
Guest editorial: From intent to action: new directions in women and leadership research

Guest editorial

841

Introduction

The impetus for this special issue emerged from the planning and implementation of an international women and leadership academic colloquium held online in June 2021. The theme, “From Intent to Action,” was designed to encourage and illustrate the ways in which new global scholarship is emerging that is intent to advance scholarship in diverse fields related to women and leadership ([Gardiner et al., 2020](#)). Our objective was not only to highlight key themes in women and leadership research and practice but also to envisage new theoretical and methodological approaches intentionally designed for actionable results to effect change.

This change is needed because, despite extensive monitoring of women’s inclusion in leadership over the past 30 years by numerous research institutes (e.g. Pew Research Centre), consulting companies (e.g. Credit Suisse, Deloitte, EgonZehnder, Grant Thornton, KPMG, McKinsey) and agencies (e.g. Catalyst, European Institute for Gender Equality) along with burgeoning research ([Abadi et al., 2020](#); [Adler and Osland, 2016](#); [Devnew et al., 2018](#); [Elliott et al., 2019](#); [Lyness and Grotto, 2018](#); [Madsen, 2017](#); [Mousa et al., 2021](#); [Place and Vardeman-Winter, 2018](#); [Storberg-Walker and Haber-Curran, 2017](#)), real progress in gender equity has been glacial ([Broadbridge and Mavin, 2016](#); [Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011](#)). Women continue to lag behind men in most areas of organizational life, for example, pay equity ([Parker and Donnelly, 2020](#)), board representation ([Deloitte, 2021](#); [Devnew et al., 2018](#); [EgonZehnder, 2023](#)), executive leadership ([Catalyst, 2020](#)) and political leadership ([Ro, 2021](#); [Tischner et al., 2021](#)).

Despite decades of feminist scholarship, [Broadbridge and Simpson \(2011\)](#) assert that gender and management research continues to be marginalized. A decade later this marginalization continues ([UNDP, 2023](#)), especially when the intersections of identity and structural issues such as social justice and structural inequities are considered. Moreover, previous strategies for the inclusion of women’s voices and enhanced participation in leadership roles have mostly benefited middle-class white women ([Deloitte, 2021](#)). Black, indigenous and women of color have had minimal benefit from these strategies ([Miles Nash and Peters, 2020](#)). For example:

- mandated quotas and monitoring for boards ([Deloitte, 2021](#), white women replacing white men and EgonZehnder, 2020, very little data on racial, ethnic and sexual orientation diversity and prohibited to be collected in some countries);
- antidiscrimination laws that do not eliminate unconscious gender, ethnic and racial biases ([Derks et al., 2016](#); [Forsyth et al., 1997](#); [Fox-Kirk et al., 2020](#); [Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016](#)); and
- gender pay equity laws that do not result in equity for all genders, races, religion and sexual orientation ([Lyness and Grotto, 2018](#); [Parker and Donnelly, 2020](#)).

Gender stereotypes of racialized women including the angry black woman, the submissive Asian woman, the sexy Hispanic/Latina woman and the invisible Indigenous woman create



Gender in Management: An
International Journal
Vol. 38 No. 7, 2023
pp. 841-854
© Emerald Publishing Limited
1754-2413
DOI 10.1108/GM-10-2023-403

additional biases and discrimination (Williams and Dempsey, 2014). Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate; every aspect of leadership is intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989; Miles *et al.*, 2020; Ngunjiri and Gardiner, 2019; Storberg-Walker and Gardiner, 2017), including (but not exclusively) aspirations for leadership (Devnew *et al.*, 2017a), networking (Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Hart, 2019; Uzzi, 2019), risk-taking (Booth and Nolen, 2012), volubility (Brescoll, 2011) and self-promotion (Lindeman *et al.*, 2018; Rudman, 2018).

Such an intersectional approach to women and leadership needs not only to consider individual issues but also ongoing social injustices that continue to privilege some people over others. Indeed, unequal power dynamics and gender injustices are at the very heart of discrimination and inequities (Gardiner, 2018; Ladkin, 2010). Moreover, institutional misogyny continues to negatively impact women through diverse explicit and implicit violence (Fox-Kirk *et al.*, 2020). We need new perspectives that seek to disrupt this state of affairs that can help us take action as instigators for change to the patriarchal status quo.

Action research

What makes this special issue original is its focus on globally diverse methodological and theoretical approaches to actionable research in women and leadership research. Action/actionable research is one method of inquiry that enables researchers to disrupt “the dominant system’s patriarchal narrative and its embedded power structure through the inclusion of the [often] marginalized voices of those being studied” (Thompson, 2021). Action research adopts a “process that collaboratively involves the subjects under study with an objective of using research results to influence organizational outcomes” (Zhang *et al.*, 2015, p. 152).

Scholars contend that action research is a promising approach to diverse aspects of women and leadership research aligned with the recognition of women’s ways of knowing (Storberg-Walker, 2017; Belenky *et al.*, 1986/1997), global women leaders (Adler, 1997; Adler and Osland, 2016; Osland, 2021), indigenous women and decolonizing leadership (Brunette-Debassige, 2021; Debassige and Brunette-Debassige, 2018) and on the contextual challenges faced by black women in diverse leadership roles (Ngunjiri, 2021).

From collaborative autoethnography and other action/actionable research (Chang *et al.*, 2013; Devnew *et al.*, 2017b; Le Ber *et al.*, 2017) and engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) to critical feminism (Gardiner *et al.*, 2020), the aim of the special issue is to encourage new approaches to key issues in women and leadership research with an international and intersectional focus.

The special issue papers

Our initial vision was to encourage papers that not only sought to understand diverse women’s experiences in organizations, but also to challenge the ongoing marginalization of women’s voices in organizational life. We were impressed by the number of articles we received for this special issue (26). However, some of these articles did not fit our criteria. Our final special issue has six worthy contributions, each with a different methodological or theoretical approach to women and leadership. What connects these articles is their focus on effecting organizational change through action-oriented theories and practices.

These include papers’ authors and titles as follows:

- Anaya, E.R. Exploring the paradox of gender preferred leadership in Kenya: a GLOBE study on gender egalitarianism and women in leadership.

- Bachnik, K., Howe-Walsh, L., Critchley, L., Alicea, M., Guajardo, M. and Washington, C.E. Women's crucible leadership experiences: through the lens of the four-frame organisational model.
- Dixon, S., Niewoehner-Green, J. E., Smulowitz, S., Smith, D. N., Rutstein-Riley, A. and Thomas, T.M. Girls' and young women's leader identity development: a scoping review.
- Olsen, K. and LaGree, D. Taking action in the first five years to increase career equality: the impact of professional relationships on young women's advancement.
- Shelton, C.D. and Wu, M.H. Challenges and considerations for building executive presence in North American female professionals of Asian descent.
- Y Cano, Y.M., Ruiz, D.D. and Esquivel, K.C. Burnout effect on working mothers in leadership positions during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Methodological and theoretical approaches

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were received in the submitted manuscripts. In this special issue, we include one scoping review (Dixon *et al.*, 2023) for its unique contribution to the extant gender and leadership literature and to one of the major themes of this special issue, leadership over the life course. The remaining five manuscripts are empirical with mostly qualitative methods. In-depth interviews are favored (Anaya, 2023; Olsen and LaGree, 2023; Shelton and Wu, 2023) but focus groups (Anaya, 2023) and collaborative autoethnography (Bachnik *et al.*, 2023) complement the individual interview studies. Y Cano *et al.* (2023) uses exclusively quantitative methods with a survey of not only working mothers in leadership roles but also working fathers in leadership roles (Y Cano *et al.*, 2023). Integrating a mixed-method design, Anaya (2023) includes surveys, interviews and focus groups in their study. Where the state of prior theory and research is nascent, open-ended data that need to be interpreted for meaning are a methodological fit for field research such as in this special issue topic (Edmondson and McManus, 2007).

Similarly, the use of inductive coding (Olsen and LaGree, 2023), reflexive thematic analyses (Bachnik *et al.*, 2023), exploratory coding methods (Dixon *et al.*, 2023), thematic analyses (Anaya, 2023) and the Gioia method of analysis (Shelton and Wu, 2023) all contribute to pattern identification to further develop our understanding of new constructs (e.g. lockdown in a model of burnout; Y Cano *et al.*, 2023) and new contexts. Where surveys are used (Anaya, 2023; Y Cano *et al.*, 2023), descriptive statistics similarly contribute to pattern identification of the organizational life experiences of women in a variety of industries and countries globally.

Not surprisingly given the wide variety of contexts of the studies, a range of literatures, theoretical lenses and theories are used to make meaning of the data. This includes feminist organizational communication (Olsen and LaGree, 2023), organizing processes and practices (Bachnik *et al.*, 2023), burnout and hybrid work studies (Y Cano *et al.*, 2023), executive presence (Shelton and Wu, 2023) and human development in distinct cultural models (Anaya, 2023).

Themes across the papers

When all six papers are taken together, the three broad themes explored by the authors as new directions in the women and leadership research in this special issue are:

- leadership over the life course and career life cycle;
- intersectionality; and
- deeply embedded gendering of organizational processes.

Theme 1: leadership over the life course and career cycle

One of the key themes emerging from the papers is an interest in leadership as it relates to gender and age. Much of the women and leadership literature to date focuses on women who are already established in their leadership roles. This is not surprising, given that scholars are often considering organizational issues that are barriers to the progress of women in the workplace. Yet, it has led to a lack of scholarship on young women's and girls' leadership (for exceptions, see [Le Ber et al., 2017](#); [Ricks-Scott et al., 2017](#)). This may be one of the key reasons that our first two articles seek to address that lacunae by focusing attention on young women and leadership. The first article by [Dixon et al. \(2023\)](#) titled "Girls and young women's leader identity development: a scoping review" is a first of its kind systematic literature review to conduct a comprehensive review of young girls' and women's leadership. They conclude that "The findings from our review are significant because leader identity development directly impacts engagement leadership as an adult, both in formal positions and informal roles" (p. 23).

[Dixon et al. \(2023\)](#) highlight four essential domains that influence the development of leader identity in girls and young women:

- Relationships – family, peers, mentors and teachers are important role models for girls and young women.
- Personal characteristics – personal traits, skills and values contribute to resilience and confidence to self-reflect on experiences.
- Meaningful engagement – experiences with family, religious institutions, schools and volunteering provide opportunities and safe spaces to practice and develop leadership skills.
- Social identities – societal expected roles of young women and girls (differentiated by intersectionality) is foundational to self-perception as a leader.

In [Olsen and LaGree's \(2023\)](#) paper, "Taking action in the first five years to increase career equality: the impact of professional relationships on young women's advancement," they use feminist organization communication theory to research women working in creative communication roles. Their findings indicate that professional relationships, formal and informal, are fundamental to giving young women the confidence and support they need. Furthermore, leadership can be nurtured by offering young women possibilities for advancement. Yet their study indicates the lack of formal mentoring programs in many workplaces, with more male than female mentors. They describe the professional development process as a Bermuda Triangle:

- The art and power of advocacy with the outcome of women learning to self-advocate. In contrast to some studies, they found that mentoring by women lead to friendships, whereas the mentorship by men to be more challenging.
- Access to high-profile work opportunities with the outcome of women learning more confidence, adaptability and proactivity from these leadership opportunities.
- Effective role modeling by women who have demonstrated effective career navigation with the outcome of women developing their own vision for future leadership roles.

Some of their recommendations related to leader development over the life span include access to experienced management through consistent gatherings, such as lunch and learn and auditing of organizational policies and procedures to ensure women are not disadvantaged due to motherhood.

The unique time period of motherhood is directly addressed in a third study by [Y Cano et al. \(2023\)](#), titled “Burnout effect on working mothers in leadership positions during the COVID-19 lockdown.” Using the context of the global pandemic in Mexico, this research examined the effects of burnout on working mothers in leadership positions in contrast to working fathers in similar leadership roles. In total, 961 women and men were surveyed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey to answer two research questions, namely:

RQ1. How does burnout affect mothers in leadership positions who, simultaneously, have the responsibility of their children while working from home?

RQ2. What kind of support do they require to manage burnout?

Their results indicate that burnout was more significant for mothers who were leaders than the fathers. The authors advocate the need for not only a good income but also a flexible schedule to help retain top talent, improve well-being and cause less burnout. In terms of action, this study suggests that policymakers can develop better policies that consider the caring work that women are more likely to be expected to undertake.

Theme 2: intersectionality

While the three forementioned studies focus on specific periods during the life course, they also address issues of intersectionality (or identify the lack of an intersectional approach). In [Dixon et al. \(2023\)](#) article titled “Girls’ and young women’s leader identity development: a scoping review,” intersectionality is foundational to the different societal expectations associated with various social identities which in turn impacts young women’s self-perception of leadership. They also do note though there is a sparsity of intersectional approaches as it pertains to young women and leadership. Similarly, [Olsen and LaGree’s \(2023\)](#) article “Taking action in the first five years to increase career equality: the impact of professional relationships on young women’s advancement” recommends professional development for all employees to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) awareness and advocacy. [Y Cano et al.’s \(2023\)](#) article “Burnout effect on working mothers in leadership positions during the COVID-19 lockdown” argues for more cross-cultural research on the effect of motherhood on leadership.

It is in [Bachnik et al.’s \(2023\)](#) article, “Women’s crucible leadership experiences: through the lens of the four-frame organisational model,” however, where intersectionality is brought to the fore as a missing piece in the existing organizational models. Narratives gathered in this study illustrate the stickiness of gender prejudice in higher education institutions and within business across the world. Diverse genderwashing practices ([Fox-Kirk et al., 2020](#)) are explored through an intersectional analysis, concentrating on race, gender and leadership. The study findings focus on four global themes: organization, power dynamics, emotional distress and intersectionality. The power of male dominance creates a challenging dynamic that reinforces oppression fear and intimidation supporting inequality within the organization. Moreover, the influence of power highlights the multiple layers of inequality women of color experience. The third theme is arguably an outcome of the first two themes causing emotional distress and calling for perseverance to survive within the workplace. The findings elaborate on the feeling of isolation and loneliness creating tense relationships

in the organization and led to self-doubt. Palpable feelings of disempowerment, anger and frustration are evident from the narratives that led to the final theme of intersectionality. This last theme encapsulates how intersectionality, in particular, gender and race, continues to challenge women leaders and remains worryingly unidentified with the organization.

What is innovative about this collaborative autoethnography is not only their honesty in sharing crucial experiences, but also how they adapt Bolman and Deal's leadership framework. Specifically, intersectionality is brought to the fore as a missing piece of the four-frame model. The authors argue strongly for equity, diversity and inclusion as a fifth frame. Their work supports a systematic approach to review leadership and challenges within the organization. Through the fifth frame, leaders are compelled to reflect upon their organizational structures, HR policies and practices, and the politics being played out in everyday encounters to identify ingrained inequities and support real change.

Shelton and Wu (2023), in their paper titled "Challenges and considerations for building executive presence in North American female professionals of Asian descent," expose the deeply held biases of Asian women in leadership positions, by not only non-Asian colleagues, but also by the Asian women themselves. In 2019, Asian women held only 2.5% of US management positions compared with 32.3% for Caucasian women, 4.3% for Latinas and 4.0% for African Americans (Catalyst, 2020). Shelton and Wu examine the lived experiences of 14 Asian female executives exploring the relationship between their gender, cultural identity and the characteristics associated with executive presence. The findings illustrate that people view Asian women as deferential, more reserved than their North American counterparts and more hard-working. These stereotypical attitudes are difficult to dislodge. One strategy women executives suggested was to encourage women to build their confidence, to speak up when appropriate and to build relationships. The extent by which gender and cultural origins affect one's leadership prospects is highlighted. The authors encourage women professionals of Asian descent to confront any lack of confidence influenced by their cultural heritage and social norms. They can strengthen their skills by not only speaking up but speaking well, that is, being strategic about when to voice one's concerns.

Theme 3: deeply embedded gendering of organizational processes

Most papers in this special issue address this third theme, even if not in depth. For example, in the Olsen and LaGree's (2023) article, "Taking action in the first five years to increase career equality: The impact of professional relationships on young women's advancement," they link the deeply embedded gendering of organizational processes to the negative influence on a woman's ability to see themselves as organizational leaders. Y Cano *et al.* (2023) identify specific organizational practices such as income and flexible scheduling to accommodate the double shift mothers work as they care for their families during lockdowns, in their article, "Burnout effect on working mothers in leadership positions during the COVID-19 lockdown."

In the Bachnik *et al.*'s (2023) paper, "Women's crucible leadership experiences: through the lens of the four-frame organisational model," the global theme of the organization plays a significant role in the women's crucible experiences. Their narratives highlight the gendered structure of organizations perpetuating a favored male dominance. The authors find that the dominant culture within the organization reinforces stereotyping, typically through HR practices such as recruitment, promotion and reward as well as informal interactions, leading to women feeling unsupported. This leads to the second theme in the model of power dynamics within the organization. The power of male dominance creates a challenging

dynamic that reinforces oppression, fear and intimidation supporting inequality within the organization.

In the paper by [Anaya \(2023\)](#) titled, “Exploring the paradox of gender preferred leadership in Kenya: A GLOBE study on gender egalitarianism and women in leadership,” we are offered a glimpse of gendered power inequities. The author explores how leadership opinions are shaped by cultural and societal beliefs. Specifically, the lack of progress for empowering Kenyan women to senior leadership positions, and specifically to political leadership, can be understood in light of sociocultural factors, patriarchal attitudes, norms and gender stereotypes. The author contends that this is the first in-depth, descriptive leadership study of any sub-Saharan African country, and is the first GLOBE country study to include gender as a demographic variable examining gender equality in terms of leadership. They took a multistep approach. First, the author surveyed 145 female middle managers in a range of industries. Next, interviews were conducted with 15 women. Finally, participant observation was also undertaken, acknowledging that participants are co-researchers.

What we learn is that traditional gender-based role assignment, for example, reflects power hierarchies, as well as beliefs about the relative worth and significance of gender identity; this worldview is at the core of Kenya’s national institutions and laws ([Anaya, 2023](#)). Reluctance to effect real systemic change is hard, as it requires giving up power and privilege. Hence, while gender policies exist at the national level, moving from policy to successful implementation is much more difficult. As such, it appears that there is a significant gap between equality in policies and the practice of gender inequality in organizations and in Kenyan society more generally. Social prejudice toward women as leaders seriously impacts their ability to lead. As such, there needs to be far more advocacy for cultural change, both socially and organizationally, before gender equity is reached.

Implications and future research

The papers chosen for this Special Issue advance the gender and leadership literature in each of the three themes. Together with the extant literature, they call for additional research. In this section, implications for research for each of the three themes are highlighted and we conclude with suggestions for an integrated approach.

Leadership over the life course and career life cycle

The quip “no matter how old you are, someone will argue you’re the wrong age” ([Diehl et al., 2023](#)) resonates with many women. Ageism, originally understood to be the biases and discrimination faced in the workplace (and society more generally) as one ages has broadened within the workplace aging literature to focus on first, the variable life span development that impacts performance and job crafting to personalize the work; second sociocultural, organizational and work design factors as they affect attitudes and engagement; and third, the negative impact of ageism ([Beier et al., 2022](#)). But this pattern of belief of performance decline and being dated in older women, “ageism” is also conflated with “youngism” where young women are seen as lacking the maturity and competency needed for leadership and are potentially childbearing ([Diehl et al., 2023](#)). Young women need to demonstrate past achievement of opportunities not afforded them. This is in contrast to older men, who are considered to have wisdom, and young men, who have great potential. The supposed sweet spot of “middle age” for men does not materialize for women as family responsibilities peak and menopause is pending ([Diehl et al., 2023](#)).

In addition, the variable career progression of women needs to be considered. Some women begin their careers after raising children, others defer child raising until they are

well established in their careers while yet other women combine both from the outset (Williams and Dempsey, 2014), which does not mirror the lockstep progression or stages of a leadership career for men. Combining ageism in all its forms with the variable career progression requires much more nuanced research studies that do not aggregate dissimilar women. The resulting recommended actions similarly need to be specific to the women being studied.

Finally, non-Eurocentric/Western models of leadership could also be explored for actions that value contributions of both women and men over the life span, e.g. grandmothers who are the advisors to indigenous nation chiefs (personal communication Ray John Jr., knowledge sharer, Oneida Nation of the Thames).

Intersectionality

Every aspect of leadership is intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989; Miles Nash and Peters, 2020; Ngunjiri and Gardiner, 2017; Storberg-Walker and Gardiner, 2017). Although race and gender were most frequently mentioned in the Special Issue papers, other aspects to be considered include social class, age, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Not dissimilar to the discussion of leadership over the life span and career cycle above, deep understanding of the experiences and impacts of intersectionality cannot aggregate results for dissimilar women. While this disaggregated approach to research is imperative; it also requires the uncomfortable confrontation of privilege and power within each of the combined identities. Foundational to these deep understandings is how power is enacted, structured, protected (policed) and reinforced by these various intersectional social identities. Finally, the historical and ongoing colonization of social identities (e.g. colonizers, colonized) is absent yet a very much needed aspect of our understanding of intersectionality and leadership.

Deeply embedded gendering of organizational processes

Although some of the barriers of biases, stereotypes and other causes of discrimination within organizations have been identified and continue to be studied, there still is limited understanding of which organizational practices and approaches are most effective in which contexts in addressing and removing these barriers to organizational leadership for those facing gender and intersectional discrimination. The special issue papers begin to address the unique needs of young women beginning their leadership career, mothers in leadership roles and more broadly human resources practices. But much more research is needed from an intersectional and decolonized perspective to advance equity and inclusion in organizations.

Kaufman and Derry (2023) offer a convincing argument that it is the underlying assumptions supporting the business case approach to diversity (focused on the demographics of employees and organizational financial performance) that “strengthens the very power structures that have historically (and currently) excluded and marginalized many women” (p. 1). For example, the human resources hiring practice to ask all applicants the same question does not address the unique intersecting identities of marginalized women and also reinforces the current power structures of who *fits* the organization rather than seeking to understand how the institution needs to ensure that the individual *belongs*. Kaufman and Derry assert that equity can only be achieved through the dismantling of the structures and practices that contribute to marginalization. They present an intersectional theory of gender diversity that goes much beyond increasing diversity alone and requires recognition of the interactions of multiple forms of identity and marginalization. Similar to

the argument presented above, this approach needs to be adapted to specific contexts of organizations (e.g. country, sector and industry) and intersectional identities.

Summary

Although the three emerging themes in this Special Issue, leadership over the life course and career life cycle; intersectionality; and the deeply embedded gendering of organizational processes, are presented as distinct, they are interwoven and inseparable. Our call for research to move beyond the *intent* of equity and equality for all women to *action* that disrupts current oppressive organizational structures and practices requires action/actionable research that includes of the [often] marginalized voices of those being studied. The multiple intersecting social identities requires the voices of those individuals to be included in our research methods and not lost in the aggregation of data. Their lived experiences of marginalization processes are key to dismantling the structures and processes of discrimination and oppression.

Concluding reflections

We want to thank all the kind reviewers who lent their time and intellectual acumen to offer insights into the papers. Since the pandemic, it has become increasingly difficult to engage scholars to review papers. In some cases, scholars are fully occupied with care work; in other cases, this form of academic scholarship is no longer seen as important. Yet, reviewing papers is a fundamental aspect of a robust scholarly life. It seems that reviewing, like editing a special issue, is becoming marginalized in academia, perceived as just another form of academic housekeeping. Such housekeeping does not have the prestige of publishing in top-rated journals. This form of “publish or perish” is detrimental to critical debate and creative innovation in academia, without which the patriarchy of publishing is reinforced: the same top-rated journals get increasing impact factors, the same scholars, some of whom sit on the board of said prestigious journals, receive the citations. Citational practices, as Sara Ahmed (2013), can be a form of silencing. But they are also a form of politics; what we might describe as gender politics in action.

If we are to see change in terms of actionable results in women and leadership scholarship and practice, then we must be open to innovation and creative approaches. Such approaches are fundamental to scholarly inquiry, and encourage scholarship for the many, not for the few.

Finally, we thank Adelina Broadbridge for her editorial insights and support.

Marlene Janzen Le Ber

Department of Leadership Studies, Brescia University College, London, Canada

Rita A. Gardiner

*Department of Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies, Western University,
London, Canada, and*

Liza Howe-Walsh

Business and Law School, University of Portsmouth Business School, Portsmouth, UK

References

- Abadi, M., Dirani, K.M. and Rezaei, F.D. (2020), “Women in leadership: a systematic literature review of Middle Eastern women managers’ careers from NHRD and institutional theory perspectives”, *Human Resource Development International*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 19-39, doi: [10.1080/13678868.2020.1840847](https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1840847).

- Adler, N.J. (1997), "Global leadership: women leaders", *MIR: Management International Review*, Vol. 37, pp. 171-196, available at: www.jstor.org/stable/40228426
- Adler, N. and Osland, J.S. (2016), "Women leading globally: what we know, thought we knew, and need to know about leadership in the 21st century", in Osland, J.S., Li, M. and Mendenhall, M.E. (Eds), *Advances in Global Leadership*, Emerald, Bingley, pp. 15-56.
- Ahmed, S. (2013), "Making feminist points", available at: <https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Beier, M.E., Kanfer, R., Kooij, D.T.A.M. and Turxillo, D.M. (2022), "What's age got to do with it? A primer and review of the workplace aging literature", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 75 No. 4, pp. 779-804.
- Belenky, M.F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R. and Tarule, J.M. (1986/1997), *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, BasicBooks, New York, NY.
- Booth, A.L. and Nolen, P. (2012), "Gender differences in risk behaviour: does nurture matter?", *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 122 No. 558, pp. F56-F78, doi: [10.1111/j.1468-0297.2011.02480.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2011.02480.x).
- Brescoll, V.L. (2011), "Who takes the floor and why: gender, power, and volubility in organizations", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 56 No. 4, pp. 622-641, doi: [10.1177/0001839212439994](https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839212439994).
- Broadbridge, A. and Mavin, S.A. (2016), "Beyond the glass ceiling and metaphors. Editorial", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 8, pp. 502-516, doi: [10.1108/GM-08-2016-0153](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-08-2016-0153).
- Broadbridge, A. and Simpson, R. (2011), "25 years on: reflecting on the past and looking to the future in gender and management research", *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 470-483, doi: [10.1111/j.1467-8551.2011.00758.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2011.00758.x).
- Brunette-Debassige, C. (2021), "Indigenous women and decolonizing leadership", address presented at the Advancing Research in Women and Leadership Academic Colloquium: From Intent to Action, 3-5 June. Virtual Online, available at: <https://ilaglobalnetwork.org/women-and-leadership-academic-colloquium/> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F.W. and Hernandez, K.C. (2013), *Collaborative Autoethnography*, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA.
- Crenshaw, K.W. (1989), "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics", *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, Vol. 1989, pp. 139-168.
- Debassige, B. and Brunette-Debassige, C. (2018), "Indigenizing work as 'willful work': toward indigenous transgressive leadership in Canadian universities", *Critical and Pedagogy Inquiry Journal, Special Issue*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 119-138, available at: <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/cpi/index>
- Derks, B., Van Laar, C. and Ellemers, N. (2016), "The queen bee phenomenon: why women leaders distance themselves from junior women", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 456-469, doi: [10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.12.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.12.007).
- Deloitte (2021), "Missing pieces report: the board diversity census of women and minorities on Fortune 500 boards, 6th edition", available at: www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/center-for-board-effectiveness/missing-pieces-fortune-500-board-diversity-study-sixth-edition.pdf (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Devnew, L.E., Austin, A.M.B., Le Ber, M.J. and Shapiro, M. (2017a), "Women's leadership aspirations", in Madsen, A. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, pp. 165-179.
- Devnew, L.E., Le Ber, M.J., Torchia, M. and Burke, R.J. (Eds) (2018), *More Women on Boards: An International Perspective*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC.
- Devnew, L.E., Austin, A.B., Le Ber, M.J., LaValley, J.B. and Elbert, C.D. (2017b), "Learning from our multi-stage collaborative autoethnography", *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 22 No. 10,

- pp. 2772-2784, available at: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss10/17> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Diehl, A., Dzubinski, L.M. and Stephenson, A.L. (2023), "Women in leadership face ageism at every age", *Harvard Business Review*, 16 June, available at: <https://hbr.org/2023/06/women-in-leadership-face-ageism-at-every-age> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Edmondson, A.C. and McManus, S.E. (2007), "Methodological fit in management field research", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 1155-1179.
- EgonZehnder (2023), "2022/2023 global board diversity tracker: who's really on board?", available at: www.egonzehnder.com/global-board-diversity-tracker (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Elliott, C., Pritchard, S. and Stead, V. (2019), "Theorizing women and leadership. Different spaces, different conversations: theories and practices for these times. Guest editorial", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 186-187, doi: [10.1108/GM-05-2019-184](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-05-2019-184).
- Forret, M.L. and Dougherty, T.W. (2004), "Networking behaviors and career outcomes: differences for men and women?", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 419-437, doi: [10.1002/job.253](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.253).
- Fox-Kirk, W., Gardiner, R.A., Finn, H. and Chisholm, J. (2020), "Genderwashing: the myth of equality", *Human Resource Development International*, Vol. 23 No. 5, pp. 586-597, doi: [10.1080/13678868.2020.1801065](https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1801065).
- Forsyth, D.R., Heiney, M.M. and Wright, S.S. (1997), "Biases in appraisals of women leaders", *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 98-103, doi: [10.1037/1089-2699.1.1.98](https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.1.1.98).
- Gardiner, R.A. (2018), "Hannah and her sisters: theorizing gender and leadership through the lens of feminist phenomenology", *Leadership*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 291-306, doi: [10.1177/1742715017729940](https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715017729940).
- Gardiner, R., Fox-Kirk, W., Fine, L. and Ngunjiri, F.W. (2020), "Leadership and #MeToo: global perspectives. guest editorial", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 4, pp. 321-329.
- Howe-Walsh, L. and Turnbull, S. (2016), "Barriers to women leaders in academia: tales from science and technology", *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 41 No. 3, pp. 415-428, doi: [10.1080/03075079.2014.929102](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.929102).
- Kaufman, L. and Derry, R. (2023), "On valuing women: advancing an intersectional theory of gender diversity in organizations", *Academy of Management Review*.
- Ladkin, D. (2010), "Why study leadership from a philosophical perspective?", *Rethinking Leadership*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, p. 224, doi: [10.4337/9781849805346](https://doi.org/10.4337/9781849805346).
- Le Ber, M.J., LaValley, J.B., Devnew, L., Austin, A.B., Sulpizio, L. and Tremaine, M. (2017), "Tracing the developmental precursors of leadership during childhood and adolescence: a collaborative autoethnographic study of women's leader identity development", in Storberg-Walker, J. and Haber-Curran, P. (Eds), *Theorizing Women and Leadership: New Insights and Contributions from Multiple Perspectives*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC, pp. 225-248.
- Lindeman, M.I.H., Durik, A.M. and Dooley, M. (2018), "Women and self-promotion: a test of three theories", *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 122 No. 1, pp. 1-12, doi: [10.1177/0033294118755096](https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294118755096).
- Lyness, K.S. and Grotto, A.R. (2018), "Women and leadership in the United States: are we closing the gender gap?", *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 227-265, doi: [10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104739](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104739).
- Madsen, S. (Ed.) (2017), *Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham.
- Miles Nash, A. and Peters, A.L. (2020), "For us: towards an intersectional leadership conceptualization by black women for black girls", *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, Vol. 52 No. 3, pp. 270-282, doi: [10.1080/00220620.2020.1785403](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2020.1785403).

- Mousa, M., Mullins, A.K., Skouteris, H., Boyle, J. and Teede, H.J. (2021), "Organisational best practices for advancing women in leadership: protocol for a systematic literature review", *British Medical Journal Open*, Vol. 11 No. 4, p. e046982, doi: [10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046982](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046982).
- Ngunjiri, F.W. (2021), "On being a black woman in leadership: crisis, chaos and contextual considerations", address presented at the Advancing Research in Women and Leadership Academic Colloquium: From Intent to Action, 3-5 June. Virtual Online, available at: <https://ilaglobalnetwork.org/women-and-leadership-academic-colloquium/> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Ngunjiri, F.W. and Gardiner, R. (2017), "Future strategies for developing women as leaders", in Madsen, S. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, pp. 423-438.
- Osland, J. (2021), "Women and global leadership", address presented at the Advancing Research in Women and Leadership Academic Colloquium: From Intent to Action, 3-5 June. Virtual Online, available at: <https://ilaglobalnetwork.org/women-and-leadership-academic-colloquium/> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Parker, J. and Donnelly, N. (2020), "The revival and refashioning of gender pay equity in New Zealand", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 62 No. 4, pp. 560-581, doi: [10.1177/0022185620929374](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185620929374).
- Place, K.R. and Vardeman-Winter, J. (2018), "Where are the women? An examination of research on women and leadership in public relations", *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 165-173, doi: [10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.10.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.10.005).
- Ricks-Scott, H.I., Yeager, K.L., Storberg-Walker, J., Lick, L.M., Haber-Curran, P. and Bauer, D. (2017), "Theorizing leadership identity development through collaborative autoethnography and women's ways of knowing", in Storberg-Walker, J. and Haber-Curran, P. (Eds), *Theorizing Women and Leadership: New Insights and Contributions from Multiple Perspectives*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC, pp. 265-289.
- Ro, C. (2021), "Why do we still distrust women leaders? BBC, equality matters | how we work", Jan 19, available at: www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210108-why-do-we-still-distrust-women-leaders (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Storberg-Walker, J. and Gardiner, R. (2017), "Authentic leadership in HRD—identity matters! critical explorations on leading authentically", *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 350-361, doi: [10.1177/1523422317728731](https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422317728731).
- Storberg-Walker, J. and Haber-Curran, P. (Eds) (2017), *Theorizing Women and Leadership: New Insights and Contributions from Multiple Perspectives*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC.
- Thompson, R.J. (2021), "Academic colloquium advances women's leadership: from intent to action", *International Leadership Association Interface Newsletter*, 28 June, available at: <https://ilaglobalnetwork.org/newsletter/academic-colloquium-advances-womens-leadership-from-intent-to-action/> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Tischner, I., Malson, H. and Fey, K. (2021), "Leading ladies: discursive constructions of women leaders in the UK media", *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 460-476, doi: [10.1080/14680777.2019.1640266](https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1640266).
- United Nations Development Programme (2023), "Breaking down gender biases: shifting social norms towards gender equality", available at: <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/gsni202302pdf.pdf> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Van de Ven, A.H. (2007), *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Williams, J.C. and Dempsey, R. (2014), *What Works for Women at Work: Four Patterns Working Women Need to Know*, New York, NY University Press, New York, NY.
- Zhang, W., Levenson, A. and Crossley, C. (2015), "Move your research from the ivy tower to the board room: a primer on action research for academics, consultants, and business executives", *Human Resource Management*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 151-174, doi: [10.1002/hrm.21616](https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21616).

Further reading

- Aguilera, R.V., Kuppuswamy, V. and Anand, R. (2021), "What happened when India mandated gender diversity on boards", *Harvard Business Review*, available at: <https://hbr.org/2021/02/what-happened-when-india-mandated-gender-diversity-on-boards> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Astuti, D.A., Wanasida, A.S. and Pramono, R. (2022), "The effect of career progression, job performance, and learning development in determining a high potential leader", *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 1 No. S2, pp. 1-10.
- Kirk, S. (2019), "Identity, glass borders and globally mobile female talent", *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 285-299, doi: [10.1108/JGM-02-2019-0010](https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-02-2019-0010).
- KPMG (2015), "KPMG women's leadership study: moving women forward into leadership roles", available at: <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/ph/pdf/ThoughtLeadershipPublications/KPMGWomensLeadershipStudy.pdf> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Madsen, S. (2021), "Bringing research and practice together: Civic engagement and dialogue", address presented at the Advancing Research in Women and Leadership Academic Colloquium: From Intent to Action, 3-5 June, Virtual Online, available at: <https://ilaglobalnetwork.org/women-and-leadership-academic-colloquium/> (accessed 23 September 2023).
- Offermann, L.R., Thomas, K.R., Lanzo, L.A. and Smith, L.N. (2020), "Achieving leadership and success: a 28-year follow-up of college women leaders", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 31 No. 4, p. 101345, doi: [10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101345](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101345).
- Paluck, E.L. (2010), "The promising integration of qualitative methods and field experiments", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 628 No. 1, pp. 59-71, doi: [10.1177/0002716209351510](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716209351510).
- Rudman, L.A. (1998), "Self-promotion as a risk factor for women: the costs and benefits of counterstereotypical impression management", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 74 No. 3, pp. 629-645.

Papers in the special issue

- Anaya, E.R. (2023), "Exploring the paradox of gender preferred leadership in Kenya: a GLOBE study on gender egalitarianism and women in leadership", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, doi: [10.1108/GM-03-2022-0107](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-03-2022-0107).
- Bachnik, K., Howe-Walsh, L., Critchley, L., Alicea, M., Guajardo, M. and Washington, C.E. (2023), "Women's crucible leadership experiences: through the lens of the four-frame organisational model", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, doi: [10.1108/GM-03-2022-0101](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-03-2022-0101).
- Dixon, S., Niewoehner-Green, J.E., Smulowitz, S., Smith, D.N., Rutstein-Riley, A. and Thomas, T.M. (2023), "Girls' and young women's leader identity development: a scoping review", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, doi: [10.1108/GM-03-2022-0108](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-03-2022-0108).
- Olsen, K. and LaGree, D. (2023), "Taking action in the first five years to increase career equality: the impact of professional relationships on young women's advancement", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, doi: [10.1108/GM-02-2022-0058](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-02-2022-0058).
- Shelton, C.D. and Wu, M.H. (2023), "Challenges and considerations for building executive presence in North American female professionals of Asian descent", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, doi: [10.1108/GM-03-2022-0105](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-03-2022-0105).
- Y Cano, Y.M., Ruiz, D.D. and Esquivel, K.C. (2023), "Burnout effect on working mothers in leadership positions during the COVID-19 lockdown", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, doi: [10.1108/GM-03-2022-0085](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-03-2022-0085).

About the authors

Marlene Janzen Le Ber, PhD, is a Professor of Leadership Studies and Distinguished Chair at the Centre for Leadership at Canada's only women's university, Brescia University College. She studies the complex processes of leadership, i.e. equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization organizational practices in leadership; leader character; leader aspirations; leader identity development in women; and policy and social change. Awarded the 2022 International Leadership Association, Women and Leadership Award for "Outstanding Scholarship for Established Scholars," she has presented over 95 peer-reviewed conference papers and keynote addresses; published numerous peer-reviewed papers, books, book chapters and reports; and granted over 1.2 million in research funding in the past 10 years.

Rita A. Gardiner, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies at the Faculty of Education, Western University, Canada. Her publications include articles in *Gender, Work and Organization*, *Business Ethics Quarterly* and *Organization Studies*. Rita led a project team on an SSHRC-funded grant that examined the implementation of gender-based violence policies in Ontario universities. Currently, she is editing a collection exploring the concept of genderwashing in leadership. This volume, coedited by Wendy Fox-Kirk, Carole Elliott and Valerie Stead, will be published in 2024 by Emerald as part of a new Women and Leadership book series.

Liza Howe-Walsh, PhD, is a Professor of Global Leadership at the University of Portsmouth. She has published widely including journals such as the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Global Mobility*, *Journal of Business Research* and the *Journal of International Management* and is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Global Mobility*. She is the past president of the executive leadership team for women and leadership and actively supports and researches women's leadership. In addition, Liza has extensive consultancy experience in global mobility and supports businesses on behalf of the University to support diversity, equality and inclusion.