The Inaugural International Women and Leadership Conference 2006

Changes. Challenges. Choices.
Conference Proceedings
from the Inaugural International
Women & Leadership Conference, Fremantle,
16 and 17 November 2006

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Nadia Nelson and Alison Preston (editors)

16 and 17 November 2006
The Esplanade Hotel
Fremantle Western Australia
www.cbs.curtin.edu.au/wiser

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Refereeing Process

All papers in this volume were subject to double blind refereeing. The conference organisers

owe a debt of gratitude to the long list of colleagues who volunteered their time and effort to

be part of the review process.

Citing the Conference Proceedings

Please cite the proceedings using the following as an example:
Haslam McKenzie, F. and T. Jefferson (2007), "The Relevance of Affordance for Women 'Ageing in Place' ", in T. Jefferson, L. Lord, N. Nelson and A. Preston (Eds) *Changes. Challenge., Choices. Conference Proceedings from the Inaugural International Women and Leadership Conference, Fremantle, 16 and 17 November 2006,* pp197-210. Available from www.cbs.curtin.edu.au/wiser

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Can't we just fix the women? Designing a women's leadership development program that challenges the organisation
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Abstract

There is an increased scrutiny of public and private organisations regarding the lack of women in their senior ranks, combined with increased internal pressure from women to make organisational cultures more inclusive, accommodating and encouraging of women. The resultant renewed organisational interest in women's programs is driven by a desire to better 'grow their own women staff', in order to solve the pressing problem of insufficient senior women. However, this desire to 'fix the problem' often translates into a 'fix the women' approach to women's development.

Recent research increasingly points to organisational culture (Chesterman et al. 2004; Palermo 2004) as the main stumbling block for women. This paper moves beyond taking a fix the women approach to leadership development and explores ways in which it is possible to achieve a 'dual agenda', where a women's leadership development program can benefit individual women while challenging the organisation. A 'dual agenda' program engages the organisation and the women in an organisational change process.

For a women's development program to operate in this way careful attention must be paid to program design, including program components, processes, linkages and content. These areas will be explored in more detail, from both the perspective of the women and the organisation. For example key content areas for the women include exposure to the growing body of useful literature exploring women's experience of leadership, building gendered cultural literacy that assists in navigating the workplace and exploring change agency. From the organisational perspective for example, program components are designed to maximise partnership building with key organisational members.

This conference session will give you a framework for thinking about women's development as an organisational change strategy and give you some useful ideas to take back to your organisation and to your female colleagues.

Introduction

Organisations continue to be confronted by their relative lack of success in progressing women into their senior ranks. Progress has been slower than expected (Valian 1998; Oakley 2000; Erkut & Winds of Change Foundation 2001), with a recent U.S. Catalyst report noting an "alarming gender gap in leadership" (Catalyst 2005), which is likewise evident in Australia (Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency 2006). This is despite more than two decades of anti-discrimination legislation, a strengthening diversity (including gender diversity) business case (Orser 2000) and growing numbers of in-house policies addressing everything from promotion policies to work flexible practices (Tilbrook 1998; Beck & Davis 2005).

The growing workforce participation of women and ever increasing education levels of women undermine the pipeline argument held on to for so long. The pipeline argument held that women were insufficiently represented in feeder groups for senior positions and when they were more equitably represented, would naturally flow on to higher level positions (Erkut & Winds of Change Foundation 2001). In reality, it appears that women are not thriving in organisations. Women still experience discrimination and harassment, they remain clustered at lower levels of organisations, are dissatisfied with career development opportunities, experience extended careers plateaus as they work part-time or seek flexible work options, have difficulties re-entering organisations after breaks and are leaving to pursue self employment in increasing numbers, Women appear to experience a lack of organisational 'fit'. This is hardly surprising when historically organisations were set up by men for men, most often with non-working wives. Burton for example describes universities as being "organised around the cluster of characteristics, attributes and background circumstances typical of men" (Burton 1997:17) thus privileging male life and work cycles and patterns.

There is an increased scrutiny of public and private organisations regarding this lack of senior women, combined with internal pressure from women to make organisational cultures more inclusive, accommodating and encouraging of women (Oakley 2000; Vinnicombe & Singh 2003). Women-only development programs

(hereafter WODP) are one strategy that organisations have employed over the last three decades to address gender equity concerns, and they are currently experiencing a resurgence in popularity. It is not the purpose of this paper to review the development and achievements of WODP over that period. While WODP have always attracted some controversy there is agreement in the literature regarding the capacity of WODP to deliver consistently positive outcomes for participants, eg from the UK (Knight & Pritchard 1994; Willis & Daisley 1997; Brown 2000; Vinnicombe & Singh 2003). from Australia (Limerick et al. 1995; Devos et al. 2003, with numerous examples in the ATN WEXDEV 'Change in Climate' 2006 conference proceedings) and from the U.S (Ruderman & Hughes-James 1998).

Despite these successes there are a number of concerns regarding WODP expressed in the literature. There is disquiet among some concerning the "decontextualised, unreflective and pragmatic representation of women only management training in most of the literature" and a lack of application of "theories and practice within feminism" to the design and content of programs over the last two decades (Gray 1994:203). Programs thus re-inforce rather than challenge the status quo, assisting women to adapt to cultures (Bhavnani 1997). Moultrie & de la Rey state in regard to a women's program

> More attention needs to be given to professional development approaches where both structure and content might construct participants as fully participating agents rather than as receptacles of remedial skills repertoires (Moultrie & de la Rey 2003:418).

There is also growing frustration among practitioners regarding the capacity of programs to deliver significantly more women into senior positions (Brown 2000). Devos, McLean and O'Hara (2003:143) ask "Should we expect these programmes to have an impact on the number of women in senior positions?"

Kolb (2003) commented on a women's leadership education program she evaluated in the US, noting that it:

helped the women to develop a more complex understanding of their organisation and its culture and to develop the skills that could help them navigate more effectively within it (Kolb 2003:2).

However Kolb also warns that "But helping the women is not enough" (Kolb 2003:1).

Kolb is a researcher from the Centre for Gender in Organizations (CGO) at Simmons College Graduate School of Management, Boston, USA. She, with colleagues such as Meyerson, Fletcher and Ely have been at the forefront of researching organisational gender equity interventions and they have their sights set firmly on gendered organisational cultures as the underlying issue that must be addressed. The CGO approach is based on the understanding that:

> gender inequities in organisations are rooted in taken-for-granted assumptions, values, and practices that systematically accord power and privilege to certain groups of men at the expense of women and other men (Meyerson & Kolb 2000:554).

Such deeply imbedded work practices and cultural norms inhibit and undermine gender equity (Meyerson & Fletcher 2000). This focus on organisational culture as the main stumbling block for women is echoed in recent Australian research (Chesterman et al. 2004; Palermo 2004). It is this gendered organisational culture that is proving elusive and intransigent.

It is with these understandings in mind that it becomes worthwhile to revisit the ways in which WODP are conceptualised and to explore the possibility for programs to be part of a strategic intervention at the organisational level.

The Duel Focus of WODP

The nature and design of WODP means they can easily be categorised as a 'fix the women' approach (Meyerson & Fletcher 2000), which puts them increasingly at odds with current understanding of the problem. If women are not the problem, are women only programs therefore misguided and a waste of money? Can women's development programs address the problem of organisational culture? To do so requires a re-positioning of WODP away from a singular focus on the women, toward becoming strategic interventions that challenge and change organisational cultures. I call this a 'dual focus', to refer to a simultaneous focus on individuals and the organisation.

This 'dual focus' acknowledges the need to work with the women and with the organisational culture in which the women are located. The idea of a dual focus is not new. It has been critiqued and aspired to (Reavley 1989; Knight & Pritchard 1994; Devos et al. 2003) and is often expressed in program mission statements (e.g. as summarised for Australian universities (ATN WEXDEV 1999:8) and Commonwealth universities (Singh 2005)) . What is not enunciated or evident in program design is how such programs can or should approach this complex task. What is also apparent is that it is much easier to fall into a 'fix the women' approach than to engage with the much more difficult task of re-visioning workplaces to become equally designed for and inclusive of the full diversity of women and men.

The work of the CGO is helpful in understanding and positioning these different approaches. The CGO team (based on the earlier work of Calas and Smircich (1996)) have developed a 'four frame' theory for understanding the various approaches taken to combat gender inequity (Ely & Meyerson 2000; Meyerson & Kolb 2000). Each frame links different feminist theoretical perspectives with different definitions or understandings of gender and correspondingly different understandings of the gender equity problem. These become recognisable organisational approaches to gender equity intervention. Frames 1, 2 and 3 are respectively labelled as 'equip the women', 'create equal opportunity' and 'value difference'. All share a simplistic understanding of gender and an individual focus which reinforces the notion of women as problematic, different, or 'other'. Frame 4 changes this focus; gender is

understood as socially constructed, systemic gendering processes are imbedded in organisations and it is the organisational culture which requires change. The focus is no longer on women.

Moving from a Frame 1 ' fix the women' approach to a Frame 4 approach of 're-visioning work practices' is a profound shift in thought and practice which when applied to WODP must impact on program design and focus. Frame 1 requires solutions at the individual level. On the other hand Frame 4 has a clear focus on how organisations are gendered and therefore must be changed before gender equity can be achieved. The 'dual focus' approach I am proposing is not a purist interpretation of a Frame 4 gender equity intervention. In maintaining some focus on the individual, there is an acknowledgment of the current organisational reality for women and the role WODP can play in assisting women within the organisational status quo.

Whilst not taking a purist approach, my premise nonetheless is that WODP are ideally placed to engage in a Frame 4 re-visioning of workplace cultures. Firstly, as Devos et al. (2003) argue, WODP appear to be a relatively palatable affirmative action option for organisations, with immediate positive outcomes for the women and payoffs for organisations that wish to be doing something tangible. WODP are also well placed for 'building constituencies for culture change' (Kolb 2003:1) therefore beginning to share the load for organisational change and bringing the responsibility for long-term change to rest with all members of the organisation. Importantly WODP avoid the problem attached to various other strategic gender interventions, where it becomes difficult to maintain a gender focus (Ely & Meyerson 2000). With WODP the balancing act is in maintaining the 'dual focus' on individuals and the organisation without falling back into a 'fix the women' approach. In our experience the women and the organisation both lean towards the individual development part of the dual focus agenda.

Interestingly Adler, Brody and Osland (2001) report on a Women's Global Leadership Forum, a week long gathering of senior women from all international subsidiaries of the one company. In this company-wide response to the under-

representation of women, Adler et al. (2001) describe that the "dual organisation -
and individual-level agenda approach inadvertently raised the question of who was
primarily to blame for the under-representation of women leaders within the
company" (Adler et al. 2001:22).

Some women had little time for any personal leadership development (implying that
the women were deficient), seeing the organisational change as primary. Adler goes
on to stress the importance of design in ensuring "that organisational change and
individual leadership development goals complement, rather than compete, with each
other" (Adler et al. 2001:22).

Williams and Macalpine (1995) in reporting on their international management
development program for women civil servants from developing countries have
addressed some of these concerns. For them the program focus is on the women as
change agents and they have sought:

> to bring together analysis, insights and strategies from work both on gender
> and management and on gender and development in a way that enables the
> programme participants to intervene in the complex and unequal relations of
> power…which contributes to the women's immediate practical needs and to
> their longer-term strategic interests"(Williams & Macalpine 1995:234).

 Williams and Macalpine worked with individual women from various organisations,
so the change agency focus was entirely on the women. The focus of this paper is on
how an in-house WODP can address the concerns highlighted above and put into
practice the 'dual focus' approach, which is an approach that strategically spreads the
change agency load.

Methodology
The program design reported here has been developed over a twelve-year period,
firstly in a university setting and more recently in the public sector. The Leadership
Development for Women (LDW) Program is well researched (de Vries 1998;
Eveline 2004; de Vries et al. 2006). It is most comprehensively documented in the

tenth anniversary publication *More than the sum of its parts: 10 years of the Leadership Development for Women Programme at UWA* (de Vries 2005). My own involvement began in 1997 and the framework reported here has primarily been developed with Maggie Leavitt, a consultant to the program; we have co-facilitated the programs since 1999.

The LDW program at UWA has been fortuitous in gaining and maintaining senior executive support along with a secure funding base. This degree of organisational support and continuity, unusual in the women's development arena, combined with stable co-ordination and facilitation of the program has allowed for ongoing development and refinement of a program framework. This framework allows each aspect of the program to be seen in a larger context; enabling a continual focus on the dual agenda to be pursued with greater clarity. The more recent implementation of the program in different organisational settings has been invaluable in clarifying our thinking regarding the importance of various design elements.

This practitioner experience provides the foundation for exploring how a WODP can strive to maintain an active focus on the dual agenda. The LDW program is one example of what that might look like. The dual focus will be explored in this article, firstly by looking at the women and secondly the organisation. Of course in practice there is no such neat delineation between the two, and neither would that be desirable. Equally in describing various aspects of the program it has been difficult to neatly parcel out program components, processes, linkages and content - they are interwoven.

For Women: Navigating, Thriving and Challenging
In the LDW program we work with a group of 30 women over a 6 to 9 month period with approximately 10 contact days. Clearly for many who applied to participate the emphasis is on personal outcomes - how LDW can improve their working lives. Based on previous research, outlined above, both in regard to the LDW program and other WODP, improved outcomes can reasonably be expected. While as has been stated, assisting the women is not enough – it is certainly imperative to maximise the benefits to the women from program attendance. Our

facilitation style is based on adult learner principles and includes reflective practice, however, unlike Vinnicombe & Singh (2003) our focus has not been on women as different learners or women as psychologically different. Neither do we see WODP as a protective environment for skill building (Limerick et al. 1995) Where our work resonates with the women is when we assist them to name and work with their experience – and in recognising that men are having a different experience alongside, above and around them in the workplace. This focus on the women and the reality of their gendered workplace experiences is reflected in the approach of the CGO in designing a women only leadership program. Kolb stresses that "The curriculum and the structure of the program are always based on a diagnosis of the gender-based issues in an organisation" (Kolb 2003:1). It is this gender-based diagnosis that provides the starting point for the LDW program.

Our approach can be encapsulated in the following question. What will assist the women to navigate, thrive in and challenge the gendered organisational culture?

Firstly, what will assist the women to navigate the gendered organisational culture?
The term navigate assumes some lack of familiarity with the terrain, expectations, power, politics and rules of the gendered organisational culture. Previous WODP approaches tend towards a deficit model here, emphasising skills women must acquire to better fit in and play the 'organisational game'. Our approach is to turn the focus onto the organisation, teaching what we call gendered cultural literacy.

We begin with the understanding that the workplace is gendered. Gender is not equated with sex or sex category but rather seen as a routine accomplishment imbedded in everyday interactions and constructed through psychological, cultural and social means. It is not a given attribute, a trait or a role but something actively constructed. It therefore becomes possible to be 'doing' gender and, indeed, necessary to keep 'doing gender' recurrently (West & Zimmerman 1987). Many claim that organisations are gender neutral, often seeing discrimination as something that happened in the past. Acker (1990) contends that this is actually 'gender blindness'. She stresses the importance of linking work and gender, both as ways of

understanding gender segregation, income and status inequality in the workplace, as well as organisations being a critical place where gender is created and reinforced.

It can be difficult to start seeing this 'doing of gender' or 'gender in action' because it is routine and imbedded in the organisational culture. Workplace cultures and the gendered microprocesses inherent in them can become invisible or at least unremarkable to those inhabiting them, particularly over extended periods of time. As Meyerson and Fletcher suggest, a revolution will not work to drive out discrimination because most barriers today are insidious. "Rather gender discrimination is now so deeply imbedded in organisational life as to be virtually indiscernible" (Meyerson & Fletcher 2000:127). Identifying gendered processes therefore, is assisted by the use of what Kolb and Meyerson (1999) describe as a 'gender lens'.

Developing 'gendered cultural literacy' incorporates this idea of a 'gender lens' to see how gender is being expressed and can be made visible through exploring organisational culture. Through culture the "multifaceted layers of gender relations can be revealed and analysed" (Thomas 1996:143). Literacy then becomes the capacity to read and understand gendered workplace cultures, putting the emphasis on 'seeing' the culture anew in order to make gendered processes visible and open to scrutiny. Gendered cultural literacy is a key empowering concept in the program framework.

Skill building to develop political savvy is often a component of leadership programs and WODP in particular, often being identified as a need by the women themselves (Larwood & Wood 1995). Moultrie & de la Rey (2003:414) refer to this as the need to develop organisational political competence, which is something akin to the idea of developing cultural literacy, but lacking the addition of a 'gender lens'. However the more traditional skill building approach usually pre-supposes an interest in better playing the political game. Teaching gendered cultural literacy assists women to identify the game, read the play, play the game or change the game, thereby increasing their capacity to make informed choices about who they are and how they want to be in engaging with the organisation.

The development of gendered cultural literacy facilitates the realisation that women often articulate in the program; that issues in the workplace they assumed to be unique to them are actually shared and systemic. This de-personalising of experiences is critically important when dealing with cultural issues that can be hard to identify and name. In this way, gendered cultural literacy assists the focus, true to a frame 4 approach, to remain on the organisation as the problem, not the women.

Secondly, what will assist the women to thrive in the gendered organisational culture?

The lack of organisational 'fit' for women, referred to above, can often result in a feeling of not belonging and a failure to thrive. Several components of the program are designed to address this, by providing support and connection for the women, to each other (through peer learning groups) and the broader organisational community (particularly through mentoring). Networks are considered a key outcome; "Many women felt the greatest value of any professional development course for women is simply the opportunity to network" (2003:416).

The workshop and peer learning group topics, generated by the women, play an important role in assisting the women to thrive. The women identify the key issues or development needs they bring to the program. Over the years and across organisations they have been relatively consistent and predictable. Clusters of issues include career focus and direction, work/life balance, communication strategies (ranging from assertiveness to self marketing), politics and influence (visibility, acting strategically), leadership (how am I a leader?), creating better workplace cultures (dealing with bullying, managing change) and workplace relationships (managing others, managing up, building teams). The link to their gendered experiences in the workplace and the multiple roles they often juggle is apparent. Many are driven by the desire to work out ways to be, often with few role models, while remaining true to self.

The journey towards identifying themselves as leaders and what that means is central to the program. However, leadership in the context of a gendered workplace become problematic. Leadership is a gendered construct, where masculine traits are

more valued, and where men and women experience various degrees of fit with the predominant (often heroic) leadership style (Schein & Mueller 1992; Schein et al. 1996). While strongly gendered stereotypes exist around leadership, and continue to influence women's progress, they are not substantiated in practice (Erkut & Winds of Change Foundation 2001; Merrill - Sands & Kolb 2001; Catalyst 2005).

We use a model to assist women with the deconstruction and reconstruction of the concept of leadership, that is necessary for them to locate themselves as leaders; one that emphasises that leadership is not an individual exercise and does not take place in a vacuum. The main ingredients of the model are 'identity' (including but not limited to gender), 'power' (formal and informal) and 'context/organisational culture'.

This three-pronged leadership model builds on the work of Bond (2000) in regard to academic leadership where she highlights the complex relationships and interactions that exist between gender, positional power and structure. All aspects and inter-relationships need to be understood.

The need to explore identity in a way that acknowledges but moves beyond gender is critical. The challenge issued by Betters-Reed & Moore (1995) echoes this – just as differences between men and women need to be recognised, so do differences between women or likewise programs will "merely reinforce the status quo through the perpetuation of a dominant ethnocentric organisational culture"(Betters-Reed & Moore 1995:35,36). While aspects of identity such as race, class, and sexuality are explored the women often identify other aspects of identity (educational background is common in universities) that contribute to inclusion and exclusion. Further exploration of identity assists the women to explore multiple aspects of who they are; for example their values, backgrounds, and childhood experiences in ways that embrace a bringing of their whole self to leadership rather than attempting to fit a mould.

The capacity for women to take on prescribed leadership behaviours will be mitigated by the constraints embedded in the gendered organisational culture. Sinclair (1998) in her book *Doing Leadership Differently* outlines many of the

challenges women will face in stepping into leadership roles. She also emphasises the expectations of followers, and this provides a useful reminder that women leaders are seen and judged differently to men. Her approach to leadership, resisting the 'objectified, dis-embodied, and de-gendered' presentation of leadership (Sinclair 2004) provides thought provoking material in assisting the re-visioning process. Work on stereotypes likewise alerts us to the importance of context. Leadership is not a solitary exercise. The work that women do on the program exploring their identity and raising their awareness and literacy around power and culture enable the women to step into leadership in ways that work for them.

While many women make significant personal changes, contributing to their own sense of belonging, and achieving significant career success (de Vries 2005) during the life of the program, often supported and encouraged by their peers, this is not done against a background of deficit.

Thirdly, what will assist the women to challenge the gendered organisational culture?
Developing gendered cultural literacy can become the foundation for becoming a 'change agent' in the workplace. It is crucial however, not to put the onus on the women to change the 'male dominated' culture as this can become a variant on the 'fix the women' (i.e. it is their problem so they must fix it) approach. Clearly this must be a shared responsibility and one that is built into a 'dual focus' program. However the program by its nature does develop the women as one of the 'constituencies for change', explored further below, but not the only one.

The 'small wins' approach to organisational change, identified by members of the CGO (Meyerson & Fletcher 2000) is described as a cycle of naming (problem recognition or diagnosis), dialogue and experimentation (trial intervention). Meyerson and Fletcher (2000:131) describe this as a "persistent campaign of incremental changes that discover and destroy the deeply embedded roots of discrimination". Diagnosis becomes the foundation of change processes and issues are identified by the women during the core program, using questions adapted from the diagnosis process, outlined in *A Modest Manifesto for Shattering the Glass Ceiling* (Meyerson & Fletcher 2000).

While providing us with a model of organisational change, we also utilise 'small wins' as an overall model for our learning process. The women are encouraged to do something different, to experiment, as they tackle issues in the workplace they have identified. The notion of small wins, which puts the emphasis on an incremental process of culture change, helps to depersonalise workplace issues and situates their own change process – pushing back against gendered organisational cultures, into a broader context.

'Tempered radicalism' provides another useful framework for participants with a change agenda (Meyerson & Scully 1995; Meyerson 2001). It explores strategies employed by individuals working as change agents within their own organisations. This is broadened beyond the individual by Eveline (2004) when she explores processes from a companionate leadership perspective, identifying collaborative and collective leadership for change strategies.

Peer learning – bringing it all together
One aspect identified by Kolb (2003) as critical when linking a leadership program to a strategic intervention, is the building of community among participants. The importance of a cohort group, where a group of women go through a program together cannot be over-emphasised, and is in contrast to many 'smorgasbords' offered to women, where they dip in and out choosing from what is on offer according to their appetite. In LDW this community building is achieved at two levels, within the large group, where significant emphasis is put on building a learning community and in smaller peer learning groups.

The concept of peer learning groups is an adaptation of action learning, as originally developed by Revans (1982). The reflective learning cycle of Kolb used in action learning (as outlined in Williams & Macalpine 1995), which begins with experience and moves through iterative cycles of observation/reflection, formation of abstract concepts and generalisations to application/practice and experimentation, is very similar to the small wins process outlined above. Where action learning is often project based, peer learning similarly facilitates an active and reflective learning

process, within the support and accountability of the group, but organised around a shared theme. Peer learning groups allow for an individual developmental focus within a group of women exploring a similar issue. These self-organising groups develop a central theme, question or issue and then meet regularly during the life of the program (and often beyond), supporting each other in their individual exploration of that theme. The peer learning groups become the practice ground for developing gendered cultural literacy skills and implementing a personal and shared 'small wins' approach.

For the Organisation: Maximising Strategic Intervention

In a 'dual focus' WODP it is important to engage with the organisation across as many fronts as possible. The aim is to build constituencies for change, thereby sharing the change agency load as broadly as possible. This often feels like the more difficult part of the 'dual focus' approach. The women are keen to engage in the program, draw immediate benefits for their working lives and are rewarding to work with. The motivation of the organisation to engage in a culture change process, on the other hand can wax and wane, becoming difficult to sustain. This is not surprising given that any organisational culture change process is difficult and fraught.

While organisations are prompted to run WODP, perhaps because their gender statistics are shocking, or their masculine culture has been highlighted through a Royal Commission, or because women are leaving in record numbers; the very success of the LDW program with the women can undermine the perceived need for the organisation to continue to engage seriously with the culture change aspect. A gender mature organisation, where the WODP is one of a number of strategies is more likely to hold onto this agenda, resisting the slide into a 'fix the women' approach. Over time an organisation that offers a women's program without serious engagement in a broader change process risks alienating the women, eventually resulting in declining participation.

Building constituencies for change is a process of building organisational capacity to see the need for, and to engage in a long-term process of culture change. Building gendered cultural literacy – being able to see gender as opposed to being gender

blind, and understanding the incremental 'small wins' approach are important tools here, as they were with the women.

Building Constituencies

Our experience in working across four organisations has taught us a great deal about the process of building constituencies. It is the variation between organisational contexts and cultures that has highlighted for us the roles and importance of the following groups and individuals.

Ideally the program should have a Planning or Steering group; a group of approximately 12 people, usually (but not necessarily) women, ideally at various levels, from diverse backgrounds and from across the organisation, who share a commitment to the program and to organisational change. This group can help build vision, can work as the eyes and ears of the program in providing feedback, generate and take carriage of broader initiatives and become powerful advocates within the organisation. An effective group is critical to sustaining the program, particularly in ensuring adequate resourcing, which often comes under fire as part of any organisational backlash.

The LDW program at UWA has a tradition of involving senior men as mentors to individual women. While this does not exclude women as mentors it does ensure the most senior members of the organisation (often predominantly men) are engaged with the program. This far-sighted approach, instigated by Vice-Chancellor Fay Gale has proved effective in building program champions and advocates. Faced with women's individual stories (and often an accumulation of individual stories over time as they continued to mentor in successive years of the program) senior men have become more attuned to gender in the workplace, changing their attitudes and for some, their work practices (de Vries et al. 2006). The results of our research mirror the work of Kolb (2003) who identifies the relationship with mentors (or coaches) as one of three key strategies in building constituencies for change. Development opportunities for mentors, incorporating material regarding their mentoring role along with gender, the gendered workplace and gender and leadership help to provide a foundation for mentoring partnerships that are

respectful of women's experiences in the workplace and that avoid patronising (or matronising) mentoring experiences.

Gender equity initiatives don't succeed without support from the top. While this is a commonly held conviction among equity practitioners, regarding the need for executive champions, it does not appear to have been much researched. Our experience however, does point to this support being critical. Visible and ongoing involvement signals the seriousness of the issue and the organisations preparedness to tackle it. Behaviours that signal this support include speaking at launches and presentation ceremonies, being a guest speaker, being a mentor, attending public presentations, speaking about the program in various forums (importantly not just to women), supporting the program through media releases, interviews and photo opportunities, ensuring appropriate resourcing and participating in consultation and evaluation activities. Providing these opportunities and requesting this level of engagement is part of the building process. Unfortunately a lack of continuity of executive support, as personnel changes occurs may require regular 'starting over' with new executives. The arrival of senior women in executive roles may precipitate an expectation that women will champion the program and existing male champions may step aside. The importance of the person's gender when championing a gender equity strategy is an area requiring further research.

Engagement with senior men and women, through mentoring, involvement on the Planning Group, guest speaking, participant conducted research and interviews, opportunities to provide public support and affirmation for the program such as launches, graduations, peer learning presentations, and opportunities to act as role models is important. Speaking opportunities requiring speakers to reflect on their gender and leadership provoke interesting reflections from speakers.

The program alumni, particularly over the long-term become an invaluable resource in the change process, contributing to a sense of critical mass. Sharing a common vocabulary, a way of understanding gender and organisational change, they infiltrate the organisation and provide a resource to the current women and the program. They become important planning group members who understand the importance of

the program to the organisation. The program must continue to engage with this group through ongoing activities in order to keep the connections strong and alive, providing ongoing support for their individual and collective change agency.

In addition, the program can engage with employees (and the public) who have no connection to the cohort program through events such as public forums, debates, visiting eminent speakers, involvement in other leadership programs, research opportunities, sponsoring conference attendance, and web resources.

I am sure that there are other ways of building in-house constituencies for change and this is an area that we will continue to develop. For example, we have done little work with the supervisors of program participants and this may well provide another fruitful avenue. What remains critical is to overtly build this organisational engagement process into WODP design.

Bringing the two together - Spreading the change agency load

Many of the strategies suggested include ways in which the women, whilst on the program interact with various members of the organisation. There are two further ways in which the women can directly contribute to the change process via their program participation. Firstly, the women participate in many activities during the program that can provide information back to the organisation. For example the cultural diagnosis exercise mentioned earlier provides excellent material on the culture in various corners of the organisation, identifies culture 'hot spots', policy versus practice gaps, and barriers to advancement which can be usefully fed back to Executive members and the Planning group. Secondly, the capacity for the current group to provide an organisational reality check is also built in through the peer learning group process. Each LDW year group crafts a combined public presentation from the end of year presentations of the individual peer learning groups. The presentation typically combines the personal and group learning experiences of the women and changes they have made, along with some hard hitting and not always palatable messages concerning the gendered organisational culture. Not only does this build the process of engagement, but it can be confronting and strategic in

highlighting organisational issues, making it harder for the organisation to fall back into a fix the women approach.

The hard work of a 'dual focus' program

This is hard and difficult work, challenging the status quo, and often inviting resistance and backlash through doing so. Building a variety of constituencies for change, while ideally spreading the change load can also spread the resistance to change or backlash across a broader array of fronts. Sometimes we know the program is being successful because of the pushing back that we experience. Even the existence of a women only program and a budget to run the program are sufficient to induce backlash. Even where programs have had a focus on the women and not on organisational change – unless there has been some building of constituencies – program support and funding will wane. Organisational priorities change, champions come and go, and despite optimistic beginnings organisations find it hard to sustain long-term culture change processes. This is compounded by the onion ring phenomena where much hard work can result in peeling off one layer of gender inequity only for the next layer to be exposed.

As consultants we are not exempt from experiencing this backlash personally – in the way organisations treat us, the way our expertise is challenged, the difficulties in negotiating contracts and budgets despite outstanding evaluations form the women, the pettiness of room changes and catering difficulties. Maggie often remarks on the contrast between doing 'gender' work and the other types of leadership and organisational consultancies she is engaged in.

This organisational backlash, marginalisation or difficulty in sustaining the work is remarked on by other consultants and facilitators. Knight and Prichard note "we were surprised and disappointed at just how tough it was at times. Even in the face of repeated and public successes we got little support or encouragement from senior managers" and "in times of economic hardship it becomes an optional extra, an overhead to be cut back" "(Knight & Pritchard 1994:59,61).

This is also commented on by Grant (2006) who labels her women only writing retreats as transgressive or counter-cultural, on a number of levels, the first of which is being for women only. She notes that because they are counter-cultural "they sometimes require energy to defend as well as maintain".(Grant 2006:486) She characterises the work as demanding, with both gains and the ongoing existence always precarious.

For us it has been important to acknowledge to ourselves that a 'dual focus' program is a much bigger ask, and that we too can be tempted to gravitate towards a fix the women approach. The approach outlined here requires a long-term commitment, there is no quick fix. Ensuring sustainability is imperative.

Conclusion

In this article I have outlined an example of how a 'dual focus' WODP can work. While not a strictly 4th frame approach the LDW program has been heavily influenced by the work of members of the CGO and continually seeks to maintain a balance between and focus on the women and the organisation. While not designed to 'fix the women' it has substantial benefits for the women who participate. It uses the development of gendered cultural literacy, the small wins process of organisational and personal change, a re-visioning of leadership, and tools for change agency to assist the women in navigating, thriving and challenging the organisation. These design elements cross-over into engaging with the organisation in building constituencies for change. In doing so the program aims to maximise opportunities to share the change agency load. In our experience the program design is all important in maximising the benefits of women only space while consistently conveying the 'dual focus' to women and the organisation.

It is no longer adequate to involve women in leadership development activities that treat women as the problem or fail to acknowledge their lived experiences in the workplace. WODP can play an important role in creating the more inclusive workplace cultures that are so desperately needed. Programs that lack this clear 'dual focus' ultimately fail to meet the needs of both the women and the organisation.

WODP can, I believe be an important and integral part of building organisations where all women can make their full contribution in a variety of roles throughout all levels of the organisation.

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