



## THE FEMININE FACE OF LEADERSHIP IN SCIENCE

“Women leaders in science have a story to tell. Their stories may inspire courage and resilience in the women who follow them. Their stories may point to questions about how better to develop leadership presence in women who dedicate their talent to improving life by science.

The Feminine Face of Leadership in Science is an inquiry to understand what women face and what they need to succeed as leaders in their chosen fields. From the perspective of encouraging whole-person leadership, it is also an inquiry about how women leaders in science want to shape the character and practices of leadership to meet current and future challenges in the business of science.”

FROM THE INITIAL DESCRIPTION OF THE FEMININE FACE OF LEADERSHIP IN SCIENCE

In this study I heard the stories of nineteen women who, in various capacities and disciplines, are leaders in science. All have earned superior academic credentials in the natural sciences, many with a string of “firsts” in their fields of expertise. Participants include women who are CEO/founders of their own companies or consulting firms, heads of divisions within multi-national corporations, pioneering scientists in start-up companies, and women who have traveled those paths and moved on to apply their expertise in law or venture funding. They range in age from mid-30’s to mid-50’s and represent a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. While highly accomplished and respected in their professional roles, all stress the importance of work-life balance. Especially with respect to family: they are daughters, sisters, partners, wives, mothers, grandmothers; many are the sole or main bread-winner in their household.

In all their diversity, the participants have much in common. They all love science and have tremendous enthusiasm for learning. All of them strive to be the best at something and to make a meaningful contribution in their world—whether in science or otherwise. All acknowledge the capacity of both men and women to be superior leaders; they reject the notion that leadership excellence is primarily a function of gender. They define their success in large measure by their ability to be creative. And they are all astoundingly resilient. They are looking for ways to stay connected to and express an authentic sense of self within whatever role they play. They want—and many are actively dedicated to building—workplace cultures that support women and embrace diversity in tangibly evident and consistent ways. “You can tell a lot about a company by how they treat their women...and whether there are women at the top.”

I sought out women in science because I believe they have a vital role to play in shaping a sustainable future for humanity. The role of scientific and technological innovation to our economic, social and political well-being cannot be overstated. Women represent a substantial and fast-growing pool of the creative talent in science and technology. What forces are shaping current and future leaders—men and women—so they can meet the challenges before them? As women emerge as leaders in these male-dominated and strongly masculine professional disciplines, are they “merely” stepping into existing molds or are they re-defining and re-shaping the practices of leadership consistent with their values, standards and perspectives? How can “masculine” and “feminine” interact in this domain for the sake of greater wholeness and health in leadership and science? And where do women find support and guidance so they can rise to the call and live to tell the tale—with humor, integrity, grace and dignity?

### COACHING FOR LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATIVE EXCELLENCE

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