

Article

# Looking Good and Being Good: Women Leaders in Australian Universities

Tanya Fitzgerald 

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University, Melbourne 3086, Australia;  
t.fitzgerald@latrobe.edu.au

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**Abstract:** In this article, I argue that women in senior leadership positions in universities continue to face a number of tensions and ambiguities in their everyday working lives. Drawing on the metaphors of ‘looking good’ and ‘being good’, I highlight the gendered assumptions that senior women encounter. As senior leaders, women are simultaneously required to negotiate an inherently masculine culture yet at the same time are expected to exercise a level of femininity. Their physical presence, appearance, clothing, gestures, and behaviours are central to the bodily exercise of leadership. As the data presented illustrate, women’s leadership bodies and bodily performances reflect gendered institutional norms and assumptions about how leaders should look and act.

**Keywords:** gender; leadership; visibility; image; performance; expectations

## 1. Introduction

In Australia and elsewhere, there has been a steady rise in the numbers of women in leadership positions in higher education, although women continue to be under-represented at senior levels [1]. Research evidence has shown that significant obstacles remain for capable women who aspire to and take up these key leadership roles [2]. Ostensibly, women leaders are located in an ambiguous and paradoxical position: they occupy leadership roles historically held by men in an institutional culture in which femininity remains an expectation. As Sinclair points out, “even before they open their mouths or act, men are likely to be endowed with power and the potential for leadership [3] (p. 109)”. It is this masculinity of power that reinforces gendered organizational cultures and which preserve leadership as the prerogative of men [4].

Primarily, leadership in higher education is a normative performance that is underwritten by a preoccupation with individual pursuits and accomplishments [5]. Masculinity and power are intertwined in such a way that men are the institutional (and institutionalized) norm, and their presence and numerical dominance are perceived as inevitable and part of the “way things are [6] (p. 308). For women, stepping into leadership can be risky work. Sharing the space with men can invoke responses such as being simply ignored or excluded, regarded as less than competent, or weighed down by the weight of expectations [7]. Remedial approaches to this positioning may involve women adopting tough and masculine management approaches, trying to blend in as ‘one of the boys’ while concurrently being given the message that they are different [8]. In essence, there are two equally unappealing options presented: manage like a man or risk a level of condemnation and struggle for recognition and credibility as both a woman and a leader.

Despite their privilege and positional power [9], the stark reality for women is that they are interlopers in a predominantly male world. Women are the institutional ‘Other’ [10]. In order to succeed, they must manage their otherness and engage in self-regulatory practices to demonstrate that they know and understand the ‘rules of the game’ [11]. Highly visible and deemed ‘out of place’ due to their gender, women are routinely and intensely scrutinized and judged precisely because of their bodily

appearance [12]. Accordingly, the expectation is that women outwardly create, maintain, and display a feminine appearance that includes professional and appropriate attire and grooming. I refer to this as 'looking good'. That is, women mask and monitor their feminine and 'out of place' bodies through their dress and physical appearance in order to be seamlessly woven into the organizational fabric and not be marked by their bodily difference to their male colleagues.

Ostensibly, women's 'out of place' bodies have the potential to simultaneously threaten, disturb, and disrupt the strategic masculine prerogative. In a hyper masculine and competitive environment, such as a university, women must manage their 'out of place' bodies as well as prevailing expectations about how that body ought to look and perform. This further requires women to 'be good' and engage in a level of self-regulation of their professional conduct, speech, expressions, and actions. 'Being good' is a bodily performance in which women discipline their own bodies, appearance, and behaviours to display their outward conformity to a learned femininity.

My intention in this article is to document the experiences of women leaders in higher education in Australia and the hyper-critical perceptions and gendered expectations that are part of their everyday working lives. I highlight the 'leader, think male' normative assumptions that continue to prevail and focus attention on ways in which the gendered performances of women's bodies and appearance are perceived and managed. As I show, women who deviate from accepted forms of masculinity experience discriminatory and exclusionary practices that provoke a level of simultaneous censure and attraction [13] This article advances work previously undertaken by Morley [14], Sinclair [15], and Mavin and Grandy [16] that explored links between leadership as a masculine construct and the disciplining of women's bodies, appearance, and behaviours. Specifically, I adopt two particular metaphors, 'looking good' and 'being good', to untangle the complexities and ambiguities of women's leadership lives and to illustrate how women comply with, negotiate, and reject embodied norms.

## 2. Methodology

In this article, I draw on a previous two-year qualitative study (2011–2013) that documented the experiences of 30 senior women leaders in universities across Australia and New Zealand. Of this group, 10 of the women were Deans of a faculty, 12 were Pro Vice Chancellors, and eight were Deputy Vice Chancellors. Seventeen of the women were geographically located in Australia and thirteen in New Zealand. In total, 23 women were externally recruited and seven were promoted internally. All of the women had higher degrees and/or professional qualifications; all had worked in more than one institution across their careers, and six of the women had worked in different countries. The majority held the title of professor (24), and three were associate professors in senior portfolios. Furthermore, 12 of the women were known in their fields outside of the university as they sat on professional committees, research councils, school governing councils, or community boards. All of the women were aged 50 years or over.

This was not a comparative project across two countries in geographical proximity. The decision to work across both countries was to ensure a level of anonymity for participants. Although there are 39 public universities in Australia and eight in New Zealand, given the seniority of the women interviewed, identities could not be fully masked if I concentrated on one location. As I had worked in the higher education sector in both countries, this offered opportunity to make use of professional networks to recruit participants. What I had not initially considered was that I was also an 'outsider'; as a citizen from Aotearoa New Zealand working in Australia, I did not have an elongated work history in that sector, and as an academic from Australia, in New Zealand I had both a geographical and chronological distance from participants; geographical insofar as I had relocated to Australia, and chronological as I had moved there in early 2009.

In this project, I also elected to interview a further 25 women who had self-nominated as aspiring leaders. It was a pragmatic decision to include this group of academic women. I sought to document their experiences of leadership at an early career stage as well as capture their perspectives of the potential opportunities and challenges senior leadership might present based on their own observations

of senior women with whom they worked. Of this group, 15 were in Australia and 10 in New Zealand. In terms of demographic profile, their ages ranged from 35 to 67, they held roles as research assistants (2), associate lecturers (3), lecturers (11), and senior lecturers (9). Furthermore, 18 women in this group had PhD degrees and the remaining seven expected to submit within a short period of time. The majority worked in fields such as Humanities, Social Sciences, and Public Health and had spent periods of time working in their own professional fields. Seven of the women had worked in more than one university and seven identified as Indigenous women. Although data from qualitative interviews from this group are not reported in depth in this article, perceptions of three aspiring women of their female colleagues offer an insightful account of the pressure women exert on each other to conform to organizational and masculine norms.

Interviews with both groups of women lasted between 65 and 90 min. From the transcripts produced and in the first stage of analysis, the repetition of words or terms in interviews were identified and then grouped according to similarity. For example, 'dress', 'appearance', and 'clothing' were deemed to be similar, and descriptions for behaviours and/or actions such as 'sidelined' and 'marginalized' were grouped together. At the second stage, 38 themes were identified from the initial coding, and Nvivo was subsequently used to further refine subthemes. This was an iterative process as these themes were constantly read against the literature and refined further once transcripts were returned. At this third stage and based on feedback from participants, from my reading of the literature and emergent concepts, 30 themes were generated. From the interviews, transcripts, and data I now present a rich compilation of narratives to draw on and perspectives to offer. I have reported elsewhere on a number of the emergent themes [17].

In this article I concentrate on participants' narratives that centred on 'dress', 'appearance', and 'behaviour' to surface an understanding of the extent to which these external elements created a gender script about how women ought to present themselves, their work, and activities. Deliberately, I have not presented a comparative analysis but a closer examination of five senior women in the same national context (Australia). I have elected to focus on these five women as their narratives reveal the extent to which they engaged in self-regulation in order to assert their presence, yet at the same time keep intact the symbolic order in their institutions. Comments made by Kathleen, Julia, Alana, Lillian, and Alison, and presented in this article, reflect their observations and experiences. I do not attempt to generalise but do suggest that their voices resonate with a number of experiences women in the wider project reported.

As I have outlined, my attention is specifically directed to ways in which the physicality of leadership is experienced by women in terms of their appearance (looking good) and behaviour (being good). I use these metaphors to reveal the challenging and frequently invisible demands women leaders face from both their male and female colleagues. I present the views of three academic women (Philippa, Mary, and Jane) about senior women with whom they have worked to illustrate their own gendered expectations of their female colleagues. As the narratives emphasize, observations and monitoring of women leaders' bodies, appearance ('looking good'), and performance ('being good') are conducted by both male and female colleagues.

### 3. Looking Good

In the past decade, universities in many Anglophone countries have become multinational institutions, competing within globalized education markets. The modern university is one that is entrepreneurial [18] and innovative, benchmarked for global excellence [19], organizationally effective and fiscally efficient, and oriented outwards towards the demands of the knowledge economy [20]. An immediate consequence has been the inculcation of neoliberal values that strengthen managerialist practices as well as the masculinity of leadership [21].

A powerful ideology has emerged that suggests leadership is a core component in successful organizational transformation. Consequently, certain cultural scripts point to specific personal qualities, characteristics, and dispositions that have been identified as critical to leading organizational

transformation [22]. The intensified focus on performance, fiscal efficiencies, quality assurance, audit and regulation, as well as executive prerogative [23] has shifted attention to leaders and leadership as the key drivers of change and innovation. However, subtle yet conscious demands for ways of 'doing leadership' that align with new regimes of management and governance sit uncomfortably with women and are counter to women's preferred ways of working [24]. Furthermore, while there are implicit assumptions about what it means to be a male leader, similar overt and explicit norms about how to 'look' and 'act' as a woman leader do not exist. And while some women may identify with the "symbolic order of professionalism [25] (p. 499)", in doing so, they unwittingly conform to male norms about how to dress and act; in other words, look good (dress and appearance) and be good (performance).

Being male and masculine is not an issue for men [26]. The physical signs of leadership include the public display of dress, language, and actions that point to the mastery of one's body. Leadership is a bodily practice; it is a physical, intellectual, and emotional performance that is frequently observed and judged by peers, colleagues, and at times, casual spectators.

Women in male-dominated contexts such as universities work to moderate aspects of their self-presentation so that they are not rejected as too feminine by their male colleagues, yet not perceived as too masculine by their female peers [27]. For women in particular, their dress and bodily performance is critical to the image they present and, ultimately, their credibility is judged by their appearance and perceived behaviours. Careful posture, neat and restrained clothing (not too much colour), minimal make-up, and conservative hairstyles are deemed appropriately feminine and professional attire. These are the gendered signs of self-management and self-control that is overt, permissible and public.

Recent scholarship on bodies, gendered bodies, and bodies in organizations points to the importance of considering links between body, gender regimes (masculine and feminine performances), and leadership [28]. There has been a proliferation of studies on leaders and leadership practices as normative performances [29] but what appears missing from these narratives, particularly in the field of educational leadership, is sustained attention to the physicality of leadership, that is, how leaders as gendered bodies physically perform their roles, are seen to perform, and are judged for that performance. In the managerial environment of higher education, men's position and performance as well as their bodies are regarded as the norm and a significant vehicle for the display of managerial and masculine practices. Certainly, the masculinities in management literature have mapped the invisibility and taken-for-granted male body; a body that escapes scrutiny, comment, and condemnation [30]. Yet women leaders are seldom able to exercise a degree of agency about their appearance and leadership behaviours primarily because what is deemed appropriate and acceptable is culturally constrained and intrinsically part of the unwritten 'rules' of leadership. Consequently, women leaders engage in self-regulatory practices in order to be perceived in more positive ways and to minimize their 'otherness' from their male colleagues. In the first instance, women encounter pressure to conform to gendered expectations about their dress and appearance. Secondly, they are required to restore the gender order disrupted by their entrance. This involves undertaking repair work and deploying strategies to mediate their femininity while at the same time mobilising their femaleness to engage in care work [31]. The double bind is that women leaders are expected to be feminine while simultaneously demonstrating the masculinities expected of those in senior positions.

As the narratives presented in this article highlight, women can struggle to convey their suitability and credibility as senior leaders principally because their bodies and appearance reinforce their disruption of the gendered order of leadership. Highly visible in senior roles, women are required to project an image that can necessitate a careful re-working, re-imaging, and re-packaging of self. Women's bodies and bodily appearance denote the capacity to exert a level of self-control and self-management. This external management of self is ostensibly for the male eye that ultimately has the permissible power of seeing how women present and project themselves as the following example illustrates:

I experience a high degree of angst before I even get to some of the meetings. Sure, I read the meeting papers, sure I canvas colleagues' views, but what troubles me most is what to wear. I need to look formal, I need to look like I know what I am doing. I am the only woman in the room. I always wear a suit. Sometimes I use a little colour, like a scarf, it helps me feel brighter but then when I see all the men in sombre suits I feel frivolous. It reminded me I was not one of them and never could be (Kathleen, senior leader).

Kathleen's narrative points to the pressure she faces to be visible, to conform, and to perform. Wearing a scarf, for example, was an outward (and colourful) attempt to signal that she was not 'one of them'. This could also be read as a sign of her resistance to gendered expectations that surrounded her presence at the meeting. However, that she always wore a suit was a marker of her own willingness to be 'one of them'. As the above example indicates, for Kathleen, her anxiety and ambivalence about what to wear created a level of uncertainty about how she would be perceived. Read another way, her female bodily presence at the meeting was an overt threat to the dominant masculinity in the room. Also evident here is Kathleen's awareness that she needs to read all the meeting papers and listen to colleagues' views. Although this preparedness for meetings might well be the norm, that she experiences a "high degree of angst" signifies her awareness of her bodily presence at the meeting, the scrutiny she will encounter, and her expected performance. Kathleen appears to be more preoccupied with her dress and appearance (looking good) than she does about her potential contribution.

The extent to which senior women are concerned with the scrutiny of their professional appearance is apparent in the recollection of another senior woman. Julia recounted that she was cautioned by a senior male colleague to dress in "understated colours ... black or dark blue ... because too much colour makes me look too casual". Julia was rebuked for the colours she had chosen which were not "understated". That she had elected to wear "too much colour" presented a bodily marker of her difference from her male colleagues who were dressed in sombre (black or navy) suits. The expectation voiced here is that Julia should dress in understated ways so as to not draw attention to her physical presence as well as her femininity. The stated requirement to dress more formally reinforced the normative standards for the senior leadership body. In presenting herself as "casual", Julia was both reminded and reprimanded for not knowing what was required in terms of her bodily presentation.

For both Kathleen and Julia, the logic of performativity [27] and the management of their bodies and appearances reminded them they were out of place and, accordingly, had to be equally restrained and constrained [32]. Both women wanted to be perceived as professional in their dress and appearance. This was important to their own sense of acceptance from their colleagues and legitimacy as a leader. Neither wished to risk being "too casual" and consequently, looking "formal" was deemed to be appropriate. Neither wanted to be in jeopardy of presenting an appearance that would be challenged or objectified. Julia's appearance was policed by her male colleague who admonished her for the colours she had elected to wear. It would seem that "understated colours" such as "black or dark blue" were the norm. Julia's bodily appearance and her use of "too much colour" attracted scrutiny and criticism whereas "black or dark blue" would have reduced her visibility.

Notably, neither woman shifted focus from her body and appearance and each was hyper vigilant about how they dressed, presented themselves, and acted. In both cases, the use of colour in their clothing accentuated their otherness. For example, Kathleen ostensibly drew attention to her femininity though her use of "a little colour" and being "frivolous" rather than "sombre" whereas Julia's use of colour emphasized that she was "too casual" in her approach to her work. Their dress and appearance reminded both women that they were out of place. Wearing a suit may well have been perceived as professional attire, but it neither worked to neutralize their gender nor equate their appearance with the masculine. In effect, women's bodies reinforce their failure to adhere to the norm and normative ideals thereby disturbing and disrupting the masculine prerogative of leadership.

The experiences of Kathleen and Julia echo previous findings by Fotaki [33] that revealed ways in which women, their dress, their bodies, and appearance are silenced. The acceptable and accepted women's body is one that is neutral (in colour and appearance), constrained (in action, behaviour, and speech), contained (conservative clothing), and displays conformity (to gendered stereotypes). It is a body that overtly demonstrates willingness to comply with the masculine social order, and a body that is judged in a way that men are not. It is, in effect, a body that 'looks good'.

Interview data further exposed the policing of women's bodies and appearance by their female colleagues. Not only were women leaders negotiating an inherently masculine institutional culture, they too had to reconcile the subjective ways in which their female colleagues viewed their appearance and behaviours. One academic woman interviewee, Philippa, offered the following comment about a senior women leader with whom she worked:

I'm not sure if Sandra [Dean] really thinks about the impression she creates. Her clothing ... far too tight and revealing. Does she think this impresses the big boys [male senior managers]? She is all over them, can't seem to keep her hands off them when she is talking. It might be her style, but it doesn't look good (Philippa, academic).

What is triggered here is Philippa's condemnation of Sandra's dress, appearance, and overt behaviour. It is Philippa's summation that Sandra does not "look good". Sandra's femininity is over-emphasized as too is her sexualised body which is uncovered through her "tight and revealing" clothing. Described as "tight and revealing", Sandra is not contained within professional attire or constrained in her perceived actions. Philippa's censure is linked with her own expectations of professional dress and demeanour. Sandra's own bodily and physical expressions do not align with a preconceived construction of how women leaders ought to present themselves and act. In this above example, both 'looking good' and 'being good' are inextricably linked in Philippa's judgement of her colleague's dress and actions.

Sandra's body is viewed as inappropriate, unprofessional, and sexualized and her conscious display of her femininity is deemed to be out of place and, consequently, inappropriate. Furthermore, that neither Sandra's dress nor her actions "look good" would further suggest that Philippa is aware of the male gaze and the need for women to 'fit in'. What is observed here is Sandra's body and bodily appearance, and, accordingly, her leadership behaviours and practices are judged negatively ("can't seem to keep her hands off them"). Sandra's overt femininity is judged and censured, and she is 'othered' and sexualized and not an 'acceptable fit'. In Philippa's view, Sandra has neither dressed modestly nor demonstrated self-restraint. Sandra has not displayed an appropriate level of respectable femininity (feminine appearance, feminine traits or behaviour, and traditional gender role ideology) and professional behaviour. Her attempts to dress and behave in order to "impress the big boys" has resulted in a scathing appraisal by her colleague.

Revealed in the above commentary is Philippa's tacit acceptance of her own role as observer, critic, and monitor of Sandra's appearance and behaviour. Philippa appears to be both simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by the "tight and revealing" clothes and the physical contact between Sandra and "the big boys". Here too, Philippa has 'othered' Sandra insofar as she (Sandra) does not conform to either a feminine (that is, respectable) or professional (that is, contained) image and appearance.

Sandra, in similar ways to the earlier examples of Kathleen and Julia, is required to perform for both male and female peers who attempt to modify her appearance to ensure she 'looks the part'. In all three examples, women's bodies are unwanted, out of place, in the space occupied by their male colleagues. An alternative reading might suggest that Sandra's dress was an unambiguous transgression of the masculine symbolic order and an outward sign of her unpreparedness to regulate her body and self [34]. Notably, Kathleen, Julia, and Sandra do not conform to a hegemonic masculinity of leadership and, therefore, experience rebuke, displeasure and censure. Simply put, the three women have failed to 'look good' and 'be good' and have been judged accordingly.

Although there are no specified or specific dress codes for senior leaders, nonetheless, women are judged by their male and female peers. The emphasis is on clothing, appearance, grooming, and actions

that confer respectability and accumulate credibility as a leader. As the examples suggest, women leaders disciplining of their own bodies and appearance might well offer a preliminary perception of their suitability for a leadership role, yet their bodies immediately cast them as ‘other’ to the male context and male construct of the ideal leader and the ideal leadership body. Whether at a conscious or subconscious level, Kathleen, Julia, and Philippa (as observer) exhibited a level of awareness that the female body was out of place and consequently each made a performative decision based on the reaction of their male colleagues. That is, “need[ing] to look like I know what I am doing” (Kathleen), not looking “too casual” (Julia), and impressing “the big boys” (Sandra/Philippa). For Sandra in particular, her performative choices resulted in a level of condemnation from her female colleague.

For women, looking good was also about “look[ing] like I know what I am doing” (Kathleen). As the narratives of both Kathleen and Julia elucidate, they attempted to negotiate the boundaries of being feminine (through the use of “a little colour” [Kathleen]) and the masculinity of leadership (formal suits and “understated colours” [Julia]). Their reconstruction of their bodies and appearance visibly distanced them from their female colleagues, yet their femaleness cast them at a distance from their male peers. Although the use of colour, and the over emphasis by Sandra on her body and appearance, offered the potential to contest and disrupt prevailing norms, it was ultimately their gender that worked to sanction and contain. For those women who neither look the part nor look good, they risk judgement and criticism not just about their bodily performance, but also about their work and achievements.

Complex technologies of control are evident across the narratives presented. In the main, male bodies are invisible because they are normalized and an integral part of the organizational status quo. Women, because of their hyper-visibility, must exert control over their bodies, dress, and behaviour so as not to draw attention to themselves, their ‘otherness’, and their physical difference to the male body and bodiless presence. How women leaders dress for their everyday work, dress for an occasion, or choose to represent themselves through dress is subject to intense scrutiny and criticism. As Connell comments, dressing up for men is a form of emphasized femininity [35]. Those whose bodies are neither White nor male, and whose bodies are not clothed in the dark suits, white shirts and tie; the masculine image and masculinized uniform of leadership and who fail to conform to these gendered dress codes are ultimately at risk. Ultimately, women are faced with a dilemma. As Hughes identifies:

too masculine and she is threatening. Too feminine and she is wimpish. The feminine touch is just a little make-up. Too much and one is the sexual working-class women. None at all and one is of suspect sexuality [36] (p. 538).

Appropriate attire requires women to conform to institutional norms while simultaneously projecting traditional femininity. Increasingly in the performative environment of universities, the presentation of image as well as a level of self-surveillance about clothing, language, and conduct is crucial. Ultimately, survival is about image and performance.

#### 4. Being Good

In the performative university there is a heightened emphasis on excellence, entrepreneurialism, managerialism, and performativity [14]. In this environment, the effective (or ‘good’) leader is one who is flexible, adaptable, self-empowered, and resilient. The symbolic gender order as Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio outline, assigns the work of restructuring, review, and reshaping organizations to the male leader [37]. Importance is placed on leaders and leadership to resolve the complex issues that confront the higher education sector and to provide new directions for universities [38]. The ‘good’ leader is one who is assertive, delivers on organizational objectives, prioritizes educational restructuring, and ensures competitive advantage and distinctive branding in the higher education marketplace. These characteristics are viewed more positively when displayed by males rather than females [39] and any change to this normalized social order is a disruption. In many ways, the ‘rules’ of the leadership

game concentrate on the hegemony of the organizational body; a body that is male and masculine. Good leadership, therefore, involves not only looking good but being good and doing good on behalf of the organization.

Strong and authoritative women face equally incompatible demands. On the one hand, women attempt to downplay their gender by projecting an image that is tolerable to their male peers, yet on the other hand they can face accusations from their female colleagues that they are either 'one of the boys' or 'playing a game'. Mary, an academic, offered the observation of her Dean (Alana) that:

I don't really know Alana [Dean]. I have never even spoken to her. I see her around and we hear about how in control she is. She's pretty successful at what she does, she's pretty focused on results and pretty driven if you ask me. It's probably hard being in a management job like that but I think she has learned how to play the game. She's been around a long time and I think she knows what to say, when to say it and who to say it to. But I think it's also about what her male colleagues want to hear. She can be one of the boys at times. You know, target focused, driven, quite direct. She's pretty good at it (Mary, academic).

Labelled by Mary as being "one of the boys", Alana is deemed to have been co-opted into the masculinist culture. Although Mary sees this as a way to be "pretty successful" she further acknowledges that Alana has adapted her own way of working in order to demonstrate she [Alana] is "in control". That Alana has "been around [for] a long time" is attributed to her ability to "play the game" and not antagonize her male colleagues. In a later interview about her own career aspirations, Alana commented that:

I've been in this place too long to not know the rules, you know, the rules of engagement. It may take longer than I expect but I get things done eventually. I don't get offside with my [male] colleagues. There's no point. They will just wear me down and win in the end. It's about knowing what will work and what will not, playing to your strengths and keeping your cool (Alana, senior leader).

The clear imagery in this passage is that there is a game to be played. That there are rules and that there are presumably 'winners' and 'losers'. 'Playing the game' is about winning, knowing the rules, and not transgressing. In other words, being good. Being good further involves demonstrating a willingness to tolerate unequal power relationships, accepting a level of compromise, and constructing a self that does not antagonize, or "get offside", with male colleagues. There is little or no ambivalence here about what was required; accept the role, speak and act when required, or be deprived of male patronage. In other words, Alana was being a 'good' girl and not rattling any patriarchal cages. Ambitious and successful women such as Alana are highly vulnerable to criticism. Her recognition that she does not wish to "get offside" with her male colleagues could be interpreted as being 'one of the boys'. Inescapably, this then translates to being 'not one of the girls' and women can stand further accused of not 'being good' for and on behalf of their female colleagues. This is evident in the following commentary offered by Julia (senior leader) about two other senior women with whom she had worked:

One [woman leader] was just really out for herself, taking opportunities and doing what she thought would make her look good. The other was completely different and wanted to do what she thought would be best for the institution, wanting to fix things for people so that things could work smoothly and she could look good too (Julia, senior leader).

Illustrated here are Julia's own perceptions of how women work to "look good". The first woman is described as "really out for herself" and focused on the work and activities that "would make her look good". That is, seemingly focused on her individual goals and achievements. The second woman is described as being more willing to achieve what "would be best for the institution" and engaged in a level of institutional housekeeping, "fix[ing] things for people so that things could work smoothly".

It would seem that in neither example were either women described in a positive way. She was either “out for herself” or wanting to “look good”. The unstated expectation here appears to be that women ought to simultaneously play hard, look good, and ‘fix’ or rehabilitate the organization. What remains problematic is that in order to survive, women adapt their ways of working in order to be seen to be more like their male colleagues thereby distancing themselves from their women colleagues.

In their own comments, senior women leaders inextricably linked ‘being good’ and ‘doing good’. As Alison, a senior leader, noted:

I was the only woman in the senior management. It gave me space to show how well I could do the job. I didn’t keep a low profile. My women friends in other universities told me to keep my head down, to not be noticed for the wrong things. I’ve never done wallflower particularly well . . . It all worked for me really. The short story. I got the university noticed in the press for all the right things. There were a few stories, photographs, that sort of thing. We looked good, good for the image. Nothing cheers a VC up more than good press I can tell you (Alison, senior leader).

In this example, Alison had acted like a good girl and this accrued advantage to both the Vice Chancellor and the university in the positive image promoted in the media. Alison had been what Gallop refers to as a good girl feminist [40]. It would seem too that Alison derived a level of pleasure from the performative regime which had motivated her to look good, be good, and account for her good work. To gain entry and acceptance into senior leadership Alison was determined to be noticed and demonstrated her willingness to negotiate the ambivalent domain between the masculine managerial role and a gendered role. That is, she was willing to not “keep her head down” and “[get] the university noticed” to enhance her career. For Alison, this required her to put aside her colleagues’ advice in order to “show how well” she ‘could do the job’ and secure attention from the VC. In addition, her ‘good’ work with the media can further be read as an overt signal that she was aware of the external environment and the importance of “good press” to further solidify the image of the ‘good’ university.

Lillian, another senior leader, reflected on the gendered expectations that she experienced and the challenges these presented:

I think women do things differently, they approach things differently, and I think one of the challenges is that we are so used to the way men do it that we don’t notice it. . . . People expect women to be different. They might expect them to be more caring and consultative, so if you don’t quite hit the mark then they probably label you as autocratic. You are judged differently. People don’t like women making decisions and being in positions of making decisions (Lillian, senior leader).

Projected into the institutional spotlight due to her seniority, Lillian experienced the intensity of the public gaze and expectations that she act in particular ways. She was expected to act differently based on her gender (“caring and consultative”), yet was “judged differently” when she made decisions and was labelled as “autocratic”. As Lillian notes, “we are so used to the way men do it that we don’t notice it”, yet when a women is in the same role or acts in similar ways “you are judged differently”. These tensions are further evident in Jane’s observations of women leaders with whom she had previously worked:

There would be three women leaders I can think of. I suppose what I am struck by with those three women: they were entirely different. So the first one was, I suppose, a more motherly kind of leadership. It was a fairly nice environment; she went for harmony. I wasn’t up close enough to know how good she was at the hard stuff. Then the next one was, well I would say a thinking type, entrepreneurial, overseas a lot of the time, very directive but very competent and straight. I didn’t have any problems with her, [and] think she was fine. She just wasn’t here a lot. The one we have now is a wonderful combination, really, I find her

very impressive. She manages to be both warm and competent. I've had personal dealings with her with the difficulty I've been through recently and I was just really impressed by the way she listened so well. She listened and she was quite strategic. I think she is excellent and people generally around the place tend to think she is excellent (Jane, academic).

In the above example, two women are recognized for either their 'motherly' or 'warm and competent' leadership. The inference here is that women are expected to 'mother' their colleagues through their caring and nurturing work [41]. For the woman described as "entrepreneurial", "directive", and a "thinking type", she was noted as being largely absent and somewhat distant from the staff. Although Jane recognizes these positive attributes, it is the combination of the motherly and present leader that Jane describes as "excellent" precisely because that leader was able to offer emotional support and is highly visible.

What is immediately striking about the typologies presented in the above example is that they mirror the sexual division of labour and gendered parenting roles within a family. That is, women undertake the domestic work and adopt a 'fairly nice' and harmonious role to ensure that the staff (family) is content. For these women, their roles are not to engage in the 'hard stuff', 'be overseas', or be 'competent and straight'. Repeated here are familial patterns of authority in which the man, or the male-like figure, is the head of the household and is occupied with work outside of the immediate environs, and the woman as the institutional mother-figure, keeping the house and its occupants in order and contented [42]. The 'good' woman leader is seduced into thinking that 'good' leadership requires women to be 'more motherly' than leaderly. It is the absent figure, able to be 'entrepreneurial', 'overseas', direct, and 'competent', who is able to participate in the competitive work order in higher education.

The expectation that women will behave 'like a mother rather than a leader' is no less than a paternalistic way to control women by seducing them into believing that being caring and protective is 'good' for the recipient as well as 'good' leadership. In greedy institutions, men rely on women to undertake this 'mothering' work as well as a level of institutional housekeeping, thereby reinforcing paternalistic organizational patterns [43]. As Jane's narratives highlight, the 'good' woman leader is one who is present, occupied by mothering work, and ensuring that institutional housework is completed. Accordingly, 'being good' is linked with gendered ideologies that presuppose that women are naturally better and more suited to caring work.

## 5. Conclusions

Women leaders operate within gendered contexts whereby they are concurrently expected to demonstrate femininities associated with being a woman ('look good') and perform feminine behaviours ('be good') through bodies socially perceived to be female. Men and masculinities are institutionalized as 'natural' whereas women are dangerous as they potentially threaten the stable symbolic order.

To this point, there is limited empirical work exploring how senior women leaders in higher education navigate gendered expectations about their clothing, grooming, and image and performative expectations about their behaviours and actions. Less examined is how women discipline their own bodies and how their bodies are observed by their male and female colleagues. This article is a contribution to the rehabilitation of these gaps in the field. As I have outlined, senior women leaders experience simultaneous pressures to conform to notions of femininity in dress ('looking good') and manage their femininity through their delivery and performance ('being good'). Body and performance are integral to the performance of leadership and senior women carefully traverse expectations that they present themselves in professional and appropriate ways.

Venturing into the habitat of the powerful [44] can mean that strong and authoritative women face accusations that they have become 'one of the boys' [45]. Accusations emerge that women leaders are adept at mimicking successful men, or are 'playing a game'. Although women hold formal and senior positions of power in universities, their feminine bodies and femininity is very much out of

place. Women's leadership bodies are the 'Other' to the male executive body and are, therefore, subject to monitoring and surveillance. Women's bodies carry the weight of expectations.

Either way, women are criticized for adopting hegemonic masculine ways of leading and face a degree of censure for their apparent infiltration of the management, and masculine, world of men. Successful women may well feel, indeed, that they are part of a game, or playing a game, as pressure is increasingly exerted on them to modify their behaviour and become more like men [32]. Perhaps it is as Sharon, a senior leader, suggested:

Maybe it's not about the game but that women actually think it's important to get involved in playing games (Sharon, senior leader).

As numbers of women in senior roles in higher education incrementally increase, opportunity exists for gendered practices to be made more visible. However, it is not a matter of women creating and playing their own game. Women's power rests in their bodily and highly visible presence and capacity to disrupt gendered norms. The challenge is for universities to adapt to their increasingly diverse environments and better reflect diverse ways of knowing and leading.

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