

Changing the face of leadership from within; Gender differences in leadership styles.

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There appears to be as many definitions of leadership as there are authors. One of the simpler faces of leadership within an organization is ***positional leadership***, where a person's ability to influence his or her organization is linked to the rank or position held within an organization. This is a narrow definition, but easily quantifiable and fairly indisputable. It is also a good indicator of the traits the organization has chosen to recognize and reward as leadership.

A recent update on trends within the policing community in Canada has identified a looming leadership crisis; 40-50% of existing executive level leaders (positional leaders) are due for retirement. This "crisis" may be an unprecedented opportunity to rethink who should occupy those leadership positions. A second trend indicates female police officers are proportionally underrepresented in positional leadership positions, particularly in some very large police organizations has also emerged¹. These trends raise a couple of timely questions;

"Have large policing agencies in Canada been operating on traditional male assumptions of motivation, values and ethics resulting in an under-representation of females as positional leaders?" And if so, "What can be done to correct the imbalance?"

Vancouver City Police have employed females since 1912. Females now make up 21.61% of the force, 24.25% of the constable rank but only 2.8% at the officer level.(there is one female at the lowest rank of the officer level)². The RCMP has been employing females as regular members since 1974 and they currently account for 19.7% of the total strength of the RCMP, 23% of the constable rank, but 92.3% of senior executive level (Superintendent and above) are male³

¹ The Police Sector Council defines "very large" as more than 1000 members. A quick survey of various sized police agencies in Canada done for this paper indicates medium and small sized police forces have better and in some cases very much better proportional female representation at positional leadership levels. See Appendix at the end for detailed results of the survey.

² Percentage supplied by VCP, June 10, 2008

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Police Sector Council, in their most recent scan of 184 Canadian police agencies in a paper entitled Policing Environment 2005⁴ warned that three immediate challenges need to be addressed and strategies devised to cope with;

-- 40-50% of senior officers will retire in the next five years- senior level succession-managing and valuing knowledge/experience will be lost

- at current levels, recruitment rates of constables will not be sufficient to replenish exit of mid/senior officers

- compensation demands outstripping public resources/capacity - competition tight

Let us begin with the first prediction.

-an imminent loss of 40-50% of cultural, skills and operational knowledge because positional leaders are posed to retire. The conclusion appears to be even bleaker when it is viewed in combination with another statistic from the same report- 74% of the workforce have less than 15 years experience. I am sure there is no one sitting in the room or reading this paper with a background in public safety who would not be alarmed by that statistic.

Public Safety work is not a “plug and play” career. The longer a person works in the field, the more valuable they become as an asset to the organization. This statement leads us to the second ominous prediction.

-There aren't enough entry level employees (constables), to replenish the exodus of mid/senior officers. As has already been noted, even if there were, a person cannot just be hired off the street or out of a University and expected to replace a seasoned police officer's operational and cultural knowledge.

The RCMP (the largest of the Canadian policing organizations) traditionally held members to a five-year term commitment, based on a calculation indicating it took five years for a raw recruit to pay back the organization for the investment of time, training and equipment. At five years of service, the RCMP felt the member was fully trained and competent as a constable; NCOs and Commissioned officers take much more time.

There is a simple truth to that logic which supports the conclusion that even if a sufficient number of recruits could be hired to fill the projected vacancies (The projected problem is already a reality for the RCMP, which has been running short for several years.). They could not fill the void of skill and knowledge created by retiring members for many more years. The third prediction speaks to the reason for the lack of qualified new recruits.

⁴ Policing Environment 2005. Completed in March 2006. Conducted by IBM Consulting Services under contract to the Police Sector Council (Canada) to update the year 2000 sector study (Strategic Human Resources Analysis)

- *There is a very tight labour market and young workers are being lured away by corporations with deeper pockets.* How does a Canadian police force compete with the booming economy in Alberta where apprentice electricians, pipe fitters, diesel mechanics and plumbers are making upwards of \$150,000; and once they get their full “ticket”, they make more than \$200,000 a year?

There will be no simple solutions and certainly no single silver bullet to solve these three problems, but organizations could buy some time to smooth the transition in the leadership hand over if they could----

- slow the retirement rate;

-*ensure their current workforce of already trained and skilled professionals are suitably employed; and*

- finally, find workers who are motivated by something other than the size of a pay cheque

These three objectives are achievable if both organizations and employees better understand and adapt to gender differences.

The answers to today’s and tomorrow’s problems won’t be found with yesterday’s thinking.

There is a underemployed resource within organizations (all large organizations, not just police). Recognizing and tapping this resource cannot only help fill the projected voids in positional leadership⁵ but can lead to a more efficient, productive, positive work environment. If the organization has the skills and the will to do this, it can transform the traditional concept of leadership within large organizations.

It doesn’t take an MD or a PhD to realize men and women are different, but it has taken medical doctors, sociologists and psychologists to prove that gender differences are much greater than previously believed. Perhaps the area of greatest difference is the least obvious, our brains.

Female and male brains differ, both physically, and operationally. Men’s brains are larger but women have more grey matter (the portion of the brain governing judgmental thinking⁵), the fibers, corpus callosum, connecting the two sides of women’s brains are larger and the chemical neurotransmitter, dopamine, which facilitates the processing of language and memory⁶ are significantly higher in women. These differences suggest women learn and remember things differently than men. The gender difference is further compounded by the very act of learning and remembering.

⁵ page 9 of Why Men Never Remember and Women Never Forget.(as below)

⁶ page 62-64 *Why Men Never Remember and Women Never Forget* by Marianne J. Legato, MD, FACP, founder of the partnership for Gender-specific medicine at Columbia University co authored with Laura Tucker copy right in 2005 ISBN 13 978-1-57954-897-1

Dr. Eric Kandel, a professor at Columbia University, won a Nobel Prize for his research demonstrating that the process of learning and remembering causes physical changes in the brain. Gender specific social environments may cloud and exaggerate the gender differences but they do not cause them, biology does. There is no “better” way of thinking between the genders, they are just different. I would love to continue to explore the medical evidence of marked gender differences but there is not time or space enough in this paper. I recommend to anyone interested in looking at a comprehensive study of gender differences written from a current scientific basis in layman’s terms, read *Why Gender Matters* by Leonard Sax MD, PhD.

Turn now from medical science to behavioral science, for it is the behavioral sciences that teach how to capitalize on the differences through concrete action plans. The physical differences of the ,the male and female brain at the structural, chemical and hormonal levels lead to some strikingly different, but predictable, perceptions and behaviors.

Males and females hear and see the world differently⁷. Women perceive the world in a more gender specific way, and based on that perception, they tend to behave, interact and are motivated differently than men. Armed with this knowledge it is easier to understand why a gender imbalance often exists in large organizations.

Older large organizations quite often evolved out of, and continue to operate under, traditional male perceptions, assumptions and values such as; leaders are competitive and perform best under stress, leaders can be motivated by increased money and power, positional rank is something all employees will strive to achieve, dedicated professionals place a higher priority on professional life than personal life. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence to indicate these assumptions do not hold true for women.

Stress generally improves male scores but has the opposite effect on female performance. It is unclear if the women are afraid of losing; or of *winning*. Women often avoid direct competition with men because of social taboos and traditions. Women have a long and current history of routinely accepting less pay for the same work and of sacrificing career ambition for family commitments.

These gender differences help explain why, when looking at the power positions of large organizations and governments, or international power brokerages such as the G8, there are very few female faces.

Women account for about 50% of the world’s population and yet women hold a very small percentage of power positions in any large institution anywhere in the world. Race, culture and religion are small differences compared to the gender issue.

⁷ Dr. Leonard Sax in his book *Why Gender Matters* makes references to numerous studies, which prove right from birth males and females hear and see the world differently, and those physical differences have profound implications for how they interpret and interact with the world.

After the “success” of the women’s liberation movement of the 60’s it is disappointing to see that forty years later so little has changed. Clearly, education, socialization and legal equality has not produced the results everyone anticipated. The inescapable conclusion is men and women should be equal but will never be the same and like the French the world should celebrate and capitalize on that difference.

Vive la Difference!

The things which attract males to high levels of power within large organizations do not appear to hold true for women. Women are not less intelligent, less capable or less qualified to assume these roles. Why then are women absent?

Assumptions for high attrition rates and the poor representation of females in positional power positions have historically have looked to socialization and sometimes systemic harassment; but, as these two causes are beginning to fade, due in part to increased social acceptance of gender equality *and* some high profile lawsuits. Why then aren’t women proportionally represented in positions of power? A surprising reason is surfacing. Women often do not occupy positional leadership because of choice, *their* choice.

An article in the February 29, 2008, Globe & Mail newspaper, entitled “*legal dropouts*” written by Susan Pinker, purported 60% of law students in Canada are female but only 26% of females are lawyers in private practice. This is does not appear to be just a Canadian trend. Female Harvard law graduates were more likely to be at the top of the class and recruited by elite law firms yet 10 years later only one quarter remained with the firms. Where are they? They are teaching or in government jobs at two times the rate of men. A recent UK study stated women were opting out of high paying positions accepting up to an 86% pay decrease or forgoing them all together⁸. These women were highly verbal, capable, educated; individuals with polished social skills who opted out of high paying powerful positions. When some were asked why they left very promising careers and positions of power on the corporate ladder, they indicated their actions were guided to resolve a conflict with their inner values. So what do women value if not money and power?⁹

“making a difference”;
“existential qualities of work”; and
finding balance in their personal and private lives.¹⁰

British sociologist Catherine Hakim has concluded female employees can be divided into the following three categories.

⁸ These statistics cited in a Globe & Mail article written by Susan Pinker February 29, 2008 were attributed to Ronit Dinovitzer, a Toronto sociologist who surveyed 9,200 American lawyers.. Dinovitzer sees this as a world wide trend of “money-versus-meaning gender gap”, which he believes will only increase in the future.

⁹ Information and statistics from an article in the Globe and Mail, February 29th, 2008 by Susan Pinker the author of, *The Sexual Paradox: Extreme Men, Gifted Women and the Real Gender Gap*, published by Random House Canada.

¹⁰From the same article as footnote number 7

20% are career oriented;

-60-80% are “adaptive”; and

20% are home centered.

The 20% who are career oriented are the ones who don't get distracted by marriage and or children; and even if they do have children, they often cut their maternity leave short to return to work. They will hide health problems, even heart attacks and a cancer diagnosis, because it will negatively impact careers¹¹. I know a female RCMP officer who hid her cancer diagnosis. These are often the few female faces organizations point to as proof women can climb the corporate ladder.

The 20% who are home centered focus on success in their private lives. If they work, it is a end to a means not a means to an end.

The 60-80% majority, the “adaptives” are looking for balance between family and work. Some career oriented persons surprise themselves by becoming “adaptives” if they start a family. They are happy doing meaningful work so long as they don't sacrifice their children or families on the altar of their career ambitions. Often women who thought of themselves as career oriented find their priorities shift if they have a family. “Adaptives” are the ones who are most likely to voluntarily self-limit their careers or want out at one point (at least for a while). “Adaptives” account for the majority of females and a growing minority of male professionals looking for a healthy life/work balance.

Beyond the optics of males continuing to dominate the positional leadership roles in large corporations, agencies and governments, why should they care if women are content to remain at lower levels of responsibility than they are capable of or leave the organization altogether? Look at a pioneering company that tackled this question and found some surprising answers.

In 1991, Deloitte and Touche, an international accounting firm, employed about 29,000 people in the United States and a total of 95,000 worldwide but it had a problem with female employees. Only 5% of the firm's partners were women and even though they had been hiring large numbers of women since 1980 by 1991 only 8% of the new candidates for partner roles were female. The traditional stereotypical assumption would

¹¹ Cathy Robertson, a female lawyer said, “I have too many friends who have been diagnosed with cancer, and they won't tell their work colleagues because they are so afraid of being judged weak”. Catherine Robertson went on to say she has known colleagues who returned to work after suffering heart attacks and pretended they had merely been on vacation. These statements were quoted in an August 14, 2007 article in the Calgary presentation by Kirk Makin in the Globe and Mail and reprinted in the Law Society of Manitoba's Communiqué in October 2007 by Brenlee Carrington Trepel, Equity Ombudsperson.

predict women were leaving to have families or weren't as serious about their careers as men. Deloitte and Touche didn't become an industry leader by making assumptions about their markets. They created a task force.

The task force found that most of the women were leaving the company before they were qualified to become a partner. The average annual turnover rate for females was 33%. The cost attached to **each percentage point in turnover** translated into an estimated 13 million dollars savings for the company in recruitment, hiring, bonuses and training costs.

The task force also found the women were not leaving the work force, just the company. They didn't want an 80-hour work week or a male dominated work culture. After a series of work shops and gender specific training the **organization** changed. It became more feminine after it launched a series of workshops; and gender sensitivity training for all employees. Deloitte and Touche began offering more flexibility in its work week and minimizing out of town travel expectations for all its employees.

In 2000, just nine years later, the number of female partners had risen from 5% to 14% and the turnover had dropped, not just for females, but for males, down to 18% for both groups. Instead of costing money the program saved millions of dollars and the men, the new breed of workers, embraced the flexibility and improved, supportive work environment which the task force had developed¹². It just makes sense to have females proportionally represented at all levels of an organizations but this hasn't been a problem restricted to the private sector.

This has been a problem for the largest of the Canadian police agencies, the RCMP. This is an ironic twist--- was the RCMP that led the way for a paradigm shift in Canadian policing, when in March 1975 the first female troop graduated from Depot, the national training center in Regina, Saskatchewan.

The RCMP was not the first to employ females as police officers. What was so ground breaking in the RCMP's approach was, when it decided to employ women as regular members, it recruited, trained and deployed its male and female recruits on an equal basis. There were no gender restrictions placed on female policing career. The organizational expectation was that the female members, with time and experience, would rise through the ranks.

The scope of the duties with the policing community for the RCMP, probably the broadest in the world, was wide open for female members. What today sounds like common sense and fair play in 1975 was a bold step challenging some very entrenched professional gender assumptions and restrictions. The successes and failures of this social experiment could fill a book. As a matter of fact it did, mine.

The psychologists of the day descended on the first few female members and studies were done, stress, gender specific work expectations and occupational

¹²Deloitte Touche example taken from Linda Babcock and Sara Laschiever's book *Women Don't Ask* already been cited in this paper.

adjustments were monitored and documented. The most comprehensive survey of female Mounties was done in 1985 by the RCMP in British Columbia. Interestingly, in hindsight, it is easy to see the results and the comments from the 1985 RCMP survey support rather nicely Catherine Hakim's theory of "adaptive" dispositions and gender differences in career aspirations.

The optimistic conclusion to the study, which not only identified statistically significant differences in career rank aspirations and motivations but also dissatisfaction with a work environment which was male oriented, occasionally hostile and lacking understanding of female "issues" began...

"While time, a long time is the only vehicle which can bring about positive change..."

Thirty-four years later, with the benefit of time, I believe it can now be said that time alone did not change the RCMP as much as was expected or desired and time alone probably won't change other large organizations. Knowledge and commitment to use the knowledge will.

In April 2008, at a workshop for the annual Women in Law Enforcement Conference in Halifax, an RCMP Assistant Commissioner's opening statement acknowledged "***we know the RCMP is under-represented by females at the management levels of the Force***" and ended by appealing to the participants in the workshop to "***Give us solutions***" to the problem.

This was the most positive, progressive thing I have heard a senior member of the RCMP say since Deputy Commissioner Venner supported the "E" Division study back in 1985 by writing "***I think we should do something helpful and forward thinking***"¹³.

The RCMP has the desire to change and is not in denial about some of the areas it needs to change. It even has a powerful mandate and a large "Change Committee", which is currently reevaluating all of the operations within the RCMP. These are powerful first steps and I want very much to believe that good intentions will be translated into meaningful action, but I have been disappointed before. Still, the Halifax conference was a good indicator that the RCMP is trying to seek out new solutions to old problems. I was given a free hand to take the pulse of Canadian female members.

Half of the conference participants were Mounties; the other half were from other police and enforcement agencies such as Halifax Regional Police, Border Services, etc. I used the workshop portion to take the current pulse of females in enforcement and to test the validity of Catherine Hakim's theories; theories I knew to be true in the past based on my own career¹⁴ were confirmed as accurate and current by the female participants.

¹³ Quote taken from page 3 of the above noted study.

¹⁴ In my book *The Red Wall: a Woman in the RCMP*, I openly admitted to self-limiting my career numerous times when I turned down promotions and was one of if not the first female NCO to decline to write for promotion.

It was an interesting conference. Some new and progressive initiatives have been adopted by the RCMP and other enforcement agencies, however, many of the complaints and frustrations with their organizations were very similar to the problems of the past.

It was also self-awakening for some of the female participants to hear about the trends of other female professionals who like them were often satisfied with the work at lower levels within organizations because although they were capable of performing at higher levels, they were motivated by intangible rewards like job satisfaction, a the sense of social accomplishment and family-work balance; motivations that were stronger than the attraction of positional power and rank.

The participants also seemed in agreement with the Catherine Hakim theory of female percentage make up of 20-60-20. Interestingly every participant who spoke to me after the workshop/presentation self identified as an “adaptive”. I guess the other two groups of 20% were either too busy or didn’t care enough to come. The participants also conveyed that this new insight not only validated their past career choices but would help shape their future choices. Knowledge is power.

I believe a strong argument could be made that “Adaptives” could also be categorized as dispositional leaders. The *competitive* minds considering this paper’s suggestions are probably wondering “***Is one style of leadership more powerful than another? When push comes to shove is a positional leader better than an “adaptive” or “dispositional” leader?***” I came across what I believe is an example of such a conflict.

In Barbara Annis’s book *Same Words Different Language*, she recounts the workshop which “turned her whole world upside down,” forever changing her view of what needs to change for women to achieve positional power position within organizations. It wasn’t a workshop she *took*, it was one she was *teaching*.

Barbara had achieved remarkable positional leadership for the early 80’s when she climbed the corporate ladder of Sony. She became so passionate about helping other women duplicate her success she began running work shops to share the strategy which had lead to her success. Barbara’s early workshops were based on an assumption that women need to change and would be willing to behave like men in order to achieve positional positions of power.

Barbara seemed to be duplicating her corporate success in her workshops until a female (I suggest, an adaptive or dispositional leader) in the workshop rejected her strategy and didn’t back down. To Barbara’s surprise the rest of the workshop participants aligned themselves with the challenger. It took a night of soul searching to realize the participants were not only right, they represented the majority of working women. Barbara Annis admitted to herself that “I had been getting it all wrong, along¹⁵”, and she became a pioneer in the field of gender differences.

¹⁵ Barbara Annis *Same Words Different Language* p3 2003 Penguin Press

I believe for meaningful and lasting change to happen both the organization and the females need to change behaviors. I further believe the organization has to demonstrate it is committed to meaningful change before women will trust the process enough to engage in it.

In May, 2008, I requested statistics on percentages of females at the different rank structures in within the Canadian policing community to see if the trend of bottom heavy female percentages was consistent for Canadian Police agencies outside of the RCMP.

Members of the IAWP (International Association of Women in Police) in Canada from various police forces provided statistics which I have included as Appendix "A" at the end of this paper. This is by no means a complete study but it does raise some interesting questions such as, "have smaller police forces done a better job adapting to female employees?" or "are female police officers more comfortable taking positional leadership roles within the organizational structure of smaller police agencies?" A much more complete survey would be required to answer these questions.

An point of interest was created by the contribution of S/Sgt Shelly Ballard of Saskatoon PD, who was not present for the Halifax Conference and unaware of Hakim's theory of adaptives self-limiting career paths, when she volunteered, in defense of what she thought was a lack of female members as positional leaders that,...

"There are several female sergeants who are certainly in a position to be able to write for S/Sgt (positions) but have chosen not to as they are enjoying the investigative positions they are in."

This brings us back to the three a solutions to the projected loss of positional leaders in the Police Sector Council's 2005 update report alluded to earlier in this paper

- ***We could slow the retirement rate.*** If we could promote qualified, seasoned "adaptives" who have opted out of the promotion stream earlier, retaining their cultural knowledge, skill and experience; and if we identify and approach them correctly; I believe in organizations such as the RCMP, where pension pay is based on the rate of pay for the last years of service the "adaptives" may be made to see the logic of future financial stability which positional leadership levels may provide so long as their personal and professional priorities are not sacrificed. Reasons such as raising children which may have caused them to self-limit their careers may no longer exist. Children grow. The organization may wish to remove some barriers to job share in the last years through amending pension policy. Some females may still find part time attractive to their life style while still being capable of performing at a much higher level, or some current positional leader may want to ease into retirement through job share if they could be sure they would not be penalized financially. The police organization may wish to rebalance the senior management organizational structure to attach higher rank to operational, not just, administrative roles. In most Canadian police agencies the further up the rank structure the more administrative the duties. "Adaptives" appear to find little satisfaction in "pushing paper."

- **Ensure our current workforce of already trained and skilled professionals are suitably employed**-. It should be easy to identify members, through historic assessments and 360 performance reviews, who are extremely capable high level workers who have remained in positions because of job satisfaction and life style choices alone. Other reliable personnel tests that rate “the internal locus of control” and identify people who believe their fate is outside of their control(women traditionally have much higher scores than men) can be used to provide counseling or training to encourage employees to aim higher. The importance of workshops, training, career counseling and active, organized peer support to achieve meaningful results cannot be overstated.

- And finally, if a search was made for workers who were motivated by something other than the size of a pay cheque . There is ample evidence even within this paper to support the assumption that females are not as motivated by pay rates as men.

Opening leadership positions to “Adaptives” or dispositional leaders is cost effective in another ways as well. “Adaptives” don’t need to be taught basic leadership skills; they have already demonstrated them throughout their working lives, through their passion in service for others, their selfless risk of their financial future in that service and their internal values and ethics, which resisted the temptation to put self above community by selling out for more money or a better position. The organization has just not recognized or rewarded those skills in the past, either ignorant or indifferent to the fact that their coworkers already look to these lower level employees for leadership.

Developing leaders is more involved than simply identifying them even if their peers already look to them for leadership. Training and development will be required to ensue both the new leaders and the organization participate in the metamorphosis. The organizations and their policies will have to be reshaped to accommodate the different priorities and values the new leaders will bring, and the new leaders will have to adjust to their new roles within the organization.

It is my opinion “Adaptives” or dispositional leaders fit the definition of the new model of leadership which Peter Urs Bender identified as “leadership from within¹⁶”. The problem has been that many large organizations, agencies and national governments have only recognized and rewarded the old style of leadership, “leadership from without”. However, fully exploring this theory is beyond the scope of this paper.

I will leave the reader with this prediction. The greatest benefit from recognizing and rewarding a new style of leader, “leaders from within” will be when the **face of leadership** for large organizations’ changes. The new face will be easy to recognize, since a proportionally approximate number of those faces will be female.

¹⁶ *Leadership from Within* by Peter Urs Bender published in Canada by the Achievement Group 2002

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Note: I have made reference to Dr. Hakim’s “preference theory” in this paper. She has written a number of books and academic articles, and I intend to read her works in the immediate future beginning with; Hakim, C. (2003a) *Models of the Family in Modern Societies: Ideals and Realities*, Albersthot:Ashagate.