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Leading self, teams and organizations from a female perspective: An exploration of the women leaders' journey

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This paper seeks to capture the characteristics that prevail in the leadership styles of women leaders paying special attention to their individual leaders' journeys. The study reviews the theoretical models of leadership and feminist theory that are particularly pertinent from the discussion of women leadership. A narrative approach is adopted for analyzing two women leaders' journeys –Mary Kay and Mother Teresa– who succeeded in very different contexts. The stories exemplify some of the most important attributes that have been highlighted to play a focal role in current leadership research. The findings suggest that women lead teams and organizations through an authentic leadership and a genuine position of service, once they have become masters in self-leadership.

Key words: Leadership, gender, women, transformational leadership, servant leadership, self-leadership.

INTRODUCTION

As Drucker put it (1999, p.11), "organization is a tool for making people productive in working together". For the 21st century the author foresaw that the productivity of the knowledge worker was probably to become the center of management of people. Yet, Drucker also realized that in the organizations of the 21st century one would need to lead teams, rather than managing people (Drucker, 1999). During the past decade, it has become clear that his forecasts were not wrong. The countless interrelations that globalization has brought in the business arena have not only changed the focus from managing people to leading teams, but also the scope of what is led and, accordingly, the responsibilities of the leaders as well

(Carter and Greer, 2013; Charan et al., 2011, Groves, 2014).

On the one hand, there is a need for leading global organizations operating in international markets (Gundersen et al., 2012; Kuratko, 2007). Being competitive means now being global; therefore, companies need to face the challenges that come with the internationalization, particularly, the complex inter-connectedness that takes place (Yates, 2005), the fact of supporting higher uncertainties as a consequence of entering into culturally distant societies (Harvey et al., 2012), and the multiple stakeholders, interests and values that come in conflict (Hughes, 2012). From this it

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follows that leaders and managers have to deal not only with organizational behaviors but also with ethical ones (Copeland, 2014; Philipp and Lopez, 2013).

On the other hand, as a consequence of the global scope of the organizations, leaders' traditional responsibilities such as risk-taking, foresight, conceptualization, and critical thought (Spears and Lawrence, 2002), mostly embedded in a rational and male role, arise no longer as the only key to lead as they used to be, while moral and emotional qualities, both considered much more close to a female style, acquire a significant role (Barbuto et al., 2014; Hayes, 1999). In fact, the most recent literature indicates a tendency to lead with a much more female style (Arar, 2012; Brandt and Laiho, 2013), which have renewed the interest among scholars for studying gender principles and how they may influence the approaches of leadership (Andersen and Hasson, 2011; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Mensi-Klarbach, 2014; Trinidad and Normore, 2006). This, put in a neutral language, is explained in terms of adopting approaches more concerned with the person of the leader –self-leadership or authentic leadership (D'Intino et al., 2007; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014)–, and the emotional processes that she or he drives to the creation of last relations within and outside the organizations –transformational or servant-leadership (Barbuto et al., 2014; Greenleaf, 1970; Lord and Brown, 2004; Schneider and George, 2011; Smith et al., 2004). Nonetheless, in spite of the recommendations about the current importance of female qualities to lead teams and organizations, there is still a considerable gap in organizations led by women as in leadership literature addressing issues of gender (Kezar and Lester, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; Sandberg, 2013; Werhane and Painter-Morland, 2011).

In the business world, although the definitive ranking of America's biggest companies boasted some 24 female CEOs for the end of August 2014, which means an increase from 20 a year ago and more than at any point since Fortune started compiling executive gender in 1998¹, they still represent a small percentage –4.8%– of the overall CEOs on the list (Fortune, 2014). In politics, the situation is similar. Of the 195 independent countries in the world, women lead only 17 and hold just 20% of seats in parliaments globally. The gap is even more for women of color, who hold just 4% of top corporate jobs, 3% of board seats, and 5% of congressional seats (Sandberg, 2013, p.5).

From the academic side, it has been recognized that some classic leadership models might appear unhelpful in relevance and application to practicing leaders, especially, when the focus of analysis lies on women leaders (Barbuto and Gifford, 2010; Billing and Alvesson, 2000). Researchers have questioned earlier attempts to study the issue of women in leadership and methodological approaches in particular (Appelbaum and Shapiro, 1993). Trinidad and Normore (2006, p.574), for instance, made the observation that “the integration of women in

leadership roles is not a matter of ‘fitting in’ the traditional models, but ‘giving in’ the opportunities for them to practice their own leadership styles”. Turner and Mavin (2008, p.376), specifically, pointed out that, “leadership research has tended to neglect subjective realities of ‘becoming’ a leader by failing to consider individual leaders’ journeys”. It is in this context that narrative enquiry has been acknowledged as valuable in addressing some of the limitations of leadership's traditional approaches. Particularly, it has been stressed about its advantages in providing multi-level perspectives on the relational processes among leaders and followers (Riesman and Quinney, 2005), in accounting for learning experiences (Fletcher and Watson, 2007) and, in general, in exploring what leaders –or others– say about what they do (Czarniawska, 2004). Moreover, it is analysing the discourses and stories related to women leaders where the power of narratives, with its teachings in the social formation of the leader-woman identity and style has become more evident (Hamilton, 2006).

Therefore, taking into account the need for considering the subjective experience of women as leaders, this paper aims to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon by paying special attention to the personal stories of two acknowledged leaders: Mary Kay and Teresa of Calcuta. In spite of their lives and leadership were developed in two completely different environments –the secular business world and the religious congregations, respectively– both share the features of authentic and servant leadership distinctive of women. Moreover, during their lives they were highly rewarded² by the significance that they achieved through their long-life projects –where the personal side was intertwined with the professional/vocational one– and their approach to lead as servant and authentic leaders –based on the application of genuine love (Bryant, 2009). While Mary Kay provided an open-ended opportunity for empowering women at a time when most women did not hold full-time jobs (Kreydatus, 2005), Teresa of Calcutta –commonly known as Mother Teresa– ran and led hospices, homes and schools through a life and leadership built through the maxim of treating the poor with total love (Muggeridge, 1971). By exploring retrospectively the individual journeys that addressed them to lead teams and international organizations, we can gain new insights about the phenomenon of women leadership and extend the existent literature in the topic.

Structurally, after this introduction, this paper begins with a brief review of the models of leadership that have been highlighted in literature, and are particularly pertinent for its discussion from a female perspective. Subsequently, a general account of feminist theory and its link with the research of women leadership is presented. This is followed by an explanation of the narrative approach and the presentation of the women leaders' stories. Then, their main aspects in terms of their leadership style are discussed. Finally, the paper ends

highlighting the main conclusions, implications, and future research lines.

Leadership approaches

There is a huge literature on leadership that deals with different models or styles of leading teams, organizations as well as the 'own person' of the leader –self-leadership (Carter and Greer, 2013; DePree, 2004; D'Intino et al., 2007; Lord and Brown, 2004; Kuratko, 2007). Generally, it has been admitted that leadership involves a relational of mutual commitment between a leader and a group of followers in pursuit of a collective goal (Gupta et al., 2004). According to this view, a great bulk of studies have put the interest on the relations between leaders and followers and, in this sense, leadership has mainly been seen from the perspective of leading teams within an organizational context (Carter and Greer, 2013; Charan et al., 2011). The traditional explanations about how to succeed doing this could be divided into two main groups: those that defend the relations in terms of transaction, that is, as an exchange process, and those who consider it from a perspective of transformation, that is, as a medium for promoting personal and professional changes (Kotlyar and Karakowsky, 2007; Rafferty and Griffin, 2004).

Introduced in the 1970s (Burns, 1978), the concept of transformational leadership gained popularity at the end of the past century, not just in business contexts but in religious circles as well (Blanchard and Hodges, 2005; Ford, 1991). References to transformational leadership consistently attribute such leaders with the ability to communicate a vision and motivate followers to embrace this vision (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004; Stelzer and Bass, 1990). In fact, as Chakraborty and Chakraborty (2004, p. 194) noted, "relations between leaders and followers involve the mutual 'raising' of both sides to higher levels of motivation and morality". Under the model of transformational leadership two different typologies can be distinguished, "servant leadership" and "entrepreneurial leadership", which mainly promote changes in teams and organizations, respectively.

Servant leadership puts the focus on motivating, guiding followers, offering hope, and providing a more caring experience through established quality relationships (Sendjaya et al., 2008). DePree (2004, p. xvi) further noted that, "servant leaders are conducted by the rule of abandoning oneself to the strengths of others", while Schneider and George (2011, p. 63) expressed it quantitatively by saying that, "servant leaders make the service to their followers their first priority". For these reasons, some authors have argued that servant leadership is an appropriate and effective style of leadership for non-profit organizations (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Spears, 1998). In fact, it has been considered the prototype of leadership style in religious institutions, and the person of

Jesus Christ its maximum exponent (Blanchard and Hodges, 2005; Ford, 1991).

While the studies under the typology of servant leadership have advanced the notion of transformational leadership in the framework of leading teams, the idea of "entrepreneurial leadership" has emerged as the key style for leading change within the organizational context (Kuratko and Hornsby, 1999; Kuratko, 2007). This approach is often referred to as "corporate entrepreneurship" or "intrapreneurship" (Guth and Ginsberg, 1990) and realizes the need for infusion of innovation and entrepreneurial thinking into large bureaucratic structures. It has also been seen as the model of leadership able to return the health to the big international organizations by allowing corporations to tap the innovative talents of its own workers and managers (Kuratko and Hornsby, 1999; Sarros et al., 2008). Leaders, from this view, are identified as entrepreneurs –*intrapreneurs*– or builders of new businesses.

Besides, more recently the model of self-leadership has grown in prominence among scholars (D'Intino et al., 2007; Neck and Houghton, 2006; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014). Although the notion of self-leadership is not new (Neck and Houghton, 2006), it seems to be living a new revival given the latest organizational scandals suffered by unethical leaders' behaviors and the longings of finding an "authentic leader" (Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014). Authentic leaders are identified with those who are able to express their inner beliefs and personal convictions through their leadership practices (Turner and Mavin, 2008). This means that, mind, heart and actions become harmonious, and therefore, it might be understood as a call to reconcile the spiritual part of the person of the leader with the emotional and intellectual ones (Chakraborty and Chakraborty, 2004; Sanders et al., 2003; Spears, 1998).

In the current organizational practice, it is possible to find leaders that become a mix of the styles pointed out earlier. Then, during their journeys, transforming leaders, for instance, may act more as leading themselves, or as leading teams and organizations. Additionally, it is important to note that the conception of transforming leaders, with an accent in the emotional and spiritual consciousness of the self –as authentic leader-, is often associated with issues of gender in leadership and how women develop their role as leaders (Andersen and Hasson, 2011). This explains, in part, the growing interest among scholars for linking the studies of gender with leadership literature (Brandt and Laiho, 2013; Mensi-Klarbach, 2014; Trinidad and Normore, 2006). To this issue we turn now.

Women leadership: connecting feminist theory and leadership literature

Leadership of both men and women is gendered (Greer

and Greene, 2003; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Mensi-Klarbach, 2014; Trinidad and Normore, 2006). Gender is a basic element of human social interaction, and since leadership involves a relational commitment both elements could be considered together (Arar, 2012; Batiwala, 2011; Hayes, 1999). While research on women leaders is not consistently organized according to any particular feminist framework (Kark, 2004), much of leadership literature could be understood in a different manner if one adopts a female perspective or, in other words, if leadership is seen from a woman's eyes.

Feminist approaches are mainly developed around the differences or similarities existent between the genders, and the positive or negative view maintained regarding the feminine traits (Calàs and Smircich, 1996). The different positions adopted with respect to these two aspects lead to classify feminist theories into three main groups (Harding, 1987). In the first group, which is supported by what is known by liberal theory or gender reform feminism, men and women are seen as essentially similar (Greer and Greene, 2003). Their advocates hold that women would behave, and achieve, as do men if they had had the same opportunities than men to be skilled to compete in the business world (Calàs et al., 2013; Lorber, 2001). The second group's ideas, developed under the radical theory or what is called "gender resistance feminism" (Greer and Greene, 2003), brings an image of men and women as essentially different, although equal, while feminine traits are perceived as benefits rather than as drawbacks. This approach affirms and defends a complementary female norm of behavior (Ahl, 2006) and portrays each gender as having "an effective and valid, but distinct, way of thinking and rationalizing" (Johnsen and McMahon, 2005, p. 117). Differences in gender are considered innate, psychological, emotional, and typical attributed at least to some degree to basic distinctions in reproduction of the species (Greer and Greene, 2003). In addition, this perspective proposes that these differences should not be eliminated, but rather, celebrated, as they could bring a positive impact in the leadership style adopted by women. Finally, a third group of thought is established by what is acknowledged as social constructionist and poststructuralist feminist theory (Greer and Greene, 2003). This group is not concerned with what men or women are but with how masculinity and femininity is constructed and what effects this construction has on the social order (Ahl, 2006).

The works that connect feminist theory with leadership emerged in the framework of an ideology that shared principles of liberal theory (Greer and Greene, 2003). They came out of larger discussions of power, and of alternative, non-patriarchal, non-hierarchical structures and organizations (Pace, 2010). Indeed, the first approaches to and definitions of women leadership became, in part, products of their struggles to advance gender equality in positions of power, to create structures that would not reproduce the patriarchal models

(Batiwala, 2011), and to denounce the social injustice and discrimination suffered by women throughout the whole history (Andersen and Hasson, 2011). Nonetheless, the sociological approach, with the basic ideas of "socialization" and "expectations", has influenced further the arguments held in women leadership literature. From this perspective, people behave according to societal expectations about their learned gender role (Werhane and Painter-Morland, 2011). In fact, it is, precisely, the expectation that women will be more caring and relationship oriented than men –due to her biological possibility to give life–, the basic idea that accounts for approaches to women leadership that differ from those traditionally established for and by men –normally more competitive and controlling aggressive (Andersen and Hasson, 2011). In addition, the dominant male culture has projected onto the subordinate female culture all aspects of life that are psychologically unpleasant, with the result that women have developed a foundation of extremely valuable psychological qualities that are particularly relevant to leadership based on relationships encouragement and support (Helgesen, 1990). Recently, the research on women leadership is frequently approached under the principles of radical feminist theory (Greer and Greene, 2003; Kezar and Lester, 2009). However, the assumption underlined is that certain styles of leadership are more readily available to a woman than others (O'Connor, 2010), which reaffirms, in some sense, the sociological approach.

In sum, according to the most recent literature some styles of leading would be more compatible with an identity as "woman" while others are not. Women would be able to lead self, teams and organizations successfully, but they surely would do in a different way than men do. Some studies, moreover, have emphasized the women's style of leading as advantages for teams and corporation's outcomes, founded on women's special relational skills to help their followers, to create truthful contacts, as well as to introduce a more emotional and intuitive mode of thinking (Arar, 2012; Sandberg, 2013). Then, the conclusions of the current existent literature seem to indicate a tendency for women to be rated as slightly more transformational and authentic than men (Mensi-Klarbach, 2014; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Sandberg, 2013).

Narrative as a research method

The field of narrative studies is acknowledged for being multivocal, cross-disciplinary, and extremely diverse theoretically and methodologically (Andrew et al., 2008). Narratives have been widely defined as "forms of discourses that connect events in a meaningful way, offering insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it" (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997, p. xv). In this sense, narratives might be considered a solution to the problem of how to translate knowing of events or actions, experienced or imagined, into an understandable telling (Linde, 2001). On the one hand, the person's experiences about a particular event and/or action are analyzed (auto) reflexively to obtain a conscious

knowledge of them. On the other, that knowledge of personal experiences, through a translation process, is transformed in the form of stories in an understandable telling that is told and re-told to a definite audience.

Important features of narratives have to do with its particular temporal dimension and its peculiar causality. For one thing, stories generally rely on the presumption that time has a uni-linear direction moving from past to present to future. But, nonetheless, as Bruner (1991, p. 6) has noted, "it may be characterizable in seemingly non-temporal terms (as a tragedy or a farce)". Then, its temporal essentiality lies in the meaning-preserving sequence of clauses in narrative discourse itself. As far as its causality is concerned, a story normally involves a change in situations with a certain causative connectedness. Although narratives do not provide causal explanations (Bruner, 1986, 1991; Hinchman and Hinchman 1997) they offer accounts of how one event followed, or will follow, another under a specific set of circumstances (Elliot, 2005). In other words, narrative supplies the basis for interpreting the person's behaviours; therefore, it provides us with reasons but not with causes.

In social sciences, the interest in the use of narratives as a research approach has outstandingly grown during the past decades (Czarniawska, 2004; Elliot, 2005; Rhodes and Brown, 2005). In the organizational context, the conception of narrative is commonly linked with the meaning-making of leaders' experiences in the relationships generated with their employees and its interpretative process into an understanding telling (Czarniawska, 2004; Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Moreover, in the daily organizational life, participants not only make sense of their relationships in narrative terms, but they proactively enact narratives that are coherent with their system of values (Czarniawska, 2004; Gergen and Gergen, 1988), providing, in this way, valuable opportunities to appreciate their personal character and personal style (Andrews et al., 2008). In fact, narrative purposefully sets out to make sense of the experiences of the self in social organizations becoming a device through which the self-identity is shaped and performed (Czarniawska, 2004; Muncey, 2010). Narratives thus carry personal as well as contextualized meanings. Moreover, there has also been a growing interest in narratives or stories as a vehicle for organizational growth and transformation. They have been used to rally leaders and followers around a specific issue or cause, being able to be placed in the service of change and social progress (Czarniawska, 2004). To this perspective of narrative we turn now, while we focus on the story of two women whose personal initiatives and leadership contributed to change the world for women and the poor: Mary Kay and Mother Teresa.

Narrating personal stories of women leaders

In terms of narratives that consider the women leaders' journey within a framework that embraces the leadership of the self, people and international organizations, few stories, over the last century, might be noted more significant than the one of Mary Kay and Mother Teresa. In spite of the fact that both developed their vocation in organizations that may be seen as "traditional sectors" – cosmetics and care taking—they left –both have passed away– a written legacy that continues being used as valuable leadership lessons to the current generations (Bose and Faust, 2011; Kay Ash and Pendleton, 2008). Moreover, it becomes remarkable that both received international rewards for the innovative approaches with which they lead traditional sectors in different areas –secular and religious. Their approaches to leadership, based on the Golden Rule (Mary Kay) and the Love Law (Mother Teresa), are object of a renewed revival not only among scholars but also among practitioners (Bryant, 2009). We present in the following paragraphs a summary of the most significant facts that marked their stories.

Mary Kay Ash: authentic and servant leadership in the secular context

Mary Kay Ash (1918-2001) was an American businesswoman internationally renowned. Founder of Mary Kay Inc., she built a profitable business from scratch that created new opportunities for women to achieve financial success (Ash and Pendleton, 2008, p.xvi).

From her personal life, it is known that she was once divorced and twice widowed. After her first husband left her, she dropped out of pre med courses she was taking at the University of Houston and began selling full-time, so supporting her children (Ash, 1981).

In 1963, when she was forty-five, Mary Kay started her business with \$5,000. Mary Kay had had a vision based on the emerging needs of women in the 1960s and 1970s and decided to follow it by offering women opportunities that did not exist anywhere else. From a dream, Mary Kay Cosmetics grew into a vertically integrated corporation with annual sales over \$950 million. In 1976 it became the first company chaired by a woman to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange (Gross 1996, p. 232). Today, Mary Kay beauty consultants are found all over the world. Worldwide, the company prides itself in having more women earning more than \$50,000 per year than any other organization (Kay Ash and Pendleton, 2008).

Mary Kay's rapid success was due, in great part, to her original approach in terms of marketplace and corporate structure – independent consultants. However, she herself recognized that her biggest secret laid on her leadership style, which was based on the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Ash and Pendleton, 2008, p.xxi). The Golden Rule in the world of business is translated in developing an extreme sensitivity for the needs of others, whether employees or customers. In both, she became exceptional. On the one hand, she had strong ideas about women's roles in the workforce so that she gained a national reputation as a forceful supporter of women's rights and of radical feminism. Yet, because Mary Kay defined consultants' participation in the business world as progressive and liberating, her company ideology allowed consultants to view themselves as empowered women who simultaneously conformed to "traditional" gender roles (Kreydatus, 2005, p.2). On the other hand, Mary Kay's leadership rested on a strong commitment to customer satisfaction, a pillar that was built through quality, value, convenience, innovations and personal service (Ash, 1981).

Mother Teresa: authentic and servant leadership in the religious context

Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) founded a traditional Catholic religious community called the Missionaries of charity; through it, she helped turn the world's attention to some of the most neglected members of the global village: the poorest of the poor (Spink, 1997).

Personally, she described herself in this way: "By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship I am an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus" (Independent, 1997, p.11). Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in Skopje, she entered the Irish Branch of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dublin (the Loreto Sisters) at age eighteen. She professed her final vows in 1937. For eighteen years, Mother Teresa served in India at St Mar's School as a teacher and principal, but she was very moved by the presence of the sick, begging, and dying people on the streets of Calcutta (Muggeridge, 1971). On September 10, 1946, she received her foundational inspiration; something to which she referred to as a "call within a call" (Muggeridge, 1971, p 19). Although she could never fully articulate this experience, it inspired her to be Christ's light for the world by following him "into the slums" (Kolodiejchuk,

2007, p.10). Flowing from this initial experience, she left Loreto convent on August 16, 1948, and initiated her work among the poor. On October 7, 1950, the Missionaries of Charity were born, whose apostolate is "to give wholehearted and free service to the poorest of the poor" (Muggeridge, 1971, p. 105).

Mother Teresa transformed the Missionaries of Charity to an organization with a full-time staff of 4,000 employees in over 100 countries, as well as over 1 million of volunteers. Over 47 years she was helping millions of people, making decisions for which she initially had been highly criticized (Spink, 1997). She believed that "it is how much love we put in the doing that makes our offering something beautiful for God" (Muggeridge, 1971, pp.67-68). Her personal belief became embedded in a leadership style characterized by the simplicity and strength in the vision as well as by the way of how it was communicated. Her way of leading turned to be essential for the growth of the organization (Bose and Faust, 2011).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As it was noted before, the two women leaders chosen in this paper exercised their leadership in two considerable different contexts: Mary Kay in the secular world as a woman entrepreneur, and Mother Teresa in the religious environment as a nun. Nevertheless, beyond these differences, Kay's and Mother Theresa's stories reveal insights into the style of women leaders for big international organizations in a global world, which, in both cases, is identified with what leadership literature appeal as authentic transformers leaders (Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014) and gender scholars include under a radical theory (Greer and Greene, 2003).

Transformational Leaders- Interestingly, in the early formation of the organizations, there are similarities reflecting the features of transformational leaders. Firstly, for both leaders, the point of departure was a strong sense of call or, in entrepreneurial words, an unmistakable vision about the aim of the organizations (Chakraborty and Chakraborty 2004; Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). Mary Kay's vision grew out of a sense of discontent with her previous professional career, in which though she had obtained important achievements she felt that she had been denied opportunities to fulfill her potential for being a woman (Ash and Pendleton, 2008, p. xxii). Once she decided to make this disappointment the reason to fight in her life, she set off with a clear objective in mind: "establishing a company that would give unlimited opportunity to women" (Ash and Pendleton, 2008, p. xxiv). In Mother Theresa's case, biographers tell the story of her confessions, in which she affirmed she had listened directly to God's voice, and confessions came to confirm that that call came truly from God (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p.32). In addition, in several interviews she personally told how their sense of mission with the poorest of poorest had come several times during her prayers (Desmond, 1989). Secondly, in the two leaders there was a combination of accumulation of hard skills or professional competency along with softer or relational

aspects of leadership. For both not only had enough competence for overcoming the ambiguity of new and challenge situations, but also had the abilities to inspire others to embrace their visions (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004; Stelzer and Bass, 1990). This capacity to build confidence in their teams is, precisely, what allows us to consider them as the kind of transformational leaders known as servants.

Servant Leaders.-As discussed by Schneider and George (2011), when followers turn out to be the reason for existence of the leader, and leaders place the growth of their followers among their first priorities, they may be distinguished as servant leaders. In the case of Mary Kay, she defended a servant leadership style throughout her life through her "Golden Rule", which she recognized as one of the most important elements to explain her success. Additionally, her caring experience with employees becomes clearer when her perspective about person is known; such perspective can be summarized in these words, "I believe every person has the ability to achieve something important, and with that in mind, I regard everyone as special" (Ash and Pendleton, 2008, p. 23). In the case of Mother Teresa, it is documented how she was able to create and nurture a close and long-term relationship with the nuns through her compassion and faith (Kolodiejchuk, 2007). She earnestly encouraged other nuns to a total deliverance to Jesus Christ as a way of attaining a full potential, and this attitude goes on characterizing the spirit of her organization even today (Bose and Faust, 2011).

Authentic Leaders.-Previous research has suggested that the individual leaders' journeys is key to understanding the style of leadership that each one puts into practice (Turner and Mavin, 2008). The two narratives considered in this paper show that leadership itself is not a state or job that someone exercises. Rather, it is part of a personal journey that is built through different pipeline turns. Moreover, from the Mary Kay's and Mother Teresa's stories is derived that their leadership grew from their daily commitments with their personal convictions – the importance of helping women and the poor, respectively–, which, in turn, had been fruit of their personal journeys. In other words, their lives as worker woman and a nun determined and shaped their public leadership style, rather than that the leadership style was a choice made previously for applying in the work place. Leadership became, then an expression of their more authentic self rather than expressions of a theoretical style of leadership. Put it differently, only once they were masters in self-leadership –in their personal and private lives– they turned to be successful leaders of teams and organizations in the public arena.

Radical Feminism Leaders.-As it was noted previously, an adequate acceptance of differences between man and

woman is proclaimed by what scholars of gender denominate “gender resistance feminism” or “radical feminism” (Greer and Greene, 2003). Beyond the stereotypes that could suggest these labels –the term “radical” is often associated with something extreme or revolutionary in a violent way³– this approach combines an equality view of men and women –as human beings– with a defense of the feminine qualities as complementary of the men (Ahl, 2006; Johnsen and McMahan, 2005). From Mary Kay’s story it becomes clear that her whole organization was an expression of radical feminism’s ideology. Moreover, she manifested explicitly her ideals by writing her feminism view and highlighting the specific ways in which women do think differently from men. In this sense, she promoted what she labeled as “women’s intuition” as special talents and sensitivities to lead (Ash and Pendleton, 2008, p. xxiv). In the case of Mother Teresa’s view of women, although it was not as evident as Mary Kay, also may be identified with the radical approach. In an interview where she was asked the question of feminism, she concluded by saying that what a woman can give, no man can give. From her perspective, that is why God has created them separately. Additionally, she stressed that women are created to be the heart of love, which they give in the family or in service (Desmond, 1989).

Conclusions

In this paper we help to address the recent call for scholars to pay greater attention to the women leadership topic (O’Connor, 2010; Sandberg, 2013) as well as to use the narrative genre for improving our understanding of the leaders’ subjective journeys (Turner and Mavin, 2008). We reviewed the literature of both models of leadership and female theory in order to consider how they fitted in the practical experiences of women leaders. Moreover, using a narrative approach we focused on two stories of two women leaders –Mary Kay and Mother Teresa– with the aim of recognizing and understanding better the peculiarities of leadership from a female perspective.

According to the two stories analyzed the women’s leadership style becomes an expression of their own persons, lived in a public role as leaders. There are not two different stories–personal and professional as leaders– because there are no two persons separated in oneself –one populated by actions and the other only by theories. In contrast, every action as leaders is shaped previously “privately”, in a scheme in which their purposes as women were to connect, improve and educate that human nature implicit in every human being. They were women first, then leaders of teams and international organizations. There was no “leadership fiction” or theoretical model of leadership embodied in the person of the leader, but authentic leadership. Moreover, in the light of the previous narratives, a new “rule” may be

identified about the way of leading teams and organizations. In particular, from their stories we can realize how the love for others contributed to shape their leadership style with the highest level of commitment for other’s good. Kay and Mother Teresa expressed an inner motivation to lead their organizations that came from their heart more than from external rewards or a traditional rationality of businessmen. In fact, their stories demonstrate that in spite of having been initiated during the past century, they are closer to the new approaches of leadership, which place more emphasis in leaders’ emotional health, values, servant hood, authenticity, and self-awareness (Chakraborty and Chakraborty, 2004; Sanders et al., 2003; Spears, 1998). Therefore, Kay and Mother Teresa’s style of leadership may fit well in the new trends for leading the global organizations of the 21st century.

Finally, although our focus on the narratives of two women leaders advises us to interpret the conclusions modestly, they can also encourage researchers to broaden their thinking about how to approach the topic of women leadership taking into account subjective realities. Nevertheless, much more effort in this research field would be necessary. Some possible directions for future research could be focused on the leadership practices of current women entrepreneurs who lead in different organizational settings, whether SMEs, new enterprises, or big secular or religious institutions. Furthermore, future investigations based on ethnographies have the potential to make significant contributions in this field.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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¹ While just one woman led a Fortune 500 company in 1998, that number slowly rose to 15 in 2009 before declining to 12 women by 2011 (Fortune 2014).

² About Mary Kay is remarkable the fact that she was the first NYSE (New York Stock Exchange) listed firm chaired by a woman in 1976; In 1984 she appeared in the first edition of Fortune among the 100 best companies to work for in America. In 2000 she received the acknowledgment for being the best businesswoman of the century. About Mother Teresa the biggest reward was the Nobel Prize of the peace, which she received in 1979.

³ Among the Oxford Dictionary's definitions, radical is identified with "an adjective relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something", and is also characterized "by departure of tradition; something innovative and progressive" (Oxford, 2014). Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/radical>