

Notes on Feminist Leadership

Charles Knight

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These are aspects and common themes of feminist leadership I find in the literature and practice:

1. Awareness of **self as part of a larger whole** -- both in the present moment and through generations and cultural legacy. Attention to history (ancestry). Greater attention to interconnectedness and collectivity than to autonomy and independence. Understanding that leadership is rooted in communities and histories and therefore one person or group cannot define it for another (Women's Theological Center - *Spiritual Leadership*). Self/community knowledge and discovery is a necessary part of the process.
2. **Shared leadership**. Attention to bringing the collectivity/community along. Affirmation of emergent leadership qualities inherent in all ("training more about affirming skills than imparting skills" – Susan Eaton). Mentoring.
3. **Relational** -- building strong trusting relationships. *Relational/Cultural* models. Importance of story telling in affirmation of the person and the community.
4. **Inspirational/Spiritual** (with depth). Oriented to the protection and nourishment of the human spirit in everyone wherein the capacity for leadership resides – thus increasing the capacity to transform the individual, their relationships, organizations, and communities.
5. **Clarity of purpose** with an orientation toward the **Transformational** (of the individual and the whole).
6. Explicit awareness and **attention to power dynamics** and their varied meanings in context of different cultures and identities. Critical attention to the role of fear and the need for control in the power relations of dominance. Sympathetic recognition of fear in the individual and the community. A lot of leadership is about bringing people through their fears toward collective goals.
7. Attention to learning to **practice of ritual, celebration**, and the personal and community expressions of joy and sadness. Joyful expression is highly valued.
8. Creating **safe environments** for expression, self-care, participation, and growth of leadership skills. Collective support for challenging each person to the best practice of leadership.

Sources

Disabled Women's Network Ontario (DAWN Ontario) – <http://dawn.thot.net> – “Feminist Principles” web pages.

“Seminar in Honor of Susan Eaton”, MIT Faculty Club, 14 May 2004.

Women's Theological Center, “What is Spiritual Leadership?”

A Reference List

“References” by Jean Lau Chin

<http://www.feministleadership.com/discuss/read.php?22,270>

<http://www.feministleadership.com/>

1) Joyce Fletcher, *The Greatly Exaggerated Demise of Heroic Leadership: Gender, Power, and the Myth of the Female Advantage*. [www.simmons.edu]

2) Ian Cook - *Ya Gotta Get'em to Wanna: 6 Roles of the Modern Leader*

Source: Center Collection

Published: January 2002

- 1) Servant Leader
- 2) Direction Setter
- 3) Steward for High Standards and Results
- 4) Motivator/Coach
- 5) Changemaster
- 6) Role Model

[www.centeronline.org]

3) Ester Shapiro - I have been especially influenced, in thinking about leadership as a Latina and progressive Jewish feminist, by an article by Kar, S., Pascual, C., Chickering, K. (1999). *Empowerment of women for health promotion: a meta-analysis*. *Social Science & Medicine*, 49, 1431-1460. These researchers (the lead author is a man) studies 40 exemplary women's organizations throughout the world, and looks at their linked processes of individual, group, and collective empowerment.

4) Website on Advancing Women that appears relevant to Feminist Leadership. The focus is on developing strategies rather than model building however.

[www.advancingwomen.com]

5) Madden, M. E. (2002, in press). *The transformative leadership of women in higher education administration*. In J. DiGeorgio-Lutz (Ed.), *Women in higher education: Empowering change*. Greenwood Press.

6) *Empowerment and Collaborative Leadership* - Annette Kolodny's book on her experience as a humanities dean has some wonderful examples. For instance, she talks about using consensus to develop clearer and more encompassing tenure review policies. Another model I like a lot is Astin and Astin's notion of "transformative leadership".

7) *hard ball for women*, Pat Heim's book.

8) Dorothy Cantor and Toni Bernay's book *Women in Power* from about 1992, a very helpful book on how women strategize and work together as leaders.

9) Frida Khalo's work on Latina women

10) Warren Bennis talks of Four Competencies of Leadership:

- 1) Management of attention
- 2) Management of meaning
- 3) Management of trust
- 4) Management of self

11) Joseph Raelin, *Creating Leaderful Organizations: How to bring out leadership in everyone*. Published by Berrett-Koehler. 'Four C's of Leaderful Practice,' suggesting that leadership be: concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate, may well be interpreted as consistent with the relational style of leadership attributed to women's leadership style.

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harvardbusinessonline@hbsp.harvard.edu