

**LEADERSHIP IN THE MINING SECTOR:  
USING PHENOMENOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND  
INTERGENERATIONAL AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN  
LEADERSHIP VALUES**



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# Using phenomenology to study leadership



- Phenomenology assumes that subjective reality can take multiple forms and seeks to capture the multiple dimensions and realities of a person's lived experience
- Phenomenology: bringing new voices to the leadership discourse
- Rather than struggle with challenges of defining leadership phenomenology helps us see this as a positive – reflects the complexity of the phenomenon
- Phenomenology helps leadership academics capture and study the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the leadership experience

# Generation: Literature and theory



- **Cohort Theory**

- Introduced by Mannheim in 1927
- Cohort = similar attributes because of shared experience
- Lack of consensus on timeframes for different generational cohorts
- For sociologists and demographers it is a valuable tool for thinking demographically about non-demographic subjects and for analysing complex problems during times of rapid change (Ryder 1980)
- Sophisticated stereotyping?

# Generation: Literature and theory



- **Generational issues in the workplace**
  - Literature uses loaded language such as clash, collide, generational puzzle, problem, threat
  - Future workforce and leadership
  - People working longer
  - Younger generations responding to work experiences of parents

# Gender: Literature and theory



- Are there differences between how men and women lead?
  - Trait approach indicates men are better leaders
  - Behavioural approach indicates that women are better leaders
  - Research shows that women display more transformational leadership styles than men
  - Women are seen to emphasise interpersonal skills, eg listening, empowering, connection and relatedness
  - Men are seen to exert autonomy and control over followers
- Feminisation of leadership doesn't mean that women are better leaders than men, rather it requires a reconceptualisation of what successful leadership looks like

# Gender: Literature and theory



- Research by Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) found that women and men in male dominated industries did not differ in interpersonal leadership orientation
- Women in these industries who did have a strong interpersonal orientation reported worse mental health
- It is not only gender, but gender ratio that affects leadership style
- While discrimination and disadvantage have been transcended, mining is still seen as a masculinised sector
- Female mine managers distance or dismiss their femininity and position themselves as gender neutral or takes up an identity synonymous with men and masculinity

# What does this mean for leaders?



- **Challenges to leaders**
  - Create work value alignment with followers
  - Motivating employees with disparate worldviews
  - Diversity versus homogeneity – innovation, better decision-making
  - Social Identity Theory – how prototypical is the leader to the group
- **Solutions suggested by the literature**
  - Situational Leadership
  - LMX – issues Social Identity Theory
  - Transformational Leadership – individualised consideration
  - Authentic Leadership – ethical and empathetic leaders

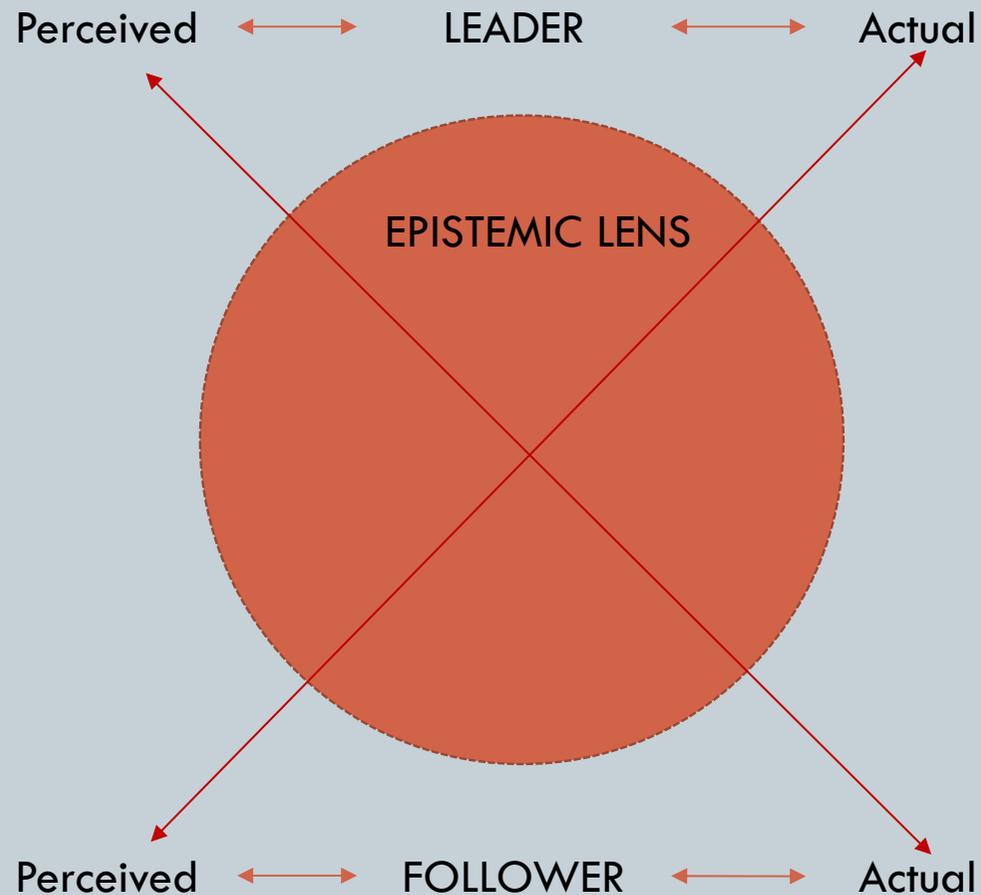
# Conceptualising the questions



Understand where there are gaps and where there is alignment

Understand what is inside the lens and how this might distort the view between perceived and actual

Do insights emerge that might help formulate strategy?



# Gen Y in the Theory



- Cohort: People who form a group because they share a common demographic attribute
  - Traditionalists: 1925-1942 – loyal, respect for authority
  - Baby Boomers: 1943-1960 – idealistic, distrust authority
  - Generation X: 1961-1980 – less loyal, personal challenge
  - Generation Y: 1981-2000 – grown up in digital age
  - Generation Z: Born after 1995/2000?
- Difficult to define – multiple different names, eg Net or Internet Generation, Echo Boomers, iGeneration, Generation Next or Nexters, Nintendo Generation.
- Millennials coined by the Millennials themselves who have statistically been shown not be associated with Gen X (Howe and Strauss 2000)
- Implies Gen Y is merely an extension continuation of Gen X

# Popular perceptions of Gen Y



- Self-absorbed
- High maintenance
- Inexperienced
- Require supervision and structure
- Impatient
- Entitled and lazy
- Disregard for leadership
- Lack respect
- Driven by money

# Gen Y pushing back against perception



“I also believe that everyone should be given a fair go and I think a lot of people write Generation Y off as “Well, they're never going to learn. They only know the one way of things.” It's like “Yeah, well do you know what? A lot of you guys aren't ever going to learn either.” Just one of those really small things is “Why is that you ring your grandson to come and program your video player and you won't read the instructions to do it?” That's the same thing as you saying we want everything now and we won't ever wait for things. It's give or take both ways and I can certainly see the massive differences.” Female Gen Y Manager, Resources Sector

# Gen Y manager/Baby Boomer followers



“... There’s definitely a respect. When you tell someone in the trade you’re an engineer they label you as a book technician ... Whereas now I can say that by doing my time on the tools as well and getting my electrical licence, I can sort of relate to them and go I’ve got my electrical licence as well as my engineering degree. And straight away they look at what you say differently ...” Gen Y engineering manager, Resources Sector, Pilbara based

# Sensemaking strategies



- Reject stereotypes
- Work to gain the respect of older workers
- Actively seek mentors and admire role models
- Seek career development – life long learners
- Focus on teamwork
- Sophisticated language and understanding about management and leadership
- Rise to and actively seek challenges

## Younger participants better able to conceptualise leadership



*“...Honesty, being a good listener and probably being organised ... you need an honest leader so that you know that you are getting the right information. And you know that they’re not going to be pushing people around to get self satisfaction ... Being a good listener, because you can’t be a good leader without being a good listener, otherwise who are you leading? ... you’ve got to take in other people’s point of view, because just because you’re the leader, doesn’t mean your point of view is the only one. And if you want to help people then you really have to listen to them, especially when you are leading ... Being organised ... if you’re not really organised then you really can’t function very well ... important things might get pushed out of place ...” - 17 year old administrative trainee participating, Resources Sector, Pilbara based*

# Generational difference and leadership?



- Younger people are stepping up to leadership
- They care about what older colleagues and followers think of them and actively work to earn their respect, in contrast to views that see Gen Y as high maintenance and self-interested
- They have a good work ethic and work on self development debunking stereotypical views
- Younger people have grown up in a world where they constantly hear the language of leadership and where from a young age they are given leadership development opportunities
- Just as leadership is difficult to define, so there is confusing about Generation Y – multiple names, difference based on socio-economic and education
- Are we trying to force fit younger generations using a Baby Boomer lens?
- Are we doing young leaders any favours by fast tracking them based on knowledge, without providing the necessary support and training to develop leadership skills?

# WOMEN SEEING THEMSELVES IN RESOURCES



LEADING PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR THE  
ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF WOMEN  
IN THE MINERALS AND ENERGY SECTOR  
FIFTH EDITION MARCH 2011

# A new generation of mining women



- Driven by shifts in women entering traditionally male dominated course in tertiary education, eg engineering and geology and introduction of equal opportunity legislation in mid 1980s
- MCA push to increase women's representation in mining
- More visible in managerial positions
- Building a reputation for doing things differently, by displaying different communication skills, being approachable and having less concern for hierarchy
- Mayes and Pini (2010; 2014) speak initially of a Feminine Revolution in Mining and critique the business case for gender equality in the sector
- In 2012, women 16% minerals industry workforce versus 45% of total workforce (AWRA 2012)
- Most women still largely in administrative roles (92% are women)

# A new generation of mining women



- Research based on media analysis indicates big shifts between experiences of women mining managers who graduated in the 1970s to those who graduated in 1980s – rapid shifts in perception:
  - Senior executive who graduated in the 1970s: “I wouldn’t deny it was quite difficult in the early days.”
  - Female geologist and mine manager who graduated in the 1980s, who finds it “relatively easy” being a “female boss”.
- The feminisation of management in mining is still problematic as women mine managers typically seek to dismiss their femininity (Mayes and Pini 2010)

# Women managers dismiss femininity



- Uncomfortable promoting an increase in women's participation and representation in the mining industry:
  - "You don't want to be remembered for being a woman CEO: you want to be remembered for being a good CEO."
  - "I'm not one of those women's champions. I just get on with my job and I happen to be a woman."
  - "... once you have proven yourself, it's an equal playing field. I'm not a believer in the glass ceiling." (Mayes and Pini 2010)
- Work wear is masculine, further defeminising, rather than being gender neutral
- Attempts at challenging this, eg pink hard hat

# Man perceptions of women managers



- Male board member comments on female CEO:
  - “If you try to get one over her, she will screw you to the wall.”
- Another male colleague suggests:
  - “She’s had to learn to deal with coalmen. Quite frankly she’s given out as good as she’s got.”
- Framed in very masculine terms and prized for being tough and uncompromising
- Male mentor suggested a female manager not disclose her “guilty pleasures” of “girlie TV shows” and “thriller novels” at the risk of being seen as trivial and frivolous (Mayes and Pini 2010)

# The business case for women in mining



- The business case for equality has arisen, because doing the right thing is not enough and against a broader backlash against feminism
- It builds on the idea that business must capitalise on diversity to achieve competitive advantage
- This approach discounts issues regarding unequal pay and the sexual division of labour
- Gender equality becomes a quotas and numbers game
- Seen as a public relations exercise to appear to be an employer of choice
- Research shows that the business case approach has been as unsuccessful as the equality case (Mayes and Pini 2014)

# Questions



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