

Gender equality in leadership and management positions



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Gender and Leadership

There is a need for gender equality in leadership and management positions. Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles despite recent social movements such as the “Me Too” movement, founded by Tarana Burke, which seek to amplify women’s voices. Writers in popular press have shown larger, and hopefully an enduring, interest in the topic of gender and leadership. Academic writing on this topic first described stark and consequential differences between men and women. These differences would often result in the conclusion that women are inferior to men because they lack skills and traits necessary for managerial success. More currently there is academic writing that suggests that alleges women are superior in leadership positions. Despite that men’s voices continue to dominate the shaping of discourse and practices of leadership and have for a long time. The predominance of male researchers and an academic assumption of gender equality left this topic under researched for a long time. Increased numbers of women in leadership in academics have fueled a scholarly interest in the study of female leaders.

I want to explore evidence related to the issues of gender, intersectional and leadership by examining style and effectiveness differences between men and women. I will discuss the gender gap in leadership and prominent explanations for it. I also want to explore the perceptions of men and women leaders; perceptions from subordinates and their own perspectives on their personal management and leadership style. And finally I want to address how to promote women in leadership. Centering the voices of women and other underrepresented populations is essential to creating a more inclusive

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world. People who have the ability to give someone a leadership role should seek women's voices.

As more women occupy positions of management and leadership there have been questions and research into and about whether or not there are variances in leadership style and effectiveness. The press has increasingly asserted that there are indeed gendered differences in leadership styles and that women's styles may actually be more suited to contemporary society. Others say that leadership has little to nothing to do with leadership style and effectiveness. In fact, "The only robust gender difference found across settings was that women led in a more democratic, or participative, manner than men." and "[...] women's styles tend to be more transformational than men's, and women tend to engage in more contingent reward behaviors than men." "Men were more likely to use laissez-faire leadership than women." These differences were found to be more apparent in recent studies than in older studies. (van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

The relative effectiveness of male and female leaders has been assessed a number of times. Men and women were found equally as effective leaders overall by a meta-analysis. This meta-analysis found gender differences in the way that men and women were more effective in leadership or management positions that were congruent to their perceived gender role. Women were less effective in "masculinized" leadership, i. e. military positions, and were more effective in "feminized" leadership roles, i. e. education and social services. Women were also rated less effective than men in situations in which the majority of the subordinates were men. (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995).

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Research shows small differences in leadership style and effectiveness between men and women. Women experience some barriers and disadvantages in effectiveness in “masculine” roles. Women experience some advantages in “feminine” leadership roles. Women’s leadership behaviors and styles are more aligned with contemporary views of effective leadership. This congruence is because women in leadership positions are more likely to exhibit democratic or participative styles and more likely to use transformational leadership styles and contingent reward.

Although the issue of female leadership has improved, there are still large strides that need to be taken. Despite the increase in women earning degrees they are still underrepresented in the upper echelons of American business and, government and politics. Women make up less than three percent of the Fortune 500 CEOs and hold only ninety of the five-hundred and thirty-five seats in the U. S. Congress, and women of color occupy only twenty four seats. Women represent only six percent of military officers at the levels of brigadier general and rear admiral or higher. (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010) (Center for American Women and Politics, 2011) (U. S. Department of Defense, 2008).

The invisible barrier called “the glass ceiling” is now more appropriately called a “leadership labyrinth”, as it can and has been navigated by women in the past and is being navigated right now. “The leadership gap is a global phenomenon whereby women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-level and lower-authority leadership positions than men.” (Northouse, Leadership, p 354). One hypothesis for the labyrinth or gap is that women invest less in the education. That is absolutely not true, Women earn roughly <https://assignbuster.com/gender-equality-in-leadership-and-management-positions/>

fifty percent of all undergraduate degrees and law degrees (American Bar Association, 2011).

Women do have slightly less experience and work continuity, perhaps driven largely by how much child rearing effort and domestic and time is put in by women disproportionate to men. These domestic and child rearing duties add more pressure onto women who are trying to climb the leadership ladder and navigating the leadership labyrinth. Women who take advantage of flexibility programs and leaves of absence are often marginalized, and reentry into roles of leadership is often difficult. There is insufficient support for notions that women receive less education than men, that they quit more often than men do, or that they opt out of positions of leadership to choose a parental life track. There is, however, support for the notion that women have less work experience and more career interruptions than men, largely because women tend to assume more child rearing and domestic responsibility. Women receive less formal training and fewer opportunities for growth at work than men, which is likely related to preconceived notions and prejudice against women in leadership and management positions.

An article entitled "En-gendering Notions of Leadership for Sustainability" by J. Marshall first explores the dimensions of "corporate social responsibility" and illustrates how men's voices dominate discourses and practices. Men who have access to a platform and power to advocate change for sustainability should do so, but in way way that does not overpower a woman's voice and perspective. Allowing men to talk over women about women's issues just makes the problem worse. The article reviews five novels by women authors addressing environmental issues so as to analyze <https://assignbuster.com/gender-equality-in-leadership-and-management-positions/>

and hear more women's voices and more images associating gender, leadership and sustainability. The exploration alters the universe of sense-making, calling attention first to broader society rather than to scoping it down to organizations as the base for building ideas of sustainability. " Themes of social justice, equality, everyday practice, ways of knowing, embodiment and the crafts of fitting in (to nature and society) move to the foreground" using this approach . These provide beginnings for an alternate gendered view of leadership for sustainability.

Women's participation in medicine and the need for gender equality in healthcare are increasingly recognised, yet there needs to be more attention paid to management positions in large publicly funded academic health centres. This study described in the article " Closing the Gender Leadership Gap: A Multi-Centre Cross-Country Comparison of Women in Management and Leadership in Academic Health Centres in the European Union" by J. Marshall describes such a need, taking cases of four large European centers in Germany, Sweden, Austria, and United Kingdom.

The percentage of female medical students and doctors in all four aforementioned countries is now well within a forty–sixty percent gender balance zone. Women are less well represented among specialists and remain unquestioningly under-represented among leading doctors and full-time professors. A gender leadership gap remains but all four centers are making progress in closing the gendered leadership gap on top-level decision-making levels. " The level of achieved gender balance varies significantly between the centers and largely mirrors country-specific welfare state models, with more equal gender relations in Sweden than in the other <https://assignbuster.com/gender-equality-in-leadership-and-management-positions/>

countries.” There are trends across countries and centres which are : gender inequity is stronger within academic environments than within hospital environments and stronger in mid-management than at the top level. These novel findings expose cracks in the ‘ glass ceiling’ in reference top-level management and also expose barriers for women shift to mid-level management and leadership positions, and remain these barriers remain strong in academic environments. The uneven shifts in the leadership gap are incredibly relevant and have many policy implications. If one exclusively focuses on closing the gender barrier in top-level decision making bodies, that may not effectively promotes or work towards the larger goal of gender equality. Academic, health and academic health centers need to pay greater attention to gender equality as an issue of organizational performance and effective, emotionally intelligent leadership at all levels of management, with special attention to academic environments and young management structures. Developing comprehensive gender-aware health workforce systems as well as intersectionality and critically comparing progress across academic health centers in Europe will help to identify the gender gaps in leadership and utilize health and human resources more effectively and efficiently.

Throughout the interviews conducted for the study detailed in the article “ Achieving Gender Equity for Women Leaders in Community Colleges Through Better Communication” written by A. Edwards, women spoke about how communication is of the utmost importance to their leadership. It is not shocking that effective communication remains a large contributing factor to success for women leaders and that effective communication contributes to

their increased use of collaboration, transformational leadership and contingent reward. Women in leadership positions also consistently work to combat negative stereotypes, perception and preconceived notions about women in leadership and in the academic workplace. This study concludes that women leaders self-describe as “ successful leaders” when they focus on interpersonal relationships and creating strong, supportive teams of people who work towards a shared goal. Despite progress and it not being to the extent it has been in the past, this study also revealed that gender continues to affect women in leadership positions because of stereotypes, perception and preconceived notions imposed upon women. Women still deal with disparity in treatment exclusion but the women in this study perceive on a smaller scale relative to the past. Issues like the pay gap, domestic and or child rearing responsibilities, and hiring processes still remain barriers that women leaders must overcome on a regular basis. This study highlighted the role of communication for women leaders. Leaders must work to understand the subjective nature of perception and begin to look at their team, their work, and their own behaviors with an awareness of their standpoint as people coming from varying backgrounds with their own sets of bias and experience. Women especially need to be introspective, self-aware and continue to reflect on their experiences as women in an attempt to understand the role that gender plays in their communication patterns and on their leadership styles and behaviors. Women voiced their perspective in “ Achieving Gender Equity for Women Leaders in Community Colleges Through Better Communication” on the “ role of gendered communication in higher education leadership and offered recommendations on how to level the playing field to be more inclusive of women leaders”
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(Achieving Gender Equity for Women Leaders in Community Colleges, Edwards, p 33).

As numbers of women in leadership increase, as do numbers of women in military leadership positions. Increasing numbers of woman veterans means more women using Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) services has exposed the need for equitable and high-quality care and support for women. The article titled “ Improving Trends in Gender Disparities in the Department of Veterans Affairs: 2008–2013” by Whitehead, Czarnogorski, Wright, Hayes, & Haskell explores that. The VA evaluated performance measure data by gender since 2006. The VA launched a five-year women’s health redesign in 2008, and, in 2011, gender-gap improvement was included on leadership performance plans. They examined data from VA Office of Analytics and Business Intelligence quarterly gender reports and looked for trends in gender related performance measures from 2008 to 2013. Through the various means, the, VA has seen a decrease in gender inequities on most Health Effectiveness Data and Information Set performance measures. This study drew attention to the gender disparities in clinical performance. Continued attention to provision of equitable, high-quality health care to women veterans remains crucial so as to better support women in military and military related leadership positions.

Research shows that gender inequality is continues to be a major issue in academic science, yet academic societies may serve as underappreciated yet effective avenues for the promotion of female leadership. Society membership is often self-selective and board positions are elected thus these characteristics, among others, may create an environment useful to <https://assignbuster.com/gender-equality-in-leadership-and-management-positions/>

gender equality. They therefore explore this potential in an article titled “Diversity begets diversity: A global perspective on gender equality in scientific society leadership” by Potvin, Burdfield-Steel, Potvin, & Heap using an information-theoretic approach to quantify gender equality in globally located zoology society boards. They compare and contrast alternative models to analyze how society characteristics correlate with proportions of women leaders, and find that “ a cultural model, including society age, size of board and whether or not a society had an outward commitment or statement of equality, was the most informative predictor for the gender ratio of society boards and leadership positions.”(Diversity begets diversity: A global perspective on gender equality in scientific society leadership, Potvin, Burdfield-Steel, Potvin, & Heap, p 7). Women were more highly represented in society leadership than in institutional academic leadership, this representation was still far short of equal. It was that of society culture, more specifically, societies with smaller boards have larger female representation on the board overall are more likely to elect female leaders, as the most informative and effective for describing female representation on boards of global zoological societies. The results show “ Societies with a high proportion of female board members, societies with women in leadership roles and societies with a statement of gender equality all tend to be the same societies: these variables are good indicators of each other.” (Diversity begets diversity: A global perspective on gender equality in scientific society leadership, Potvin, Burdfield-Steel, Potvin, & Heap, p 8).

The Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church’s, or DRC’s, regulations state that the organizational ministry of the DRC should be organized

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according to the directives given in 1 Timothy 3. The “overseer” is admonished to, amidst others, manage his “household” well and keep his children submissive in order to take care of and honor God’s church. In the article “Overseeing the Womb: A Rhetorical Investigation of Masculinities and Ἐπίσκοπος in 1 Timothy 3.” author H. Visser explores how these normative and essentialist interpretations of the Bible in regulations and articles in official church documents is highly problematic, with special reference to gender, leadership and power ideals related to the term and role of “overseer” will be explored with the modern day ecclesial contexts in mind. The kind of life-denying interpretations of the Bible in church structuring that make simplistic use of, for example, this specific section of the book of Timothy. Timothy has led to dire problems in ecclesial contexts, especially for women in particular. The “overseer” worked in a Greek and or Roman household, charmingly referred to as “womb”, as a protector. He sustained and gave life to his incredibly masculine and dominating nature. Today’s churches more and more so want to move away from appointments to leadership positions based on and biased towards the traditional, conventionalist patterns, stereotypes, preconceived notions and perceptions based around gender, leadership and power position that reflect an outdated era, ways of thinking, culture, traditions and values. Alas some traditional, potentially harmful and conventional appeals to 1 Tim 3 have resulted in predominantly men occupying leadership positions in the church. This is not just because of the use of explicitly gendered language in the texts, but also because of the fact that these texts typically privilege the masculine. The role of the church as a social and religious institution as well as the persistent influence of related major biblical themes within broader society

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should not be underestimated. The male-dominated South African society and its accessory life-threatening praxis exemplify this. The Christian church plays a big role in the lives of many South Africans. Readings of the Bible which do not acknowledge the gap between ancient and modern contexts, this leads many Christians to treat the content in the Bible as being above or without any historical context. The importance of accountable and responsible historical contextualisation of biblical content created the core of the exploration. The use of scripture in churches is, obviously, to be expected and should be respected, but the unwillingness of churches and their ministries' leadership to engage in an accountable and responsible way with biblical text is obstructive to interpretation that can lead to life-enhancing, transformational and redeeming practices.

In an article called " Gender leadership style: & the self-perceptions of secondary headteachers" by M. Coleman, when faced with choices of adjectives that were either stereotypically masculine or feminine, headteachers, both male and female, chose a range of adjectives to self-evaluate that were predominantly " feminine" but also included some " masculine" ones. The predominant model of management that both sexes appear to identify is androgynous, as in leaning neither masculine or feminine, but it does favour the " feminine". The survey shows that the perceptions of men and women head teachers about their own management and leadership style are similar and that their evaluation of their own style is more likely to be ' feminine' than masculine. This raises a number of issues. The idea that managerial roles are " masculine" is still prevalent and the adoption of ' feminine' and approved styles of management by men, as well

as women, is likely to further perpetuate male dominance of leadership roles. Leaders in education and in the public sector generally are more likely to be 'people oriented' compared to leaders and managers in the private sector, but the evidence to support this claim is inconclusive. The relationship between age, gender and leadership style is also unclear. The single most popular adjective was "participative". This survey indicated that the majority of both men and women headteachers are aspiring to a style of leadership that is collaborative, caring and people-oriented and that hyper-masculine gender stereotypes that are associated with men as leaders is not the way that most men actually define themselves. In a culture that tends to anticipate men are managers, the social experience of being a headteacher is felt very differently by women and men and this must impact on the professional identity and the style of both men and women.

In conclusion, One rather apparent explanation for leadership gaps is prejudice. I've heard the saying "women take care, men take charge". People assign variance to groups without any proof or validation. Gender stereotypes are easily and automatically activated in a person's brain. They often lead to biased judgements. Gender stereotypes are particularly harmful to women in leadership positions. This prejudice is proven through negative attitude toward female versus male leaders. The higher up you go, the less accountable people are for choosing elite leaders. Stereotype expectations affect others perceptions and ratings of leaders as well as directly affecting the women themselves. Substantial empirical evidence shows that gender stereotypes can greatly alter the perception of women in leadership and directly affect women leaders or aspiring women leaders.

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Women are more easily influenced than men because people tend to form more agreeable interpersonal relationships with women than men. Women are more likely to display a transformational style of leadership than men, which is more associated with “ femininity”, but that is now becoming more accepted. Despite transformational being a more current popular form of leadership style, people are still shown to prefer male leaders to female leaders. Female leaders are evaluated more harshly than male leaders.

I chose this topic because it is of immense value for organizations to focus on gender disparity improvement. It is a global, diverse and accessible time for leadership. Now more than ever, leaders need to seek new perspectives, experiences and values. Leaders should seek this because it allows leaders to learn and empathize in ways that they might not have ever imagined. Learning empathy is important for leaders because this allows them to: be more self-aware, handle stress more effectively, be more aware of what motivates subordinates, communicate and listen more effectively, better manage conflict, and even improve their ability to work in teams. The aforementioned qualities and abilities make for a better leader, thus women’s perspectives in reference to leadership is vital to create better leaders for the world.

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