcher). Yet at the end she did become a professor or an associate professor, but for years and years and years she was a senior lecturer. It took a long time for her to be recognised.

This unit has been set up in an incredibly ad hoc way with many different influences over time. but with no clear leadership. So that was actually why I was employed to take over the leadership. ... When I got here it was incredibly obvious that there had been lots of different voices about what the unit is about. And the way that the facility was set up was incredibly ad hoc, thrown together and hadn't got any of the services and support staff that it needed to be a functioning unit. Anyway, I tried to put all these things in place and was continuously road blocked. We couldn't have extra support staff. We couldn't have technicians or good equipment systems. We couldn't have the consumable budget that we needed to actually make sure the equipment worked, etc, etc, etc. ... And in the end there was a crisis meeting because the unit account was so in the red and I had just put all the things I needed into working order because otherwise there was going to be no functioning department. And at this meeting were the key stakeholders. I just explained my situation and said this has been an impossible situation for the last four years. You should have been given a budget to start with. And I already knew at this stage that the DVCR was on my side and he was relatively new into the position and he had been trying to data gather about why there was such a mess anyway. So I had already made him aware of the position but I don't think the Chief Financial Officer knew what the situation was. ... at this particular meeting when I presented my case by bringing everyone together, it was decided that from next year I will be having a budget.

BUILDING SUPPORT NETWORKS

Few of us can survive as leaders on our own. Having support networks of peers who are walking the same path as us and following the same challenges gives us the support of someone who knows what it is like to lead (in good times and bad) and someone who can share ways of coping and succeeding that have been learned from actual practice.

Support networks can also be the team we work with, including people who report to us. And, there is a great advantage of having networks and colleagues who are outside of our workplaces and our institution's communication space, and beyond the institution's power consequences. Having such people, trusted friends

and professional support and development companions is vital in enabling leaders to face, survive and celebrate the challenges that leadership poses.

> *There are no peers (for me) in the school. And, that is one of the difficulties. My peers are certainly other principals and so there is a mix of friendly support and I guess, to some extent, to a limited extent, perhaps, some degree of, I wouldn't say rivalry, but there is probably a more collegial support in relationship between principals and their associations through which those relationships can be explored.*

> *There are many times when you need to be able to talk to someone you can trust not to let what you say go further. Having someone like that to talk to can make all the difference between survival and going under. It's useful if they are your peers – they know what it's like to do your job – but also that they are not involved in your work or influenced by what you do. They can be a good sounding board with no consequences.*

> *For me, I needed to learn who I could talk with, among the other heads of school. Some would use what I said against me. Others would stand up for me. Sometimes I just knew I needed to keep quiet.*

BEING PROACTIVE AND MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

How often do we encounter reactions rather than responses, and reactionary people? What bravery is required to be proactive? Or is it foolhardiness? We may not know until much later.

> *Yes, I certainly put my hat in the ring too, and yes had my fair share of head-hunting. I think within any organisation if you feel that things aren't going the way you expected they would go – then I am one of those people, who instead of sitting there complaining about it, proactively engage with the leaders to actually find solutions and be that voice representing others. From that, the success of making an actual difference in how institutions advance and progress and enhance the environments in which people are working, and that doesn't mean that it's making the environments comfortable … it's actually making such environments dynamic. Ensuring these people have a clear direction, and the outcomes can be very rewarding and that is really what has been a motivator is that a lot of people have. There's a lot of work that needs to be done in higher education; it's been a very shifting environment in both regulation requirements and performance demands and in many other areas as well as the changing fiscal contexts.*

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I think, you know, there is a real key to, developing adults who want to contribute to the education of young people and as we say grow remarkable people. And I think the world needs that.

So, in your little corner of the world, if you can make that sort of difference that is a higher goal that I find really exciting. And I like to do it in an environment where there is a playfulness and there is fun and you can show to some people that adults can collaborate really well and laugh together and have fun together and be challenged and still achieve great things in a way that brings joy. Because I think if young people can see that, it is worth growing up. Yeah, so you know, that element of creativity and fun is great. I think for me I would always want to be in a school where you could build a momentum to create new things all the time. I couldn't come into a place where the norm is to just keep it ticking over and keep the status quo. I think in today's day and age if you are status quo you are going backwards.

You know, we have that privileged position of influencing the next generation. We have the capacity to create a great environment. The feedback that I get from the staff is that, the stories that I tell or the context I give for what we are doing, really resonates with them. And so, you go wow, you are not just providing a livelihood for these people, you are making their work meaningful and purposeful. And joyful. That is a big tick in life I think, if you can do that for people. And they in turn do great things for the young people they have in front of them.

WORKING OUT HOW TO SUCCEED

Complex systems like academia pose many challenges not the least is trying to solve the puzzle of how to succeed. Perhaps this is situated problem solving. Perhaps it is learned wisdom. Perhaps it is collegiality and strength in numbers or friends in high places. Hopefully each of these strategies is remembered and brings future success that brings others along in shared accomplishment. And hopefully this success achieves a greater purpose than just personal reward.

I've worked in teams where we have really kicked goals. That's a bit different I suppose, I mean working in a team and kicking a lot of goals and feeling excited about your outcome, that's a real success. And it takes some learning how to succeed like that.

And why do you think I'm successful? It's having things in train and having significant input from large numbers of the organisation, it is having very active and productive and engaged working teams that are not reluctantly doing it, they're

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proactively and actively doing it. Making decisions and consulting in that process. And people are willing to embrace the change that's coming forward.

OK so the process is that, as a leader and manager, the first thing you have to be seen to be doing is developing the case as to why you need to change and you need to engage people in that dialogue as to intent and purpose of the change. To have people not be passive but active in the process you have to provide them with the opportunity to be active for them to have a voice. So there was a process put in place to enable people to independently and collectively have a voice in that process. Importantly it needs your ability to receive those messages from people and to act on them.

So one of your first things that always makes you successful is for you to at least give people some information as well as exemplars of what you might seek, that gives a basis from which to work from and some options within that. And then have them understand by the nature of the questions you ask of people, for their input into that.

Then you take on board that, and then the positions that you hold you need to then evaluate the merit of each of those and then redefine it in accordance with that. So the process of the next stage was in taking the feedback. We then convened a second group that looked at the merit of the different elements of feedback and how it might fit with a range of the options that came forward. So you will always influence, but it's not about winning and losing.

You need to learn to pick your fights ... absolutely clear have to be in there (for some) and let the other ones go. But you need to do that I suppose in a way, not just with each fight but across the board so that over a period of a couple of years, people will say oh give it to her because you'll get a reasonable opinion from her.

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES THAT CAN WORK WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Leaders aren't leaders without teams to work with. Similarly, decisions and strategies that seem right to us (as leaders), aren't right or best or even acceptable if they don't work with other people. This is one of the biggest challenges of leadership and it takes a great deal of learning, self-reflection, feedback and willingness to let go of our preferred options, and to create or fashion change jointly, sell or listen to proposed strategies, and instigate or sew seeds for change.

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Look, I am a very big believer that if you want people to come along on an issue or a problem that you are working on and solving that first of all, you really have to bring them into the issue and help them have some ownership of the issue too. So, the issue that I am thinking about (over staffing), really I spent a number of months, you know, helping them, giving them a perspective of this issue because it was something that really was quite foreign to many of them.

So, it was really starting to share, you know, an issue that I was working on but I wanted to give them a bit more information because I could see a time in the future where I would need their input as well. So really, the first period of time was a, an exercise in helping to bring them up to speed but also with individuals, discussing it a little bit more so they could see how it was related to their work. I set out to create an environment for them to feel comfortable in and to help them gain an understanding and start buying in. This happened through our management team meetings where we have reports on various issues. Firstly I tabled it as an agenda item and I gave them a very brief overview. Then I gave an update in our management team meeting two weeks later. And that really went on for a good month and a half, where I kept it fairly low key to start with. Because I wanted them to buy. And each time I sort of I suppose exposed a bit more of the issue, wanting their feedback and observations, wanting their thoughts on it. So I was helping them to start thinking about the problem and I suppose after the first month and a half I was able to give them some more hard data on why it was an issue that we needed to address and some comparative data on where we needed to go to or where for this issue we should be sitting, in the marketplace. I probably spent a fair bit of time on because that was the time when I really got a bit of sort of push back, oh you know, no, not, some of them wanting to buy into it because they could start to see the implications if they did buy into it. That it would mean some change and change that they would have to be involved in which wasn't necessarily pleasant change. So we actually spent a fair bit of time on that.

A big part of the strategy was getting the facts together and communicating them with people and keeping people up to date on some little trends I was seeing in relation to some of the things we were working on. And so when we actually came at staffing time to say, no we realistically have to look at some of our class sizes, then people were prepared. They didn't

necessarily like it but they were prepared. This is basically a progressive strategy.

And then we set up a special staffing group that has some members of the management team on it, not everyone, but I spent time in our meetings when we were looking at staffing with them, really talking about well what are our options, are there different ways that we can do things. So once again, helping them to be part of those solutions. I just feel that if you allow people into the discussions you will get much greater ownership and they will take more responsibility for initiating the changes that need to take place as well.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Increasingly, globalised society is risk averse, particularly educational institutions being a mixture of altruistic (educational) endeavours and managed programs driven by accountability to stakeholders (especially governments and the public purse) and accountability with strong cost-efficiency and "proper behaviour" parameters. Leaders are risk managers which is generally translated as risk minimisers. How does this balance with creativity, adventurousness and good practice that is not just ensuring cost-efficiency and limiting bad press?

So it's important to understand how the system works and how to manage, minimise and if possible, avoid costly problems and risks.

As Principal you are sort of the conduit between the Board and the school. They are very aware of the fact that I do a lot in my role as Principal. It is not the regular kind of activity so I think that they find it quite useful when I am able to report at a more detailed level about things that are going on in the school and perhaps explain the rationale behind it more readily. I think if you are involved at that level instead of dealing with things at the end place, whether that is a discipline problem or a failure of some area of the school, you actually are in a preventative, pre-emptive position.

I think you can plan much more easily for what you want the outcome to be because you can get in at the bottom and say, okay we can improve this or we could do this differently and there is an immediacy about it too. Which I think the staff pick up on. So they will come to you more readily with an idea because they know you will be interested and you might actually implement it fairly quickly. And it is not going to go through a whole series of, you know, this, that and the other. And I guess the metaphor is having an open door.

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LEARNING TO DEAL WITH THINGS THAT GO WRONG

If all of our endeavours have been easy and gone well, then how are we prepared for some inevitable failure or negativity. Through triumph over tribulations comes strength, resilience and wisdom that provides greater potential for future success. How do we juggle the risks the potential benefits and consequences of our leadership actions? We need to look behind the obvious, to discover intent to look beyond powerful messages to examine the breadth of underlying issues and ideas and to seek opportunities and new ways of working together. Sometimes too, we have to find new ways of feeling OK about our outcomes.

> *And it had been something we'd been working on for months, and a whole lot of stuff had been working fine, but we'd got to this particular spot where we really were stuck, and you know in some ways you could say it was a minor issue but I don't think it was because it was going into a policy and it was going to have a significant impact if it was allowed to go through in the way that it originally was. And I kept thinking, I can't let this go through because this is going to cause no end of problems if it goes through in its current form. So you could say it was both successful and unsuccessful. It wasn't successful in me getting exactly what I wanted, but the ultimate outcome was successful enough, in that it got rid of what I saw as the major risk and it didn't get us to the point where I would like us to be and in the future I would still hope we might get there, but it got us out of the major risk. So I suppose I often think any outcome has got success and lack of success factored into it almost. You don't always get a perfect success I suppose.*

> *I was head of a particular discipline. I found the way the management structure was working was quite problematic. You know, the culture in that organisation wasn't conducive to forging good relationships, or encouraging leadership that was perhaps a bit innovative. So, I had a lot more struggles there in trying to bring about innovation and change because I found there were pressures from above, from sideways, from below, wherever, and, it was hard to bring people along.*

How can we measure success? Perhaps we need to re-conceptualise it. Who says it went well? Who says it didn't? Perhaps the real benefits will not be known until a future time and place. When is it time to say enough is enough? Sometimes our goals will never be theirs. In the end we have to balance the costs, personal and public, and the benefits.

> *I was unsuccessful in keeping that centre going and there were a lot of people who were very emotionally upset about that. Some of them are still working here with me and I am still*

collaborating with my Deputy Directors. One thing I pride myself on, every single one of them has a job. So my Deputy Director has a tenured position. Another woman I worked with as a research fellow has a part-time position. She is the one who needs to be a bit more strategic. All of the research assistants have finished their PhDs.

So there is nobody in that centre; what I did is, we planned it for six months. We had a big review, an external review, great review with people from NSW. It was very good. So what I did with the team, the group in the centres, as I said, look we can keep going but it is taking a toll on me. I am unsuccessful in this environment. Or we can wrap it up. And so I knew I wanted to wrap it up but I actually brought people along with me and I think that, you know what it is, it is managing failure is what it is. So we wrapped it up.

During that six months everybody was able to get to transit and this is without the union. I mean we are all members of the union. I believe that it is really important to have that and I had union support for a number of issues that I were with the uni, around issues. And they were really supportive. But basically what we did was we closed the centre down. We were able to send emails out to a really large network of stakeholders.

We tied up all of our, you know, publications. Our grants got transferred to here. We had a big party. Some have finished their PhDs. Some are lecturers. And that has been really good. So you know what it was, it was like a point where I realised that I was unsuccessful. Continuing to fight it would have taken a personal toll on me and so what we did was we wrapped it up. And that is why here I have, I purposely negotiated a contract without a big management fuss.

LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND POLITICS, CHANGE AND CHANGE AGENCY

Organisations, including educational institutions, are one of the most amazing phenomena in modern society. They take a large number of people, structure them into manageable and functional groups and development management systems to enable tasks to be completed, communication systems to work effectively, products to be produced, the talents of people to be well utilised, marketing and outreach strategies to be implemented, and resources (people, finance and physical as well as virtual resources) to be utilised in accomplishing the mission, purpose and capital (emotional, financial, intellectual, systematic) to be produced. Throughout all of these enterprises, actions and mechanisms, lies the fundamental reality of different interests and perspectives, along with the factions, lobby groups and

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political alliances this creates. Being an effective leader requires understanding how the organisation works (formally and informally), learning to work within that system, developing the ability to manage or cope with change as well as becoming an insightful and effective change agent.

> *There are times when you need to understand what's going on behind the scenes You maybe haven't considered the ripple effect of your decision and what you should have to have done to make something successful. You just haven't thought about it and the implications of it. You haven't realised that sometimes the goalposts change in this world.*

> *Sometimes when you start out, you think you have scoped out a project or that you know a challenge that you want to address. And you launch into it and all of a sudden the goalposts change or the rules change and you end up in some sort of some wicked problems. And you have to be able to then either reassess, change course, or reprioritise. And so sometimes you get to the end of it and you realise - well, that wasn't really that successful. Then you reflect – I definitely will or won't do that next time.*

BUILDING A GOOD TEAM AROUND ME AND WORKING WELL TOGETHER

Building such teams can be fruitful and energising. Not only do such teams enable work to be accomplished, they also make working a positive experience.

> *Sometimes you just don't have the right people in the right seat. Because at the end of the day everything that you want to achieve you achieve with and through other people. So it is so critical to have the right people with the right aptitude and the right attitude. Sometimes, I look at my management team and I think wow, I have a stable of thoroughbreds. They have got such expertise, they are so dedicated, they are smart and committed.*

> *In comparison another group I work with - they are a bit flighty. They have their different ideas and so you are constantly having to be working at nurturing and supporting them and the team. Because they won't just do what you tell them. They will question, they will have a robust discussion which is what you want but, you have to be able to sustain that. When I think of things that haven't worked as well or the jury is still out on whether they are working, it is because they are really challenging and there is a measure of ambiguity. And so I think you have to work with such people and say you have to trust me, that I know we are going to nail this problem or achieve this project but right now there is uncertainty and there is ambiguity*

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but I am really determined and we are going to persevere through this and have all the discussions and try to understand all the obstacles. And we are going to get there in the end. Because in that process people will get to know each other and you will develop good working relationships.

You have to be respectful but sometimes you have to really have direct adult discussions and I think that's important too. Actually, I think this is a real expectation that you need to have of them and their leadership. If you are really exercising leadership you have to be able to have these direct adult discussions. We have to be able to have enough trust there to put the issues on the table. We have to discuss the issues and work through the issues. That is what grownups do, you know.

LEARNING HOW TO BE ME AS A LEADER

In life and work we follow our own journeys. How much are these pathways harmonious, compatible, tolerable, and mutually supportive? Some paths may be beyond us, intolerable or prestigious but at the same time incompatible with who we are – too compromising. Some choices seem to be beyond us but by some miracle of stamina, imagination and courage we rise to the occasion.

It's just the sort of so much a part of me that I can't (do it differently) you know. And sometimes I think I need to kind of toughen some of that up. I don't know. It's an interesting one because when I think that you can be who you are within it. Not everybody likes everything – so you know you're always going to have times when your behaviour rubs people up the wrong way and other times when people will like it as a model.

And on the whole I suppose I would say my behaviour has stood me in good stead. If I think it's been non-threatening. To be supportive, to be willing to compromise when you need to. All that's very gendered in many ways. But it's also I guess from my point of view, it doesn't seem to have held me back in my career anyway. It's probably given me enhanced opportunities at times.

I worked in these syndicate groups. If I was chairing the meeting I would go and sit in the middle of the table and you know, some of them were so uncomfortable with it. You know, it was such a little thing. But they thought I was supposed to sit at the head of the table. And because I was middle of the table I was actually picking up different sorts of things. It is quite interesting but it made them profoundly uncomfortable.

And we kept sort of having these peer reviews and they kept reading back to me, feeding back to me could I stop doing it. They didn't like it, you know. I was rocking the boat.

It's rather old fashioned, of course, when they think there needs to be a master, and then everybody else is underneath. I found this very divisive. People didn't like collaborating. It was a really competitive environment. And that has been extremely interesting because I encouraged quite a different style of participation. Where it has come to is we are putting in a grant and it has become a lot more collaborative. Although it has not been very easy.

And I know that is a very minor thing but it is trying to change the environment and I work better laterally or down. I am very poor at working up. I am very weak at doing that. I have done two years of sort of lateral stuff here and I said look, I want more of a leadership role now, next year. I have finished that research.

And now I am really keen to get up and going. Not so much administrative but leadership for early career, mid career researchers, mentoring. Particularly women. The work I have done with the junior women whether it is either mentoring informally or informally, I haven't done a formal one. I have mentored with people, you know, in my research team. The students, the women are very un-strategic.

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As a leader
am I:
a rebel,
a party liner
a states-person
a lucky sod?

Beyond what I feel
and what I am comfortable with,
what does my leadership style
mean for those I lead?
Can I live with the effect
I engender?

What will I think of me
at the end of this job?

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CONCLUSION

To survive and be resilient in educational leadership requires character and balance. The women in this project had many stories to tell about these accomplishments and sometimes the real achievement was coming back from, or through failure, to keep on going. We each have tales to tell and questions to ask ourselves about how we have coped or flourished and what we might do next time.

Maike Ingrid Philipsen (2009) argues that "making it work" in successful educational careers and leadership involves recognising what really does count and reconciling this with our own values and priorities. Such people, she argues "have enablers in their lives that help them be successful, and they employ a wide array of coping strategies to deal with barriers to what they should consider a successful balance of their personal and professional lives" (p. 109). Such is our challenge.

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Joy Higgs AM PhD
Strategic Research Professor in Professional Practice
Charles Sturt University

NITA CHERRY

12. LEADERSHIP AS EMOTIONAL LABOUR

This chapter takes up a theme identified in Chapter Eight, which explored the dynamics of trying to have influence in circumstances that place the practice of leadership work under pressure. The chapter uses the concept of emotional labour to further explore what can be involved in undertaking that sort of leadership work. It considers the accounts of the women in educational leadership roles in terms of their engagement with emotional labour.

Over time, pressure can come to be an expected dimension of practice, to the extent that the employing organisation doesn't acknowledge the emotional work involved in dealing with it. The culture of an organisation or group might also relegate this emotional work to unconscious processes, or acknowledge it in ways that neither value it nor help those who undertake the labour. Even those who undertake emotional labour and realise that they are doing so and are expected to do it, might yet accept it as a necessary aspect of the work they do.

THE CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL LABOUR

The idea of emotional labour – a concept articulated by Hochschild (1983) – recognises the significant but often unacknowledged work that many employees regularly undertake to control and regulate the expression of quite reasonable emotions in order to do their work. It is not to be confused with the "growing up" process of emotional development and maturation, through which people learn to adjust their most spontaneous and needy behaviours in order to get along with others and form satisfying relationships. Emotional labour involves having to make significant effort to keep on enacting emotional behaviours that are quite different from what any adult might be reasonably expected to display in a similar situation outside the workplace.

Emotional labour means limiting or even hiding spontaneous feelings and reactions, such as anger, disgust, fear, sadness, or delight, excitement and approval. In some situations, employees need to be so neutral in their behaviour that the other people they engage with have no idea of how he or she might be feeling. In other situations, employees are expected to modify the extent of their feelings or express them in ways that are culturally acceptable to their organisation, colleagues, clients and other stakeholders. And in others, the employee needs to express and act out feelings that they actually don't have in that situation. They might have to pretend to be friendly, upbeat, interested, or calm. They might have to pretend to be indignant or angry or displeased, when really they don't feel these things at all.

Commentators on emotional labour make the point that although significant work is involved, often this is not acknowledged or explicitly rewarded by employers, for several reasons. Sometimes successful and sustained emotional effort is mistaken for so-called "soft skills" or "emotional intelligence" that is assumed to come easily or naturally to the person. Or it could be that recruitment and training practices initially screen out people who don't have these soft skills. In both cases, over time the difficulty of emotional work escalates, so that what could once be readily accomplished through reasonable skill, slowly turns into work that requires considerable emotional effort and strain. Or it might be that organisational culture prohibits the acknowledgment of emotional labour, so that it becomes undiscussable or even out of awareness. Some would argue that this is most likely to happen when there are significant power differentials in play, so that some portion of the workforce takes on labour that is not expected of others.

One of the defining characteristics of emotional labour is that the employee engages in acting that requires significant effort. Hochschild (1983) distinguished between *surface* acting and *deep* acting. Surface acting is focused on performance behaviours that are noticeable to others: what is being said and how it is being said through voice tone and range, through facial expressions and body language. While surface acting might deceive others, Hochschild was clear that the actor could never deceive him or herself. The actor is always aware of the discrepancy between what they are doing and how they are feeling.

Deep acting involves more than trying to control and regulate what is visible on the outside. Its intent is to try changing things on the inside: the way the person actually feels. This might involve using the techniques of cognitive behaviour control, such as self-talk, cognitive reappraisal or relaxation techniques to modify the authentic feelings that would otherwise be present. Or it might involve trying to invoke the emotion that one wants to feel, for example by imagining a very positive experience and then transferring positive feelings into the present moment. Although this technique requires training and practice, the result can be that what the person feels is more natural than having to pretend or fake something.

However, surface acting has attracted most of the interest in the literature on emotional labour because the person is aware of the dissonance between what they are enacting and what they are actually feeling. They might feel tense and under pressure as they try to control their spontaneous behaviour, or disappointed if they don't succeed as well as they hoped. Or afterwards they might be left feeling disappointed with themselves for being inauthentic about something that does actually matter to them. They might be left feeling tired because of the level of effort involved.

And over time, the emotional work involved in sustaining and managing emotional dissonance might leave people with some loss of self or sense of self-alienation. For some, the ultimate price might be blunting of their emotional repertoire, emotional distancing from others and a deterioration in personal as well as professional relationships.

The argument has been made that deep acting, once mastered, requires less emotional labour than surface acting. However, deep acting that is sustained over a long period of time can also have significant consequences, precisely because it is not open to scrutiny by self or others.

Over time, professional identity, agency and practice can be significantly compromised and undermined without awareness or negotiation. If deep acting involves collusion with prevailing organisational norms and cultural practices, what started out as deliberately learned professional behaviour can actually become counter-productive.

The striking thing about much of emotional labour is that it is not acknowledged by employers and not rewarded: rather, it is simply expected. And some commentators have argued that women are expected to do far more emotional labour than men, not because of explicit and conscious protocols of managers and organisations but because of deeper seated cultural expectations of how men and women should behave. The rest of this chapter explores the accounts of our women to see what they suggest about the dynamics of emotional labour in their experience.

THE EMOTIONAL LABOUR OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL
LEADERSHIP ROLES

Chapter Eight explored the experiences of the women we interviewed in noticing and enacting real-time influence behaviours. The accounts of the non-executive women, in particular, suggested that they are mostly aware of having to actively work at selecting and adjusting their behaviours in order to be effective in influencing others.

> *I have always been very aware of not challenging big egos which are often weak egos. (Laughing). And this particular person I think is quite vulnerable in terms of their ego.*

> *I was also really aware that trying to change the dynamics by being quietly persistent was going to be the best way to get, not confronting but choosing a number of opportunities, where I could get some change.*

When asked whether she was careful in her use of language, one commented that:

> *Well, not so much being careful with language, but being careful with what I do.*

Another said:

> *But I talk through stuff. So, my way of coming to working on a problem is to actually talk it through. And, I don't know the answer, and I am working it through and I am fertilising it to work it through and discussing it with people and getting opinions and weighing it up. Whereas, I have a large number of colleagues who would never open their mouths.*

A consistent theme was that there are different tolerances and expectations attaching to the emotional behaviour of men and women:

> *Men and women do things very differently. I have direct experience of that and I have direct experience that I can figure out in my head and say, mmm that is the reason. And then other, I have direct experience that just sort of seeps into me and then I think oh, that is the reason. So I have spent most of my life in a group with all men.*

> *I think like a man because I had been trained by men and worked with men all the time. Almost all the time, not completely but almost all the time, apart from students who I of course supervised.*

> *But we looked at things differently. And we were less, we looked at things differently at a more balanced, not even balanced but having a mix of women and men, a much more mixed cohort, in*

comparison with all men. And it was beneficial in some ways and not so beneficial in others I guess.

And I often made mistakes because initially I didn't grasp the concept at all; it was all in symbols and it was completely obtuse. But they used to have a great joke about how my maths was no good and they also said I was the best person to test technology because I always wrecked it.

You know, on the one hand that was fine, you know it was quite good fun and I don't think they were trying to be damaging or anything else, but they wouldn't have said that about one another in the main.

Well, I am in an open plan office, and I know if there is hardly anybody in the great big office and there is a man and a woman, they always go to the woman which is me, at the time, and they ask me where somebody is or where this room is and that, they never ask the man.

The attitude is oh well, he is really busy, and or he is this or he is that. Students will come and knock on the door. Do you know where such and such is, but they wouldn't do it if he was a bloke because a bloke is too busy.

Sometimes these differences in standards and expectations are very stark:

I think I see that a lot because people are negative about women far faster than they are with a man. They will go, oh that's just them, where as you know, you are a bitch. And that is a really strong terminology to be using about somebody in the workplace.

Language gets used in a way, whereas well, you know, they are just difficult if it's a bloke. And, calling them a bastard isn't quite the same.

Their accounts made it clear that most of the women were well aware of the effort they made to adjust their behaviour:

And, that's the whole thing. It's a lot about, that. I am aware that I think I am constantly aware of that type of thing.

While many of the examples presented in Chapter Eight relate to real-time face-to-face situations, the accounts of women in educational leadership roles also suggest that over time, significant emotional labour is associated with developing a base from which to be influential and then continually negotiating that authority when it is regularly contested.

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I used to get constantly dragged into things because I was the only senior female and some bloody policy would say, oh you need a female sitting on this committee and that committee.

And, you do notice as you go along and I think this is the thing that happens is that there is an expectation that somehow, particularly in my field, that the women will be able to look after the students. I definitely found that at my old university where there was this expectation that you know, we would take on those sort of pastoral roles.

So we worked very hard to help him to understand that the social sciences were different. He came from a very boysy lab culture and it is completely different. And so we worked hard but the other thing we worked hard at was to achieve a lot and that makes people look good and they really like it ... And he is the Dean and he gets the credit for it, so, even though a lot of people know he is not doing it, we are doing it, but it makes him look good within the university. And so I think it's a very good strategy for us.

When I came in I partnered on two activities I wouldn't have probably otherwise done. One was the conference and master class and I am not very good at organising conferences. I find it really hard. And I invited quite a famous person from France to be the keynote speaker because this other person interestingly was afraid to send the email.

And I said, oh I will send the email. He is really well known in this area. So the first year I actually did two things that were in a more support role and that was, and I did that purposely. It was lots of work but in part it was to get his trust and to have him see me as not a threatening person who came in to take over his role.

I established and pioneered it and paid for it in the sense of making sure there was always nice breakfasts or dinners provided for this group and you know it's part of the fabric of this Faculty and I'm quite proud of that, but it's never been acknowledged as important. If someone went out to Cisco and got a great big screen donated to the university or something it would be wow, look what they've done. So I think there's still not equal value placed on some of the things that women do very well. You know, I don't want to over generalise but I think that's the case.

Even when acknowledging the extra effort that they were making, most of the women spoke of their experiences and behaviours in a matter of fact way, as though accepting that that is just the way things are, or that some dynamics take a long time to change. But for a few, the significant negative emotional price paid for their extra labour was very evident:

Because I got very cynical when I was Chair of that Board. I took it on because I thought, oh I can make a difference, I can you know. The official line is that the Board used to exist to get broader participation and decision making in academic matters. It absolutely doesn't. It existed for (senior people) to ram through whatever they wanted. And they didn't like people questioning them so – I mean it was never overt, but that was actually what went on.

And I think over three years I got, I just ran out of energy. I got tired of trying to encourage people to believe that it was not desperately threatening to let people have a voice, and I don't think it is. I mean you don't have to change your mind ... but I think not to allow a certain amount of babble from the bottom, to come up and actually listen to people's concerns and ideas is just ridiculous. I don't know why they shouldn't do this.

Because you look back and you think, I've been so bloody naive. You know, I thought for three years that I could actually make some good changes. I ended up thinking, the boys actually let me tinker at the edges you know. I could change the name of committees and change a few things.

But the substantive issues of how things went through and whether or not there was every broad participation and discussion, I didn't get within a bull's roar of changing. When I stood down, off the record I was told by one of the members of the Board that they do have an agreement that they argue when they meet one another, but when they go to Board meetings they all stick with the agreed line.

I also think, you know I used to innocently think that processes were set up to be followed and that, you know, but then you sort of find a lot of the blokes will just be going around the back directly to the Dean, and you know getting extra money that way.

So even though I am four days a week, I am a .8, which is fantastic. So many of my women friends, I will tell you what I call it, we buy out our guilt. And a lot of the men including my partner think it is ridiculous. But four days a week we buy out our guilt, we still work five plus, like you do.

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These examples illustrate the range of ways in which the women leaders have taken on emotional labour that over time has taken some significant toll on their energy, their commitment, and even their sense of their own adequacy. These were not women who had decided to lie low and play the safer and less visible game of simply getting on with what was to hand, within a less demanding sphere of influence. They had stepped up to help take on challenging roles and work that the university said it wanted done.

Their accounts suggest that they had gone about that work in good faith, trying to use the legitimate processes as they understood them and acting the intellectual and emotional parts that were associated with the roles they had taken on. And we hear them, in retrospect, realising just how much emotional energy they had expended over a period of years, questioning what made them think they could challenge or change the powerful dynamics they found themselves surrounded by, and labelling themselves as naïve and innocent. Yet these are women who took on this emotional labour as seasoned and mature professionals appointed to high levels of leadership and management seniority.

Others spoke about the impact that such experiences can have on other women in educational environments who, over time, witness or hear about what can happen and in that way learn vicariously about the risks involved.

> *I have got a couple of staff members who are mums of young families and they don't want to be leaders but they are very appreciative that I am. You know, and they, they want to be good at their job and they want to do good research. They want to do good teaching but they don't aspire to be professors.*

> *They don't want to be. They have other interests and they have other passions in their lives and as long as they are working in a team where it is very collegiate and it is very friendly and everyone is getting on, they don't see it, the need to take all this on.*

This type of situation adds to the emotional labour that some educational leaders take on:

> *I do like mentoring. I am kind and I do listen and I make sure there are … make sure that the road blocks that I face are not necessarily the road blocks that my staff face so I make it my responsibility to remove those road blocks. And that is certainly something they would probably say that if there is a road block they often don't know about it because you know, I try to protect them from road blocks because they usually are from university bureaucracy rather than anything real.*

THE PRICE PAID OVER THE LONGER TERM

One of the striking things about their accounts was the number of women interviewed who spoke about the long term sense they still carry of not being good enough, of needing to continually prove themselves, despite their demonstrable professional achievements.

But, I think that sort of attitude, or how women often took that on, just remains part of your psyche. You have just keep proving yourself or being better. Meanwhile, (the men) are constantly saying they are better than they are.

There are a lot of us who feel, how did we get here. Do we deserve, do we really ... we don't believe we are perhaps as competent as we are. And there are a lot of men who we think they don't actually realise they aren't as competent as they think they are.

But the thing that I found the most interesting among my female friends who have managed, managed to have very influential positions and, so there are a group of us who, not frequently, but we go away. I mean we might go to a spa for a weekend or whatever.

And there, it is a group of us who all had kids around the same time and there are women who are in very high powered positions. You know, really high powered. You know what the one thing that we always laugh about, we always say we wonder when they are going to find out we aren't for real.

All of us have this deep seated ... we could write a book about it. We have talked about it. When will they, when will we be found out and I think we are all over achievers but are always running on the fact that we sort of aren't so good.

Or it is a game that we are always trying, when are they going to find out we aren't, we are faking it. And do you know what, we have all commented that there is not one man leader who we think thinks that. Whether it is a DVC, a Dean, whatever.

And I think the academy is particularly vicious in that way. And that is why I think there are fewer, that is why those stats haven't changed. I think, when you get women at the upper echelons.

I don't know that it is not that they don't want to but they don't think that they can do it. I can't tell you the number of times I have told, like women who I am sort of mentoring at the lecturer or senior lecturer, time for you to go to promotion. Oh, no no, I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that, I need two more years. I look at them and say your CV is twice as good as this CV of this male lecturer. Of course you could go. And they are like but I won't get it. It is alright, fail. Do it again.

Women don't put themselves up because they don't think they are good enough. And I, the thing I really wonder about is the ones who make it, are they the ones who, well of my colleagues and friends, there is still a really strong element that we aren't good enough.

Among the women who participated in our study, many were very clear about the very high level of effort involved in building and exercising influence over the course of a career:

I know I have an amazing capacity to deal with stress. I, and so you definitely have to have that.

Some were rather critical of women who don't try as hard as they had themselves:

I see massive differences and the ones that worry me are the women who really don't get it. Don't understand where they sit in the bigger picture and so end up sounding very selfish and sounding very me, me, me.

And, try on the whole, oh you need to support me thing, and I am like, no we don't. If you can't make a case for yourself. And then there are guys who, you know, the male equivalent of that is somebody who is demanding all of the time.

I get worried because I feel as though I can be very hard arsed with some of my female colleagues, but that's when they are being whiney and moany and I am just like, yeah I am not playing this game.

We are professors. If it's not going well, work out how to make it go better. You know, you have got all of the power. You really need to make a case for yourself. Don't come to me demanding that I help you.

THE EMOTIONAL LABOUR OF PARENTING

This exploration of the emotional labour of these women would not be complete without including their accounts of the effort and pain of combining parenting with the process of developing leadership influence and seeking to progress in their work environment.

I think the other issue is that being a parent and working in academia is incredibly difficult. I mean that is the one thing that I didn't expect to find difficult when I had my daughter. You know that, I had seen all of my friends around me not in academia have children and certainly I think the business environment is a lot more supportive of women having six to eighteen months off and in academia it is incredibly tough to have that time off. And you get, and you do get ostracised for that. And I guess I wasn't willing for that to be a problem because of my research that I find important.

I have a kid, oh my God I don't even want to think about what happened to my heart, let alone my pocket, dropping off my kid to day care. I don't want to think about it, it was really, really

painful. But if I hadn't put her in the childcare, and if I hadn't come to work when she was young, I think I would have really lost my career opportunities big time. So be prepared for hard work is the only thing I can say. Hard work and commitment to each other and the family, but it's just no way out. I think it applies to many young men these days as well.

I had to have help from a psychologist with my children in other jobs in the past and I won't go on about it because it is not about me at all but you just reminded me of things back then. Because I was a single parent for a while and the psychologist said to me, well what are you like when you come home. And I said well I am very busy, I have to cook tea, bath and shower and read the book and put them to bed. And he said, well do you ever have any fun, why don't you have fish and chips in the park. You don't have to have meat and three veg every night.

Get in the bath with them, have a bath with them, just relax. Because he said when you come home in a bad mood, they don't know it is to do with work or all your problems at work. They think they are creating this animosity from you and really in 24 hours, luckily I did change around. And I did used to hop in the bath with them and we would go to the park and have fish and chips. We didn't have meat and vegetables every night and I completely changed and I started to have fun with my children. Because otherwise I would see myself as a martyr. It wasn't my fault my marriage had broken up and you know, blah blah blah. But also I would take out my problems at work on my children.

These vignettes offer poignant glimpses of the real emotional labour that is involved in trying to remain focused and effective at work while coping with the anguish – and holding on to the joy – of parenting. Some hoped that things were changing since the time when they were the parents of young children themselves:

So you know, and I guess one of the things I see has changed a little bit since I started as a student is a lot more acceptable for anybody to do that nowadays. I remember when I first started, you know, all the professors worked until 6 o'clock and it didn't matter whether you were male or female. And I see a number of men going off to pick their kids up from school and I see a number of men coming in late because they have taken them to school.

And so that casual kind of working hour thing has made things a bit easier for women but as you say, the percentages haven't changed so I don't know but maybe that is just a societal

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perception that anyone can do that now. Whereas it always used to be the woman.

CONCLUSION

Using the construct of emotional labour as a lens through which to explore the conversations we had with academic leaders, it was possible to see more clearly the ways in which many of these professional women were engaged in emotional labour in their roles. There are several ways in which they have taken on emotional work that other colleagues – women and as well as men – ignore, refuse to do or do poorly. They do this work because they think it needs to be done and done well.

While these women could and did enjoy aspects of the work, it became emotional labour when it required high levels of effort on top of all the other things they did, especially when it was not recognised, let alone valued, by peers and key stakeholders.

Emotional labour for senior academic women can include mentoring, coaching and supporting younger colleagues and students; making connections with people to ensure that projects can be done co-operatively over time; facilitating meetings and other conversations; taking on confronting or challenging real-time encounters that others avoid; taking the risk of suggesting options that might attract criticism, or be initially ignored but then claimed by others.

The women we spoke with told stories of having to protect male egos, of being excluded by their male colleagues, of having to step into spaces where they were not welcome, of worrying about the consequences of being seen as too assertive or too authoritative. The also spoke of the emotional labour involved in parenting their children while trying to keep up at work.

It is striking that these very successful women spontaneously described the significant emotional labour they had taken on in relation to working with men, often with the air of it being "the way things are". A very small number were critical of other women for not stepping up to the plate and tackling some of the more confronting or difficult work.

And some of the executive women described the extra work they had taken on, such as thinking in advance about how to adjust their style when dealing with competitive men in a meeting, while believing that their male colleagues were unlikely to have prepared for the dynamics they might encounter. However, only two or three of the entire group seemed to be indignant or irritated that this emotional labour was necessary. When people are no longer aware of the price they might be paying for the significant emotional work they do, arguably the culture of the workplace is strong enough to attract and sustain very powerful dynamics of collusion.

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Nita Cherry PhD
Professor of Leadership and Organisation Studies
Faculty of Business and Law
Swinburne University of Technology

JOY HIGGS

13. PURSUING PRACTICE WISDOM IN LEADERSHIP

> Practical wisdom (phronesis) is an ancient, enigmatic, and intractable notion yet the manner of its workings and its influence on public life, professional practice and civil society remains little understood. Despite its profound effect on virtually every aspect of modern life, full understanding and comprehension of practical wisdom continue to elude us at every turn.
>
> … Without doubt there is an urgent need to reset managerial priorities and corporate agendas to take into account the need for acting not just in the immediate self-interests of individual corporations but for the greater common good. (Chia, 2013, pp. xv-xvi)

The women who participated in this research were women of influence. From their actual accounts of their leadership experiences I came to appreciate that they were not only operating (usually wisely) in contested spaces but also that they were contesting these spaces and learning how to contest these spaces wisely. In their everyday working lives as well as in their strategic pursuits, they were facing dilemmas in leadership practice as well as using their abilities, indeed their practice wisdom, to practise amidst and through these dilemmas. In response to Chia's challenge, this chapter provides real examples through the experiences of the women in this study of what practice wisdom means.

This chapter is titled pursuing practice wisdom in leadership and through this research this phenomenon of practice wisdom will be examined in the context of educational leadership in secondary schools and universities, that is, the particular institutions of these research participants. Importantly, I am neither arguing that wisdom is an exclusively or predominantly feminine attribute, nor that it is particularly feminine in nature. Rather I am contending that wisdom derived from practice experiences and from reflection and challenging of these experiences, can produce wise way of knowing and practising, and that this is of particular value in leaders (of both genders).

The participants in this study demonstrated wisdom in the way they spoke about, understood and created their practice knowledge, and in the way they enacted their wisdom across their leadership and management roles. Also, we should note that neither they nor I are claiming that all of their behaviour and understandings were wise.

Instead, we can see wisdom in their moments of advanced realisations, their leadership inspirations and successes, in the way they dealt with situations that were beyond their control and the times when they failed to be successful in both task and relationship aspects of their leadership and management roles, but "held it all together".

The title of the chapter emphasises the pursuit rather than simply the use of practice wisdom. I take pursuing to reflect three things. The first is the active pursuit or engagement with specific leadership tasks, dilemmas and challenges utilising the leader's existing practice wisdom.

The second is the way that accumulated experiences, reflections on practice and deliberate learning activities encompass the active pursuit of professional development with an emphasis on the seeking of practice wisdom. The third is about a journey of pursuing wisdom, akin to the seeking of enlightenment, in which wisdom is a desired attribute and capacity, that is appreciated and respected as a way of both being and becoming (for the pursuit of wisdom is unending).

SETTING THE SCENE

To structure the chapter I posed three questions: Where does practice wisdom fit in relation to educational leadership? How does it relate to women in educational leadership? How do women in senior educational positions understand and develop leadership wisdom? These questions are addressed in this chapter through three conversations derived from the interviews and experiences of the women leaders in this project. Their words appear in *italics*. The conversations are:

Relating successful educational leadership to practice wisdom

Wise female educational leaders

Becoming a wise woman in educational leadership.

CONSTRUCTS

First let us consider these terms: practice, wisdom and practice wisdom.

> Practice … encompasses the various practices that comprise occupations, be they professions, disciplines, vocations or occupations. For doctors, engineers, historians, priests, physicists, musicians, carpenters and many other occupational groups, practice refers to the activities, models, norms, language, discourse, ways of knowing and thinking, technical capacities, knowledge, identities, philosophies and other sociocultural practices that collectively comprise their particular occupation. Essentially, practice is embodied, agential, and socially-historically constructed. Practice is situated and temporally located in local settings, life-worlds and systems, as

well as international discourses, and it is grounded and released in metaphor, interpretation and narrative. (Higgs, 2012, p. 3)

Both education and leadership are fields of practice. When we consider the definition of practice above we see that being an educational leader involves understanding the contexts of such leadership, learning a range of practice elements such as leadership language and actions and learning about what leadership can be.

As will be seen in many of the research participants' experiences below, an important part of being a leader is making leadership a personal form and enactment of practice. This involves two key actions: owning one's leadership (making it compatible with the leader's values, identity, interests and self) and interpretation (making sense of things – the situation, the task, the people factors, the potential risks and consequences).

Moving from leadership as enacted practice in the sense of task pursuit or productivity, to leadership as wise practice, requires understanding ideas of wisdom and deciding where we want to be and what type of leader we want to be. Many of the ideas presented in this book – ranging from coping and survival, to resilience, to thriving and attaining job fulfilment – help to address this question.

And, now, let us turn to wisdom.

The etymology of the words *wisdom* and *wise* suggest that they have always denoted or connoted high or elevated forms of behavior. Thus, being wise and displaying wisdom reflects forms of behavior that are admired, condoned and encouraged. This fact suggests that wisdom is at the top of a hierarchically organized system in which wisdom is a complex compound of elements blended with experience. Over time, this blend results in superior human qualities. (Birren & Fisher, 1990, p. 318)

Wisdom is not an easy idea. It can be written off as "an age thing" – the venerable sage – something that comes with much experience and years of engagement in a field. This can lead to the attitude of – well you just have to wait for it to develop. And, this, combined with attitudes of ageism and the power of youth, can dismiss wisdom as a form of folklore or "old wives' tales".

Then, there's the argument of scientific hegemony which gives precedence to scientific knowledge and practices which are often seen to be "worlds away" from other interpretations of practice knowledge and knowing, such as wisdom.

To have a useful discussion on practice wisdom in educational leadership, first we need to move beyond unhelpful and dismissive definitions of practice wisdom and be open to its value; second, we need an acceptable definition and then we can be open to looking for practice wisdom in action and pursuing practice wisdom in ourselves. Consider the following interpretations.

Wisdom is not just a way of thinking about things; it is a way of doing things. If people wish to be wise, they have to act wisely, not just think wisely. (Sternberg, 2003, p. 188)

> Practice wisdom is an embodied state of being, comprising self-knowledge, action capacity, deep understanding of practice and an appreciation of others, that imbues and guides insightful and quality practice. (Higgs, 2016, p. 65)

Using the definition above, we can see that there are considerable challenges for those who seek to understand and embrace the elusiveness of practice wisdom in the motivations, acts and achievements of educational leadership. These challenges are evident in the conversations below and in the voices of our women in educational leadership roles.

RELATING SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO PRACTICE WISDOM

In the following story an educational leader talks about the world "behind the scenes" and "across time" in her academic world. Her story shows a depth of knowing and understanding, a real wisdom about how the system operates. As she brings this knowledge to her leadership, her practice and her work relationships will benefit because she has reflected deeply about her working world and understands how it works and how to work in it.

> *If you've been around academia for a while and worked at different levels in the hierarchy then you can really see the importance of understanding the politics of places and systems. I think academic politics is a really curious mixture. It seems to blend the broad inherited paradigm of academic life, people's interests, the local culture and the system incentives. Let me explain.*
>
> *Academia, referring broadly to the world of education, has high sounding goals of doing good for society through the education of children, young people and adults across the various levels from childhood schooling through secondary and tertiary education.*
>
> *And, it is expected that both individuals as well as society as a whole benefit from this education. So the espoused practice paradigm of education is driven by altruism and positive gain as well as a sense of the educated (people) teaching those who are less educated about things they need to know for life and to support their contribution to society through work and knowledge generation.*
>
> *Then you come to the idea of different interests. People investing considerable time and money in their own education or the education of their children want advancement for the learners, often through employment but also status, privilege and advantages in their lives and careers.*

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Industry wants skilled workers and customers to support and advance the delivery of their services and products. Industry can be said to include primary, secondary and tertiary forms of industry, plus employers, systems and infrastructures (e.g. healthcare, transportation) that support the structure of society and nations, multi-national conglomerates, entrepreneurs who benefit from and provide services to local and global communities) and government workforce systems.

Educational providers not only want to achieve their roles (of educating for the individual and common good) but also want to succeed in the complex environment of 21st century education.

This environment provides many incentives for certain types of performance (including high rankings in competitive schools' tables, international research status for universities, popularity that translates into high enrolments, wealth and status in schools and universities). The notion of the education market place is alive and well across all the education sectors.

How educational institutions market their graduates' outcomes and the learners' opportunities is strongly linked to these incentives. And, how they set out to accomplish these outcomes and experiences is pivotal to the sustainability of their success.

In addition, there is a range of different roles for groups and agencies (e.g. accreditation authorities, government departments of education, professional bodies, community and industry associations) who want to influence the quality and impact of education through such roles as gate keeping, standard setting, entrance criteria, external regulation, policies, and, in particular, government and private funding. All of these factors influence the political arena of education.

In the following reflections, an educational leader reports that there's no easy way to be prepared for the politics of educational contexts. It is interesting to see that part of her wisdom in dealing with the challenges of educational politics is to recognise how you can enjoy debates rather than see them as battles. She is astute.

Now, you know, there's no magic book on education politics. The complexity of this arena is enormous. You can complete higher degrees and management training but nothing really prepares you for the way systems behave (globally, nationally, locally) and the way people with all their different needs and motivations push and pull educational providers in competing directions.

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These forces act strongly on the task of educational leadership and management and the pressures on educational leaders. So it means that many people learn from others and they often have to learn on the job through their own mistakes and facing the consequences of their decisions and actions.

When we think of politics we often have a negative image in mind: people trying to win at all costs, people thinking more about winning than serving those who appointed or elected them, people taking on negative attitudes to their opponents.

It can also refer to people who want to debate or question decisions and politics and in the process make these decisions better but perhaps also overshadowing the primary purpose of the (educational) institution.

If we replace the term politics with leadership – what difference does that make? Sometimes there is no difference. Sometimes leadership can be intensely positive and it can be shared – drawing others with responsibility into the arena of decision making and influence as well as work. Other times it can just be self-interested.

Political astuteness is aligned to practice wisdom. Some might call it having "nouse" or having insight or learning to be insightful or having practical knowledge.

WISE FEMALE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Understanding practice wisdom in educational leadership can come about by looking around at successful and wise leaders and also by learning to wear practice wisdom as a 'second skin', to live it, to embody it. It's not just learning to 'walk the walk' outwardly, or 'talk the talk' politically, it's also about genuinely living a form of wise leadership practice that merges self with effective leadership actions.

The women in this study reflected on female colleagues who were successful in academia. Often these women were described as wise and also courageous. Here are some of their stories.

One of my key inspirations, is an exceptional leader. She can bring other people into line with her vision and she can clearly enunciate what her vision is and why she is trying to do it. That whole thing is important – it's so much better if you don't send anybody a surprise in an email but build the changes and communicate them well with justification.

She is excellent at getting her point across. She makes sure that she is listening to what they are telling her. And having

built trust with people it doesn't mean she agrees with them all – it's not possible.

In the end she has sold the decision and got people on side. The she doesn't back down. That's important too. People want a sense of direction as well as the chance to have input.

It's vital to learn to communicate as leaders and to promote effective communication with others by understanding where people are coming from. You need to convince the team that a certain project was a worthwhile endeavour for them to move into. And indeed it was found to be so, because they were very successful in gaining funding for the project. And that is partially because these were very ambitious people and excellent problem solvers.

Sometimes practice wisdom involved the women in looking beyond or above the overt happenings and expectations around them. They brought insight and wisdom to their appreciation of the bigger picture of what was happening.

We were required to change our faculty structures, and think about what the re-structure would look like and what process we would go through to engage the staff ... the consultation, workshopping and feedback needed and how to make decisions around these processes to achieve the final faculty structure. We needed to think about the management and leadership teams within that structure, what they do, how those positions are redefined and so on.

That was not a decision I could make on my own. I needed to influence my senior executive peers – that this was a worthwhile exercise, why it was strategically worthwhile. You also have to influence Council, the Vice-Chancellor and so forth as to why we should do that and what would be the intended outcomes and how to go about doing that.

Wisdom in leadership goes beyond making good or effective choices. There are times when knowing if, when and how much one can afford to take risks, is part of wise practice.

Problem solving and visioning are key expectations of wise leaders. This notion of actually being open minded and being willing to try some crazy things and take risks is part of being able to try new things and see if they work out. It was critical for our collaboration and indeed critical for us to move forward in the very positive fashion in which we did.

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At some point you have to look at the big picture and these leaders were wonderful at the big picture, what I call the helicopter view.

So they are up there in the helicopter and we are down at the desk and somewhere in between we can talk to each other. So I was able to come and say, well listen why don't we look at it from this perspective and from that perspective, and this way of seeing different viewpoints was very successful.

A number of the participants also linked the discussion of practice wisdom to making choices about blending oneself (particularly as a woman) to being a leader.

Women often face two particular challenges in (educational) leadership: they're supposed to be more in touch with female skills and virtues like sharing, caring, collaboration; and, some would argue, they're supposed to redress the historical supremacy of males by advantaging females through their leadership power.

I think naturally there is the different style that women bring and that difference plays to some generally natural attributes that women have that are a little bit different to men in that sense. I've never tried to play one gender against each other and say well that's typical of a woman, typical of a man or whatever.

We need to work to helping people identify what their natural inherent strengths are, and how they may appreciate the difference in the approach, style and so forth of others. I think sometimes there tends to be more clustering around what might be female versus male types of environment. So when women are in a leadership role there are two things that I generally observe.

One is working with their natural tendencies where they use their ability to help, encourage, bring people along, identify strengths in people and have fairly robust conversations around the things that are not doing as well as those they are doing well. That doesn't always happen, so I think there's a different language approach that women tend to use.

But that's not all women, and there are men who will do that too. But I'm talking about in general, and then you actually have a different side when men will actually apply a different style.

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I find women are more likely to be more honest and up front with you than perhaps some males and so that's a different style. The other style that you tend to see in women is when they try to emulate a more masculinised and aggressive style.

Women leaders who do make a difference and have influence will do so in a way that doesn't prevent people closing their ears because they're hearing the soapbox mantra as opposed to being persuaded by a balanced opinion and argument.

Now that doesn't mean that women don't have a sense of dogged determination in such situations but they do it in a far more considered and balanced way and they tend to influence in a meaningful way rather than in a dictatorial way.

So they're usually solution oriented, they can usually articulate the issue and they can identify approaches to dealing with it. And that's how they influence. If you're a solutions and outcomes orientated person, you will influence. Whereas if your only sphere of influence is to identify issues and having no mechanism by how to actually address those issues, then you won't be influential.

BECOMING A WISE WOMAN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Wisdom results from the application of successful intelligence and creativity toward the common good through a balancing of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests over the short and long term. (Sternberg, 2003, p. 188)

Becoming a wise leader requires a lot of reflexivity and listening. Just doing things well was not seen as wise or becoming wise. Instead taking time out to understand and appraise oneself and seeking feedback from trusted peers were used by these women as ways to become (more) wise in leadership practice.

The way you use power is really important. I was the chair of one of the key decision-making committees and I learned a great deal about how the system works. Sometimes all the senior leaders just pushed their positions on this committee and I had a hard time getting people to debate the issues. It was as though the committee existed for the Deans and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to ram through whatever they wanted.

I tried hard to get people to listen to all levels and position holders in the room – but it was hard work. I need to be able to influence at least in some way. Let me put it to you this way. For me to operate in a senior peer team, I have to have an

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effective working relationship with all my peers and it's not a win or lose situation.

There's a real issue about development. I think mentoring by a good leader is a great way to go. We need sensible feedback and to be valued. And we need to learn from the wise and effective practice of other leaders. I like mentoring people. I think I have a good skill base. I think I am very personable.

I think I have a reasonable emotional IQ and I think to be in a leadership role you do have to have a range of different abilities that don't include just your scientific or research kudos. These abilities focus around being a person who can communicate with other people and can also sit back and listen.

One of the things I've learned through taking on leadership roles is how to blend timely thinking with patience. This particularly relates to using information wisely. I remember one time thinking that I had done my homework very well and that I had all the relevant information at my fingertips.

The very next day some new information was received. I really did not have the full picture till then. I learned that sometimes you have to proceed with haste and other times you actually have to say, well we're (seemingly) ready but I need to actually put you on pause till I check things out further – this is a very important matter and we can't rush it.

Two of the things that wise leaders need to learn is to understand the context, particularly in a rapidly changing situation, and knowing how to get things done that involve other people and departments. Leaders learn to work well with the people who make things happen (such as administrative officers rather than the head of department).

In changing times this is particularly relevant, as is keeping in touch with the change priorities, targets and rewards. We've going through a real building and growth phase and everybody wants to be aboard something like that – so it's important to keep in touch with what's going on.

For the change leaders it's vital that we keep people on board and informed about what's happening and why.

Becoming a leader and doing it well, to the point of practice wisdom, takes time, course and sometime single-mindedness and sacrifice. A number of the women reflected on the challenge this posed for women with family responsibilities (both children and elders).

> *For some women, family is a big issue in taking on leadership roles. I think part of it, at that point in time, was that I was just returning into my career after a marriage breakdown, with three kids to bring up. And I was very conscious of making sure I had a secure career.*

> *So there was an element of being pragmatic here – I told myself – don't knock any options back because you need to make sure you've got a job and that's why I did the PhD. I needed it to keep my job. There's a very pragmatic side, around being the breadwinner and you really need to make sure you keep your job. Leadership needed to be put on hold at the time.*

Another key issue the participants recognised in relation to becoming an effective leader was the idea that being "comfortable in my own skin", which is a way of embodying wise (insightful, calm and rewarding) practice, doesn't happen overnight. Instead, it often happened across several jobs with different levels of responsibility and in different settings which allows learning and accrued wisdom to be carried forward, refined and re-imagined.

> *I liked knowing about what's going on and being part of leadership. I've noticed this at each step up along the way, even when you do your first little Deputy Head role – or chairing a committee – you start to see a broader slice of the organisation and I really like that because I like seeing how the whole system works I suppose and having some opportunity to input into that system.*

> *So I got to see what was happening at the Faculty, by the time I was Deputy Dean, I could see the Faculty as a whole, and the Faculty's connection with the university. And by the time I headed off into more corporate roles, I could see the whole university.*

> *And I really liked that sense of oh OK, I'm not just looking at my own teaching arena and what I'm doing within it, I'm sort of seeing broadly. I like that understanding of how the whole system's ticking. I also quite liked the fact that, you do have some influence and power and the opportunity to have your voice heard.*

For me – I learned to be an effective and respected leader over several jobs and several institutions. It was about understanding the way the system worked and how to influence things and people. Learning what sort of leader I wanted to be and how that fitted with success at the university. And, a lot of it was about success.

When I was successful I gained advantage, prestige and influence. I had some really good mentors that I could talk with along the way. And I learned a lot from role models – one in particular who was good at "doing the meet and greet". As a leader I had to learn a lot about "managing up" as well as "managing down" and working laterally as well. And I had to learn to keep my cool.

CONCLUSION

For each person reading these conversations above, let me ask you, do you share the experiences these women report? In your experiences in education and leadership – what part does practice wisdom play, and is it valued? How might educational leadership by men as well as women, be enhanced by appreciating the role that practice wisdom can play? How do you relate to the ideas expressed in the verse below?

<div align="center">

As a leader
first I am me.
Then I am the position holder
Or an influence
beyond or without formal status
What do I bring as a leader?
First I bring me
who I am
what I stand for
and who I am becoming.
I strive
in pursuit of wise practice
that benefits those involved
and achieves positive outcomes,
to become wiser
through critical reflection
and interpretation
and imagining
and to still be
a me
that I value.

</div>

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Joy Higgs AM PhD
Strategic Research Professor in Professional Practice
Charles Sturt University