Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal
Volume 20, Winter 2006

Lock in on Coordinates: Mapping the Glass Ceiling with Career Women's Reflections on Power
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Abstract

In an attempt to solicit career advice for young women by interviewing experienced career women, this study discovered the location of the proverbial glass ceiling and revealed distinct types of power operating in organizations. The careers of the women participating in this study were circumscribed by conflicts. If they developed technical expertise as a mode of insulation, they escaped high conflict but remained on a technical career path without access to higher executive opportunities. If they pursued executive opportunities through general management positions, they were surrounded by high conflict and became career casualties in powerful threat systems. A review of the literature revealed that each of these systems is similar to a type in Boulding's (1989) theory of power.

We are members of an age cohort: baby-boomer women who started their careers in the late sixties, when a variety of factors made it possible for women with good educations or computer skills to pursue professional and managerial careers. We wondered what our generation had to say to college-age women who are about to embark on their careers. As the first female cohort in history to enter the managerial and professional workplace in considerable numbers, would we not help inform the next generation?

When one of us became involved in an undergraduate course titled "ENGL 212: Thinking Sex: Representing Desire and Difference" at an eastern women's college of substantial repute, we saw our chance. We employed the praxis aspect of the course to assemble a team of student researchers to engage twenty-one career women in tape recorded interviews about the ingredients for success that women should adopt and the best advice they could give to young women. This article reports on that study.

Approach

The study team included the two of us; one serving as praxis supervisor, the other as participant-leader; and three undergraduates with majors in English, economics, and math. We authors were the corporate crones, and the other three were the soon-to-be corporate virgins; as such, we represented both the source of and the intended recipients for the advice the study would provide. As the five of us engaged in weekly dialogues

and as the interviews, assigned readings, class and on-line discussions progressed, an equality of bafflement ensued. Across the board, our study participants told us not to sleep with the boss, but where was the really useful advice? Our growing perplexity was inversely correlated with our initial confidence.

Proposal

In our proposal, to both the Institutional Research Review Board and the course instructor, we were confident that our study would produce useful information for women who are new to or considering work in hierarchical organizations. One young team member wrote "I jumped at the opportunity to learn from the experiences of veteran working women, as I essentially view the information I will extract from these interviews as advice and tips on how to arm myself for success in the future" (G., class project paper, 2003). We proposed to use text-based research augmented with interviews of 12-20 adult female participants.

Research Questions

Our initial research questions derived from our combined sixty years of professional work experience plus our entire research team's understanding of the course objectives:

1. What would women with work experience in hierarchical organizations say about sex and sexuality and how they affect women's careers?
2. How would women preparing to enter the workforce for the first time respond to this advice or insight?

The study was interpretive, qualitative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994), and iterative in its approach. We five researchers met weekly throughout the semester for several hours outside of class to launch the project and then reviewed findings in an iterative fashion. These discussions altered our approach in relationship to the participants and our objectives for the study. For example, we expanded our sample, selected some participants specifically for their sexual orientation, and rejected plans to hold a final focus group with young women. Accordingly, our approach was open, evolving, and responsive to the participants' narratives as we interpreted them. We reached a saturation point (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) at the twelfth interview but continued with nine more interviews to ensure an equal distribution of workload within the team and to provide participation from lesbian professionals. As a result, the redundancy in the narratives became a source of reassurance: career women had similar stories.

The one major source of structure to our recursive investigative method was the interview questions (see Appendix). Our research team spent considerable time developing and refining these questions. This process served to improve our own shared understanding of the study, its purpose and methods, and to create a sense of group cohesion among the five research team members who had never worked together before.

Selection Criteria

Participants were selected from a purposive convenience sample (Creswell, 1994) from a list of 60 contacts we had. Later, we added a sub-sample of lesbians in response to a perceived pattern in the narratives. Others we added as recommended by contacts outside the study team. Each participant met these criteria:

- at least ten years of work experience
- in a hierarchical work environment
- during which she was employed full-time and dependant on her salary
- in an organization (for profit, non-profit, academic, government) where there was potential to earn high salaries and/or other forms of compensation / aggrandizement.

We did not want to interview women supported by trusts or husbands who were working for supplementary

income or doing volunteer work. We did not want to talk to entrepreneurs; we saw them as autonomous. We were seeking women who were working for economic reasons, like most of the men in our experience, and who had first hand knowledge of organizational systems, hierarchies, and politics.

Significance

The value in our approach and our sample is that our interviews captured the perspective of experienced career women while they considered what young career women need to know. The tapes represented their own voices, their language, recounting actual experience with power in the workplace. Further, the empirical evidence of experiences with and feelings of power narrated by these participant career women fits well with Boulding's theories and reveals the location of women's careers within power dynamics that reveal the proverbial glass ceiling.

Biases and Limitations

All of the investigators in this study were biased in that we were motivated to secure advice for young women entering the workplace and we assumed that sexual desire was present in the workplace. One of the study team members characterized this well. She said:

My personal hopes for the project are that we gain an insight into the ways a professional space is sexually charged, and the ways this sexual tension is dealt with in people's daily interactions with each other… I wonder if there are times when individuals sense sex or issues surrounding it and find ways to ignore it…. none of us really know what these women are going to say…It will be important to keep ourselves open to all kinds of unexpected responses and to realize that we do expect certain responses. This is important to remember not only during the interview but especially afterwards when we are looking at the data for certain tangible facts about sex in the workplace – we must make sure we are not hearing only the answers we want to hear. (L., class paper, 2003)

As professional guides to the students and the study, our motivations were perhaps more complex. We had experience receiving and giving advice to other career women, and we shared a belief that the behavioral psychology-based approach to career coaching does not address the most significant cause of career derailment for women in hierarchical organizations: system dynamics. We were looking for advice that was less focused on individual personality and more aware of system dynamics and rules of the game. This study was limited to one semester and generalizability (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was not a goal.

Power as a Surrogate for Sex

We conducted a practice interview to provide a supervised setting to develop skills at open-ended questioning and learning how to "follow the data" (Seidman, 1991) and to test our interview questions for flow and length. Our approach viewed sex as a biological status and gender as a social one. In this way, sexuality is an expression of biological drives at work, an erotic desire, a practice, or identity (Jackson & Scott, 1996).

We soon learned we could not directly ask these women about sex. Our pilot test study participant balked at answering questions about sex and sexuality and expressed discomfort and predicted others would also not want to participate. We believed, based on the strength of this experience, no one would readily agree to participate in the study if we told her during the initial qualifying/recruiting phone call that we were studying sex. So, we created questions about power that we thought would give us narratives about sex.

> The questions we have designed for these interviews are intended to start a dialogue about the 'discourse of desire' present in the workplace by asking women to talk about their experiences and observations of the ways men and women express or suppress their desire for power. (L.,

Because the definitions of power used in organization theory sort into two essential themes: 'power over' and 'power to,' we assumed that the 'power over' stories would yield narratives of gender inequalities and the 'power to' stories would yield narratives of desire and success.

Definitions of Power

Riker (1969) and Cartwright (1959) have each reviewed many definitions of power in the literature of managerial and organizational sciences. There is a shared assumption that a relationship exists between two or more parties and that in this relationship an expectation exists that some action will manifest between the parties. In these definitions, power is characterized as resistance or acquiescence to this action. Consequently, seduction and consent form the very foundation of power in management and organization theories (Calas & Smircich, 1991).

If an employee consents to be governed by the authority others have over her in the hierarchy, that consent legitimates the other's power. Power is both an aspect of personality or social role and an attribute of position or organizational role and relies on the relationship with the follower for legitimacy (Barnard, 1938, 1968; Cartwright, 1969; Follett, 1987; French & Raven, 1959). However, not all theorists agree. In conflict theory (Duke, 1976), power is observed when it manifests in conflict. Therefore, power's legitimacy is always contested and conflicted for structural reasons. Both consent and conflict theories share a modernist (Hatch, 1997) orientation to power which derives from a tendency in the functionalist and structuralist social sciences (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) to either search for or assume relationships of cause and effect. Accordingly, the power to act, to get things done, is the essence of leadership in modern organizations (McClelland, 1975).

We felt uncomfortable with these theories of power. They posit a strong hierarchy of relationships that would stabilize organizations and promise little to women who have been marginalized and left out of leadership positions. We preferred Boulding's theory that power is manifest in systems and forms the background of relational and structural aspects of organization.

Boulding's Three Power Systems

Boulding's (1970; 1989) typology consists of three categories: the threat system, the exchange system, and the integrative system. These systems range on a continuum from high to low conflict with 'threat' being high and 'integrative' being low conflict systems. In the threat system, power is obvious and explicit. Members submit, defy, counter threat, or avoid. This is a zero-sum binary game: if one wins, another loses. In the exchange system, power is implicit, and members employ the proverbial carrot rather than the stick. In this system, power is an exchange medium (similar to money in an economy). This is not a zero-sum game; power circulates as value is added. Power grows in this system of dynamic exchange dyads. In Boulding's third system, the low conflict integrative system, power is diffuse and possibly disguised to those looking for power in conflict. The carrot or stick is replaced by hugs (Boulding, 1989). The integrative system provides a basis for what Boulding labels comparatively 'less rational' manifestations of power such as altruism. Power here is not relational but fluid, an omnipresent property of the integrative system.

The Link: Power and Sex

To summarize, power is important to effective organizing because it is the basis of the relationship of followers with leaders and their joint relationship to their organizational context. This holistic concept points the way to considering narratives of power as indicative of relationships such as those between genders at work, including aspects of sexuality arising among coworkers. Accordingly, we pursued narratives of

experiences with power in our interviews. However, we did not define power for the participants: we went beyond our questionnaire (Appendix) and asked spontaneous, open-ended questions to elicit their perceptions. If power was changing as a result of females occupying positions of responsibility, we wanted to hear it described first hand.

Findings

Surprise! There was very little advice for young career women beyond clichés. The stories we heard were about survival and provided idiosyncratic approaches to survival in alien environments. The participants considered their success factors so unique and particular to their circumstances that they failed to identify generic, applicable, transferable lessons for young women building careers. To our further dismay, these survivors were pessimistic regarding change. One participant warned us: "Young women think the battle is won, that they're going to be embraced with equality. They need to prepare for the realities of a lot of disrespect and discrimination" (K, taped interview, 2003). Her battle metaphor was significant. As we reviewed the tapes, we noted that most of the participants seemed embattled. We had read that male dominance and male roles as elites in the work place generated metaphors of war, sports, and sex as the means to communicate the rules (Tannen, 1995). Clearly, this participant was working in Boulding's threat system. As conflict theory would predict, she narrated power as it manifested in conflict. This was a common occurrence in the interviews and impacted our ability to answer our research questions.

Answering the Research Questions

We heard clichés in response to the first research question: what would women with work experience in hierarchical organizations say about sex and sexuality in the workplace and how it affects women? Participants suggested that women need to trust and work with other women. They recommended mentors for young women. One executive said she was dedicating herself to helping young career women in her corporation, but with no clear strategy for how she will accomplish this goal.

The young women on the study team were as frustrated as we were. One said: "That's it? We're not supposed to sleep with our bosses?" Because of these clichés, we were never able to satisfactorily address the second research question: how would women preparing to enter the workforce for the first time respond to this advice or insight? We felt we had little to share with undergraduates to guide them in their career plans, as our study proposal had suggested. Therefore, we turned our attention to seeing what the participants were telling us beneath the banal advice-giving.

Four Themes

Initially, after completing half the interviews, we identified four thematic elements that seemed to us to be the predominant emerging patterns from the tapes, the transcripts, and our weekly dialogues. As we continued to interview, we revisited this thematic structure and made modifications. These four themes, with modifications, pertained throughout the collection of narratives. They are: (1) Navigating the patriarchy - women have a limited choice of roles and insulate themselves in alien or threat systems. (2) Fantasizing - some idealized asexual workplaces, possibly as a reaction to threat or as an acceptance of patriarchy and a desire to be untouchable, on a pedestal. (3) Yearning - all of the study participants desired respect. (4) Escaping - women's orientation to power may offer a way out of threat systems and zero-sum games.

Navigating the Patriarchy: A Limited Choice of Roles

The narratives involved navigating the patriarchy. In a traditional patriarchy, a woman's identity is defined in relationship to men. Accordingly, a woman can be a wife, a daughter, or a mistress to a man. The corporate roles that emerged from our interviews are the same: wife, mistress, or daughter. Occasionally, a

woman survived in the sister role. We had one very strong story of a woman who had achieved a long-standing "sister" role in the federal government in a male-dominated field requiring highly specialized technical expertise. She had developed true expertise and a solid reputation for expertise, and was accepted by her colleagues, the guys.

We had one interview with a lesbian who flatly stated that there was no role for her in the patriarchy; so, she selected marginal attachments to the economy as the price of her liberty. To disconfirm this, we selected two other lesbians for interviews. Their experiences tended to confirm this phenomenon which deserves considerably more attention and research. It appears that heterosexual women accommodate the patriarchy whereas homosexual women cannot / do not because they have no currency with which to do so.

The need for new rules for all was evident in the narratives. "Many women continue to fail because they need to look/smell/breathe etcetera like a man. I do not believe this is a correct formula for success" (N, taped interview, 2003).

"We are interested in the inherent risks to early adopters and supporters during what appears to be a period of transition from rules that work for mostly males to rules for mostly mixed populations at work" (R., class paper, 2003). We believe that men need the new rules as much as women, and the study participants agree. "Sadly, most men in my generation cannot look to their mother for that role model. My mother was a professional woman. But most were stay at home moms. They may have it (i.e. rules / role model) from a spouse, and I do think that men look towards them if they have it from a significant other or spouse" (N, taped interview, 2003).

This theme of navigating or accommodating the patriarchy yielded some narratives of techniques for insulating oneself from workplaces that seem remarkably similar to Boulding's threat system. For example, evidence of a high conflict threat system is that no participant extolled her career's managerial environments as places to learn from men about how to operate. There were no stories of appreciation for being allowed into the male-dominated world of work. There were several stories of changing directions to escape difficult situations, for example, a golden parachute – "a guy-size (exit) package" (M., taped interview, 2003).

The participants' approaches at insulation caused us to group respondents into two distinct categories regarding their environments. One group we labeled the "warrior women." These women worked in highly competitive environments fostered by competitive market practices (e.g. finance, technology, software). The second group we labeled "nurturing women." These women chose to work in professional environments that manifested little or no business competition (e.g. non-profits, schools, and libraries). These nurture settings are insulation strategies because they shield women from the world of the warrior, with its diminution of 'mother.' Other insulation strategies included stories of women creating protection through expertise, for example, a pilot's license, or a specialized graduate degree.

Asexual Fantasy

The division between warrior and nurturer contains another division among the participants: the asexual workplace. Some women in this study fantasized about an asexual workplace where treatment was not a result of relationship, role, or a man's personal expectations. Other participants preferred to come to work as complete women, their biology intact. Every participant overtly aligned herself with either the asexual or the sexual division during the course of our interviews. This division suggests a rift among women that must be addressed in order for them to partner in the creation of women-friendly workplace environments. "While none equated femininity with sex for favors, there were degrees of sexual agency in their comments" (R., in class presentation, 2003). "I don't mind telling you, I was gorgeous. I flirted, dressed great, spent time on my makeup" (K., taped interview, 2003). The sexual approach offered disruptive powers, albeit temporary, and may have offered a route out of the threat system to the exchange system. Another approach toward the

exchange system may be offered by pairs who combine in support of their careers. This power couple may not necessarily evolve into a sexual relationship. However, it is intimate and sharing by design.

> It does seem that a woman is better off exercising sexual agency as part of a power couple. It may be the only success she has had in revamping, not accommodating, the rules of the patriarchal game. In the business environment, where power is seen as positive and pervasive, it makes no sense to recommend that women further handicap themselves by not using their own brand of power. (R., in class presentation, 2003)

The proverbial power couple may have provided role models for integrating organizational position with private life in a socially acceptable manner. However, the fantasy of the asexual workplace provided resistance to the power couple.

Those questing for the asexual workplace were courting denial and repression because the evidence was strong that sex happens at work. "Forty-two percent of people…are now in relationships with someone else at work; thirty-five percent are hiding that relationship from others at their offices" (Hite, 2000, p. 208). Unfortunately, despite our hopes, the participants' narratives did not yield advice to young women on how to integrate their work and their sex. Much more work needs to be done to provide approaches that work for everyone's benefit in dealing with sex at work. Mutual respect offers a beginning.

Yearning for Respect

The common denominator among the participants in this study was the desire for respect. In 21 interviews, there were 24 references to respect; for example: "Outspoken women have earned more respect." "Most men who have worked for me have shown me respect." "Respect has to be earned." "Women with very specific expertise get more respect than those in general management." "She gets a lot of respect from both [men and women] as being professional and a good listener." "If an older woman has attained some power, she can bring some respect with her." "I think men who have wives who work have more respect for women in the workplace than men who don't." "Technical people, in general, give unilateral respect based on competence, not gender." "She earned their respect." "Respect is key."

Participants often blamed other women, not men, for the lack of respect toward women. "Every woman I interviewed had at least one anecdote and usually several about being terribly hurt by another woman, and they told these stories with more anger, grief, and bitterness than they told about men" (Fillion, 1996, p. 34). One of our participants offered a theory about why this occurs: "I think that women truly believe that society is better off if a man feels in charge and strong. They seem to be willing to do anything to perpetuate this. They need to stop" (A., in taped interview, 2003).

Nowhere is this concept of respect and its marriage to accommodation clearer than in the responses from the lesbian participants.

Nobody really knows what to do with a lesbian at work besides shove her identity under the rug…. My male bosses usually seem to have felt uncomfortable, so they tried extra hard (even too hard sometimes) to treat me equally, not like the other women I worked with… They would treat me as a man as long as I 'kept up my side of the bargain' and downplayed the lesbian part of myself – in other words, my personal life. (G's taped interview, 2003)

A lesbian does not fit the patriarch's roles – wife, mistress, or beloved daughter. She is not really one of the boys, either. "What to do with a woman-loving woman? She clearly possesses some sort of power that her male colleagues find intimidating…. Thus, she is excluded from the role-playing game" (K., in-class presentation, 2003). Excluded, how does she behave? What are the rules for working with members of the

organization who are not in the social system of the organization?

In other research, "the word 'respect' is used ten times more frequently in replies about fathers than in replies about mothers" (Hite, 2000, p. 101). Reading Hite's study through the lens of this study, we would conclude that in the patriarchy, respect is the highest value because it is what is paid to the father, the patriarch. In this study, the desire for respect is a futile plea for recognition on the patriarch's terms.

A Way Out: Escaping Threat Systems

Because the force cultures (Hawkins, 1995), or threat systems (Boulding, 1970; 1989), of organizations gave power to the elites and gave privilege to power, some of the women in the study were attracted to power as evidence of elite status and career success. This is partly what is meant, we believe, by the participants' desire for respect. Paradoxically, women did not communicate power (Tannen, 1995) in ways that were recognizable to their male colleagues, causing misunderstandings and conflicts. One participant (who had been eased out as president of a mega-million dollar division of a corporation) told us, "You know how they say, 'It's not personal? It's personal!" (M, taped interview, 2003). This participant acknowledged first hand the consequences of power in a zero sum game.

In a threat system, the consequences of loss of status are totally negative. In an exchange system, to the contrary, a dyad simply does not do the deal. They live to trade another day.

In light of the literature about power, we believe that the women in this study reported experiences in the threat system and suggested a means for elevating the workplace to the level of Boulding's exchange system, employing intelligent uses of power (Hillman, 1995). They abhor the stick and seek the carrot. Further, they seek carrots for all who merit them, not an exclusionary club, because that is in essence a threat system for those on the outside. Figure 1 depicts the study's findings in accordance with Boulding's systems of power and includes another dimension emerging from our analysis of this study, impact.

The participants' narratives provided ample evidence of the high conflict threat system. In our opinion, the evidence of high conflict means that those who are threatened in these systems have little impact when attempting to exercise power.

Some of our participants sought areas of low conflict. Figure 1 labels this "Exchange System #1" because in this system our participants meet Boulding's definition with reports of low conflict. In our opinion they had little impact on the direction or nature of the systems in which they were involved. This is less true for those who sought insulation from conflict by developing strong technical expertise than for those who sought insulation through careers in support or nurturing organizations.

The highest conflict is for the warriors, the generalists who sought executive positions through general management careers. Figure 1 labels these participants "Exchange System #2" because they tried to meet the definition of Boulding's exchange system by demanding respect. Indeed, their narratives in this study provided evidence of titles, staffs and budgets that imply

Figure 1 *The Glass Ceiling's Coordinates Pursuant to Boulding's Theory*

respect and impact. However, they each had a story of losing positions in this system due to high conflict.

Figure 1 depicts the glass ceiling as residing in the exchange system, precluding access to the integrative system. We based that location on the absence of information on integrative systems in this study and in our own experience. Figure 1 suggests that it is not possible to progress directly from the threat system to the integrative system without going through the exchange system. However, we had no evidence from this study that women sought the integrative system. There was evidence from the participants' narratives that the role younger men are playing indicated that the workplace was evolving into a system more in line with Boulding's exchange system. A return to the literature helped to elucidate these findings.

Power in the Literature

Coerced participation can be found in Boulding's threat system. "Not to conform means to be rendered powerless, economically and therefore spiritually -- to be 'self-employed" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944, p. 133). This is the zero-sum game, and is, of course, very personal for losers. This system excludes those who cannot play the role altogether. Accordingly, the lesbian participants in this study were the most removed from relationship to and accommodation of the patriarchy and hierarchy found in this system.

Patriarchy and hierarchy are relational systems and the relationships in these systems denote power. Hollander and Offerman (1990) delineate three kinds of relationship power: (1) 'power over' or dominance; (2) 'power to' or empowerment; and (3) 'power from' or the ability to resist demands of others, i.e., 'integrity.' Each of these three kinds of power speaks of a relationship of the powerful with the 'other.' The first type, dominance, corresponds with Boulding's (1970) threat system. Types two, 'power to,' and three, 'power from,' fit with Boulding's exchange system. The participants in this study appeared to be advocating an end to 'power over' and an increase in 'power to' and the 'integrity' from being powerful enough to resist the demands of others. In conclusion, the respect that these women desired would be evidence of exchange systems operating in corporate organizing systems. If this evidence is accurate, there are implications for leadership in a postindustrial era (Hirschhorn, 1990).

Power and Leadership Linkages

For several decades, organization researchers have linked power and leadership. McClelland's studies of leadership (1975) empirically determined that the need for power was the basis of organizational relationships formed around work. French and Raven (1959) identified five types of power consistent with leadership theories: reward, punishment, legitimate authority, referent power, and expertise. Yukl (1994) combined the first two, reward and punishment, as the functions of leadership. The third, French & Raven's legitimate authority, is structured, meaning that it comes with a position, a job in the organization. The fourth is power of expertise. The fifth, referent power, is power a person is accorded by others because the person is liked or respected by his/her followers.

The first two of French and Raven's (1959) five types, reward and punish, are the positive and negative aspects of threat which might be placed, theoretically, in Boulding's threat system.

In contrast, French and Raven's power of expertise operates in Boulding's exchange system. Some participants in this study provided evidence of this power. Their technical expertise enabled creation of micro-worlds of exchange (i.e. Exchange System #1). French and Raven's (1959) legitimate authority is also theoretically in Boulding's exchange system because it is an aspect of job design and is based in the economic exchange between organization and employees and requires the consent of the employees to maintain legitimacy.

Power manifests as an economic metaphor in the exchange system, similar to Parsons' (1960) definition of power. Parsons saw power as a property of social systems similar to the function that money plays in an economy (Lukes, 1974). In Parsons' social theory, power works as an organizing dynamic. If power is exchanged extensively in a system, power grows. If power is held closely and not expended, power deflates and the system has less power than it might. Consequently, according to Parsons, use of power is a way to increase total power in a social system. Therefore, further research on Boulding's exchange systems provides a way to move women out of threat systems and increase organizational power at the same time.

When we examined Boulding's power systems in comparison to several leadership theories (Table 1), we saw a theoretical basis for improving women's leadership. This basis for building women's leadership results from two factors. First, Boulding's typology is the most comprehensive of the leadership theories. Second, Boulding provides the additional concept of integrative systems, systems powered by love. Accordingly, Boulding's typology is the only one that provides system characteristics for exercise of true transformational leadership.

Table 1

Power Systems / Leadership Definitions

Hollander & Offerman (1990)	Boulding (1989)	French & Raven (1959)	Other Theories
dominance (power over)	Threat System	Reward punish	Political (e.g., Pfeffer, 1981; 1982a; 1982b; 1992a ; 1992b)
			coercion & enablement
integrity (power from)	threat system (resistance) (acquiescence)	Expertise referent	followers' role (e.g., Follett, 1987)

empowerment (power to)	exchange system	Legitimate	Transactional (e.g., Parsons, 1960)
-	integrative systems (e.g., Schein, 1985)	-	transformational (e.g., Bass, 1985; Sashkin, 1988; 1995; Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003; Sashkin, Rosenbach, & Sashkin, 1995)

In Table 1, the more complete definitions of power in the threat and exchange systems are provided by French and Raven (1959). However, Boulding's addition of the third system, the integrative, gives his approach more breadth and opens the way for consideration of power in collaborative settings. We believe Boulding offers a system that might fulfill the desire of women in this study for respect. At the same time, Boulding's theory offers organizational management an orientation to power that can sustain organizations and grow systems with relatively less effort than threat systems. Unfortunately, Boulding's metaphor for this system, "the hug" reintroduces notions of sexuality abhorrent to some of this study's participants. Additional research is needed to understand the nature of power in integrative systems and the implications for women's leadership.

This analysis of theories, coupled with the narratives from this study, suggests that women's careers provide empirical evidence of change in the social norms of organizing and leadership. In this way, women's desires provide energy for employment of new forms of power that value exchange and mutuality over dominance. If Parsons (1960) is correct and exchange systems increase in power, then these new forms of organizing will be more powerful than those employed in the past.

Conclusions & Further Research

This study provided evidence that women are creating exchange systems at work through some insulation practices, development of expertise, and power coupling. Their practices were analyzed using theories of power, particularly Boulding's, to reveal the organizing dynamics creating the glass ceiling. Further research is needed to confirm these patterns and to identify possible tipping points where organizing systems might morph from threat to exchange and accordingly increase their supply of power. What is the potential and what are the risks of such developments? What happens when organizing systems move from zero-sum games to mutual exchange?

We saw evidence in this study that threat systems hold no value for women, even if they are succeeding at it. "These women are not frightened of power, just very thoughtful about the responsibilities that come with it" (L., in-class presentation, 2003). Women preferred the exchange system and the promise it holds for mutual respect. We will need additional research to discern paths from the threat system to the exchange system and possibly beyond, past the glass ceiling.

We thought we would be able to capture some rich language regarding sexuality and power from our participants and employ it to provide advice to young women. Unfortunately, while participants could articulate small wins and successful tactics for insulation and survival, they lacked language for analyzing their repression and its corresponding liberation.

Because of the convenience nature of the sampling technique and because we were so focused on our research questions rather than the demographics of representation, we did not interview women of color. We know from our personal experiences and from the literature (Bell & Nkomo, 2001) that white women and black women misread each other. We assume that they also read the corporate rules with different perspectives and expectations as well. We know from Bell and Nkomo (2001) that black women prefer the

asexual workplace since they do not see themselves as able to chose to leverage sexuality at work as some white women do. It is not an option available to them. Similarly, the participants in this study who advocated or longed for an asexual workplace would rule out hugs, the evidence of Boulding's Integrative System at work. We need to find metaphors of power and sustenance that transcend the biological approaches as long as women feel demeaned by sexuality at work. Or, we need to liberate women's sexuality so that everyone in the workplace can celebrate it as a generative power.

How can we lead young women to a realization of power? There is little advice for them from this study; Boulding's integrative system seems unimaginable to our narrators, perhaps because they were too embedded in old paradigms (Clegg & Palmer, 1996). However, the study's participants have found some paths out of threat systems and into exchange systems and as such have provided us with a powerful conceptualization of the proverbial glass ceiling and ways around it.

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Appendix

Praxis Project for Thinking Sex: Representing Difference and Desire

Interview Questions for "Women's Wisdom at Work

Since the data on this tape will not include your name or identity, it would be useful for our study to have some information about your background:

How old are you?
Married? What year?
Children? What years?
Education: Where, what field?
How many years at work? Contiguous?
What type of business or work?
What positions (a brief list)?
Is a resume available?
Did you have mentors?
When? Male or Female?
What type or aspects of work are you passionate about?

1. Can you describe how it feels—physically and emotionally—to wield power or have control over

some success at work? What comes to mind? Do those feelings lead you to want more, less? Why?

2. What do you think men think about women at work in positions of power?
    1. As heads of companies
    2. As their boss
    3. As their peer
3. Can you describe a specific workplace situation in which you were acutely aware of being "on the outside" as a woman? Do you recall any specific language or nuance that made you aware or uncomfortable?
4. Have you ever felt that issues of sexuality (or sexual politics) are sensed by the parties involved, yet deliberately not spoken of? What do you suppose is at stake? What keeps them silent?
5. Have you ever felt your femininity working to your advantage on the job? Or witnessed that happening for other women? If so, please explain how and also how you felt about it.
6. In the following situations, is there a difference in how men are treated versus women and how that difference manifests itself?
    1. At meetings
    2. On business travel, alone or in mixed company
    3. In situations of risk-taking and decision-making
    4. In opportunities for promotion to highly visible, senior jobs
7. In the female attributes paired below, describe any differences (give examples) in the way one is treated versus the other. How do men talk about or act towards women who are…
    1. younger versus older
    2. married versus single
    3. pregnant versus not pregnant
    4. outspoken versus reserved
    5. the [male's] female boss versus the [male's] female subordinate
    6. Can you think of other relevant pairings?
8. In your opinion, who are the role models for how men act towards women at work? For how women act towards men at work? In either case, who should they be? Why?
9. How would you differentiate between overt and covert sexism? Give examples and, if possible, any specific language used in either instance.
10. Have you ever felt forced to change yourself—suppress your true characteristics or adopt ones unnatural to you? Why? What happened? How did you feel?
11. What is your experience with sexual harassment legislation and awareness training? Have you found it useful, benign, harmful? What is the atmosphere in the workplace like following a training session?
    1. Do you believe it's common for a worker to decide not to report an incident of sexual harassment?
    2. Have you ever remained silent when you felt an incident had occurred? Or did you voice a complaint? What happened next? How did you feel?
12. Does sexuality have a place at work or should the work environment be totally asexual? Please explain why you believe this.
13. In your opinion, what strengths do women need to cultivate to achieve all they want at work? Why?
14. What weaknesses should women be aware of in themselves? In their male superiors, peers, or subordinates?
15. What haven't we discussed that you think is important for young women to know about sexual politics and desire at work?

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