Women CEOs: A Thematic Analysis of the Construction of Leader Identity

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Abstract

How women leaders view themselves and how society at large views gender and leadership is an ongoing area of study across many disciplines where it continues to evolve and develop. This study aims to add insight to this growing area of scholarship by investigating the construction of women leaders’ identity. Through an examination of the discourses that currently prevail in the wider USA media, and the discursive practices presented in the text of short interviews of sixteen Fortune 500 company women CEOs, findings suggest that the discursive, social construction of women leaders’ identity is an ongoing negotiation between several identities: that of leader i.e., one which is often associated with masculine characteristics; that of gendered leader i.e., “feminine”; and lastly, that of transformational leader where the discourses of leader and gender merge and speak to a type of leadership generally viewed favorably for its “feminine-type” attributes. This paper will also argue that the prevailing ideologies of what is considered leader continue to be problematic for women leaders’ identity development and thus for their advancement to higher-level positions in organizational life.

Introduction

Women in high-ranking business leadership positions in the USA have been making gains over the last twenty years, but the going is slow. Overall, women’s share of the US labor force has remained relatively steady since the 1990s at around 46 percent (US Department of Labor, 2012). However according to the 2014 Fortune 1000 list of women CEOs, women currently hold only 5.4 percent of Fortune 1000 CEO positions and only 5.2 percent of the Fortune 500 CEO positions (Catalyst 2014a). These percentages translate to only 26 CEOs positions of Fortune 500 companies and only 28 CEO positions of Fortune 1000 companies (Catalyst, 2014b). In addition, though the number of women holding board seats of Fortune 500 companies has doubled since 1995, women still hold only a little over 16 percent (Catalyst, 2013c) of all seats. Currently in
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the USA, men continue to dominate the positions of power, authority and decision-making of corporate America. As statistics show, gender bias is an on-going challenge and is a very real one for women who hope to gain positions of power and authority in organizational life. Several explanations have been offered for this large discrepancy which include structural and psychological barriers as well as social/cultural barriers.

*Structural Barriers*

Some structural barriers that have been identified in several studies include barriers such as the lack of corporate support for family life, an underrepresentation of women in organizational power, the lack of appropriate mentorship and role models, certain practices and structures that tend to support men’s experiences, obligations that demand excessive hours and workloads, and limited access to informal networks, to name a few (Ely, R., & Rhode, D., 2010). Lyness and Thompson (2000) for example, found that some corporate advancement practices lead to differing professional experiences of men and women with women receiving fewer overseas assignments and more often being placed in relationships of less authority than their male peers. These types of organizational practices can hamper and even deter women from higher organizational positons.

*Psychological Issues - Self-views*

In addition to structural issues, psychological issues can also pose a challenge for women leaders. One of the more well-studied issues pertains to self-views of gender and leadership. For organizational advancement to leadership roles, Karelaia and Guillén (2014), for example, found that women may struggle with self-views of gender and leadership. Their research suggests the importance of reducing the perceived conflict between gender and leadership to a perception that increasingly views leadership and gender as compatible. This type of self-view, they claim, is more likely to increase a woman’s psychological well-being as well as her motivation to lead and thereby is more likely to encourage women to view leadership as an attractive goal rather than as a duty. Lord and Hall (2005) in their study on identity and development of leadership skill describe a critical process that involves the integration of a set of leadership skills with an identity of that of leader claiming that, “Ones self-view as a leader not only influences proactive attempts to gain leadership experience, it may also be an important cue to access knowledge related to leadership” (p. 611).
Social/Cultural Challenges
Culturally derived attitudinal factors that perpetuate gender stereotypes as well as leader stereotypes continue to challenge women’s advancement. In one recent study, stereotypical beliefs about how women leaders should behave were shown to influence their promotion to senior management positions. This study even argued that female leaders would be “wise to supplement” the inspirational motivation behaviors (a leadership behavior ascribed more often to male leaders) with individualized consideration behaviors (those perceived as more feminine) in order to “fulfill prescriptive gender norms and avoid backlash” (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly & Johnnesen-Schmidt, 2011, p. 19). Another study found that for women to be perceived as effective leaders they needed to blend what is considered feminine and masculine behaviors and “paid a higher penalty” more than their male counterparts when they were perceived as not having done so (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). In addition, general attitudinal perceptions of what a leader “is” still lean heavily on stereotypical male characteristics such as authoritative, aggressive and independent, to name a few (Hippel, C., Walsh, A. & Zouroudis, A., 2011) coupled with the continuing perception of think leader think male which has been demonstrated though many additional studies. Stereotypical perceptions of gender and leader continue, in other words, to add to a woman’s challenge of obtaining leadership positions.

Leader Identity/ Transformational Leadership
Studies show that one of the key issues in regards to nurturing women leaders rests, at least partly, with any organization’s ability to help women develop the skills necessary for leadership and with this, importantly, those skills that will help nurture leader identity (Ely & Rhode, 2010; Karelaia & Guillén, 2014). In order for women to gain leadership skills, they must be given greater responsibilities and opportunities in organizational life; for it is these that have the potential to serve as the formative experiences for leader identity development: “as leaders gain experience, these identities become more firmly established” (Ely & Rhode, 2010, p.391). Having a sense of leader identity, in other words is central; one must view oneself as a leader, as well as be viewed as a leader in order to be a leader. This socially-constructed view of leadership and identity can be one of the keys for understanding these challenges more clearly. As identity plays a central role in leadership development (e.g., Karelaia & Guillén, 2014; Lord & Hall, 2005), for women, leader identity development can be problematic as gender identity is not consistent with the leader identity as leader is typically associated and often perceived as those more often aligned and identified with stereotypical masculine traits (e.g., Ely & Rhode, 2010; Kark et al., 2012; Agars, 2004); traits that are at odds with those perceived as feminine. And as Ely and
Rhode further states, “With little support or direction, a woman leader must convey the right blend of masculinity and femininity – to an audience that is deeply ambivalent about her authority” (2012, p. 392).

Interestingly, an approach to leadership that women often tend to bring to organizational life, termed transformational leadership, embraces many of the attributes and skills typically, or traditionally associated with feminine stereotypes such as relationship-building, communication and engagement (Hippel, C., Walsh, A. & Zouroudis, A., 2011 and Miller, K., 2012). Research has found, in fact, that this approach can produce some very real advantages including improved organizational performance and even bottom line economic gains (McDonagh, K.J. & Paris, N.M., 2012). This approach then provides an interesting meeting place for both “feminine” and “leader” identities as leader attributes valued here align more closely with “feminine” attributes. However, though femininity traits were important, the “masculine” traits tended to be equally if not more important for women’s leadership success (Kark et al. 2012). Though women leaders were not to deny feminine traits, nor were they to benefit by not also “blending” typically masculine leadership traits. This “androgynous” style (mixing femininity and masculinity) seemed to be especially important for women leaders and for those who did not do so and thus were not perceived as “androgynous” “paid a higher penalty” (Kark et al. 2012, p. 620).

Given these three identities, feminine leader (gendered), and leader (generally seen “masculine”) and transformational leader, it is then interesting to explore women leaders and investigate how women leaders construct their own leader identity and how these identities are constructed in a wider social context.

Methods

In order to explore women leader identity, language itself serves as important resource well in line with the perspective that identity is constructed in discourse. Though leadership psychologist have greatly contributed to leadership studies, a social, cultural and linguistic approach can broaden and enrich our understanding (Fairhurst, 2007), especially in regards to leader identity. The discourses presented in a leader’s text or talk, the way leadership is talked about or referred to, can all add insight; identity can be simultaneously expressed, influenced and (co)constructed through language use. This paper takes a social constructionist perspective which sees identity as more than just an outward discursive expression (in talk or text) of the “hidden” truer inner self. As Benwell & Stokoe (2006), point out from a constructionist perspective, construction of identity is one not merely reflected in discourse but is “actively, ongoingly, dynamically
constituted in discourse” (p. 4). Identity, they claim takes place in discourse and is a “public phenomenon, a performance or construction that is interpreted by other people” (p. 4). Given this perspective then, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach provides the opportunity to study identity by embracing the notion of discourse in the widest sense, employing analysis of textual features (to tease out themes) of micro data which are then critically examined within a broader social/cultural frame of the macro data in order to provide for a richer and fuller interpretation and analysis. Specifically, for the micro data, short career advice interviews of the Fortune 500s, 19 women CEOs from CNN Money (Career advice from Fortune 500’s, (2012) provided a uniform set of comparable data, all contained direct quotes, and all focused on career advice for women: “With plenty of glass in their hair, the female CEOs of Fortune 500 companies have doled out anecdotes and advice during their tenures. Here are some of their best practices” (Appendix 1, Fortune 500, 2012). From the 19 interviews, three were discarded as they were not relevant to this investigation. These CEO interview blurbs provided the micro data for linguistic analysis which was conducted by teasing out the themes that presented in the text and aided with the application of other linguistic tools such as vocabulary and presupposition. Macro (media communications) data was also examined as it provides the necessary context from which the micro data can be further analyzed, interpreted and explained (Benwell, B. & Stokoe, E., 2006). For the macro data, five articles from between 2011-2012 containing the key words women leader were chosen at random though the news search engine Factiva. Three articles were general news articles and two were announcements about leadership forums (workshops) for potential women leaders.

Findings and Analysis

Themes in Micro-data
Examination of the micro data (Appendix 1) uncovered three main themes as shown in Graphic 1. Several CEO interview blurbs revealed several themes strengthening the various thematic classifications. The analytical tools of presuppositions and vocabulary greatly aided in these findings as seen in Graphic 1 and the themes that emerged were: discomfort, uncertainty but important for growth, with four CEOs quotes falling into this theme; “Transformational Leader “feminine leadership” found in five CEOs interviews; and the largest observed theme found in the interviews of six CEOs, gender is a problem to overcome.
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Graphic 1: Thematic Classification of Micro Data

Discomfort, uncertainty, but important for growth
As the Graphic 1 illustrates, several of the women leaders expressed that leader position is in some way uncomfortable, difficult and even scary; however, also noting that discomfort is important for growth and for developing leader identity. These women leaders expressed being in a “zone you don’t know”, “...looking over our shoulders and worrying what’s on the next horizon”, “be willing to accept new challenges and opportunities outside your comfort zone,” and one CEO expressed, “Wow, what I have gotten myself into this time?” These statements highlight the notion that one may feel uncomfortable in order to “grow” as a leader; in other words, there is a certain amount of expected discomfort and uncertainty that accompanies their leader position.

Transformational leader/ feminine leader
Transformational leadership is often linked with more stereotypical “feminine” behaviors. So when stereotypical female attributes were considered, such as nurturing, caring, relationship-building (openness), to name a few, several CEOs quotes unveiled this theme. In one such instance, the CEO of PepsiCo chose to talk about a company that “cares” emphasizing corporate responsibility beyond more than just the bottom line: “Performance with purpose only means deliver great performance while keeping an eye to all stakeholders.....If you weave purpose into the way you think about your performance, that’s now part of the business model.” Another of the women CEO leaders stressed the importance of openness, which is intrinsic to relationship-building, and an important accepted component of transformational leadership. When speaking of her leadership style, one CEO leader emphasized openness in combination with an emotional positivity that should accompany it, “And you have to do it openly, you have to be visible and you have to do it enthusiastically.” Transformational leadership also describes a leader behavior that encompasses vision-building and role-modeling to achieve desired follower practice. A CEO stated that, “The fastest way to create culture change is to start acting the way you wish the company
would start to act, and very soon it starts to catch on,” and another CEO noted, “You light the way for others to follow.”

Gender as a problem to overcome
This theme highlighted the struggles of women leader identity where gender was sometimes seen as a disadvantage to leadership and as a problem to overcome. Gender as seen as problem to overcome was especially pronounced in one case where one CEO felt it necessary to even defend femininity by directly, and specifically challenging some leadership traits that are stereotypically male: “Ambition is a part of femininity,” she claimed. “So you can be ambitious and you can be feminine and that’s both okay.” Several CEO quotes highlighted the fact that women leaders often felt they were being scrutinized more thoroughly than their male counterparts simply because they were female. One CEO stated, “I think we all know that every day in every way, people are watching us.” Another tried to downplay the gender card stating, “I don’t feel any added pressure being a woman,” but then conspicuously added the caveat, “but I do feel added responsibility.” It can also be noted that as women in CEO positions, the reference to the need for credibility further supports the discursive development of this theme of gender as a problem to overcome, with the presupposition that women CEOs needed to still build “credibility” in the first place given that they are already in top leadership position. One CEO stated, “I think it’s very important to build credibility and enjoy and learn from every position you have.” Gender took another hit when another talked about the importance of “sticking with it” as some stereotypes tend to categorize women as flighty and uncommitted. The combination of these discourses served to support the theme of gender as a problem to overcome.

Themes in Macro-Data – In the Media
In terms of macro-data consisting of five articles chosen at random (Appendix 2), three main themes emerged from the text as Graphic 2 shows: female gender as positive which emerged as that theme that is in line with generally accepted attributes for transformational leadership. Though it was only in one of the articles, it featured prominently throughout. Another theme, women need help/support emerged from all five of the articles. Lastly, three of the five news items revealed the theme women ARE economic gains.
Graphic 2: Thematic Classification of Macro Data

Female Gender as positive/ transformational leadership
One article markedly equated feminine qualities in a positive light and mentioning the feminine attributes that are significantly often observed in the transformational approach to leadership. In fact, the article was entitled “Women and the Workplace: the benefits of gender diversity put to the test.” In terms of transformational approach the article noted those stereotypically female attributes such as nurturing, relationship-building and developing (mentoring) others were in fact traits more often seen in women than in men.

Women need help/support
This theme presented in a variety of ways and in particular with two other sub-themes: 1. Women needing help to realize that they can be leaders and, 2. needing help with dual (identities) roles (family life/work life).
In regards to number one above, one newswire article noted the problem with gender stereotyping and then went on to offer a solution via a workshop for potential women leaders: “...continued gender stereotyping in popular culture often hinders aspiration and innovation. What are business and the media doing to inspire and support female leadership? Womenetics is hosting a groundbreaking conference that seeks to reverse stereotypes and advance gender equality.” For number two above, one article (as do others) emphasized the very real challenges that women face balancing home and work recommending that: “...employers create engaging and challenging career options for women; create true part-time flexible work options; revisit the economics of childcare; and revisit how contribution is valued and rewarded in the workplace...”. Another news item that introduced a forum for women spoke of helping women in personal development, leadership growth, and strengthening leadership approaches.
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**Women are economic gains**

Three of the five macro-data articles unmasked another challenge to women leader identity: depersonalization. Here we find it claimed that because of their gender, women were an economic asset to the company. One article specifically stated, “Women in leadership positions can make a substantial difference to a company’s performance, profitability and capacity for innovation,” and also further stating that, “Women are the largest emerging market in the world.” Another article claimed, “Women’s full leadership engagement results in higher business profitability and corporate social responsibility.”

**Discussion**

This paper attempts to uncover the construction of women leaders’ identity through the identification of themes found in the discourses presented in Fortune 500 women CEOs’ personal interviews and in media communications. For it is at least partially through discourse where identity is accomplished, ascribed, managed and negotiated (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). These themes, then, are a meaningful witness to the ongoing process of women leaders’ identity construction.

The analysis of the micro and macro data found several themes which suggests that women leaders’ identity construction is likely an ongoing (and perhaps challenging) negotiation between several leader identities: that of leader i.e., one which is often associated with masculine characteristics; that of gendered leader i.e., “feminine”; and transformational leader where the discourses of leader and gender merge and speak to a type of leadership generally viewed favorably for its “feminine-type” attributes. There also appeared to be an indication of another possible identity that was suggested by some of the data - and should not be without mention – that of superwoman, or the women who does it (or should) do it all. This was an interesting additional finding, but the data here was scarce and this identity and its implications would require further study.

**Gender Stereotypes Influence Women Leaders’ Identity**

Feminine leader, a gendered label which incorporates stereotypically female traits, was one of the three identities mentioned at the beginning of this paper and this will be discussed together with leader identity as this is generally equated with stereotypical male attributes. It is interesting, then, that both micro and macro data themes suggested that gender is very much an issue in women leader identity in many subtle and some not so subtle ways. To best understand these
subtleties we must, however, rely on the generally accepted gender stereotypes of men and women in the USA society and culture. First, one of the themes the micro data revealed was discomfort and uncertainty. This theme proved a challenge to interpret as it does not as clearly suggest, as the other themes seem to do, gender (male or female) as an influencing factor for women leader identity. It could be argued that both male and female leaders would grapple with discomfort and uncertainty as they grew into better leaders. However, since this theme emerged in women leaders’ discourses, it can also be explored as such. In other words, we can speculate what this theme might then tell us about women leaders. A woman leader’s identity at least partly consisting of feelings of uncertainty and discomfort might suggest a leader identity that is uncomfortable, and even perhaps not suited for the very position she currently holds. The self-view that emerges in this theme then, appears to be at odds with the perceived notion of leader as strong and assertive (stereotypical masculine traits). If women leaders themselves have an uncertainty and discomfort about their leadership, we might then ask how this identity might affect their ability to lead, to grow and develop into better leaders. Further supporting the suggestion that women leader identity is influenced by gender stereotypes was found in the macro text suggesting that women leaders (as opposed to men) needed help and support either in terms of developing leadership skills or in terms of handling the dual responsibilities of family and work. This theme of help and support is certainly a conundrum for women leader identity. On the one hand, a society that strives for diversity in the workplace by “helping” women to achieve leadership positions (and thus helping to develop positive leader identity) seems just and right: women have long been denied accesses to higher-level positions and authority, and it is a society’s business to even the playing field and help. Certainly an argument can be made for the positive interpretation of “help and support.” A corporation’s assistance, care and awareness of the unique challenges facing (potential) women leaders can greatly impact hiring practices and routes to advancement and changes in the structural support that would benefit their advancement. Thus, it could be said that a workplace that acknowledges these dual roles (and duel identities) does so with positive intentions. Yet, at the same time, this view of women also feeds into long-held stereotypes of women as the weaker sex needing help, of not knowing how to be a “real” (read male) leader. In addition, the macro data articles that announce the specialized workshops and forums for women leaders (Appendix 2) seems to strengthen this very perception of the woman who “needs help” to also fulfill womanly duties at home as well and thus needing additional help. This dual role, of leader at work and “leader” at home may suggest another possible identity that women leaders may have
to contend with - that of superwoman - the one that is expected to do it all. In this study, however, there was not enough data to further explore this additional possible identity and all its implications.

Given together then (micro and micro themes), uncertainty, discomfort, help and support, the picture of women leader identity (ies) that seems to be constructed here also seems to further fuel and perpetuate male/female stereotypes where women is seen as uncertain, struggling and needing help (either at work or as result of work and family obligations) – it could be said, in other words, the weaker sex. Though it could be argued that the intention itself is positive (provide assistance to working mothers) these same discourses in terms of women leader identity, also serve to perpetuate a women leader identity as the ‘weaker sex’, and unfortunately this very perception may actually contribute to limiting them from positions of power and authority where such perceptions are not generally in line with what leader is. Certainly, an image of a women leader uncomfortable and needing help is not an identity that the US society typically associates with leaders — though quite readily could associate with a stereotype of woman — and this unfortunate image could serve to perpetuate the idea that women should not be leaders – that it is somehow unnatural for this gender. In other words, what emerges as identity may actually further fuel the ideology that equates leader with stereotypical male attributes and sees female leaders as not quite measuring up.

Gender as asset for Transformational Leaders

The discourses that exposed the theme of identity of transformational leader provide another interesting point of discussion of women leader identity. This model for leader, as previously described, posits the positive (albeit, again, stereotypical) attributes of femininity as important and even desired for leadership. The micro data certainly revealed that the women CEO leaders themselves were aware of the positive behaviors of transformational leadership that tend to align with “typical” feminine attributes. Though the term “transformational leader” was not specifically mentioned, the interview text of several of the women CEOs seemed to speak to an identity aligned with transformational leadership style. The advantage of this identity for the women leader is that in this approach to leadership, a women leader can both be woman (in stereotypical terms) and be leader without diluting or ignoring or favoring one identity over the other. Transformational leadership, in other words, allows for feminine type qualities and these qualities are in fact are revered, desired and praised. It was surprising therefore, that though the CEOs themselves mentioned these qualities as “good” for leadership, the macro data only found only one instance where transformational skills (positive feminine skills) were specifically
mentioned (Appendix 2, Creating Effective Leadership, 2012) and in this instance it was the feminine qualities themselves that were seen as beneficial to the organization rather than the leadership skill set that some women leaders happen to bring (for whatever reasons) to organizational life. In other words, gender itself (as male gender associated with leader has also done), along with stereotypical baggage, becomes the overriding factor that brings advantages to organizational life.

Certainly, primarily linking gender (through attributes) to leadership is a double-edge sword. On the one hand, this view of leader women in this positive, transformational, though stereotypical way, could bring more women into leadership positions as more business see women leaders as beneficial because they may be more likely to bring a transformational approach; however, on the other hand, this gendered approach to leadership could also paradoxically limit a woman’s access to leadership roles such as (for example) for those women who wish to adopt a different leadership style – a style that may be seen as “male”. Interestingly, this view of women as better transformational leaders may be problematic not only for women but for men as well. Though women leaders may feel pigeonholed into adopting this style of leadership and may feel restricted from using other (read men) leadership styles, men, on the other hand, may feel excluded from using this transformational leadership style – one which may be more beneficial to their leadership success.

In terms of women leaders, though, this view of gender (positive or negative) so closely linked with leadership style may perhaps account for these women CEOs mention of discomfort in the leadership positions and their alluding (directly and indirectly) to gender as a problem to overcome. Gender itself could certainly be problematic when stereotypes limit leadership styles as well as the skills women could develop if women leader identity allows for experimentation or development of different leadership styles. It may be argued that one of the implied messages that emerge here, and could certainly influence or confuse a women leaders’ identity, is that “female” is good for transformational leadership – but other leadership styles that “don’t match” with gender stereotypes should be best avoided.

Gender is profit

This discussion will end with one of the more interesting themes found in the macro data: that of equating women leader with economic gain. Notably, this theme emerged in three of the five articles chosen at random and cropped up several times prominently throughout each one. What are we to make of this? It could be argued that when a woman leader is equated with profit, and as one article termed it “an emerging market,” she is then depersonalized to the point of being
equated with the bottom line value that she can bring to the corporation (Appendix 2). This kind of depersonalization certainly creates a less than flattering identity for the women leader herself and can deprive them of the very leader identity that is needed in order to successfully lead. As pointed out earlier in this paper, and as Ely & Rhode, (2010), note, one must view oneself as a leader, as well as be viewed as a leader in order to be a leader. This self-perception, then needs to be nurtured and being viewed as “economic gains” does not seem to further that campaign. This depersonalization, in fact, may adversely devalue the very real qualities, styles, and unique skills sets that women leaders can bring to organizational life.

### Conclusion

The challenges that women face for gaining leadership positions in corporate America are not confined to the USA alone. In fact this challenging situation is prevalent in many industrialized nations throughout the world. As businesses grapple with globalization, embracing diversity in upper positions, including the hiring and promotion of more women, comes with multiple advantages and challenges and is an ongoing issue where continued discussion, focus, awareness and action, can, overall, benefit not only the company but society(ies) at large.

In this paper we attempted to uncover some of the discourses that shape and form women leaders’ identity and thus contribute to current ideologies of the same. Unearthing women leader identity is challenging, and complex. Through this micro and macro set of data women leader identity was shown to be comprised of several identities such as feminine, transformational, male (where leader and male stereotypes are equated) and even possibly superwoman – and perhaps even more. Certainly a women leaders’ identity cannot be statically defined; this study has shown that is it is constantly being negotiated and challenged by the leaders themselves and society at large though still heavily relying on gender stereotypes. Transformational leader perhaps, for now, seems to most positively embrace both the identity of leader and of woman; however, here again this is only because it draws on the more positive characteristics and attributes based on the same gender stereotypes.

In terms of women leader identity, though, women face more of a challenge than their male counterparts as the perception in the US culture and society of what make a good leader and what makes a good women (leader) are sometimes at odds. The mixed message is a challenge to a woman leader’s identity in that this seems to suggest that gender is a problem to overcome, but at the same time it is also a great leadership asset – if only for the fact that it may lead to economic gains. In the end, organizations can perhaps lead the way for a “redefinition” of
leadership where successful leadership (or leading) focuses more on a set of skills, values, and philosophy than on gender, especially when that gender is female.

Certainly an additional challenge to women leader identity may be in the perpetual use of the label, women leader, itself. This label, also used by the author of this paper as well, links leader with a gender and a gendered label inevitably summons up stereotypes both negative and positive, but stereotypes nonetheless. Only women leaders are labeled as such: in other words, it is rare to see a leader labeled as a male leader in this society. Labeling, then, with all its associated ideologies, is certainly also a significant contribution to women leaders’ identity construction and contributes to how they may see themselves and how society at large may continue to view them as well. How women leaders are positively viewed and how they positively view themselves may require some change in prevailing ideologies of what and who leader is. But change in perceptions of leader, male or female, may not come easily or quickly and until this happens, women leader identity may always be a site for identity negotiation and struggle and may thus continue to hinder and challenge women’s opportunities for leadership positions in corporate life.

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References
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Appendix 1 (Data)

Appendix 2 (Data)


