Generation, Gender, and Leadership: Metaphors and Images

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This article explores the metaphors and images used by different generations of women to describe women's leadership in higher education (HE) and the impact these perceptions have on their careers and career ambitions. It also explores how such metaphors and images can position them as "other," silence their voices in the dominant masculinist discourse, and marginalize them. The emphasis in the gender and higher education literature has been on identifying the barriers that impede women's progress in academic organizations, including images of continuing hegemonic masculine leadership, and their promotion to leadership positions. These models position women leaders who are assertive as troublemakers, and women as "the problem" either because of their attitudes or perceived domestic and family responsibilities. And while women leaders are often not gender conscious, they are frequently doing gender in their senior roles. The metaphors and images that portray women's leadership are often of hidden work, supporting more senior males, or "ivory basement" leadership. Combined, they suggest a deficit model that positions women as lacking for top jobs, and institutions therefore needing to "fix the women" generally through leadership development programmes, sponsorship and mentoring. The article examines the metaphors and images used to describe women's leadership across two generations. Older women often saw their leadership as conforming to male leadership models, as fitting in, and not challenging or unsettling their male colleagues. However, a younger generation of leaders or prospective leaders had a very different set of metaphors for their leadership. They saw themselves as unsupported by what they described as the current mediocre, institutional leaders, weighed down by inexorable organizational restructure, and merely in survival mode. Hence, they refused to accept the masculinist leadership model which they perceived as ineffectual, outdated and not meeting their needs. The article suggests that the prevailing culture in higher education leadership and the metaphors and images used to describe successful leadership narrows the options for women leaders. While older women were prepared to accept current masculinist leadership, younger women had contempt for the way it marginalized them while at the same time encouraging them to lift their game and had a different set of metaphors and images to portray what successful leadership should look like.

Keywords: leadership, women, higher education—women in academia, generations, metaphors, images

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the metaphors and images used by different generations of women to describe women's leadership in higher education and the impact on their careers and career ambitions. It also explores how such metaphors and images can position them as "other," silence their voices in the dominant masculinist discourse, and marginalize them. Metaphors enable us to redefine how we view university leadership, "give abstract concepts a reality," recreate and extend past experiences and hence "provide alternative ways of seeing things that go beyond the reach of literal language" (Clouse et al., 2013, p. 89–90). Images can either be negative and engage our focus and energy and prevent us moving forward, or they can be a tool for transformation (Greenberg, 2015).

The article focuses on two generations of women leaders using two different studies—the first, women in top positions in the UK and the second, a younger generation of women at an Australian university who were either in middle management or aspiring to management jobs. This is a mixed methods study, with qualitative interviews with VCs and a quantitative survey with younger women that enabled respondents to make additional comments. The data therefore was from women at different stages of their careers and in different countries and this helped us to explore if the metaphors and images used to describe leadership differed across two generations and/or if there were similarities. As none of the women identified as women of color in either of the studies which generated the data for this paper, the intersectional lens for our focus is inevitably generation and gender. More recent studies in the corporate sector have explored other intersections, race and gender for example (Holder et al., 2015). This paper follows an article published in 2017 in which we argued that gendered power relations in universities stubbornly maintain entrenched inequalities (Burkinshaw and White, 2017).

We were interested in investigating if women representing distinct generations might be performing leadership differently and therefore have different ways of describing their leadership through the use of particular metaphors and images. One could assume that women who had already made it to the top either learnt to adapt to the prevailing leadership culture or could influence it once they were running universities. However, O'Connor (2014) questions whether women in top leadership can in fact change the gendered organizational culture. Meanwhile, the next generation may view leadership differently; Morley (2014), e.g., argues that younger women are examining and then dismissing leadership careers in HE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The emphasis in the gender and HE literature has been on identifying the barriers that impede women's progress in academic organizations, including continuing hegemonic masculine leadership, and their promotion to leadership positions. Masculinist leadership uses particular metaphors and images to position women leaders who are assertive as troublemakers, and women as "the problem" either because of their attitudes or perceived domestic and family responsibilities.

And while women leaders are often not gender conscious, they are frequently doing gender in their senior roles (Bilimoria and Piderit, 2007). Women's leadership is often hidden work, supporting more senior males, or "ivory basement" leadership (Eveline, 2004; Bevan and Gatrell, 2017). Thus, the metaphors and images often position women as lacking for top jobs, and institutions therefore needing to "fix the women" generally through leadership development programmes, sponsorship, and mentoring.

It is useful to consider the broad framework for gendered leadership in HE and the metaphors and images used to describe them. Organizational culture is important. Rees (2011) points out that historically women have been excluded from the academy; the discourse, the dress and the culture remain androcentric and thus universities are characterized by horizontal, vertical, and contractual gender segregation. Moreover, O'Connor (2017) emphasizes that the power structures, culture, and values of universities reflect those of the wider environment where public power and resources are mostly in male hands. Thus, women in university leadership have historically—and continue to be—positioned as outsiders.

The transition from collegial to managerial governance since the 1990s (Bolden et al., 2012) was initially considered an opportunity for women moving into leadership positions. However, managerialism has produced its own images of women's leadership and merely entrenched the *status quo* with its emphasis on research activities and bringing external funding to the organization (Acker et al., 2010) at which men outperform women. Importantly, managerialism does not necessarily alter homosocial structures and cultures. While Carvalho and Machado-Taylor (2009) point to a variety of ways in which managerialism has influenced gendered leadership patterns in HE, O'Connor (2014) and O'Connor et al. (2015) argues it has had little impact on the gendering of universities in relation to the underrepresentation of women in top jobs. And even when women reached top positions, they are often labeled as not the right type of leader; the soft skills characterizing their leadership style may not be not appreciated or rewarded (White et al., 2011); and consequently, they become stressed and conflicted (Lynch et al., 2012).

The metaphors and images used to describe gendered career paths in HE can be crucial to women's leadership ambitions. As women move from the junior ranks of academia to the professoriate their representation decreases (see, e.g., Etzkowitz and Kemelger, 2001). Moreover, women in universities are less likely than their male colleagues to work full time and have uninterrupted careers (Bagilhole and White, 2011), and women in university leadership tend to be in administrative areas rather than in academic leadership roles (Burkinshaw, 2015). O'Connor et al. (2017) argue that the construct of excellence impacts on academic careers and is used to obscure masculinist, relational, and "local fit" micro-political practices that can affect academic recruitment/progression and maintain organizational legitimacy. Thus, metaphors of women not conforming to a monastic male model of successful academic careers abound (White, 2014), even though the career model in science, for example, is now changing [Association for Women in Science (AWIS), 2012]. In addition,

women academics in their early thirties are at times described as making individual choice to be on a different career trajectory as they try to manage careers and other responsibilities (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2012), rather than investigating the underlying masculinist culture which make it difficult for these women.

These complex factors—and the metaphors and images used to describe them—impact on how women are perceived as performing leadership. The focus is on women not measuring up for higher education leadership rather than on addressing the difficult organizational culture (De Vries and Webb, 2005) which assumes workers are care-less (Lynch et al., 2012). Most explanations of women's deficits in university leadership, O'Connor (2011) remarks, use the image of women as "the problem" rather than analyzing the organizational culture and procedures that produce these patterns. However, women have quite a different view of why they do not succeed in university leadership, using metaphors such as being side-lined (Morley, 2014; Bevan and Gatrell, 2017). And while managerialism has offered the promise of better careers for women, the result has often been little change in the gendered organizational culture (O'Connor, 2014). The cost to the academy is that some women can become uncertain about their commitment to the institution and disengage (Blackmore and Sachs, 2007), while others consider and then reject HE leadership, deciding in the present organizational environment not to apply for leadership roles (Morley, 2014).

This article will use two different pieces of research across two different generations to explore metaphors and images of leadership. It will examine:

- The metaphors and images masculinist organizational cultures in universities use to legitimize the low percentage of women in top leadership ranks, often depicting women leaders as not matching male standards of performance;
- The intersection of generation and gender to raise awareness of viewing women through an intersectional lens;
- How the language of managerialism influences the gendered performance of leadership and gendered career paths in HE and impacts on leadership; and
- If the deficit model and the images used to describe women's leadership performance mask much broader structural impediments that need to be addressed if more women are to become, and thrive as, leaders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The two pieces of research reported in this article can provide fresh insights into the organizational and/or societal contexts which facilitate female and/or feminist leadership. They can also demonstrate the benefits of an intergenerational mixed methods study.

The first study was semi-structured interviews conducted in 2012 with 18 senior (white) women professors at the top of UK higher education institutions (vice-chancellor /principal / president). The second study was an on-line survey to assess a leadership program for women conducted at a newer Australian university in 2013. All 85 participants in the

program were invited to complete the on-line survey. A healthy response rate of 53% of the participants was achieved which is average in the field (Baruch and Holton, 2008). While most questions entailed responses on a five-point Likert scale, some also enabled respondents to make qualitative comments. So, this research analyses both qualitative interviews and a predominantly quantitative survey—thereby using different methods to examine the research problem (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2008). Although data interpreted in this way is not normally generalizable, the literature argues that such a mixed methods approach does allow the results to be generalized to distinctive groups such as women leaders in higher education (Morse, 2003). We recognize the comparable background of higher education in Australia and the UK, given that Australian universities were established on the British standard and that universities in both countries adhere to national legislation in relation to equal opportunities in the workplace.

The theoretical framework used to explore the data from these studies is communities of practice (COP) of masculinities (and femininities). It follows Paechter's (2003) research which employed the notion of communities of practice to determine how we learn gender (through communities of practice of masculinities). The extension of her work by Burkinshaw (2015) argued that exploring women in leadership through this lens can elucidate HE leadership cultures and how we acquire leadership. We argue that this theoretical framework underpinning our data analysis helps us to recognize gendered performance of leadership in HE through the images and metaphors it portrays. Communities of practice produce networks of full members, apprentices or those practicing "legitimate peripheral participation," meaning that membership at any level entails "fitting in" to a degree. Membership helps establish "individual and group identity" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) and "learning full participation in a community of masculinity or femininity practice is about learning one's own identity and how to enact it" (Paechter, 2006). By using COP of masculinities to understand how leadership is learned in a higher education context we can explain the fluidity of masculinities and femininities and also local and negotiated ways of doing gender. Our theoretical framework illustrates how these communities resist change and how leadership (and leaders) can be constrained by membership of COP of masculinities which historically have influenced leadership practices and shaped the (masculine model) status quo.

The interviews from the UK research were transcribed by the interviewer. Themes emerged both inductively from the interview data as well as having been framed by the questions which were also informed by the literature. The data analysis software Atlas Ti helped to code these themes during the analysis process. Before the interviews were conducted the whole study was approved by the university's Ethics Committee which required all participants to consent to being interviewed beforehand, and to consent for any verbatim comments from their interviews to be included in publications so long as maintaining their anonymity was paramount. The Australian research used thematic analysis in the light of the dominant themes emerging from the data, in conjunction with those from

the literature. Here the Ethics Committee approved the research which was an anonymous online survey administered by the Equity Office. The aggregated data was then forwarded to the Principal Investigator for analysis. Participants were invited to complete the anonymous online survey to share their experience of the program and to assess any impact it has had on their working lives and career planning. They were also invited to provide comments on how any future programs could be improved to better meet the needs on women at the university. By completing the survey all the participants consented to their anonymous contributions being quoted verbatim.

RESULTS

We examine the metaphors and images used by different generations of women to describe current managerialist leadership in higher education and the impact on their careers and career ambitions firstly by analyzing data from each research project separately. The data of the older women was rich in metaphors about how they navigated a masculinist leadership culture, while the data of the younger women presented strong images of leadership at their university. We were then interested in exploring if the alternative metaphors and images these women proposed could help to redefine how they viewed leadership (Clouse et al., 2013).

The Metaphors and Images Used to Describe Women's Leadership: UK Research

The senior women in the UK research had become adept at negotiating and navigating HE gendered leadership cultures thus completely reinforcing the doing of leadership as gendered performance through the images and metaphors with which they described their work. Bearing in mind these women were in their mid to late fifties, their generational perspective is key. Many benefitted from grammar school education, several of which were all- girls' schools. They saw this background as influential in propelling them into leadership but not in preparing them for the masculinist culture.

The literature provides many examples of how certain leadership performances practiced by those at the top of institutions, and the images they use to talk about it, are acceptable (Saunderson, 2002; Wicks and Bradshaw, 2002; Coleman, 2006). By inference, and rather more importantly through metaphors such as "othering," there must be alternative leadership performances that are unacceptable or at least less acceptable. Othering produces alternatives to "mainstream" (malestream) performances; however, these are invariably interpreted as inferior (using the image of lacking the right characteristics) and second-best alternatives. According to this vice chancellor:

> … for me it's about the culture that gets created and the willingness [of] types of characteristics of those people who are in senior roles in leadership positions, and some men have those characteristics and some women don't have those characteristics.

Another described the way we talk about leadership by using male, masculine, words and constructs which in itself helps to define acceptable (and conversely less acceptable) leadership:

> I think leadership is defined by powerful leadership: it's if you look at the words you use to describe leaders, they tend to be male words and sometimes they put in the odd thing about nurturing and engaging people—that's a girly one. Things like that. They tend to be male in that sense. Actually, the way that the leadership club works tends to be like that, a club. Let's have a beer. Let's meet for breakfast. That's all the constructs about meetings. You go to meetings and you have to stand from the floor and orate. That's a very male thing, rather than sitting down and having a discussion.

This VC saw leadership as "a club" that used male metaphors to describe leadership and being a member was about attending breakfast meetings, catching up for a beer, and standing up to speak. Instead she was trying in her own institution to engage in other ways of collaborating with staff and had quite different images to describe it. For example, there were open gatherings in shared social spaces such as refectories or coffee lounges where she interacted with small groups who congregated to chat and easily joined in their conversations.

HE leadership COPs of masculinities prosper because the metaphors and images they use are so convincing that they cannot be contested. This resistance is difficult to explain except for the image of a "not how we do things around here" culture which permeates practice fundamental to COP (of masculinities), and so one VC asserts:

> We also need to start to review again the leadership constructs and attributes and start to raise the values level of some of those attributes which have taken on, male vs. female, about great leaders and about attributes for our leadership. We have found lots of different people, maybe around women and raising them up the value scale. It's about re-engineering around the value messages and re-engineering about some of the things we do around leadership and make sure it is embedded.

This VC was arguing that the gendered metaphors used to describe effective leadership needed to change.

Gendered leadership culture and the metaphors and images that describe it are the glue that holds HE together and it is images of masculinities' emotionality and irrationality, such things as game playing, back stabbing and ingratiation, that are acceptable. The double-bind of emulating these metaphors of masculinities leadership will not necessarily gain women full membership of HE leadership COP of masculinities anyway, as this leadership practice too often becomes unacceptable when performed by many women (Mackenzie Davey, 2008). Nonetheless, women in HE leadership invariably negotiate and navigate gendered cultures by adopting masculine images of acceptable behavior and talking about sport, engaging in other forms of male banter and, as explained here, definitely never crying:

> You can never ever become emotional in a work situation. That would be the worst thing you can do if you were trying to position yourself for a senior position. You could not afford to become

emotional. You might just be able to do it once. You couldn't make a habit of it. You certainly wouldn't cry in any situations.

The strong image here of women being emotional, and therefore less effective, leaders is clear.

Women VCs had learnt that conforming to COP of masculinities was the only acceptable and successful image of leadership in HE. Inevitably we all survive and prosper by fitting in to COP because they operate as boundaries in our lives, providing security and identity (Wenger, 1998); in other words we have to do something to prolong the membership that sustains these communities (Paechter, 2006) as the following UK women explain: "because perhaps that was part of the fitting in bit and not wanting to be labeled as one of those awkward women"; "I've moved from a mimic and behaving in a way that was going to be acceptable in a mainly male world"; "in the early days it was power suit dressing time and there was a lot of emulating of what men would have done"; and "probably I find myself occasionally doing it and recognizing it's not my natural way of behaving and I see it occasionally in other women. It's about survival partly."

This suggested a negative image of women VCs not wanting to be labeled "as one of those awkward women" and using the metaphor of being a "mimic" of the prevailing culture. An undercurrent of the conversations and the fear of being labeled, played out for these women throughout their career. So, these metaphors and images suggest that women's role in leadership COP is about making the incumbents feel at ease with their presence as "others" by fitting in with the codes of practice, which reinforces the boundaries and deepens the masculinities culture:

> One of things I do now, which I never used to have time for or wanted to be associated with, women's groups, because perhaps that was part of the fitting in bit and not wanting to be labeled as one of those awkward women ... Those of us who are older now should be trying to encourage people.

Consequently, there was a huge learning process going on for many HE senior women. They were faced with the double-bind of conforming—as these metaphors and images attest—often by performing their gender in a way that was acceptable in a mainly male world and even then, of having their leadership interpreted as not appropriate. For example, the same leadership could be defined using metaphors such as aggressive or forthright depending upon which gender is doing it and who is interpreting it, as these VCs explain:

> I can be very forthright and a couple of times I have been forthright. I've often worked with a load of women; you can be forthright with some women and they will be in tears. I will be bullying but a man can be saying the same thing and not. So, you can be forthright as a woman and be obstructive or bullying which probably as a man would be perceived differently.
> If you've been brought up in that environment and if you've had to fit in to survive, which you probably have as a woman in a very male dominated environment, then actually some of those behaviors you learn them.

The overriding conclusion from the UK research is that this generation of women learned throughout their careers to adopt masculinist metaphors and images of leadership in order to navigate and negotiate gendered and gendering cultures which in part was responsible for their success. This concurs with other evidence that women in HE work hard at "fitting in"; the metaphor so often used to describe conforming to an uncongenial leadership culture (Brooks and Mackinnon, 2001; Cotterill et al., 2007). Hence, there is a strong image of them performing emotional labor on their leadership identity and being sanguine about having to do so. They expend energy on "fitting in" to gendered leadership cultures which has implications for other women (and other under-represented groups) coming through.

In summary, this generation of women had to work intensely and continuously at meriting membership of COP of masculinities by embracing its metaphors and images of leadership and "fitting in", as all memberships are temporally determined. Predictably they found that the metaphors and images of masculinist leadership had to be repeatedly performed to maintain the status quo and to keep the HE leadership community "intact", neatly encapsulated in the metaphor of difference from this woman VC:

> So, I think there's a group going through where there is a range of masculinity. It's not just what you wear, that you have to wear a suit. It's not that. Its, the way I see it, it's by being female and entering the room I am different. I can extenuate or reduce the differences. And that puts them at their ease.

We have an image here of a woman seeking to influence the perceptions of her leadership by conforming to masculine leadership in order to put "them at their ease."

The Metaphors and Images Used by the Next Generation to Describe Women's Leadership: Australian Research

We will now explore the various images, more than metaphors, used by the next generation to describe women's leadership through examining their evaluation of a women's leadership development program and reflections on the leadership of their institution.

The effectiveness of such programs in HE has been noted by several authors (Tessiens, 2007; Morley and Crossouard, 2015). The participants identified the opportunity to explore leadership and network with other participants as key strengths of the program.

Such programs recognize that women have different career experiences to men and allow them to explore different styles of leadership. Most participants used positive images to describe how such programs provided an opportunity to reflect and to meet other people "who want to be the best they can," "raise the aspirations of women and help close the gender gap at senior management level," and allow women to compete on an equal footing. Their views of the potential of such programs reflected Tessiens's (2011) findings.

Participants used positive images to portray women's approach to leadership "as very different as a female" because "women manage and lead differently to their male colleagues" and "the issues for women can be very different to those of men and as such require a forum that invites open discussion." Therefore, the program provided a secure space "where the issues that are exclusive to women can be aired," as also noted by Debebe et al. (2016) and Vinnicombe et al. (2013).

The images used to describe the networking in the program were also positive. One noted that it provided "skills and information on who is in what area and people to contact and have since developed relationships with these people and utilized them in my work to essentially help the students have better outcomes." Other benefits included: increased confidence "in approaching new people at work and social circles"; (see also Clarke, 2011); being valuable: "beneficial to my own work area"; and a learning opportunity: "I thought it would be a great learning and networking opportunity and it was!." Their experience resonated with other studies on the value of women-to-women networking (Sagebiel and White, 2013) and women only leadership development programs (Tessiens, 2007). Building broader networks helped participants to understand how they operated in the workplace and how men used networks, often to consolidate their own power, and how networking could be used more effectively for career progression. It also enabled them to imagine other possibilities of HE communities of practice.

However, the contrast between these positive images of the program and the metaphors and especially images used to describe the masculinist leadership they observed in their institution was stark. Participants were critical of the institution's masculinist leadership, the poor leadership provided and organizational restructure that led to disinterest in leadership roles. Moreover, they criticized the program as an approach to fixing the women rather than fixing the institution which, they asserted, was the problem, reflecting their frustration with HE leadership COP of masculinities (Burkinshaw and White, 2017). Once again this article raises awareness of viewing women through the intersectional lens of generation and gender given the rich data generated by both studies. While the older women tended to be more accepting of the status quo, the next generation used strong metaphors and images to express anger about what they saw as the injustice of the power of the dominant leadership model and its negative impact on their careers.

Participants used negative images such as: "glaring gender inequalities in the workplace" and the failure of this culture to adapt: "without real buy in from the university's leadership and our male colleagues nothing will change." This alienated women, leading one participant to conclude: "having time to think about my career and to learn and reflect on the workings of our university has had an impact … this has acted to convince me that I am a poor fit with this university."

COP of masculinities produced poor leadership and images of women who were trapped. One said that the "light bulb moment" for her was "realizing that women at this institution are so poorly represented in leadership." Inviting senior male leaders to the program to discuss their leadership simply confirmed that they were ineffectual: "sadly, it just reinforced the impression I already had that the university leadership team lacks strength and determination." Moreover, some argued the program was in danger of perpetuating this mediocre leadership: "I do not want more "leaders" trained in ways that emulate the poor leadership I see throughout our university." Unlike the women VCs described above who strongly invested in negotiating and navigating COP of masculinities, these women were not prepared to play the game of fitting in with this code of practice and accepting current leadership in order to get on, reflecting the observation of Sluis (2012).

These negative images extended beyond a focus on the program to the wider organizational culture, refocusing the emphasis from trying to fix the women to fixing a system constructed and perpetuated by powerful male leaders. One participant was clear that this needed to change rather than women changing themselves:

> not just expecting women to change themselves to better fit the existing system. And there needs to be follow through—what comes next? What is the university leadership doing to fix the problem? What is the university community doing?

Another criticized the program because "much of the "advice" was focused on us changing rather than us working together to fix the system that is the problem." For them the reality was that "in isolation, such a program changes nothing—I do not see any evidence of the leadership of the university doing anything to improve things for their women employees." Their views concur with Tessiens (2007) assertion that the underlying assumptions, values and approaches of women's only leadership programs need to be examined: "Without a clear strategy that includes a focus on organizational culture, programs will continue to help individual women fit into organizational cultures while leaving those cultures untouched."

This leadership development program mostly failed to encourage women to aspire to leadership roles because the pervasive image of "the problem" is women, articulated by O'Connor (2011), moves the accountability for blatant discrimination from universities to women themselves and to a range of remedial initiatives for "fixing" them such as mentoring and women in leadership programs. By focusing on what women lack in terms of skills and experience, university management can neatly explain why women's career trajectories do not match those of their male colleagues (Ely and Meyerson, 2000).

As mentioned earlier, Morley (2014) has identified that many younger women are dismissing careers in HE leadership. The impact of managerialism is a factor here, evident in negative images of work intensification, continuous restructuring and undermining the confidence of women in their ability to perform their jobs and have job satisfaction. The effect of managerialism on the performance of leadership was evident in the responses of participants. Blackmore (2014) argues that work intensification for academics and lack of diversity in leadership discourage women from aspiring to or achieving leadership. Given their assessment that the program was flawed in focusing on fixing the women, participants mostly were not attracted to

senior leadership. Instead, some seemed preoccupied with an institutional wide restructure that consumed them and might explain the following observation: "disappointing that women didn't feel more empowered!." One noted that the light bulb moment in the program was "that there are some very unhappy women working here! I wonder why they stay if they are so unhappy—lack of options?" or it could be more personal, another realizing that she "was not coping with work life at the university." Others felt trapped: "at the moment because of my position I feel there is nowhere else for me to go within the organization," and wondered if they were in the right career:

> It made me question whether academia was the career path I want to pursue. I love what I do, but I see so many obstacles, and so many poor decisions that impact on staff satisfaction and staff development.

Strong negative images of disempowered, unhappy women who were not coping in the workplace and having nowhere to go explain why these participants were not putting up their hands to move into leadership roles. Reflecting Carvalho et al.'s (2013) research, the complex gender relations at work here in the university, including poor decision making by male leaders, alienated women and confirmed their status as outsiders. Acker (2014) observes that it is not sufficient to urge women to seek university leadership, particularly when they are often stressed and discouraged, and it will not lead to reform of the gender relations in institutions.

Images of ineffectual institutional leadership reflecting a hostile COP of masculinities, had left some women merely in survival mode. Despite identifying the value of women's only leadership development programs and networking opportunities, the transformational potential of the program was outweighed by the overwhelmingly negative images of the current masculinist leadership at the university. Not surprisingly, like the women in Morley's (2014) and Acker's (2014) studies, they either did not aspire to leadership or wish to take on further leadership roles.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our discussion focusses on the key synergies and dissonance in the metaphors and images of leadership between the generations and hence the intersection of generation and gender in higher education leadership.

The narrative for older women provides us with images about conforming to masculinist leadership, of fitting in, and not challenging or unsettling their male colleagues. Time and again the women VCs talked about their experiences of fitting in to dominant masculine leadership styles both in order to get on and to survive once promoted. The ongoing energy required to achieve some membership status of belonging to COP of masculinities suggested that alternative (other) leadership was not necessarily supported or encouraged. At the same time their pervading tone in the images and metaphors used was that they rarely openly challenged the masculinist culture. Several rejected any responsibility for women coming through by adamantly denying their role as "gender politicians". The

precarious nature of their success is reflected in the metaphors they used such as needing to stay under the radar regarding such controversial issues, that they were merely practicing legitimate peripheral participation, in other words. One or two women used the metaphor of being much more comfortable "in their own skin" once they had made it to the top and even changed how they dressed to reflect their femininity, gaining confidence to abandon the dark suited uniform expected by COP of masculinities.

Most worrying is our observation about the images these women used to describe how they needed to work hard at navigating and negotiating gendered leadership cultures in order to perform acceptable leadership, because men in these positions defended their entitlement and privilege (Fox, 2017). This image of conformity as the price of success was stark. Moreover, they were not resentful about this extra emotional labor required, which their male peers (generally) avoided. Almost without exception these womens' images were about discrimination as a woman in a man's world. Interestingly these stories often emerged following them saying something like "I've never really had a problem but…" as though they had normalized misogynist cultures and that the metaphor they often used of needing to fit in was part and parcel of getting on. Some even adopted a "maggie thatcher" leadership image, being more masculinist than many of their male peers. They wanted to be seen not just as good as the men at their own (leadership) game but better, whatever the personal cost, which included (more often than not) broken relationships and childless lives.

Feminists worry about how the metaphors and images used in this approach to leadership influence women coming through about the agency of ambitious women. It infiltrates both overtly and covertly: covertly, without challenge the strong imagery perpetuating masculinist culture survives intact; and overtly, off the record we have the image of some of these older women actually admitting to a complete lack of sisterhood with their younger more junior colleagues, believing that because they had had it tough and made it through, then why shouldn't their successors. Clearly improving the lot of women in leadership COP of masculinities is complex and nuanced. Simply achieving a critical mass of women at the top will not necessarily change the entrenched metaphors used to describe masculinist leadership and the images that sustain it. Rather, more feminist women (and men) are needed for this to happen. Otherwise younger generations of women will continue to focus on images of ineffective, hostile leadership which perpetuates glaring gender inequalities in the workplace, and dismiss any leadership ambitions as more of the same struggle.

Hence this is why subsequent generations are seemingly more reluctant to fit in to get on or to become leaders and the metaphors and images they used to describe the current masculinist leadership were overwhelmingly negative. While participants in the women's leadership program saw networking opportunities as its key strength, unlike Wojtas (2008) findings, there was no indication that networking increased their confidence in tackling their image of the institution's mediocre and/or ineffectual leadership. Many of these women experienced

high levels of stress and frustration resulting from how the university treated them and their colleagues during the current restructure. This thirty and forty-year-old generation of women were unimpressed by their older, more senior female and male colleagues and the prevailing COP of masculinities they observed, using mostly negative images to describe them, and as such demonstrated a complete resistance to fitting in altogether, often at the expense of furthering their careers. Indeed, many reported that participation in the women in leadership program generally did not inspire them to focus on career progression. If this means women in the younger generation decide against taking on senior leadership roles it illustrates yet again how leadership COP of masculinities operate to quash diversity. To reiterate, we are argue that the older generation of women worked hard at fitting into masculinist leadership cultures which goes some way to explain their illuminating metaphors whilst the younger generation of women were unimpressed with those cultures hence their resistance through negative imagery.

On a more hopeful note, the metaphors and images used by women across the generations about their positive experience of COP of femininities, often through women only networking/forums and a critical mass of women in leadership teams, suggested the possibility for transformation. While they might have difficulty articulating the leadership culture of masculinities, they readily discussed how femininities leadership was valuable and led to more relaxed leadership settings. The status quo, perpetuated by "the calculus of interest", can mean people do not recognize the prevailing gendered and gendering driven culture, as though it is gender neutral (Connell, 1987). Whereas, it is easier to recognize "the other" because it is extraordinary and unusual, not the usual image and feels different, as one VC explained:

> It's much, our meetings, there's only eight of us around the table. Very evenly balanced. Very collegial. A lot of laughter. Very straight with each other. No manipulation. No stabbing in the back once you go out the door. Everybody feels very supported. And it's absolutely in good times and bad, most especially in bad, that you have that kind of trust in each other. Now if that's a feminine style, so be it.

Similarly, the next generation used positive images to describe what they saw as the alternative model of leadership offered in the women's leadership development program—such as providing a space for "open discussion," a "safe forum" that enabled them to raise issues "exclusive to women," and brought together women who were "committed and passionate" about their work.

Often both the older and younger women provided images of higher education leadership COP of femininities which offered a different model of leadership and therefore represented more effective leadership communities. They described femininities leadership culture as "feels very different," "leadership is very different as a female," "it was a lot different," "very noticeably different," "women manage and lead differently," and "so totally different." Their conversations about the relative merits of both femininities and masculinities leadership strongly favored the former as more productive. These women were praising the incisiveness of femininities leadership which may not previously have been in the metaphoric "calculus of interests" of the hegemonic masculinities culture of HE. Until very recently HE has been a "default man" society, a term coined by the artist and social commentator Perry about wider society (2014). By default, the images and metaphors defining HE masculinities and masculinist leadership cultures have remained powerful, rejecting alternatives which could compromise their vested interests. These vested interests cultivate modern "microaggressions" which mask sexism (and racism) and which are "more likely to be expressed as covert, indirect and more ambiguous thus creating challenges in identifying and acknowledging its occurrence (Holder et al., 2015). That both generations of women experienced and enjoyed the leadership alternatives (described by more comfortable metaphors and images) as more inclusive, effective and transformational is encouraging. While feminists are accused of threatening this status quo, both the older and younger women in this study demonstrate that alternative and more fluid metaphors and images of feminine leadership are evident across the generations.

To conclude, the metaphors and images used to describe the experience of the older generation of women who were compelled to negotiate and navigate gendered leadership cultures seems to be influencing the younger generation to resist this style of leadership. The prevailing culture in higher education leadership and the metaphors used to describe successful leadership narrows the options for women leaders or aspiring leaders. While older women were prepared to accept current images of (male) leadership, younger women had contempt for the way such images marginalized them while at the same time encouraging them to lift their game. Their crushing images of disappointment, unhappy women, not coping, nowhere else to go, being trapped, encountering obstacles, and poor decisions of managers reinforce the sense of women who on the one hand were blocked in their careers and on the other were not interested in emulating what they saw as poor decision making and ineffective leadership of their current managers. Instead middle and aspiring women leaders are performing leadership differently, suggesting COP of femininities and feminism can work toward reinforcing more positive metaphors and images of doing leadership which in turn may transform the leadership diversity landscape.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because: in the case of the Australian data surveys were conducted by the equity office and deidentified data was provided confidentially to the author; and in the case of the UK data the participants' consent to being interviewed was based on total anonymity and confidentiality of the data generated. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to Dr. Paula Burkinshaw.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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