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Danica Purg: The Leadership Development Journey of One of Slovenia's Most Influential Women

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Women and Leadership Around the World: Middle East and North America

Session Chair
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Commentator
None

Session Description (up to 80 words)
The purpose of this symposium is to highlight lessons learned from the book project Women and Leadership around the World, and share some chapters from that volume. We will focus on transformational insights and chapters from Europe and Asia Pacific. The editors and chapter authors will highlight recent research and provide implications for future research and praxis.

Session Abstract (500-1000 words)

On January 12th, 2015, Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant wrote an OpEd piece in the New York Times titled "Speaking While Female," where they argued against the silencing of women's voices in various organizational contexts. Citing research by Brescoll (2011), which suggests that powerful women face backlash as a result of talking more than others while men do not, Sandberg and Grant (2015) urged for the need to interrupt this gender biases. Other research demonstrates that women are silenced when they attempt to speak up, especially in a space where they are the minority (e.g. team, boards). At the same time, the men in the room take up both space and volume and interrupt or re-state whatever the women have said with more authority and credibility. These issues of women being silenced or penalized for speaking up are seen in the senate, in business organizations, even in educational organizations. The question that arises is this: Do such gender biases occur in every cultural context, across all generational types, irrespective of national boundaries? That is, are such findings culture-specific or global in nature?

Following the publication of Volume 2 (Women as Global Leaders) of the new book series, "Women and Leadership: Theory, Research and Practice," editors embarked on the third volume focusing on exploring "Women and Leadership around the World." The aim was to explore the kinds of questions asked and implied above: What are the experiences of women as leaders around the world? What kinds of barriers exist for women in different regions and countries of the world? What developmental activities are deemed effective in different parts of the world? How do women fair, in terms of numbers, in accessing leadership positions in organizations and society? These and other questions are answered in the 14 chapters in this newly released book.

Our goal with this symposium is to highlight some of the lessons learned by the editors in the first presentation, and two of the chapter authors representing Asia Pacific and Europe, respectively.

There are indeed differences in the experiences of women and leadership around the world, based on cultural differences, political systems, economic enfranchisement or disenfranchisement, religious norms, and other markers that influence the social structures in various countries. For example, in the United States, it is apparent that women's experiences as leaders are impacted by their social identities such as race, class and gender (Pompper, 2014; Hernandez, Ngunjiri & Chang, 2014; Purdue-Vaughns & Elbach, 2008). Further, women's access to mentors and sponsors irrespective of their location around the world is seen as a barrier or support for their access to leadership and authority (Gibson, 2005; Hexlett & Gibson, 2007). In addition, women's experiences in their early life, within their homes and during their educational journey will have an impact on their leadership experiences too (Adler, 2008; Madsen, 2008). Studies demonstrate that in countries that have instituted quota systems for women in political leadership and/or at the board level of organizations, there will be more women to be found in leadership positions. These kinds of policy and structural changes are sometimes necessary to advance women into leadership in sufficient numbers, and decrease the kinds of experiences reported in Brescoll (2011) or Sandberg and Grant (2015) where women are interrupted, silenced, or ignored. Where there is a critical mass of women leaders, it becomes much harder for such behavior to remain acceptable. This symposium helps to demonstrate the lessons learned through research on women and leadership in different parts of the world, and will end with implications for future research as well as practice.

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PAPER 1: Women and Leadership Around the World: Transformational Insights as Editors

Keywords: women, leadership

Co-Authors
Karen A. Longman (Presenter)
Susan R. Madsen (Co-Author)
Faith Wambura Ngunjiri (Co-Author)

Short Description (up to 80 words)
This session will explore the experiences of women in leadership within the context of two regions (Europe and Asia Pacific), distilling insights gained by the volume editors as they worked with authors of this new ILA/IAP volume. The chapter contributors use various theories and conceptualizations to problematize, historicize, and analyze women's limited access to power, and their agency as leaders from the grassroots to the national scene, from education to non-profits and business organizations.

Abstract (500-1000 words)
As the research and publications on women and leadership continues to expand, there is agreement that advancing increasing numbers of women into positions of leadership in organizations and society has tremendous benefits. For example, Gerzema and D'Antonio (2013) indicated that society as a whole benefits when there are more women in leadership. They found that, among 64,000 people surveyed in 13 different countries, a vast majority felt that the world would be a better place if men thought more like women—that is, away from battlefield mentality, and into more nurturing, cooperation, communication and sharing.

Our focus in this session is on unpacking some of the insights gained from the most recent volume in the women and leadership book series, specifically focusing on overall lessons learned as editors, and two chapters from Asia Pacific and Europe. The guiding questions for this symposium is, what can we learn from women's experiences as leaders in different parts of the world? What is common, and what is unique about women, their access to power and authority, and the barriers faced in different contexts? How do women cross the borders of generations, as well as national borders, in their pursuit of leadership?

The chapters about women in Europe offered a diverse array of perspectives regarding statistics, women's experiences at the intersections of social roles and identities as leaders in different contexts. These chapters remind us that, as Alder (2008) has argued before, early experiences have a strong influence on women's development as leaders. Beyond individual experiences at home, women's access to leadership positions and their ability to thrive as leaders is impacted by structures and policies within nations and organizations. This is an important reminder that, as Sheryl Sandberg (2013) so eloquently argued in her book, *Lean In*, there is individual responsibility to lean into opportunities, as well as policies and structures that must be in place to support women's leadership. Whether quotas are utilized, family and maternity policies instituted and child care systems put in place has a great impact on the numbers of women able to effectively engage in leadership.

The chapters focusing on Asia-Pacific provided rich descriptions of female leaders in different contexts, including education, business, entertainment industry and politics. Countries included New Zealand, India, Philippines and Taiwan; the chapters elaborated on the challenges and opportunities available for women in that region.

Overall, the chapters focusing on these two regions of the world highlighted several transformational insights for us as editors. First of all, they helped to demonstrate that, even in far reaches such as Philippines and Taiwan, women are engaging in leadership, in spite of constrains and challenges to their authority as leaders. Secondly, these chapters reminded us of the need for not just personal leadership development activities for women, but also structural and policy changes within nations and organizations, to create a climate more open to gender equity in leadership. Without the structural and policy changes, women's efforts are limited in their effectiveness. Thirdly, these chapters raise the need for continued studies, employing multiple methods, focusing on both individual level of analysis as well as groups, teams, organizations, and nations, in order to further learn what works and what gets in the way of advancing women in leadership. Fourth, we recognized the need to train more women in writing and research skills, so that such women can use those skills to record, investigate, and write about leadership in their various contexts, to contribute to the knowledge base. The fact that we have so little on women and leadership in countries such as India, Philippines, and Taiwan makes it necessary to empower emerging scholars to engage in that work.

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PAPER 2: New Zealand Women in Leadership: Opportunities and Challenges

Keywords: New Zealand, women, leadership

Co-Authors
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Short Description (up to 80 words)
New Zealand women, despite representing nearly half of the New Zealand workforce, are under-represented in both public and private sector leadership positions and are, on average, paid less than men. Drawing on research from three different sectors (the public service, sport, and higher education), this presentation considers the experiences of New Zealand women pursuing leadership roles and highlights the external and internal barriers which, if left unaddressed, restrict their career progression. Implications for future research and organizational practice are discussed.

Abstract (500-1000 words)
New Zealand, a small pacific nation with a population of just 4.5 million people (Statistics New Zealand, 2014), is known internationally for its stunning natural environment, its primary produce and its prowess in rugby. It is considered a "young country," even though Māori (indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand) have lived in Aotearoa (New Zealand) for over a thousand years. Today, New Zealand is a multi-cultural society, welcoming people from many different ethnic backgrounds. Auckland, New Zealand's largest city with a population of 1.4 million people, is one of the world's most culturally diverse cities. Despite the ethnic and cultural differences this diverse population brings, New Zealand is also a country with a strong sense of national pride and identity.

New Zealand has a "long standing commitment to creating a fair and just society" (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2010, p. iii). It has been a world-leader in seeking to empower women to participate fairly and equally in society. In 1893, it led the world by giving women the right to vote in national elections. Since that time, women have progressively broken down the bastions of traditional male-dominated power. The first female mayor was elected in 1893, a female member of parliament was first elected in 1933, and in 1990, New Zealand, a member of the Commonwealth, appointed its first woman Governor-General. In 2005, the top jobs were all held by women. New Zealand had a woman Prime Minister, Governor-General, Chief Justice, and Chief Executive Officer of the country's largest corporation (McGregor & Fountaine, 2006).

These achievements suggest a nation, which embraces women leaders and where gender equality is the norm. However, the statistics paint a somewhat different picture. While women represent nearly 50 percent of the workforce, this is not reflected in the country's senior private and public sector leadership roles, with women under-represented in the upper echelons of both private and public sector organizations (Grant Thornton International Ltd, 2014; McGregor, 2012). For example, at the end of 2009, only 17% of government public sector chief executives were women (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2010) rising to 24.1% in 2012 (McGregor, 2012). The situation is less encouraging for women in New Zealand's private sector. The annual Grant Thornton report on Women in Business (2014) found that 31 percent% of New Zealand's senior management roles were held by women. New Zealand's ranking has slipped from fourth in the world in 2004 to 15th in 2014 (Davies, 2014). A gender pay gap remains the reality for women

in the New Zealand workforce. Based on median hourly wages, women are paid 10.1% less than men (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2013). The situation for women of non-European ethnicity is considerably worse. For example, the gender pay gap between the highest paid (European men) and the lowest paid (Pacific Women) sits at 24% based on median hourly rate (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2011).

Case studies from the public sector, sport and higher education will be discussed in the presentation. Common themes emerging from these three case studies included self-confidence and self-awareness, mentoring, networking, role modelling, authenticity, balance and career management. Women face internal barriers which, if left unaddressed, can restrict their career progression. The development of self-confidence and assertiveness have been identified as essential areas for self-development. Self-confidence and assurance in one's decision-making is important to improved performance, as well as the ability to cope with difficult situations, such as interpersonal conflicts motivation and emotional stability (Harris & Leberman, 2012). The importance of mentoring, networking and role modelling were reinforced. Developing good networks, as well as the importance of mentors, particularly and informal mentor relationship, is a consistent theme arising from this body of research. Women leaders value the advice and encouragement from role models, mentors, peers and friends (Leberman & Palmer, 2009). The case studies also touch on the importance of role modelling not just for other women, but also for boys and men. Youth sport, for example, provides the opportunity to challenge stereotypes about gender, power and leadership, provided the number of female coaches increases. Boys learn to respect girls and women by seeing women in leadership positions. One mother of three boys explained the importance of her sons seeing her in a sports leadership role. "They think that's pretty cool. And I'm not a boy, and they've learned to respect the girls and athletics because I'm a girl and I'm athletic" (Leberman & LaVoi, 2011, p. 481).

A key theme running through the case studies is authenticity, the need for women to feel a sense of purpose and that they are making a difference. This is consistent with the Kaleidoscope Career Model (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). Consistent with this model , women in the case studies reflect a broader approach to balance, recognizing that it is not just about balancing work and family responsibilities, but also "personal health and wellbeing" and "protected time to do something for yourself" (Leberman, 2014). Women leaders in the sport sector recognize the role of organizations in enabling a balanced approach. Advice from women in the education sector case study suggest that women seeking to develop their careers should look for challenges and grasp opportunities, reflecting a flexible approach to career development. However, many of the women also recommend young women to be proactive about career planning. There is an inherent challenge in undertaking research retrospectively on a generation of older, successful women while also seeking to make it forward looking and relevant to younger generations. This challenge is an area for that merits further academic thought and research.

Based on these case studies and relevant research, the implications for research and practice will be highlighted. These include the importance of a long-term commitment to gender equity as an explicit strategic management priority, and the need to level the playing field through, for example, encouraging women into senior leadership positions. The research also demonstrates the value of multi-organizational, sector-based leadership programs, designed specifically for women and targeted to the sector's unique context.

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PAPER 3: Danica Purg: The Leadership Development Journey of One of Slovenia's Most Influential Women

Co-Authors
Susan R. Madsen (Presenter)
Michelle Taylor (Presenter)
B. Candice Backus (Co-Author)

Short Description (49 words)

The leadership development journey of Dr. Danica Purg, one of Slovenia's most influential women, provides insights for present and future leaders. This presentation will provide highlights of Dr. Purg's family background, personality traits, education, life events, interactions, challenges, and opportunities. The presenters will draw from the life story of this significant leader to illustrate how outstanding leadership abilities are developed while young and refined over time.

Abstract (891 words)

One of the authors was able to interview Professor Danica Purg in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2013. The purpose of the interview was to discuss how Dr. Purg developed the knowledge, skills, and abilities throughout her life to become the leader she is today. Hence, this paper will share many of her thoughts and experiences related to her lifetime of developing leadership. Although much of the chapter was written from data collected from the interview, additional information was obtained from articles and books that highlighted Dr. Purg's background and work. We are products of our own experiences and circumstances, including our own family backgrounds, individual personalities, childhood and youth activities, interactions, events, challenges, and opportunities (Madsen, 2008, 2009). Exploring the backgrounds of prominent women leaders throughout the world is critical in order to expand our understanding as to how we can develop strong leadership capacity in girls, youth, and women of all ages and in all settings (e.g., workplaces, communities, governments).

Professor Danica Purg is the founding and current President of the International Executive Development Center (IEDC) at the Bled School of Management in Slovenia, the founding President of the Central and East European Management Development Association (CEEMAN), the chairperson and director of the European Leadership Centre, and the President of UN Global Compact Slovenia (IEDC, 2014). Recognitions have included, among others, the 2010 International Educator of the Year Award by the Academy of International Business and the Honorary Order of Freedom from the President of the Republic of Slovenia. She has authored and co-authored several books and numerous articles on technological and organizational change, comparative human resource management practices, team building, economic reforms, and management development in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

Born in 1946, in a small village in the eastern part of Slovenia (which was then Yugoslavia), Danica innately possessed and continued to develop many fundamental leadership characteristics. First, she had strong communication skills from a young age. She could articulate her thoughts interpersonally and publically. She learned to articulate "a case" from a young age with her parents, peers, and adults. They listened to her and valued her concerns and ideas. Second, she had strong organizational skills. Her ability to observe her surroundings and listen to the issues discussed by adults gave her creative ideas and solutions for many events and efforts she could organize and implement. Third, she had a natural talent for event planning, delegating, and bringing people together for cultural events as well as dialogues and efforts for change. She was an entrepreneur at heart, because she found great satisfaction in building relationships, events, and activities from her childhood. Finally, she was restless and had a busy mind and endless energy, which are also characteristics of successful leaders (Madsen, 2008, 2009).

As a youth, her passions for patriotism, change, improving structures, systems, and politics definitely surfaced. It was evident she was courageous, assertive, resilient, and could also be stubborn, which can be an important leadership attribute (Madsen, 2009). She had talents of being social and interacting with people at all levels of influence and in various types of settings. Danica commented that her self-assurance came during her childhood and youth because "Life made me tough." Another asset was her love for learning. Danica's teachers inspired her to work hard and do her best. Many were very passionate, and passion was important to Danica. Teachers along her journey provided encouragement and friendship; she felt cared for and appreciated by them. These teachers recognized her intellect and potential and helped her find opportunities to follow her passions and continue to develop her strengths.

When asked about other leadership competencies she strengthened or developed during her undergraduate and graduate education, she believed that her quest to develop language skills through her college years opened up many opportunities. She now speaks and writes fluently in English, French, German, Dutch, Slovene, Serbian, and Croatian, and has a good working knowledge of Russian and Italian. Next, she strengthened the natural gift of networking that has been evident in her life since her youth. Finally, she cited the importance of her natural curiosity, which was fueled during her college years, particularly her curiosity in change and innovation. She also discovered additional joy and motivation that came from challenges, and she learned to intentionally use them as a platform for future growth and development. Danica noted that she has had some particularly influential role models through her college years has learned a great deal from observing and asking them questions. Danica has also provided advice through the years for children, youth, and young adults wanting to develop leadership. This advice is summarized in the paper in four specific areas: (1) develop courage, (2) become change agents, following your passions, and support other women.

Understanding the journey of how one influential woman developed the knowledge, skills, and abilities throughout her life provides helpful insights for leadership practitioners and scholars, as well as those who help develop leadership in others (e.g., parents, educators, coaches). Leaders are products of their own experiences and circumstances, including their own family backgrounds, individual personalities, childhood and youth activities, interactions, events,

challenges, and opportunities. Exploring the backgrounds of prominent women leaders throughout the world is critical in continuing to expand understanding regarding how to develop strong leadership capacity in girls, youth, and women of all ages and in all settings.

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