

Gender Inclusive Leadership: A Dominican Model of Values, Relational Authenticity, and Dominican Presence

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Abstract

Despite dramatic changes in gender roles during the 20th and 21st centuries, women continue to lack access to powerful leadership positions in comparison with men. We examine four realms for possible explanations to this gender inequity: leadership definitions and theory, values, authenticity, and Sharmar's theory of presencing. We examine whether leadership definitions and theories are gender neutral, and we explore the idea that men and women act upon different values in their leadership roles. We compare the Dominican values of truth, justice, compassion, partnership, and community to globally ubiquitous values as a means of exploring the differences between male and female centered values. The article outlines the using of values, authenticity, and presencing in leadership programs to bring a more inclusive view of leadership to the forefront. We propose that a more inclusive foundation for each of these attributes--values, authenticity, and presence--be based on the Sinsinawa Dominican's model.

Keywords: Inclusive Leadership, Values, Gender, Leadership

1. Introduction

We all know good leadership when we experience it. Making this statement leads us to wonder if our beliefs about good leadership are a mirror-like reflection of our own attributes, dispositions, and needs. Some of our knowledge about leadership--like anyone else's knowledge--comes through personal experience, and some knowledge is acquired through reading and studying what makes a good leader. Sadly, most of our professional experiences with leaders have been less than stellar. In fact, between us, we can only think of three leaders with whom we have worked whom we would consider exemplary leaders. We believe that exemplary leaders base their actions and thoughts on their values, form their leadership through a sense of authenticity, and rely on their ability to deeply and meaningfully study, reflect, and act. We propose that a more inclusive foundation for each of these attributes--values, authenticity, and presence--be based on the Sinsinawa Dominican's model.

2. Leadership Definitions and Theories

As we set out to explain and explore our experiences of leadership we began with a fundamental definition of leadership. Kenneth Leithwood (2004) notes that at the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions: providing direction and exercising influence. According to this definition, leaders are responsible for setting a vision and ensuring that vision is carried out. It is the differing ways that each of these functions can be carried out that distinguishes the diverse models of leadership.

Howell (2013) follows the concept that great leaders are born, not made, and reviews the traits of great leaders. These leadership traits are immutable characteristics of an individual and do not change from situation to situation. Kouzes and Posner (2012) studied desirable traits of leaders across cultures and genders. These traits are honesty and competency as well as forward looking and inspiring. Following the logic of these researchers, there are some among us who possess personal traits that enable them to naturally gravitate toward assuming leadership positions. These people seek to create a vision. Moreover, they possess the requisite power and influence to set up and control their organization in order to have that vision realized. Taken together, these definitions lack a nuanced understanding of the historic, political, social, or cultural context in which women leaders must operate.

As we examined the definitions of leadership, we wondered about the influence of these definitions on both theory and practice. In modern times, an early theory of leadership and the one that has therefore garnered the most attention in the research is called “the great man theory of leadership” (Borgatta, Bales, & Couch, 1954). The great man theory follows from the notion that history is generally written from the perspective of “great men”. The great man theory provides a foundation for research in the area of leadership. Burns (1978) is often credited with impacting the course of the scholarship of leading. Yet, to a large degree his work focuses on transformational leadership by chronicling the lives of great male leaders and applying the psychology of the day to personality formation.

The foundation for leadership definitions and theory came from a male perspective: primarily conducted by men and primarily about men. This notion prompted us to wonder how much of what we know about leadership today is grounded in male values. We also wondered about the effect of that viewpoint on the more varied leadership landscape we work in today. While examining the foundational concepts of leadership and the concomitant definitions and theories, one of the issues we considered is the possible difference between leaders who are men and leaders who are women.

We began by asking the following questions: Are there leadership traits that differ between men and women? If so, how do those differences play out in leadership situations? Are there leadership theories that transcend gender? Do men and women act upon different values? Do men and women maintain authenticity differently? Are men and women equally equipped to envision a new paradigm without over-reliance on the past?

We began to answer these questions by looking at three realms: values, authenticity, and Dominican presence. By values, we mean the internal compass that guides one’s decisions, promotes a future vision, and aids in reflection. In addition, those compass points in the direction of normative ethics—including deontological, consequential, and virtue ethics. Authenticity refers to honoring the self so that one’s values align internally and externally. Finally, Dominican presence refers to the ability of a person to study, reflect, and act deeply and meaningfully in order to envision a new paradigm.

3. Women’s Values and Leadership

It is our contention that the current definitions and theories of leadership are less true for women than for men. Perhaps because of women’s gender socialization, ability to bear and consequences of bearing children, responsibility in caring for family members, and their apparent natural inclination to connect, we posit that women’s values—and therefore their leadership—are inherently different from men’s values and leadership. We also suggest that regardless of gender, leaders should also have knowledge of and access to the ways in which these more inclusive values are used in leadership situations. Therefore, a new exploration of female values and leadership is relevant and necessary.

In the United States, empirical studies demonstrate the persistent and long-standing attitudinal differences between men and women. In particular, three areas of difference are apparent: social compassion, traditional morality, and support of equal rights for women, gays, and lesbians. Eagly, Diekmann, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Koenig (2004) analyzed data from the General Social Survey (GSS). This survey annually gathered interview responses on a variety of attitudes over a 25 year period from 1973-1998. Many items were replicated for the approximately 1,700 people interviewed for each year of the survey. Eagly et al. (2004) noted that over time, women were more likely than men to endorse policies that were socially compassionate and traditionally moral. The researchers also calculated that the attitude gap between men and women was greater for social compassion than it was for traditional morality. Additionally, women supported equal rights for women, gays and lesbians at a higher rate than men (Eagly et al., 2004). This study indicates a persistent difference in values between men and women.

Research into values, however, often harkens back to male-centered spiritual and religious traditions, including Greek philosophy. For example, Authentic Leadership assumes values originate from a construct of Greek philosophy: “know thyself” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). However, as Miller (2012) and Gilligan (1982) asserted, understanding the self is gendered and realized through connection with others. Freeman and Auster (2011) argue that the self is a “poetic self” who endeavors to know one’s self, past, connections, purposes, and aspirations. In a study of virtues and character in ethical decision making, Crossan, Mazutis, and Seijts (2013) pursue defining virtue in ethical decision making, as opposed to deontology or consequentialism. Crossan et al. (2013) draw upon Plato and Aristotle’s view of the virtuous mean. They use this concept to differentiate between a dearth or an excess of virtue. For example, a lack of courage might be cowardice, an excess of courage might be recklessness. However, this virtuous mean is understood as an individualized virtuous mean.

An examination of global virtues lacks inclusivity as well. Dahlsgaard, Peterson, and Seligman (2005) examined philosophical and religious traditions from around the globe and across time. They looked at major texts from Buddhism and Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism, and Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The authors found that there were six core virtues among all the traditions: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence. One could argue, however, that each of these traditions is male centered. Each of these traditions was founded by men, interpreted by men, and adopted by societies that include women. This is not to say that women cannot be virtuous according to these six core values. However, we contend that because of the male dominance in creating these traditions, the delineation of virtues flowing from these traditions is in turn male dominated. Therefore, women are at a natural disadvantage in that world.

From our perspective, it is this disadvantage that creates inequity. Much research has been done in the area of income disparity in the United States. Here, women comprise 27% of chief executives in both public and private sectors in the U.S., yet comprise 47% of the total labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Full-time working women in the United States earn about 82% of their male counterparts (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). On average, women make 77 cents for every dollar a male makes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). The Association of American University Women (2013) found that when controlling for employment sector, college major and type of institution, grades, geographic area and marital status, women still earned 7% less than men one year after graduation. Additionally, they found a 12% gap 10 years after graduation.

Nonetheless, women continue to make gains in pay equity and in obtaining leadership positions. Yet, one could argue that women have a more difficult time both in securing positions of leadership, cracking that glass ceiling, and in effectively executing those positions. For example, studies conducted to determine if there was bias against women with children in hiring showed significant bias, while men sometimes benefited from having children (Correl, Benard, & In, 2007). When in leadership positions, women find themselves caught between being too feminine or too masculine, with error on either side being detrimental (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Even when balancing between masculine and feminine character traits, women are judged as less effective than men when employed in male dominated roles and masculine settings (Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Chin, 2010). Regardless the reasons, approximately 30% of all discrimination cases are based on sex; furthermore, this percentage has not changed over the last 16 years (EEOC, 2013).

Despite these drawbacks for women in the workplace, companies with women in leadership positions have shown to be more profitable. In a survey of 679 businesses listed in Fortune magazine, Krishnan & Park, (2005) found there was a significant positive relationship between organizational performance and the percentage of women in top management teams. A 19 year study of top Fortune 500 companies (Adler, 2001) showed that companies with the best record of promoting women to executive positions were between 18 and 69% more profitable than the median firms by industry.

Perhaps because of women’s gender socialization, ability to bear and consequences of bearing children, responsibility in caring for family members, and their apparent natural inclination to connect, women’s values are inherently different from men’s values. As women continue to assume more leadership positions than before, regardless of gender, leaders should also have knowledge of and access to how these more inclusive values are used in leadership situations.

4. Comparing Dominican Values and Ubiquitous Values

We propose a focus on the values of truth, justice, compassion, partnership, and community to begin a study of female centered values as a new way to approach leadership.

These values derive from Catholic social teaching, and were selected by sisters from the Order of Preachers, the name carried by members of the Dominican order founded in 1216. These values serve as guideposts for the College they founded. These five values form the bedrock of our College's mission. The College clearly and openly states its mission as being rooted in the Dominican tradition and seeks to engage students within a community of learners who are committed toward building a just and compassionate world. In addition, the College educates students for meaningful personal and professional lives of ethical leadership, service, and a lifelong search for truth. (Mission, Identity, Vision, 2013). The values frame the mission of the College and guide the outcomes of the Doctoral Program in Leadership. We believe our students internalize these values and continually use them in the scholarship of leading. Those values are:

- Truth – *Life, Dignity, and Equality of the Human Person*. Every person is created with infinite value, equally worthy of care and respect. *Relationship to the Universe*. All of creation is in a sacred relationship; humans have a special call to live that relationship in reverence and humility.
- Community – *Social Nature of the Human Person*. The dignity and worth of human persons are most fully realized in the context of relationships with others in the community. *Solidarity of the Human Family*. Human beings are part of one family and share responsibility for one another.
- Justice – *The Common Good*. The social systems and institutions of a just community evolve to pursue the common good: that which benefits all people. *Human Development and Progress*. True development enhances the human spirit while respecting and promoting the dignity of all creation.
- Compassion – *Concern for the Poor and Vulnerable*. Those who are most vulnerable or who benefit least from existing social institutions merit first consideration in our circle of concern.
- Partnership – *Sacredness of Work*. Work is the expression of each person's gifts and achievements, through which each contributes to the common good. *Role of Leadership/Governance*. All people have the right and the responsibility to participate in political life in pursuit of the common good. *Subsidiarity*. Dialogue and participation are necessary at all levels of community decision-making, with decisions entrusted at the most elemental level of responsibility and authority are appropriate.

If we look at these five values, we see numerous differences between them and the list of ubiquitous or universal values Dahlsgaard et al. (2005) derived in their study. The first Dominican value—truth—connects with Dahlsgaard et al.'s (2005) virtue of transcendence because the Dominican value emphasizes one's relationship to the universe. The Edgewood College Dominican Mission Committee's (ECDMC) description of truth goes further and asks fundamental questions of identity and authenticity. The Dominican value of truth does not imply empirical evidence, but rather is articulated through these thoughts stated here by the Mission Committee (ECDMC, 2011):

The search for truth integrates all ways of knowing and reflects intellect, spirit, imagination, and heart...The search for truth is an inherently communal endeavor; our search is broadened and deepened through meaningful relationships with others...As we engage with others, we have a responsibility to dialogue in a spirit of love, hospitality, and civility...And we ask: Who am I and who could I become?What are the needs and opportunities of the world?What is my role in building a just and compassionate society?

This Dominican value of truth has much to do with equality and relationships with others and the self, two characteristics that are absent in the list of ubiquitous values formulated by Dahlsgaard et al. (2005).

One overlapping value is justice. However, this concept is interpreted differently between the six ubiquitous virtues and the Dominican values. In the Dahlsgaards, et al (2005) study, the authors define justice as "Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life; examples include fairness, leadership, and citizenship or teamwork" (p. 205). By contrast, the Dominican value of justice expresses this way:

As a Dominican college, our core mission values impel us to study the needs of our times and promote changes that ensure justice for all people and the well-being of all creation. To promote justice, the social systems and institutions of our community should pursue the common good: that which benefits everyone—especially the invisible and powerless among us. As an institution of learning, we recognize education for all is the foundation for living a full human life (ECDMC, 2012).

By looking at these two interpretations of the same concept, justice, we see the former as hierarchical and linear and the latter as circular and even. For example, by examining the word “citizenship” one need only tune in to the current debate about immigration in America to realize that the concept is hierarchical: one group with power would like to control and limit access to said group. Conversely, the Dominican value of justice places the issue of the common good and benefits for all above benefits for some.

The remaining Dominican values—community, partnership, and compassion are inherently “other” centered and emphasize responsibility. While responsibility is not a cornerstone of the six virtues from Dahlgaard et al. (2005) we believe that responsibility for others is not, as is so often charged, an invitation for dependence. Perhaps, because taken together, these three values also stress participation: participation in dialogue, in political life, and in work.

Three of Dahlgaard et al.’s (2005) virtues do not appear to overlap with these Dominican values: temperance, courage, and wisdom. We see the Dominican values as being relational—relational to the self and to others. The values even go so far as to state that “All of creation is in a sacred relationship” (Edgewood College Values Card, 2013). However, we see the interpretation of these values as vastly different from the virtues of temperance, courage, and wisdom, since the latter are individual commodities. Therefore, we categorize the Dominican values as being more feminine and the six ubiquitous virtues as being more masculine.

We do not believe that women leave their values at the office door. Research has demonstrated persistent gender gaps in social compassion, traditional morality, and support for the rights of women, gays and lesbians. Because these gaps remain significant over time, Eagly (2005) suggests that “as women gain access to roles, they may not become ideologically equivalent to men but instead act on those value commitments that distinguish them from their male counterparts” (p. 467). This idea supports the notion of authenticity in leadership. However, a definition of authenticity that accurately portrays women’s reality is essential.

4.1 Authenticity

The subject of authenticity has roots in Greek philosophy, and evolves over time. Lindholm (2013) provided historical context to the concept of authenticity. He wrote that the notion of authenticity emerges from the migration in the Middle Ages of individuals from the countryside to urban areas. As people removed themselves from their traditional homes and insular world, they relocated in urban areas. Then we see a rise of the notion of sincerity. Individuals began to rely on new methods of judging the inherent goodness of a person or good. They could no longer rely on rank, history, or family connections. This migration coincided with the breakdown of the feudal system. With the breakdown, the Great Chain of Being also began to crumble.

The subsequent rise of Protestantism fueled the development of the notion of authenticity. He notes that many of those notions of authenticity were predicated on the interpretation of divinity by a number of theological denominations. The prominence of reason during the Enlightenment led Descartes and others to seek truth through science. As a response, men like Rousseau began to realize that to use only reason is impossible, and philosophized that men in a natural state, unencumbered by social conventions, were authentic. Lindholm (2013) continues to describe Nietzsche’s development of the idea of expressive authenticity through a re-creation of the self and what he called a will to power. Others following Nietzsche, like Sartre, eschewed convention and focused authenticity on man in a natural state of being, responsible for himself alone.

Several leadership researchers have refined the idea of authenticity. Kernis and Goldman (2006) support this core philosophical action by delineating four aspects of building a sense of self, yet only one of these concerns others. Further, Avolio & Gardner (2005) ask a leader to “know thyself,” and define authenticity as a connection to the self and not necessarily to others. However, this request does not provide an avenue for a female leader to be herself because women leaders have different values and therefore different leadership challenges.

Leadership requires followers. Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, and Avolio (2010) refined their concept of authenticity in leader and follower development by encouraging actions by leaders that relate to the self: self-awareness, self-regulation, and positive modeling. If a leader only needs to be authentic then subordinates will follow and assume the same values as the leader. Ford and Harding (2011) question Authentic Leadership in relation to its undifferentiated values between the organization, the leaders, and the follower. Further, they question the ability of organizations to support diverse viewpoints. Ford and Harding’s questions are particularly relevant when considering the different followership challenges that female leaders face.

In a study on the perceived effectiveness of feminine vs. masculine styles of leadership, when the leader's identity was hidden, a feminine style of leadership was perceived as more effective and as having a more positive effect on subordinates (Embry, Padgett, & Caldwell, 2008). In another study by Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard (2008) female leaders needed to exhibit both masculine (i.e. Strength) and feminine (i.e. Sensitivity) characteristics to be perceived as effective, while men needed only to exhibit masculine characteristics. Researchers note that women face different home and work challenges than men (Eagly and Chin, 2010; Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Therefore, realizing that women have challenges to authenticity that do not exist for men is an important shift in leadership theory.

4.2 Presencing

Three important vehicles for change within an organization are information gathering, reflection, and action. Scharmer (2005, 2009) writes about the concept of presencing for leaders. Instead of reacting solely on past experiences, organizations and their leaders can develop this capability by engaging in a process that allows them to learn from the future as it emerges. Scharmer labels this dynamic, evolving new learning capacity "presencing." The term refers to the capacity for sensing, embodying, and enacting emerging futures. Researchers such as Shields and Wheatley posit a similar process. Shields (2013) frames her transformative leadership process as deconstructing assumptions and worldviews, and then reconstructing a more socially just educational setting. Wheatley (2010) uses the paradigms of emerging science to create new worldviews. The Dominicans utilize two reflective processes: the first process is Study, Reflect, Act; the second is to connect learning, beliefs, and actions.

Each strategy listed above encourages connection. Scharmer's (2005, 2009) model advocates a connection to the source of inspiration and will; Shields (2013) asks educational leaders to connect with students and parents and community to deconstruct current inequities. Wheatley (2010) advocates connecting new scientific paradigms to complex problems, such as applying quantum physics or chaos theory to current human issues. The Dominican reflective processes may be simpler than the other processes, but when the Dominican values rooted in reflection and beliefs, the process can be very powerful. Therefore, the process can be a means to develop deep and meaningful change as an individual and as an organization. The Dominican values and reflective processes, when embodied by leaders and when used as the mission to drive an organization, could be used as a mirror like reflection of the present, casting a touchstone into the future.

5. Using Values, Authenticity, and Presencing in a new Ph.D. Program in Leadership

A transparent and direct use of the Dominican values and a presencing process in a Doctoral program that requires leaders to reflect on their performance in leadership positions will bring a more inclusive view of leadership to the forefront. We believe the differences between more feminine and more masculine values, gendered challenges to authenticity, and embodying the reflective process as described above has implications for leadership styles and effectiveness. This values-centered leadership dilemma is front and center in our minds. We are in the unique position of being able to help create the vision for a new Ph.D. program focused on leadership that will be based on the Dominican values. It is an exciting position to be in to help create this more inclusive vision not only for women, but for all future leaders.

The Ph.D. in Leadership at Edgewood College is grounded in the Dominican Values that guide our institution: truth, community, justice, compassion, and partnership. We believe that the Dominican Values have the potential to dramatically and positively alter the society in which we live, and we envision leaders whose personal and professional lives align with these values.

The program aims to cultivate leaders who view complex issues through many lenses and act courageously and effectively to create a more abundant, just, compassionate, and peaceful world. The College's values create the backbone content classes (for example: Compassion in Leading: Enhancing Human Equity). We also use a cohort system to enhance and fulfill the value of community and partnership. The cohort community is an integral part of our program is the visible commitment to building and nurturing family and community as our students progress through the course sequence and graduate as a cohort. Members of the cohort learning community support one another and serve as critical friends who challenge and hold each other accountable for successfully completing the program and for producing meaningful and sound research. In keeping with the value of partnership, our leadership program provides multiple layers of support for students from the time they enter the program through the research sequence and dissertation publication to graduation.

Students are supported in multiple ways by multiple professionals throughout their journey in the program, including a faculty liaison, professional mentors, and advising community that consists of students, faculty advisors, writing coaches, readers, and working and retired professionals, so as to deconstruct the traditional notion of isolation in doctoral study. The Edgewood College Doctoral Program in Leadership Studies creates a space where critical thought and Dominican Values meet the questions and issues of our time.

6. Conclusion

Leadership must change as our world changes. As more women assume leadership positions, we must look at women's values, challenges to authenticity, and the role of presencing in creating a just and compassionate world. When we do so, we can begin to ask better questions. These questions are questions of heart, spirit, and imagination. The questions must link us more profoundly so that we continue on a path which Vaclav Havel described in a different era:

Consciousness precedes Being, and not the other way around, as the Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility. Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed, be it ecological, social, demographic, or a general breakdown of civilization, will be unavoidable. (Havel, February 21, 1990, <http://thomas.loc.gov>)

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