



Gender and Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we document women's underrepresentation as leaders and examine various theoretical explanations for women's leadership disadvantage. First, we explore whether the gender gap in leadership can be explained by inherent differences between men and women that endow men with natural leadership ability. We then consider whether women's disadvantage lies in their greater domestic responsibilities and lesser investments in human capital in the form of paid work experience and education. We also assess whether women's advancement is obstructed by gender stereotypes and discrimination, which may result in resistance to women's influence and authority. Next, we examine research comparing the leadership styles of men and women to determine whether such differences may provide either gender with advantages or disadvantages as leaders, and thus potentially contribute to women's lack of access to leadership. Finally, this chapter evaluates the extent to which organizational structure and culture make it difficult for women to rise into higher-level leadership positions.

In our chapter, we present many studies comparing the situations, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of men and women. Studies that reveal gender differences do not demonstrate dichotomous effects with no overlap of men and women, but rather average overall differences that occur across a variety of situational, cultural, and individual variables. Many differences and similarities have been established meta-analytically by taking into account the results of all available studies. These effects are often moderated by other variables, such as ethnicity, religion, country, education, organizational setting, and other factors. In these several respects, effects associated

with gender resemble the effects associated with other variables studied by social scientists (e.g., personality traits, attitudes, socioeconomic status, and race).

We begin by examining women's current status as leaders. To what extent have women gained access to leadership and how has their advancement remained blocked?

THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN LEADERS

There is little doubt that the status of women has improved. Women have steadily increased their numbers in the paid labor force. In the United States, women made up only 39% of the paid workforce in 1973, but 47% by 2009 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b, Table 2). Women's incomes have also risen: in 2009, for full-time US workers, women earned 80 cents for every dollar that men earned – up from only 62 cents in 1979 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a). Across all organizations in the United States, women constitute 51% of those in professional and managerial positions, 37% of managers, and 25% of chief executives (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b, Table 11).

Women's advancement is also apparent in politics and public sector jobs. In 2010 in the United States, women hold 17% of the Senate seats, 17% of the seats in the House, 12% of the governorships, and 23% of state executive offices (Center for American Women and Politics, 2010a). There are record numbers of women in state legislatures (Center for American Woman and Politics, 2010b) as well as in the US Congress (Center for American Woman and Politics, 2010c). Similarly, in the

highest non-elective positions of the federal government, the Senior Executive Service, the percentage of women has risen from 11% in 1990 (US Office of Personnel Management, 1997) to 28% in 2007 (US Office of Personnel Management, 2007).

Although women have made substantial gains, they still have not achieved parity with men. Women are particularly underrepresented at higher levels of leadership, and the percentage of female executives declines with increasing organizational rank (Helfat, Harris, & Wolfson, 2006). In the *Fortune* 500, women make up 16% of corporate officers and 15% of corporate boards (Catalyst, 2010d) in the *FP500*, the 500 largest Canadian corporations, women are 17% of corporate officers and 14% of boards of directors (Catalyst, 2010c). At the very top, there are only 13 companies with female CEOs in the *Fortune* 500 (Catalyst, 2010b), and 19 in the *FP500* (Catalyst, 2010a). Similarly, in Europe, women hold 11% of the positions in the highest decision-making bodies of the largest corporations (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, & Baumgarten, 2007) and only 12 women are CEOs in the *Global Fortune* 500 (*Fortune*, 2010). In contrast to these statistics for large corporations, women are particularly well-represented as leaders in US philanthropic organizations and foundations, where women hold 55% of chief executive and chief giving officer positions (Council on Foundations, 2009).

Despite much progress, women clearly remain poorly represented in many high-level leadership positions. But even when women attain positions with high status, they still remain disadvantaged relative to men. The positions that women hold typically confer less authority than those of men when controlling for job status, education, and experience (Smith, 2002). In addition, women have less access to visible developmental assignments with high-level responsibilities – the types of assignments that are likely to lead to greater authority and future advancement (Lyness & Thompson, 2000; Ohlott, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1994). Thus, although women's status has improved, their progress remains impeded, and they continue to lack the authority of men. Why is this so?

THE DEBATE ABOUT NATURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Evolutionary psychology and male dominance

One possible explanation for the absence of women at high levels of leadership comes from

evolutionary psychologists – that women lack the inherent characteristics needed to be effective leaders. Evolutionary psychologists claim that fundamental differences in the traits of men and women evolved through genetically mediated adaptation to primeval conditions, in particular, through sexual selection mechanisms of male competition and female choice (e.g., Buss & Kenrick, 1998).

According to evolutionary psychology, women are naturally predisposed to depend on men to provide resources that insure women's survival and the survival of their children, whereas men, to attract women, are naturally predisposed to compete with other men for these resources (e.g., Buss & Kenrick, 1998; Geary, 1998). If true, women should have provided little subsistence in nonindustrialized cultures. However, although men on average contributed more food than women did in most nonindustrialized societies, women made substantial contributions to subsistence. For example, in one examination of a broad sample of nonindustrialized societies, women contributed an average of 44% of the food (Aronoff & Crano, 1975). In addition, women contributed most of the food in foraging societies that were dependent primarily on gathering plants for subsistence rather than hunting and fishing (Ember, 1978).

If the evolutionary argument is correct, the pattern of male dominance should be universal or nearly universal, and especially characteristic of nonindustrialized societies, which would be closer than industrialized societies to the conditions under which humans evolved. Yet, anthropological evidence indicates that male dominance is far from universal and actually less characteristic of foraging and pastoral cultures than of industrialized ones, exactly the opposite of what evolutionary psychology would predict (Wood & Eagly, 2002). Instead, male dominance developed along with particular economic conditions, such as warfare and intensive agriculture (Harris, 1993), and is particularly characteristic of agricultural and industrialized societies where men hold roles as the primary resource providers for their families (Wood & Eagly, 2002). The roles created by these new economies involved strength-intensive physical labor and often travel away from home, demands that were difficult to combine with gestation, breast feeding, and child rearing. Thus, these roles were more easily filled by men.

As gender hierarchies formed in these advancing economies, men increasingly occupied the roles that provided access to wealth and power, confining women to domestic roles involving childcare and activities carried out in and near the homestead such as the preparation of food and garments. Thus, male dominance did not derive from an inherent dependency of women on men but emerged along with particular economic and

social conditions that favored the assignment to men of roles that conferred power, authority, and access to resources.

Gender and personality: the leadership traits of men and women

Even if men are not inherently dominant, they may still tend to possess different traits than women under contemporary conditions, and such differences could affect men's and women's suitability for leadership. Indeed, gender stereotypes suggest that men would show greater aggressiveness, assertiveness, dominance, and competitiveness. In fact, meta-analyses have found that men are on average more physically and verbally aggressive than women, especially for physical aggression, although the overall male–female differences were small to moderate in size (Archer, 2004; Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Another meta-analysis revealed greater male aggression in the workplace, both toward other employees and the organization as a whole (Hershcovis et al., 2007).

Similar results have been reported for assertiveness and dominance. Based on personality scales and other self-report measures, men score higher in overall assertiveness than women do (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Feingold, 1994). Moreover, women's assertive behavior is qualitatively different than men's. Researchers studying assertiveness distinguish *negative assertion*, which involves threat, aggression, hostility or control of others, from *positive assertion*, which balances self-expression with respect for the rights of others (Wilson & Gallois, 1993). On average, men more often engage in negative assertion, whereas women engage in greater positive assertion (Carli, 2001a).

Research findings on gender differences in competition have been more equivocal. In a meta-analysis of studies comparing the behavior of men and women in bargaining and mixed-motive games, such as the prisoner's dilemma, only a very small gender effect was revealed (Walters, Stuhlmacher, & Meyer, 1998). Overall, men competed slightly more often than women did.

The evidence reviewed thus far shows greater aggression, assertiveness, dominance, and, to a very slight degree, competitiveness among men, but it is unclear whether this set of characteristics contributes to effective leadership. Men's greater physical aggression is unlikely to enhance their ability to lead, except perhaps in criminal gangs or contact sports. Verbal aggression, dominance, and negative assertion may be useful in certain contexts, but in general appear to provide little benefit to leaders (see Van Vugt, 2006). On the contrary, successful leadership is now construed as requiring

the ability to form good relationships with others, work in diverse teams, and influence and motivate others to make valuable and creative contributions to their organizations (e.g., Bass, 1998).

Although aggression and dominance do not generally benefit leaders, there are personality characteristics that do contribute to effective leadership. General intelligence correlates a small to moderate degree with emerging as a leader and with leadership effectiveness (Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004). Of the *Big Five* personality traits, extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness show small to moderate associations with leader emergence, and along with agreeableness, with performing effectively as a leader; neuroticism is associated with lower amounts of leader emergence and effectiveness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Based on a multiple regression analysis, the strongest Big Five predictor of leadership overall is extraversion, followed by conscientiousness and openness, with neuroticism and agreeableness of least importance (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Given the predominance of men among leaders, one might expect men more than women to possess the traits most strongly linked to leadership. But they do not. No gender differences exist for general intelligence (Halpern & LaMay, 2000) and neither gender has a clear overall advantage in the Big Five traits associated with leadership. For example, a large cross-cultural study revealed somewhat higher levels of extraversion among women and moderately higher levels of agreeableness and neuroticism among women for both US and non-US samples (Costa et al., 2001). For conscientiousness and openness, the study revealed no overall gender differences in the United States, but in other countries slightly higher levels for women. So the biggest gender differences occurred for agreeableness and neuroticism, with one trait favoring women and one trait favoring men, but neither having much relevance to leadership. And although women showed more extraversion, when the study assessed the various components of extraversion, findings were mixed: women surpassed men in warmth, positive emotions, gregariousness, and activity, but men surpassed women in assertiveness and excitement seeking. Overall then, neither gender has a leadership advantage in personality.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN HUMAN CAPITAL AND DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Childcare and housework

If the scarcity of women in high-level leadership roles cannot be attributed to personality differences

between women and men, perhaps it may be due to women's greater domestic duties, particularly childcare and housework. According to the *human capital theory* of economics, women's balancing of work and family contributes to the gender gap in pay and advancement because women bring less human capital to their jobs and show on-the-job behavior that is less optimal than that of men in terms of hours of work, effort, or effectiveness (see Kunze, 2008). For example, noted economist Gary Becker (1985) attributed the gender gap in wages, particularly for married men and women, to women's greater effort in childcare and housework and their lesser effort in paid work. Thus, this approach credits men's advantages in the workplace to their greater human capital.

In fact, national time diary studies reveal that although men do more housework and women less housework than in the past (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007; Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006), women still spend more time on household chores than men do (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010, Table 1). Men have also become increasingly involved in child-rearing over time, investing more time in interactions with their children than in the past, but so have women (Bianchi et al., 2006; Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002). Indeed, even with smaller families, both men and women spent more time interacting with children now than in 1965 (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007; Bianchi et al., 2006), a phenomenon known as intensive parenting (Hays, 1996).

Education, preferences for advancement, and career commitment

Certainly, women have the bulk of domestic responsibilities. But do such responsibilities interfere with women's education, commitment to paid work, and desire for advancement? With regard to education, the answer is no. On the contrary, women are becoming better educated than men. In 2007–2008 in the United States, women received 57% of bachelor's degrees, 61% of master's degrees, and 50% of PhDs and first professional degrees (US National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, Table 275). And this is not a recent phenomenon; women surpassed men in the number of bachelor's and master's degrees beginning in the early 1980s (US National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, Table 268). Women typically have an educational advantage in other industrialized countries, as well, where more women than men are enrolled in post-secondary education (United Nations Development Programme, 2009).

Even though women are better educated than men, they do earn fewer degrees than men do in many technical and scientific fields (US National Center for Education Statistics, 2009) and, unsurprisingly, work in different occupations. Women continue to be clustered disproportionately in administrative support, clerical, and service jobs, and in traditionally feminine professions such as nursing and elementary school teaching (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b, Table 11) – jobs that are lower paying (Boraas & Rodgers, 2003; England, 2005). But is it the case that women choose jobs that provide less opportunity for leadership and advancement?

In a large meta-analysis of career preferences, very small to small gender differences were found: on average, men and boys expressed a greater desire for work that provided opportunities for high earnings, promotion, leadership, autonomy, and leisure, and women and girls expressed a greater desire for work that provided opportunities to work with and help others, be creative, grow and develop, and feel a sense of accomplishment (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000). Still, because the desire for advancement is higher among employees who work in positions with built-in promotion procedures and greater opportunities for promotion (Cassirer & Reskin, 2000), the test of the gender differences in career preferences should ideally control for job type. And in fact, the meta-analysis revealed that among adult men and women in similar occupations, there were no gender differences in the desire for leadership, promotions, or autonomy, and women actually expressed a greater desire for high earnings than men did (Konrad et al., 2000). Furthermore, in recent studies, having more family responsibilities did not dampen women's desire for advancement (Corrigan & Konrad, 2006; Families and Work Institute, 2005).

Given the similarity in male and female preferences for job attributes, it is not surprising that women and men differ little in their psychological commitment to their careers. In the United States, the majority of both women and men would prefer to have a job rather than stay home (Saad, 2007). In addition, a meta-analytic review found no gender differences in employees' commitment to their organizations (Aven, Parker, & McEvoy, 1993). And a majority of both men and women report greater commitment to family than to career (Families and Work Institute, 2005). Further evidence of women's career commitment comes from a representative US study of paid workers in which women reported putting in more effort at their jobs than men reported (Bielby & Bielby, 1988). Nevertheless, with some exceptions (e.g., Eddleston, Veiga, and Powell, 2006), most research reveals that women on average report a greater

commitment to family than men do (e.g., Families and Work Institute, 2005). In addition, more women than men – 45% versus 29% – report preferring to stay home than have a job (Saad, 2007).

Breaks from employment, job flexibility, and part-time jobs

Women's leadership opportunities do not appear blocked because of poor education, preferences for careers that lack potential for advancement or lack of commitment to careers, so these variables cannot be responsible for the gender gap in leadership. However, women's greater commitment to family suggests that they may make more accommodations in their careers to fulfill family obligations. Being married and caring for young children increases women's workload and reduces their leisure, but has little effect on men's (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). And having children or a spouse is associated with a reduction of paid work hours for women, but an increase in men's paid work hours (Corrigan & Konrad, 2006). Thus, marriage and parenthood increase men's paid work and women's unpaid domestic work. And it is women more than men who compromise career for family.

One way women may accommodate increased family responsibilities is to quit their jobs. Although a meta-analysis of 42 studies across a variety of organizational settings (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000) and a study of over 25,000 managers (Lyness & Judiesch, 2001) revealed that men quit slightly more often than women do, women more often quit for family reasons than men do (Lyness & Judiesch, 2001), even highly qualified women compared with similarly qualified men (Bertrand, Goldin & Katz, 2009). Still, a national study found that only a minority of women with full-time jobs quit when they had a child (Klerman & Leibowitz, 1999).

Women may also seek flexible employment arrangements to help balance career and family. In a nationally representative poll, women reported a greater desire for job flexibility than men did (Roper Starch Worldwide, 1995). But, compared with male-dominated occupations, female-dominated occupations typically have less flexibility, in terms of control over setting work hours, taking days off, taking breaks during the day, or changing work days (Glass, 1990; Glass & Camarigg, 1992). Because of the difficulty in obtaining flexible work, women may rely on part-time employment instead. In 2009, 26% of employed women worked part time compared with 13% of men (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b, Table 8). Even women in traditionally male-dominated, high-status professions are more likely than their male

counterparts to reduce their work hours to accommodate childcare and family responsibilities (Boulis, 2004; Noonan & Corcoran, 2004).

Implications of domestic responsibilities for leadership

Both men and women experience considerable losses for time out of the workforce, but women's losses far exceed men's (Rose & Hartmann, 2004). Moreover, studies have linked the gender gap in pay specifically to motherhood (e.g., Arun, Arun, & Borooh, 2004). For example, Budig and England (2001), in a nationally representative sample of married and unmarried women, found that motherhood resulted in a drop in hourly income; human capital variables, such as years of seniority on their jobs, number of job breaks, and years of employment, accounted for about one-third of the drop in income. Studies have also shown that wage penalties can be reduced by limiting time away from work after having children (Bond et al., 2002; Lundberg & Rose, 2000). Hence, women's commitment to family responsibilities contributes to their loss of experience and job tenure and, consequently, to their income deficit.

GENDER STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FEMALE LEADERS

Evidence of gender discrimination

Economists and sociologists have conducted a large number of surveys of wages and promotions, often using nationally representative data. Such studies typically determine whether adjusting for human capital variables (e.g., education, job experience), family characteristics (e.g., marriage and children), and structural factors (e.g., occupational segregation) can account for women's lesser advancement and lower wages. Although the differing employment patterns of men and women do contribute to the wage and advancement gaps, the nearly unanimous conclusions are that these and other variables account for only a portion of these gender gaps (see review by Blau & Kahn, 2006). Most social scientists conclude that discrimination accounts for at least a portion of the remaining unexplained gender gaps.

To supplement these correlational studies of discrimination, some social scientists have conducted experiments that equate job applicants in all respects other than the attribute (race or sex)