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Two notes on Wiezel et al.: Explaining why people disfavor dominant leaders and exploring overlooked sources of women's dominance and leadership

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4 **Two notes on Wiezel et al.: Explaining why people disfavor dominant leaders and exploring**
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6 **overlooked sources of women’s dominance and leadership**
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9 Wiezal et al. (target article) propose that the “think manager-think male” model and the
10 “alpha male” stereotype can explain why people associate leadership with men and so-called
11 male-typical features (e.g., dominance), but point out that these stereotypic associations do not
12 translate into preferences. Rather, people consistently disfavor dominance-based leadership and
13 instead favor leaders, including women, who enact prestige-based leadership. Here, we raise two
14 additional notes to further the original paper that aim (1) to make sense of the disconnect
15 between leader stereotypes and preferences and (2) to provide an enriched springboard for future
16 examinations of specifically female leadership and power.
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28 First, how people—including prospective followers—prefer their leaders to behave is likely
29 nuanced than past work suggests. Recent adaptationist work on mate and friend preferences has
30 revealed that these preferences are target-specific (Krems et al., 2023; Lukaszewski & Roney,
31 2010). For example, whereas past work emphasized women’s preferences for dominance in male
32 mates, Lukaszewski & Roney (2010) find that women prefer men who are dominant toward
33 other men—but importantly low in dominance directed toward oneself or one’s kin. Likewise,
34 whereas intuition and some research has suggested that people prefer kind and disfavor vicious
35 friends, some people report preferring friends who are more vicious than kind *toward one’s*
36 *rivals* (Krems et al., 2023).
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48 In this same way, people’s preferences for leader traits may be target-specific. For example,
49 people might have certain preferences for leaders engaged in group formation other preferences
50 for leaders engaged in group coordination, group maintenance. These preferences might be
51 further influenced by other features of the task at-hand. For example, people might prefer leaders
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4 who are highly dominant toward competing outgroups, less dominant toward competing
5 outgroups, and non-dominance toward oneself (i.e., followers). Indeed, a target-specific views
6 implies that prospective followers should disfavor dominance in leaders, at least in part because
7 people implicitly substitute the self for the target of behavior when no target is specified, such
8 that asking one how dominant they prefer a leader to be is akin to asking one how dominant they
9 prefer that leader be *over oneself*. If so, people might indeed *expect* leaders to be dominant (e.g.,
10 to achieve sought-after positions or resources) but also *disfavor* leaders who show dominance,
11 particularly insofar as leaders people expect those leaders to dominate them.
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24 Second, we raise the question of what features lead people—and particularly women—to be
25 granted leadership power. To put related concepts of leadership, power, dominance, and status
26 into adaptationist terms, we ask: What features provide women the ability to inflict costs and
27 generate/withhold benefits from others, ultimately rendering some women better able to direct
28 and coordinate others' behavior? We focus on this question because it remains relatively
29 underexplored in part because the domains of leadership often emphasized are those in politics,
30 business, and intergroup conflict or because studies of leadership in ethnographic work have
31 often focused on men's roles (but see, e.g., Garfield et al., 2020).
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43 Women's beauty is often a first focus, ostensibly due to women's physical beauty as a cue of
44 reproductive potential. Specifically for men, women's reproductive potential is a valuable
45 resource, and it can thus render women able to influence men's behavior. For a famous example,
46 the women in the ancient Greek play *Lysistrata* band together in denying sex to the men as
47 means to force those men to negotiate for peace. But women also frequently interact *with other*
48 *women*. At least in Western school and workplaces—and fictional works depicting these
49 spheres—women leaders of other women, sometimes called Queen Bees, are also highly
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4 attractive and visible, if not necessarily well-liked (e.g., Vaillancourt & Krems, 2018). What
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6 benefits, then, might attractive or popular women confer (or withhold) from other women, and
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8 what costs are such women better able to inflict? One possibility is that such women are more
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10 central the social group, perhaps rendering them more effective at bolstering allies' and
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12 denigrating rivals' reputations via informational warfare.
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15 Work on men's leadership and dominance has sometimes focused on their physical
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17 formidability, a feature that can allow strong men to inflict significant costs on others and thus
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19 influence others in strong men's favor. Women's ability to inflict physical costs on others is often
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21 overlooked—understandably so, given women's relatively avoidance of physical violence. Yet
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23 one source of women's power might be in their coalitional formidability (Yanca & Low, 2004).
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25 That is, coalitional formidability—having numerous and/or physically strong supporters—is not
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27 necessarily unique to men. Consider the following admittedly stereotypic examples: In the
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29 playground line to get on the slide, a boy cut in front of the girl with two strong teenage brothers
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31 watching over her or the girl on her own. A teacher can give the lead role in the school play to
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33 the girl whose parents are considering donating funds for a school library or the girl on financial
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35 aid. The wives accompanying their husbands on the company trip defer to the wishes to the
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37 CEO's wife for where to go to dinner. Indeed, just as a woman whose physically strong male kin
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39 might influence how people calculate her ability to generate/withhold benefits and inflict costs
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41 on others, a woman whose family is highly esteemed in the community may be deemed better
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43 able to generate (or withhold) social and material benefits and may be deemed better able to
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45 inflict costs. Of course, women can themselves become physically strong and esteemed, but failing
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47 to recognize the ways that women can wield power via their relationships—even for women who
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49 themselves are not physically strong or esteemed—might mean that we fail to recognize true
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4 sources of power that some women effectively leverage to create, coordinate, and maintain
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6 groups.
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10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 **References** 20

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