

## **Women Power and Leadership Research Project**

### **Introduction**

The theme of women power seems to benefit from little attention in the analyses and researches on gender diversity, more focused on others topics of organizational behavior and on corporate policies.

This lack of attention reflects – at least partially – a critical issue for women: power is often “kept at a distance” from women, often as a result of their own complicity and explicit choice.

The basic questions regarding women leaders therefore remain un-investigated, or investigated only superficially in the context of other cognitive and conceptual themes, in the existing researches on the topic.

In this research project, we therefore aim at analyzing the relationship between women and power (in the professional arena) in an open and methodological way, in order to understand if a positive female leadership can be developed and in which circumstances.

### **Research objectives**

As a general objective we aim at:

*“analyzing the base elements and the process phases which determine women to assume powerful positions in organizations, comparing several diverse countries. In particular the socio-cultural background, the enabling organizational contexts and the relationship to the predominant specific culture will be investigated“*

The analytical objectives are:

1. the precedents of leadership, psychological origin:
  - care from parents and basic educators
  - education investments
  - discovery of passion for one’s own professional project;
2. the contexts:
  - cultural affiliation
  - organizational cultures in which one has worked;
3. the choices:
  - the self-exclusion theme
  - managing the network
  - encounters: mentors, sponsors;
4. the features of leadership:
  - role models
  - managing subordinates
  - “socialized” power of women: reality or hypocrisy?
  - Managing decisional processes
  - Managing conflicts;

# *Wise Growth*

## **Research methodology**

We've identified a qualitative research methodology, using autobiographical narratives, by means of in-depth personal interviews, according to a common guide-line.

We'll conduct interviews with women recognized as leaders, in relevant organizational positions, who manage people and economical resources, in context differing both from an organizational point of view (multi-national corporations, small/medium enterprises, public entities, political parties etc.) and from a cultural perspective (European Union – Italy, Austria, Czech Republic – USA and China).

The interviews will be conducted and transcribed by the researchers themselves. On the basis of the collected data, a content analysis will be performed with a report as a final result.

Milan, Italy, May 2009