



Standing at the Crossroads: Next Steps for High Achieving Women

Notes by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Authors: Marian N. Ruderman and Patricia J. Ohlott.

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Authors' Bio: Marian N. Ruderman is a research scientist at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, where she studies the career development of women and the impact of diversity on management development processes. Patricia J. Ohlott is a research associate at the Center for Creative Leadership. Her current research interests include the career development of women managers and issues relating to the management of diversity in organizations.

Authors' big thought: As women move into leadership and managerial positions in record numbers, there is an increasing need to understand how they will prioritize and integrate the many new roles and possibilities available to them. This book looks at the fundamental pressures that influence the career and personal decisions high-achieving women make, and it identifies strategies for adapting to the many demands that both challenge and enhance their lives. The book provides a basis for understanding the many choices, tradeoffs, and decisions that face women daily. The e book spotlights five key themes that are essential to guiding executive women's development today.

Introduction

Part One: Five Themes for High-Achieving Women

- Lacking an internal picture of the successful female executive, many high-achieving women often feel confusion and distress as they wonder how to blend a significant career with other needs.
- Whereas once the issues were gender-related hurdles at work- harassment, isolation, the constant need to prove oneself, and trying to fit in- now the emphasis has shifted to the changing contours of life – choices and trade-offs, the forces that influence decisions, and the strategies successful women use for constructing meaningful and fulfilling careers.
- Many women are now asking questions such as: What does it mean to be a successful woman manager? Is success simply advancement or can it mean something more? How do I make choices about my life? How do I merge career ambitions with my other life goals? Can I be true to myself and to my organization at the same time? Can I develop my full potential in this job?

What am I giving up by succeeding at work? How do women gain and achieve power? How can I be assertive effectively?

- This is not to say that with the increase in numbers, discrimination has ended; it is simply less absolute. The glass ceiling still exists, but it has cracks, and more people are noting fundamental problems intrinsic to the design of work and organizations.
- Women managers and those who work with them need to know how to navigate in the new terrain, and their organizations should know how to develop women in a landscape that is more accepting of them. Women are at a critical crossroad, where they are faced with choosing the right path for their next steps.
- This book aims to draw a map that clearly marks such paths for high-achieving women.

The research

- To better understand the inner landscape of women managers, they studied the experiences of sixty-one high-achievers who attended the Women's leadership Program, a five-day intensive leadership course conducted by The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). All were mid-level and senior-level managers in jobs of substantial responsibility, with base salaries ranging from the low \$80,000 to more than \$205,000. They were well educated, with 92 percent holding bachelor degrees, and the majority was employed by Fortune 500 companies. Ninety-two percent of these women were white. Their average age was forty. Half had children under the age of eighteen, and 71 percent were married or involved in a committed relationship.
- The participants were interviewed three times apiece – shortly after they finished the program, six months later, and then one year later,
- Based on these in-depth interviews and the subsequent analysis, they developed a map of the underlying forces guiding the personal choices and trade-offs on the lives of managerial women.
- They expanded the research at certain points to include an additional 276 women, to whom they sent a written questionnaire.
- This book explains the patterns that underlie the dilemmas, choices, and contradictions that influence women's life journeys as managers. It shows how clarifying the patterns in women's lives can be used both to guide women's development and to help them make informed choices about their careers.

A Framework for Developing High-Achieving Women

- Understanding five themes can help you make sense of the contradictions that dog high-achieving women managers; acting authentically, making connections, living agentically (that is, as an active agent in one's own destiny), achieving wholeness, and gaining self-clarity. These themes influence the way women approach their careers and their lives.
- The five themes are intertwined and change in their relative importance over each woman's life course, forming a sort of tapestry.
- As a woman ages and enters different life stages, the themes may shift in a complex pattern, with some becoming submerged and others more visible in a particular part of the overall design.

Why is this important?

- This is not just an issue for individual women. Organizations have high stakes in understanding and advocating new ways of developing high-achieving women.
- Given the increasing demand for leadership talent today, organizations can't afford to misunderstand or underestimate the developmental issues facing women in leadership roles.
- A particularly serious consequence of ignoring the gendered nature of organizations is the high level of turnover among women managers and executives, This is disturbing not only because it cost companies their substantial investment in these managers' development and because it my hamper efforts to increase organizational diversity, but also because it can hurt an organization's overall effectiveness.
- This it becomes critical for organizations to understand what women want out off their lives and how they want and need to develop, so that corporate America does not keep losing this valuable source of talent.

Acting Authentically

- Authenticity matters to both individuals and organizations. For individuals, feeling authentic – that is, feeling that daily actions are in concert with deeply held values and beliefs – builds energy and promotes learning, while the reverse creates inner conflict and turmoil.
- Besides fostering learning, authenticity also promotes psychological well being: how happy you are with your life, how confident you feel, and how accepting of yourself.
- For organizations, having people who feel authentic means having employees who participate fully and honestly and who work in an engaged and enthusiastic manner. Organizations that discourage authenticity for the sake of conformity can be creating hidden costs by demoralizing their staff. Organizations also need to pay attention to authenticity because t correlates with the retention of talent.
- Women managers focused on authenticity most strongly when attending to long-ignored goals and passions, addressing a changing environment, attempting to fit into a male-oriented organization, and responding to a major life event. They worked on being authentic to varying degrees.
- Many women have well-developed dreams that they have put aside or restrained in the face of doing something more conventional or coping with financial or familial pressures. As time passes, the unlived dream takes on more prominence and the cost of ignoring it increases.
- A second type of authenticity struggle occurs when values and behaviors become inconsistent as the environment charges around.
- The predominantly male culture of most organizations can impose a third type of struggle: restraining behaviors that seem too feminine so as to fit the mold without appearing more masculine than the men.
- Authenticity becomes a priority when life changes. A diagnosis of life- threatening illness can shake someone up, prompting review and reassessment of values and behaviors, and women often describe the experience as one of profound learning.
- For others, the health crisis of a loved one made them reflect on what was really important.
- One of the defining characteristics of authenticity is a good grasp of priorities and preferences.
- Related to precision about values was awareness of choices and trade-offs. Women high in authenticity knew the trade-offs they had made and could articulate them: leaving jobs and taking new ones, having children, leaving a bad situation, switching careers, meeting financial

goals, moving, divorcing, managing dual careers, balancing work and family, maintaining the relationship between their work group and organization.

- This awareness of trade-offs was also related to a strong sense of self-determination. They simply pursued personal definitions of success based on the achievements and values that mattered most to them.
- It is also possible to act authentically at work and at home but not be authentic toward yourself. They made time for everyone and everything but left themselves out of the equation, creating issues of authenticity.
- A final characteristic shared by women of high authenticity was their comfort with decisions made earlier in life.

How to develop Authenticity: A developmental Thumbnail for Understanding and Achieving Authenticity

1. Work on developing self-awareness.
 - Prioritize values and understand personal like and dislikes.
 - Foster self-awareness of values and priorities.
 - Visualize yourself five years from now.
 - Create an actual image of the future.
2. Assess your behaviors, choices, and trade-offs.
3. Take action to align your values with your life.
4. Believe in yourself.
5. Get support.

Obstacles to Authenticity

- Many of the women were quite successful at developing in authenticity during the year of the study. However, family expectations, societal norms, and organizational cultures all acted as forces hammering this process. Every woman lives with a list of shoulds, oughts, and musts in her head.
- Sometimes the internal voices contradict themselves. Many women found that societal norms suggested one course of behavior, organizational norms suggested a second, and familial norms a third. Authenticity can become a struggle when deeply held messages conflict with one another.
- In the face of contradictory messages, it can be difficult to search your own soul and figure out what you truly want.
- In light of the growing numbers of women entering managerial positions, organizations need to consider the ways in which climates and styles block or promote authenticity. Organizations that require one particular style can be unknowingly pose obstacles to authenticity and therefore to productivity.
- If you work in an organization that you believe is threatening your authenticity you can take modest and incremental steps while building alliances and gaining support for a series of changes with cumulative impact. With strategies such as turning personal threats into opportunities, quiet resistance, or negotiation, it is possible to push back on the organization to improve the climate.

- Developing authenticity is not easy. It involves learning to live in a way you feel comfortable despite social norms counter to your desired direction. The rewards of living authentically are great and make the struggle worthwhile. An authentic life can be active, vital, and committed, while promoting a sense of inner peace.

Making Connections

- Connection refers to our need to be close to other human beings – friends, family, community, coworkers. In traditional Western society, a woman defines her identity through attachment and intimacy, organizing and developing her sense of self in the context of her important relationships.
- Women develop themselves in the process of building, maintaining and nurturing the important relationships in their lives.
- Among the women interviewed there was a great deal of variation. Those who valued connection often lacked the number or depth of relationships they would have preferred. Others seemed to feel no need to work on connections. All the women struggled with the fact that in most organizations, the type of relational work that women have typically been responsible for is not valued. They and the men they work with are encouraged to strive for individual achievement, often at the expense of other people.
- For women leaders who value connection, their relationships with others serve three important functions: providing support for oneself as well as others; enhancing emotional well-being due to social rewards and feelings of joy; and learning, growth, and fostering change that facilitate effectiveness and career success.
- Relationships don't just provide support when you're down. They can also provide a buffer zone between different areas of your life and help you see difficult situations in new ways.
- Managers with strong social skills tend to have a wide circle of acquaintances as well as a knack for building rapport. They are adept at managing teams and influencing others – a manifestation of self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy combined. Social skills help leaders apply their emotional intelligence to relationships and enhance their ability to handle interpersonal interactions, negotiations, and conflict.
- Women in executive positions often lack intimate relationships. Some wish to increase the depth and number of their ties, while others feel no need to do so. Women's struggles with connection issues fall into four types: desiring more connection to a group, desiring an intimate connection with another individual, managing a dual-career relationship, and intentionally seeking isolation and distance.
- Those who developed intimate relationships expressed the importance to their own well-being and development; they worked constantly to maintain and nurture them.
- For women managing a dual-career relationship, it was difficult to learn to balance independence and dependence to produce interdependence.
- For a few women, long-distance relationships compounded the difficulty of creating meaningful intimacy in the context of their career demands.
- Some women felt they were unable to speak as freely or as openly with their husbands as they could with their friends. Others felt constrained because the balance of support seemed

unequal. At other times, connection issues arose when the woman decided to move for the sake of her husband's career.

- Women with high levels of connection develop and maintain a variety of relationships. They see themselves as members of one or more communities, and maintain relationships that are mutually beneficial rather than one-sided. Their management styles are consciously influenced by their relationships with others. They facilitate the development of others and derive personal pleasure and gratification from doing so. They know how to use relationships to accomplish organizational goals. They are sensitive to the needs of others and gain power through their connections. If isolation is a structural feature of their jobs, they figure out how to actively develop relationships in other ways. During times of change, growth, or difficulty, they know how to get others to support them.
- Through exchanging stories, women learn that they are not lone or crazy. It is empowering to know that what you feel and experience is both real and widely shared.
- Connections with others in a group or community can help reduce such feelings of isolation and loneliness. The women in the survey also sought advice and input from others in their networks. Having a mentor or role model helped women validate their experiences and feelings and feel part of a community. Mentorship provides development and on a social and emotional level, mentors can provide acceptance, counseling, friendship, role modeling and personal support.
- Very few women worked in organizations with formal mentoring programs. More often the relationship began informally, when the woman found someone she admired and wanted to emulate, or when the mentor recognized someone with potential likely to benefit from her knowledge, advice and counsel.
- Women managers with healthy connected relationships value their teams and expect that team members will work together and help each other. Effectively managing their connections can lead to greater impact and effectiveness for themselves and their teams. Women who value connection tend to use participative management.
- At managerial levels, the ability to influence other is closely tied to performance. "Getting things done" often depends on the ability to influence across department lines and across organizational levels.

A Developmental Thumbnail for Understanding and Achieving Connection

1. Map your relationships (page 64). Examine your relationships as things to work on, make the commitments, and schedule them so that you will do something concrete about them.
2. Slow down and take time for people
3. Join a group
4. Find a mentor or become one yourself
5. Reconnect with people from your past
6. Tap your networks.

Obstacles to making connections:

- Lack of time and energy is one important obstacle as nurturing relationships takes commitment and work.

- Other obstacles include logistical issues and, finally, organization can discourage connectedness. This is a function of the gendered nature of organizational environments that value individual achievement above cooperation, compassion, and connection.

Controlling your Destiny

- The desire to control one's own destiny is one of the strongest needs of high-achieving women. The quality of acting assertively on one's own behalf is what the authors call agency. The fundamental desire to control one's own life is what motivates us to take the initiative and to advocate for ourselves.
- You need agentic qualities to succeed, especially in the corporate environment. Most people expect nurturing rather than agentic behavior from a woman; when they don't get it they become confused and may be tempted to retaliate.
- You can employ agentic behavior without being arrogant and manipulative and sacrificing your relationships. What matters most for people regardless of gender is that they feel that they are moving, that they can make something happen. It means seeing ways to take action rather than feeling stuck and stagnant.
- People demonstrate agency differently depending on where they are in their careers. At first, achieving your desired position may require you to master particular individual skills and to seek assignments or situations that will allow you to shine above the rest. Later, agency may have to do with the ability to accomplish significant tasks in the context of a rapidly changing organization, to figure out the best way to shoulder new responsibilities, or to determine when it is time to leave a deteriorating job.
- Agency also becomes increasingly important over time in the personal realm. Tough decisions about fashioning your life in accordance with your dreams require agency. For the women interviewed agency involved working on life plans as well as career plans. Women who were learning to take control also grew in self-satisfaction and self-worth.
- Agency also has a positive and pervasive influence on physical and psychological well-being. Research relates agency to reduced anxiety, reduced depression, enhanced self-esteem, and improved overall health.
- When greater agency is needed:
- Resolving a difficult situation: Women struggled more with agency when they felt stuck in a dull job with little opportunity for growth or in an environment rife with conflict at work or at home. Making a change often required acting in opposition to what others expected of them and perhaps also violated what they had come to expect from themselves or had become accustomed to. Many women worked in environments they perceived as hostile to them. Several women mentioned harassment so troubling they considered leaving.
- Becoming an authority: Especially early in their managerial careers, becoming comfortable with personal authority was often a significant challenge. Women are encouraged to focus more on getting along and supporting others and working together than on giving direction or creating and enforcing rules for others to follow. Taking a position of authority has many advantages, but it also increases feelings of vulnerability; in putting yourself out there you are subject to more criticism and the consequences may be higher if you fail or need some degree of agency to overcome these fears.

- Negotiating in a political climate: Awareness of office politics can advance your agency. You need to know the unwritten policies and procedures and understand where and how decisions are made. You can capture opportunities for advancement and develop relationships with people who are likely to facilitate your goals rather than hinder them. And you can use political behavior in a way that accords with your values.
- At the other end of the spectrum are women who overuse agency. As their successes build and they gain power and prestige, they grow arrogant, overbearing, and likely to ignore the needs and feelings of others. Research has shown that these characteristics and behaviors are correlated with illness, use of alcohol and drugs, poor mental health, and relatively poor work performance as well.
- Figuring out how to be more agentic and connected at the same time is complex. If you are acting agentically but don't recognize and respect the human needs of your coworkers enough to fully engage and empower both parties, your career may be headed for difficulty. To be agentic effectively, you must have both the goals and the means to achieve it. Very few goals can be achieved without the participation, cooperation, and support of other people.
- In pursuing goals, the most effectively agentic women considered both short- and long-term implications of decisions made along the way. Clarity of direction means not only knowing what you want but also what you *don't* want. With this knowledge, you can more readily steer clear of paths that may lead you astray.
- Agentic women *make* things happen rather than letting things happen *to* them, and their choices let them feel in control of life. The most effective women had well-developed life plans and used short-term objectives to help them reach long-term goals; they were future-oriented. Planning alone is not enough; it's also necessary to seek out experiences that will help achieve planned goals. An agentic woman sees her life as a developmental process and takes an active role in it.
- The most effective agentic women sought out experiences that were a stretch for them and required them to do things differently and to learn new skills. Agency requires an ability to extend beyond one's comfort zone, and thus an ability to take some risks. Those with higher levels of agency were able to acknowledge their fears and use them as a reality check rather than an obstacle to taking the risk.
- The agentic woman knows what she wants and uses a clear sense of priorities and values to align her plan. The most effectively agentic women spent time in self-reflection. Understanding your own values, priorities, likes, and dislikes is essential for setting goals that will bring you personal as well as professional fulfillment. Acknowledging risks and fears allows you to address them planfully.
- Women who used agency well spoke of flexibility in handling challenging tasks, both at home and at work. They developed a wide repertoire of skills that allowed them to respond appropriately in stressful or novel situations, and they could envision a variety of possibilities and generate alternative prospective outcomes. When faced with a difficulty or challenge, agentic women often reframe the situation.
- Rather than collapsing when faced with personal and professional challenges that might have seemed insurmountable, resilient women reframed the situation and found the strength and initiative to master change.

- The ability to glean lessons from experience is a key factor in agency. Rather than focusing on a failure when it occurred, they saw it as an opportunity to learn so as to approach similar situations differently in the future. Using such experiences for learning greatly reduced regrets about the past.
- Being agentic sometimes meant letting go of things rather than taking them on- removing sources of stress and obstacles that stand between you and your goals. It can also mean delegating work to others. Both these strategies can help maintain your focus and your high-priority goals.
- The women most successful at controlling their own lives were those who acted agentially but also maintained good relationships. Women who ignored relationships limited their ability to forge their future.

A Developmental Thumbnail for Understanding and Achieving Agency

1. Set realistic, specific goals - some short-term, some calling for a medium-term stretch, and a few idealistic long-term visions. Be prepared to adjust either your goals or your strategies for achieving them as you encounter obstacles. Also spend time examining the congruence of your goals and your actions.
2. Develop a plan for achieving your goals
3. Seek feedback from others and act on it. Feedback is an important tool for improving self-management and self-reliance, and you can incorporate feedback from others into your development plans and then gather feedback along the way to monitor your progress.
4. Remain open to possibilities
5. Empower yourself – have confidence and conviction in your plans.

Obstacles to Developing Greater Agency

- Taking greater control over life rarely comes easily. Stepping out in an agentic way meant seeking opinions of others and sharing more responsibility and information with staff members, being less rigid and controlling.
- Gender stereotypes present a second obstacle for women attempting to be more agentic.
- Besides the obstacles posed by others, women often harbor obstacles of their own. Socialization can discourage women from attempting to act as agents on their own behalf, teaching them to emphasize relationships above individual achievement, and to derive feelings of power and renewal from connections with other people rather than competing and winning.
- Several women acknowledged that they expected to be rewarded for good performance and that they would often wait and wait for their reward, their frustration and anger growing when recognition was not forthcoming.
- It can also be difficult to be agentic when things change and opportunities drop up. Look for hidden possibilities, for benefits in the new situation; try to figure out ways you can influence what happens next.
- Inertia can also be an obstacle to agency. It is almost always easier not to challenge the status quo. Changing your situation may mean a disruption, a loss of equilibrium, and perhaps even a loss of control.
- Finding ways to maintain continuity in your values, goals, and sense of identity can help make it easier for you to take agentic steps in the face of uncertainty and stress.

Achieving Wholeness

- Across time and cultures, feeling whole has been recognized as central to well-being. Wholeness, the integration of all parts of the self into a sense of identity, is key to optimal human functioning: we need to feel whole to feel good about ourselves and to perform effectively over the long haul.
- Living a *whole life* allows a person to address human drives such as the need to be agentic and to be connected. Agency and connection need not exist in equal measure simultaneously, as long as the satisfaction of one drive does not preclude the possibility of addressing the other.
- Wholeness is related to psychological well-being. Numerous studies have demonstrated that both women and men who engage in multiple roles have higher levels of well-being than people who engage exclusively in one role in life. If your life is overly focused on one role, the loss of that key role can be experienced as a total loss of meaning.
- They found that higher commitment to personal life roles was associated with greater psychological well-being, measured in terms of general satisfaction with life and acceptance of self. Someone who engages in both personal and managerial roles has multiple ways to derive psychological well-being/ having both sets of roles helped women bring perspective and objectivity to their problems.
- Engagement in personal roles may also promote job performance, via a process called role accumulation – which means that learning from one role can be accumulated and incorporated into another.
- Managerial performance has two main components: capabilities to deal with people and capabilities to structure tasks. Personal life roles can offer experiences relevant to both these components. Commitment to private life roles is associated with high performance in the more public sphere of work.
- More life roles create more opportunities to learn skills and behaviors relevant to management. Personal roles enhanced managerial performance in four main areas: relational skills, multitasking skills, using personal background to understand constituents, and leadership practice.
- These women reported that they learned how to understand, motivate, and respect others through their personal life and were then able to carry those abilities over into their roles at work.
- Volunteering in the community also taught valuable lessons – volunteer positions provide a great way to practice leadership responsibilities.
- A final reason that whole life is important is that such a life offers multiple sources of support and comfort.
- Women in the study had two types of problems with wholeness: problems of putting everything into work and problems of trying to combine work with outside interest.
- Those who described themselves as workaholics had major difficulties feeling whole. For a woman living this way, her career is her life. Status and recognition matter so much that she doesn't allow room for anything or anyone else. Because their self-esteem is tied up in their work, they can be very demanding and difficult to work with.

- A second way issues of wholeness arose was through conflict between work and personal life, Work and personal roles create competing demands in terms of time and energy. Women live in two different worlds and they fear failing in both. Often they feel the different pieces of their lives are at war with one another. Many women want it all and struggle with how to get it in the face of an inflexible environment.
- Although wholeness is difficult to achieve, it is not impossible. Those women who felt whole tended to understand their own identity and their various needs and responsibilities. They fashioned a life that put them in environments where they could fulfill a wide variety of needs and feel both agentic and connected.
- What was common to all who felt whole was that they addressed both types of goals through an array of roles. The woman who feels whole has a sense of self based on multiple facets. She views herself as having many identities – manager, negotiator, spouse, mother, implementer, and nurturer. She is able to weave these pieces together in a coherent way.
- Letting go of the ideal of perfection often seems to be key to success in feeling whole. Sharing power allows a woman to delegate, which frees her up to do what is most important.

A Developmental Thumbnail for Understanding and Achieving Feelings of Wholeness

- Developing wholeness is a complex process that takes place over time and never really ends, as wholeness requires active maintenance.
 1. Establish clear priorities – it is important to know what you want. You must understand what you cannot give up, what you can do without, and what you feel must be added. Priorities need to be rebalanced and realigned periodically.
 2. Set boundaries - learn how to say no to protect time for top priorities.
 - Schedule
 - Delegate
 - Share responsibilities
 - Say no
 3. Incorporate time for reflection and spirituality
 - Meditation, yoga, inspirational reading, journaling and religious practices.
 4. View yourself holistically – an integrated self-concept
 5. Restructure your thoughts – fully involve yourself in the situation you are in at the moment without being distracted by other responsibilities.
 - Review your thoughts on being a perfectionist
 - Enjoy the here and now
 - Keep at it! Reassess and redesign your life structure as conditions change

Obstacles Faced on the Journey to Wholeness

- The most prominent obstacle is the organizational environment; most organizations simply don't care if their managers feel whole. Organizations embody an implicit belief that workaholic cultures promote the organizational interest. Career ladders are designed to reward people who prioritize work above other roles.
- Organizations face a paradox. Complete dedication seems so desirable that they set up systems to promote total dedication to the workplace but commitment to non-work roles is actually associated with non-work roles.

- Norms for the roles and responsibilities of women are at fault as well.
- Wholeness was the most common area for developmental growth chosen by the women in the study.

Gaining Self-Clarity

- Self-clarity is knowing who you are and how you fit into the world. It is a fundamental human desire and one that acts as a facilitator for growth in the four other themes. It allows you to recognize your values so as to live authentically, enables agentic behavior, improves your ability to connect with others, and allows you to make choices that produce feelings of wholeness.
- Self-clarity provides a map that can keep you on course and lead to a fulfilling professional and personal journey. First, self-clarity helps to figure out what you want and what your gifts and talents are, and then it shows you your surroundings, what your relationship to your world is and where you might go in it. Self-clarity helps you find a job in line with your talents, one that lets you build on your strengths and satisfy your desires for meaningful and enjoyable work.
- A second reason self-clarity matters is that it helps you deal with the demands of modern adult life. The better you understand yourself in relationship to others and to the context you are embedded in, the better you deal with partnering, parenting, and working.
- A third reason self-clarity is important is that it can help you perform better as a manager, allowing you to identify performance obstacles before or as they occur. A clear self-view can help you create a developmental plan to enhance your strengths and shore up your managerial weaknesses. The self-awareness aspect of self-clarity has been linked with effective managerial performance for both men and women.
- A fourth reason self-clarity is important has to do with the gendered nature of organizations. Modern organizations were built by and for men. Identifying their masculine norms and understanding one's own relationship to them is crucial for women. Self-clarity is a big help here, allowing you to see how organizational gender expectations influence your private experience. Once you understand that linkage, you can tell when to push back in the organization, when to accommodate it, when to ignore it, and when to leave it.
- Managerial women are constantly struggling with the development of self-clarity.
- Issues of low self-clarity:
 - Women who are low in self-clarity never see the obstacle until they run into it. Even then they are not sure what happened because they thought they had done everything right. It is hard for them to correct their behavior because they don't see that they made any errors.
 - Women with low self-clarity are unable to adapt to business or performance realities because they don't see how they fit into the larger departmental or organizational context.
 - Another problem often seen with low-self-clarity was unwillingness to seek or accept feedback. They just didn't value feedback.
 - Not only did those low in self-clarity dismiss formal feedback delivered in the program, they also stood out from the other women in that they never mentioned asking anyone for advice during the year they interviewed them. They never saw themselves as owners of the problem.
 - A common deterrent for low-clarity women was the notion that asking for feedback suggested that they might have a problem. However, without asking for advice, suggestions, or feedback, it is hard to solve a problem or change your behavior.

- Even those who saw some value in feedback struggled with the problem of getting it without showing vulnerability. This is a very real tension in organizations today when many women are still seen as pioneers for their gender in their line of work.
- Others avoided feedback to protect themselves from being hurt which restricted their ability to learn from their experiences and diminished their managerial potential over the long run.
- Issues of moderate and high levels of self clarity:
- Women with moderate and high levels of self-clarity tend to engage in subtler struggles, generally involving gender dynamics and the need to determine how personally to take the tensions they encounter at work.
- You must know the overall gender dynamics before you can tell if perceptions of you reflect the gendered environment or not. Understanding gender dynamics is also important when it comes to understanding feedback. Many women are all too ready to blame any negative feedback on gender dynamics.
- Consulting with other women about your behaviors is an effective way to reduce confusion about gendered feedback. You need to sort out what part of others' reactions to you is based on your actual behaviors and what part may be the result of stereotypes of women in the organization.
- Understanding gender dynamics is also very important when it comes to pushing back on the organization. To act as a change agent and push for norms more supportive of women, you need to understand how much of what you want to change, is a function of systemic practices and how much of it is a reaction to you as a person.
- It is a challenge to learn that coworkers are responding to your role as a manager and not you as a person. Learning how to see yourself in perspective can help you accept some of the harsher realities of your organizational role
- The woman who sees herself clearly can describe patterns in her life with insight. She reflects on her experiences and uses those reflections to increase her self-knowledge and guide her behavior as her situation changes.
- Women high in self-clarity describe themselves as lifelong learners. They approach new situations as opportunities to learn and see difficulties as a challenge.
- Women high in self-clarity generally see events as interconnected.
- Women high in self-clarity use feedback effectively. They know how to take feedback from others and use it to refine, change, or confirm an understanding of themselves. She does not substitute feedback for a strong self-assessment system; rather she uses it to enhance and check her own assessments.
- Self-clarity helps women make choices consciously. Because they know themselves so well, they can make sound life decisions. She constantly evaluates the situation and options as well as what she wants and she will work to change situations and adapt her behavior if needed, until there is a good fit and she can perform effectively.
- Women high in self clarity views herself objectively. She has roles but she is not them. She does not over-personalize difficult business situations. She understands how her identity has been shaped by others. She knows her own value system and how it relates to the values of others.

A Developmental Thumbnail for Understanding and Achieving Clarity

- Developing clarity is an ongoing process.

1. Seek feedback - once you understand the feedback, then you need to actually use it to enhance your self-knowledge and shape your behavior.
2. Examine your behavior
3. Look for patterns in your life – journaling can enhance the process of refining clarity
4. Pay attention to your organizational environment- try to understand the gender issues in our organization. Some of the work of self-clarity has to do with figuring out what you are contributing to a difficult situation and what the environment is contributing.
 - Take note of change in the climate
 - Find out what happens to other women
 - Ask others for their take on the environment
5. Make self-learning a priority

Obstacles to Self-Clarity

- One of the tough parts about developing in this area is that those who need it most are least aware of it.
- Even if you want to develop more self-clarity, many obstacles can get in the way. Constructive, helpful feedback is sometimes hard to get.
- If the overall organizational climate is hostile towards women and systematically undermines their growth, then it is harder to get a clear picture of yourself and others or grow toward your own potential.
- Organizations hostile to women tend to have few women in managerial positions, so the ones who are there may have no access to role models and no reference group with which to validate their perceptions.
- The temptation to stay with the status quo poses another obstacle to the development of self-clarity. Exposure to changing circumstances enhances personal learning and development. Seek out situations that will make you examine yourself.
- A final obstacle to gaining self-clarity can be sheer distraction. It is extremely hard to focus on your own development during periods of crisis and trauma.

Part Two: next Steps for High Achieving Women

Growing through Life Experience

- The women of fifty and older in this study were extremely impressive. If they are typical, age and experience do give managerial women a strong sense of wisdom about life, smart ways to make choices, greater resiliency, and inner peace.
- The various developmental demands change their relative importance depending on your age group. Certain issues are more central at particular ages.
- The authors found it useful to use the age markers to create a general sense of the development of managerial women over the course of their careers.

Here are the dominant themes for each age group:

Life Stage	Dominant Developmental Themes
29-33	Agency: How do I get ahead in my career?

34-40	Wholeness: How do I keep my career from pushing out the rest of my life
	Connection: How do I develop and maintain important relationships?
41-45	Authenticity: How do I redefine my work so it is more fulfilling?
46-50	Agency and Authenticity: How do I realign my life so it is fulfilling both personally and occupationally?
51-55	Self-Clarity: How do I continue to learn and grow?

What Can Organizations Do?

- The authors' goal at the outset was to look at how high-achieving women respond to the choices and trade-offs in their lives, but it soon became apparent that the women's struggles were not purely private; they had their roots in a changing culture fraught with contradictions for their role as women. High achieving women face difficult choices and trade-offs because they receive competing messages.
- Organizations can do a great deal to help women develop into authentic, whole, agentic, connected, and self-understanding human beings- and organizations that do so should profit in terms of the increased effectiveness of their whole workforce, not just the women they employ.
- From an organizational perspective, the basic issue is that high-achieving women must compromise to survive in careers patterned after the stereotypical male experience. Women in management positions are still expected to dress, think, and act like the men currently in leadership positions and to meet male norms of effectiveness- with no recognition of the different but equivalent contributions that they make. Thus women feel pressure to sacrifice authenticity and wholeness for success. Connections with others become compromised and weakened. Attempts at agency evoke discrimination and harassment. Attempts at self-clarity are distorted by the proliferation of stereotypes and prejudices.
- This social context is a source of ongoing stress for women managers at all levels. How can organizations change to capitalize on the influx of women? They can remodel their cultures to incorporate the basic developmental values of authenticity, connection, agency, wholeness, and self-clarity
- Although American society no longer assumes that men should work and all women should stay home, few organizations have redesigned their managerial development policies and structures accordingly.
- The authors are not suggesting that male norms be replaced, but rather that a wider variety of values and behaviors be accepted in how managers design their lives. They want to see the standards and norms of organizations refined and reshaped so that they allow for the development of authenticity, wholeness, connection, agency, and self-clarity.
- Organizations should and do care about the commitment of their workforce, and most organizations invest heavily in their human capital. Research has consistently shown that creating and maintaining a culture where all employees feel included and valued results in decreased absenteeism, turnover, and expenses for dealing with grievances, as well as increased motivation and commitment.

A Developmental Thumbnail for What Companies Can Do

1. Build support
 - Frame gender diversity as a business advantage
 - Assess how well your organization is doing at retaining and developing women managers.
 2. Give it time to work.
 - Implement practices to support the development of authenticity, agency, connection, wholeness and self-clarity.
 - Experiment with different practices.
 - Reward practices that enhance these dimensions, not just those that satisfy traditionally male norms.
 - Support culture change at all levels of the organization, from top management to work group.
 - Continually assess and reward progress.
 3. Institutionalize change
- Organizations are at a critical juncture with regard to women. It is vital for them to actively respect the unique needs and contributions of women. Organizations will profit by encouraging and developing women as part of the norm rather than as exceptions.
 - Women present a formidable force. Moving them from the managerial to the executive pipeline can keep American organizations at the forefront of the global marketplace. Let's not waste the opportunity.

Recommendation: This is an important book which provides well-researched, illustrative, and balanced perspectives of what women are thinking and feeling today. Organizations and individuals will benefit from the insights provided and from the recommendations.

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About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

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