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October 14, 2015

# Advancing Women and Leadership Theory into Diverse Contexts

Julia Storberg-Walker  
Susan R. Madsen



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# Advancing Women and Leadership Theory into Diverse Contexts and Cultures

## ORIGINALLY SUBMITTED LONG DESCRIPTION

This preconference workshop, sponsored by the Women and Leadership Affinity Group, will provide a needed space to build on the many events previously held to develop leadership theory by women and for women. The preconference will also contribute to the conference theme of *Leading Across Borders and Generations*. Specifically, this preconference will address the question: "How can women and leadership theory from diverse perspectives contribute towards leading across borders and generations?" This in-depth session will mirror and build upon the continuing work of the Women and Leadership Affinity Group to foster cutting edge scholarship and research, specifically advancing the work done at the between 2013-2015 (e.g., the 2013 Asilomar Declaration and Call to Action; the May 2014 Colloquium; the 2014 ILA Conference, the 2015 Asilomar Conference, and the 2015 George Washington University Leadership Think Tank).

The work produced at these events provides a foundation for expanding theory building efforts across cultural, economic, religious, racial, economic, and environmental difference. This full-day pre-conference session will be structured to allow participants to generate specific and actionable research strategies for developing context-dependent women and leadership theory. The purpose of the pre-conference session is to provide strategies, resources, and networked connections for scholars who wish to build context-dependent theory. The outcome of the session is intended to be the "next wave" of women and leadership theory building that reaches across diverse cultures and contexts.

After a welcome, introductions, and a broad overview of the day, the preconference will begin with a short discussion focused on the need for theory to be responsive to cultural and contextual differences. Participants will then be asked to work in small groups to critically review a small selection of women and leadership theories to assess the theory's ability to represent difference. After working in small groups for an extended period of time (45-60 minutes), participants will report back to the full group their findings and critique of the existing theories. Next, participants will discuss various theory building research strategies for addressing the gaps or weaknesses in existing theory, with an eye towards contextual and/or cultural relevance.

Depending on the time allowed for the preconference (e.g., full day or half day), the remaining activities could include: 1) barrier exercise: participants self-select into affinity groups based on some characteristic (e.g., racial, religious, cultural, generational, etc.) and identify barriers or obstacles to applying existing leadership theory on that characteristic; 2) affirmative exercise: like #1, affinity groups identify strengths or assets of a characteristic (racial, religious, cultural, generational, etc.) that can be leveraged or integrated into new women and leadership theory; or 3) translational exercise: participants self-select into small groups based on the leadership theory they want to work on. Groups will represent existing theory, for example complexity leadership, or authentic leadership, or followership. The groups will then be asked to translate the existing

theory to be able to address a particular context or culture or area of “difference” as identified by the participant group.

All three of these exercises are attempts to catalyze thinking, sharing, and creating new women and leadership theories for women and girls in diverse contexts and cultures. At the end of the workshop, participants will be given the opportunity to sign up to receive theory building resources; in addition, subject/context preference sheets will be distributed to facilitate continued communication between scholars sharing similar contextual and/or cultural interests.