LEADING FROM AUTONOMY AND INTERNALIZATION:
An Examination of Race and Gender on the Leadership of a Culturally Competent White Woman

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Keywords: *identity, gender, race, leadership, culturally competent*

Abstract

This paper examines the influences of race and gender on identity. Social Identity theory and subordinate affiliation's effects on group dynamics and identity are examined. Helms (1984) White identity model is used to examine the development and growth of a positive sense of White racial identity. Womanist Identity Development Model (Helms, 1990; Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992) is used to examine the development of positive female identity. Commonalities of highest levels of both measures of identity (race and gender) are discussed along with their influences on leadership. Some limitations which may be due to Social Identity theory are considered.

Introduction

"The journey that a leader takes is one of expanding awareness" (Chopra, 2010, p.19). In an effort to better understand and lead her team, it is vital that a woman leader comes to an intimate understanding of her own identity. She must become like the tapestry weaver who knows the fibers that make the warp will stabilize the fabric, but the weft adds the variety and beauty to the design. Her warp makes up her core identity, but her weft is where she can grow and become so much more than before.

The culturally competent leader needs to take a careful analysis of all parts of her identity to successfully respond to situations that arise when trying to foster an ethos that communicates and embraces diversity. Attempting to lead without a deliberate and thorough exploration of facets of group identity such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other leaves the leader in a position of unawareness and unable to successfully build relationships and support diverse people in that organization (Chopra, 2010; Ponterotto, Utsey & Pedersen, 2006; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sonnenschein, 1999). A leader needs to critically understand her own identity before she can begin to respect the diversity reflected in her own organization (Sonneschein, 1999).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory is the study of intergroup processes to organize the affiliations and cognitive processes that individuals generate when forming alliances (Hogg, 2001; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). These may be based on common social identity factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation (see Fig. 1). They may be imposed by an outside force or self-categorized. Tajfel (1972 in Hogg, 2001) theorized that individuals subscribe affiliation to a group based on social and emotional significance that is attached group membership. The evaluative portion of social identity comes from the in-group comparisons that the members make to positively distinguish their own group (Hogg, 2001).
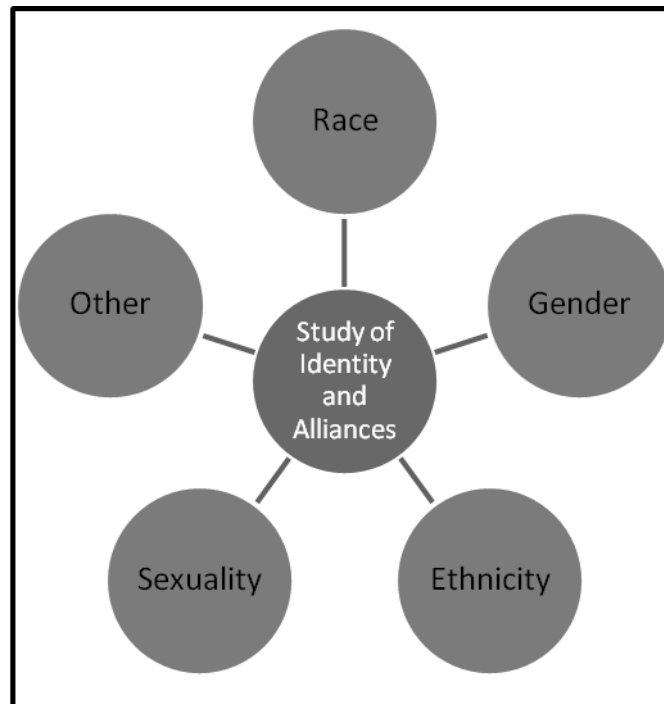
Figure 1. Factors of influencing social identity (Hogg, 2001; Purdie-Vaughns & Eighbach, 2008; Tajifel in Hogg, 2001).

Prototypes		**Subgroups**
Ethnocentric		Not White
Androcentric	≠	Women
Heterocentric		Homosexual

- Prototypes more often chosen for leadership position
- Subgroups more often discriminated against

Figure 2. Prototype and Subgroup Affiliation demonstrate those members who fall into prototypes are more often chosen for leadership positions; affiliation in more than one subgroup can lead to intersectional invisibility (Aker, 1990; Hogg, 2001; Leonardelli & Phillips, 2008; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) offer a further analysis of social identity and explain sub-ordinate group affiliation. Discrimination may be experienced as a result of affiliation to a sub-ordinate group (e.g., White women, Black men, gay White men). Their model of social identity is based on the premise that in-group memberships are based on 'prototypes'; specifically ethnocentric, androcentric and heterocentric identity. Members who do not fit are deemed non-prototypical and considered members of a sub-ordinate group (see Fig. 2). Individuals who do not fit more than one of the prototypes, (e.g., White lesbian women, Black gay men) are subject to "intersectional invisibility" (p. 378), a condition where the intersection of their sub-ordinate identities is greater than the sum of their parts. The marginalization that occurs from this 'intersectional invisibility' leads these individuals to suffer more than belonging to only one sub-group (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Affiliation in only one sub-ordinate group serves to marginalize those individuals while "accentuating the existing ingroup [*sic*] prototype" (Hogg, 2001, p. 191). Prototypical members are more often chosen for leadership and considered more effective (Aker, 1990; Hogg, 2001; Rosette, Leonardelli & Phillips, 2008).

Although they are more often chosen for leadership, they are not the sole examples of leaders. Women are increasingly taking leadership roles in business, education and higher education. Women are now 44% of school principals, 24% of chief executive positions and 21% of higher education presidents (Eagly, 2007b). When leadership models were designed, they were assumed to be from an androcentric and White privileged perspective (Caldwell-Colbert & Albino, 2007; Chin, 2004; Eagly, 2007a; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gill & Ganesh, 2007; Madden, 2005; Rosette, Leonardelli & Phillips, 2008; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Sonnenschein, 1999).

As the demographic of leadership is changing, it is important that a conscious effort be made to look at the leadership styles of sub-ordinate members to understand how leadership may be influenced through the experience as a sub-ordinate group member. Only looking at one aspect of identity is taking too narrow a view on leadership. Although a leader may have one membership in a sub-ordinate group, she may have another part of her identity in the dominant group as well (e.g., White women, Black men). The leader may have to process both the reality of oppressor and oppressed in her own identity before she can create an atmosphere that supports and acknowledges differences. For these reasons, it is important that the following question be explored:

> *How does the deliberate examination of White identity theory and feminist/womanist identity theory inform the leadership style of a culturally competent White woman?*

One of the ways that a leader begins to develop her vision and potential is to make a deliberate inward accounting of the factors that make up her identity (Chopra, 2010; Sonnenschein, 1999). Sonnenschein speaks of the "Socialization and Ism Prism" (p. 31). This prism isolates the factors that expose bias. Many times bias is the result of an unexamined part of identity such as race or sex. Racism is detrimental to all, with both physical and psychological effects on the perpetrators and victims (Ponterotto, Utsey & Pedersen, 2006). It is necessary for a culturally competent leader to make a full examination of her racial and gender identity in order to understand her leadership style.

White Identity Theory

Helms first proposed her White racial identity theory in 1984. She posited for Whites to develop into fully realized, non-racist people, they had to pass through a series of statuses; each of which involved a process of internal reflection on their racial status as White people (Helms, 1984). This theory also incorporated the fact that Whites must begin to take responsibility for White privilege and racism before they can "understand how oppression hurts all people even when it is not directly aimed at them" (Helms, 2008, p. 83).

Helms' first status is Contact, characterized by being unaware of any racism, prejudice, or problem with it. An individual in this status may or may not be conscious of her participation in racism; she also may be 'raceless' or see other Whites that way as well. She does not see or understand White privilege. (Helms, 1984; Helms, 2008; Ponterotto, et al., 2006).

Once an individual can no longer deny the existence of racism, Disintegration begins (Helms, 1984). The individual sees the effects of racism, but at the same time wants to be accepted by the dominant group (Whites). The individual suffers a moral crisis during this stage. She can either choose to deny racism and go back to the stage of contact or choose to go forward and enter the stage of Reintegration.

Reintegration represents the effort of the individual to deal with the moral and ethical feelings of shame, anger, and ambivalence of being a White person who benefits from White privilege (Helms,

1984). She also sees the effects of racism on the sub-ordinate groups and feels anger over her inability to do anything about it. Fear of minorities may result at this time and overt racism may occur.

Pseudoindependence arises when the individual begins to recognize the racism and White privilege that exists and has occurred (Helms, 1984). Individuals at this stage look to others' mistakes and fail to take personal responsibility for racism. She is on the quest for a new White identity.

Immersion/Emersion can be a difficult stage for individuals. It involves undertaking a variety of studies each with the purpose of understanding and accepting White culture and at the same time, understanding racism (Helms, 1984). She may get involved with others who are in the same process, or may feel more isolated because of the journey she is undertaking. She may become cut off from former friends and family in her search. This process can be both enlightening and exhausting.

The final status in the White identity model is Autonomy (Helms, 1984). At this point, the individual has developed an appreciation for White culture, is flexible in her ability to comfortably co-exist with many different races of people, and works to end oppression in all forms. She sincerely engages with all people in an effort to understand all points of view.

Leading from Autonomy

A culturally competent leader is instrumental in taking a proactive approach to leading from Autonomy. She will look for opportunities to listen to all members of her organization, regardless of race. She understands that designing opportunities for her group to interact in meaningful ways will increase awareness and understanding of individuals' points of view (Ponterotto, et. al., 2008). Designing experiences for members to talk about their observations of shared events in a safe environment can lead to a greater understanding of both verbal and non-verbal behaviors of which they may not be aware (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawkami & Hodson, 2002). These discussions may be difficult, but may result in much greater understanding of each other and better cohesion in the group. It will also allow the leader to put working groups together in a more informed way.

Providing training and team building time within the organization is vital for a leader to help her team begin to isolate, understand and value differences (Sonnenschein, 1999). Just as each person may be at a different place in Helms'(1984) model, it is imperative that the leader of the team help each team "discover commonalities and build on them" (Sonnenschein, 1999, p. 102). The completion and discussion of the "Rokeach Terminal Values Test" (Sonnenschein, 1999, pp. 36-37) and Diversity Questionnaire (p. 47) is valuable for both a hetero and homogenous group. Both of these exercises allow individuals to deeply think about their personal values and listen to others. Homogenous groups also benefit from exploring the "Self-Assessing White Racial Identity" exercise (Helms, 2008, pp. 35-39). This exercise requires more skillful facilitation and grounding in White identity theory. Because this model is developmental, individuals in the Contact, Disintegration and Reintegration stage may not be willing to listen nor speak openly about their feelings or the subject. It is critical that the leader is able to use all of her skills as someone in the stage of Autonomy or that she find someone who can facilitate this discussion.

Lastly, leading from Autonomy necessitates the leader openly challenging institutional racism when she encounters it. Not only is she bound to do it from a moral perspective, but also as the leader. "Leaders create big changes: their tone sets the kind of environment that others experience…. You are the whole situation that you find yourself in, creator of a continual mirroring effect" (Chopra, 2010, p. 151). When a critical incident is experienced, a leader must speak up. Blackmore (2010) tells of the struggle to confront the 'Whiteness' in the pedagogy of teaching–"Teaching's normative imagery in

Western systems is of a white feminized profession" (p. 53). Others also write about the difficulty of bringing up issues of institutional racism in higher education, yet they continue on because they are leaders and are morally bound to do so (Gordon, 2005; Jensen, 1998).

Gender as Identity

Gender identity has been accepted as a significant aspect of an individual's identity. In the 1980's and 1990's theorists were working on developing models of women's identity (Carter & Parks, 1996; Downing & Rousch, 1985; Helms, 1990; Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992). Two of these models mirror racial models in their approach to stages and constructs (see Figure 3). Downing and Rousch (1985) proposed Feminist Identity Development Model, but it was criticized because it focused solely on White women and necessitated a feminist ideology (Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992). Helms' (1990) Womanist Identity Development Model includes women of other races and allows women to develop their self-concept regardless of political orientation (in Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992). The two models are not always specifically identified in the literature on women and feminism, resulting in ambiguity (Chin, 2004; Dentith & Peterlin, 2011; Eagly, 2007a; Eagly, 2007b; Madden, 2005).
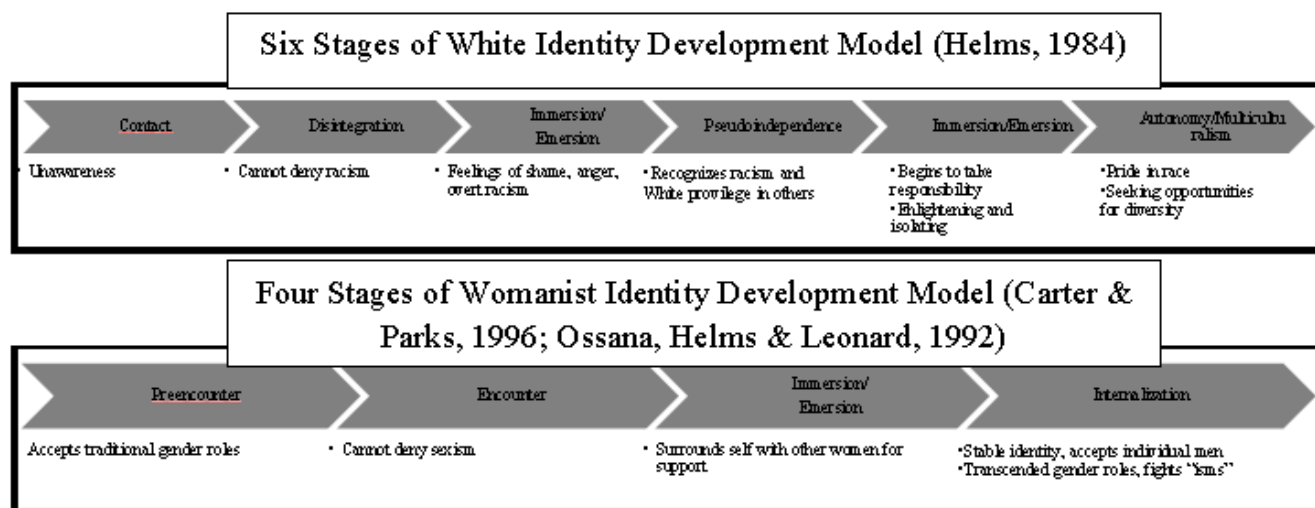

Figure 3. Comparison of White Identity Development Model (Helms, 1984) and Womanist Identity Model (Carter & Parks, Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992). Similarities are found in stages and progression.

Womanist Identity Development Model, proposed by Helms (see Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992) states that women move through a series of developmental stages similar to White Identity Theory (Helms, 1984) (see Fig. 3). Preencounter (Stage 1) occurs when a woman accepts society's traditional gender role definition. It is analogous to Contact in Helms (1984) model of White Identity Theory. Stage 2: Encounter is triggered when a woman encounters events (e.g., asked to get coffee, told not to major in engineering because she won't get a job) that cause her to shift her thinking, assigning men as bad and women as good (Ossana et al., 1992). This stage then proceeds to Immersion-Emersion (Helms in Ossana et al., 1992). In this stage, a woman chooses to surround herself with other women for emotional support and to strengthen her new identity. She attempts to forge a positive model of womanhood for herself. In Stage 4: Internalization, a woman achieves a stable identity as a woman as well as is able to evaluate men on an individual basis. In this stage, a woman has transcended gender roles and has made a commitment to action to eliminate oppression and other 'isms' involved (Hoffman,

2006). She looks to understand people, rather than genders. The Womanist Identity Development Model (Helms in Ossana et al., 1992) also adds in the importance of an internal definition of gender identity, rather than seeking validation from others (Hoffman, 2006). This stage is compatible with Helms' (1984) Autonomy stage or a multicultural identity as cited in Ponterotto et al. (2006).

Leading from Internalization

A woman in Internalization leads with open ears, mind, an intention to reject personal prejudices, and to challenge institutional practices that continue power imbalances. Because of her position as a sub-ordinate group member (female), she is highly aware of positionality; defined as "the awareness of how one's position impacts one's perceptions" (Madden, 2005, p. 7). For her, leadership "becomes a process – to empower, facilitate, collaborate, and educate – rather than a personality characteristic" (p. 9). Leadership is less based on the 'Great Man Theory' and more consistent with attributes of transformational leadership (Chin, 2004).

Internalization is a commitment to social justice and activism. These may take the form of promoting more opportunities for women as leaders (Chin, 2004; Madden, 2005). A woman in power has the ability to change from within. "The presence of many women, especially feminist women, in leadership roles throughout societal institutions can greatly speed the pace of social change toward gender equity" (Eagly, 2007b, p. xvi). In higher education, women are applying feminist theories to leadership education as a way to spur more critical thought and action (e.g., empowering communal change systems rather than authoritative) (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011; Eagly, 2007a).

Simultaneously, she understands the extent of what Bennis (1997 in Caldwell-Colbert & Albino, 2007) calls her 'value power'; the values, ideas and standards that are communicated through her actions, words and deeds. In feminist tradition, this includes employing a power structure that uses open communication, shared responsibility, collaboration and nurtured relationships (Caldwell-Colbert & Albino, 2007). "Even when other stakeholder goals are essential to survival, a feminist leader moves the organization towards success through commitment to a set of values that are embraced by the organizational culture" (p. 83).

Limitations

There are limitations to women achieving success as leaders. As noted earlier, women belong to a sub-ordinate group identity. According to social identity theory, members of sub-ordinate groups do not fit the prototype for group leadership, nor do they benefit from attribution of leadership qualities or skills (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hogg, 2011; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Women can suffer from prejudice toward their abilities or performance when there is an inconsistency between what is expected of the qualities needed to lead and what they display (Chin, 2004; Eagly, 2007a; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gill & Ganesh, 2007; Madden, 2005; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Men are more easily credited with leadership abilities and as prototypes, are "subjectively important and distinctive are seen to be disproportionately influential and have their behavior dispositionally attributed" (Hogg, 2001).

Collaborative leadership has been another criticism of female leadership. Because qualities of collaborative leadership are communal rather than agentic; it can be viewed as weak or ineffective. Collaborative leadership looks to consensus, building of relationships and collective voice. Agentic leadership is typically independent, decisive, aggressive and competitive. Defined in these ways, they can be stereotypically conceived 'female' and 'male' (Eagly & Karau, 2002). If group members hold

stereotypical views or ascribe to social identity prototype theory; it may indicate that members may be less likely to follow a female leader.

Putting It Together

How does a culturally competent White woman lead from a stage of Autonomy (Helms, 2008) and Internalization (Carter & Parks, 1996; Downing & Rousch, 1985; Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992)? They are both similar in their viewpoint. Both stages of her identity development require that she sees the world and her team as multicultural individuals who are each equally deserving respect. She no longer makes judgments on people based solely on their skin color or gender; but now leads by helping her team to "know their strength and recognize themselves as experts about their own lives" (Lott, 2007, p. 27). She demonstrates that she has confidence in her team and encourages them to take risks by increasing the level of trust and designing experiences and the environment to feel safe for all members to participate. "Because of experiences with oppression in society and in organizations, women (and people of color) often need skills for empowering" (Caldwell-Colbert & Albino, 2007).

It is the leader's job to encourage unity and discourage divisions (Chopra, 2010). She can inspire the group by living the example of a higher level of awareness and action. When she has truly come to believe and embody the principles of both parts of her identity, her weft and warp; she can weave her greatest tapestry and her team will aspire to do the same.

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