



Challenges For Women in Senior Leadership Positions: Annotated Bibliography

Women comprise over half of the professional workforce, yet remain underrepresented in leadership positions. To explore why there is a gender gap in leadership positions, as well as how to successfully navigate these challenges, we have curated a list of resources. This begins with work on the theories of gender differences in leadership. Following that, we offer resources that provide advice for navigating the path to leadership — which can be helpful for both women and men.

Gender differences and the leadership experience

Do women and men have different leadership styles? Why is there a disparity in the number of women versus men in leadership positions? This section draws on theoretical work in social science research to help explain fundamental reasons regarding gender differences in the leadership experience.

Chapter 15: Gender and Leadership, in Leadership Theory and Practice, Seventh Edition,
by Peter G. Northouse

Northouse's book on Leadership Theory is a foundational introduction to theoretical perspectives on leadership. In the chapter on gender and leadership, he addresses the theory behind why gender differences exist by looking at role congruity theory, individual differences in leadership style, and different outcomes that may be due to gender differences. He answers three primary questions: do men and women lead differently, are men or women more or less effective as leaders, and why are women under-represented in leadership roles? This chapter explains why considering gender as a factor is important to understanding leadership.

"Explaining Gender Differences at the Top" by Francesca Gino and Alison Wood Brooks
(<https://hbr.org/2015/09/explaining-gender-differences-at-the-top>)

This article explores recent research on why gender differences persist in top leadership roles. While prior research has found that women struggle to achieve higher-level roles due to stereotypes of the powerful, masculine leaders, or that there are institutional barriers that prevent women from climbing the corporate ladder; this work suggests that men and women have different preferences or life goals that direct their career choices in different ways. Findings indicate that men are more motivated by power while women are generally more motivated by affiliation and relationships. In another study, the authors found that women had more diverse goals than men, and therefore seeking powerful positions was less likely to be a key focus for them. In a separate study, women expected more negative outcomes from having achieved higher-level leadership positions. This article provides another lens through which to view the issue of why women are under-represented in higher level leadership positions.

Advice for women who want to navigate a leadership journey

Building on the theoretical understanding of gender differences in the leadership experience, this section offers science-backed and evidence-based research to help women who want to increase their leadership responsibilities (and to help men to better support them).

The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance -- What Women Should Know
by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman





Leadership is a form of power, and achieving power requires confidence. Journalists Kay and Shipman draw on cutting-edge research in genetics, gender, behavior, and cognition to help women understand why they may lack confidence and how to achieve it in a way that feels authentic, and also yields results. Taking a neuro-cognitive perspective, it explores how confidence can breed success, why women lack confidence, and tips that will help foster increased confidence.

The Next Generation of Women Leaders: What You Need to Lead but Won't Learn in Business School by Selena Rezvani

In this book, Rezvani collates lessons learned from interviewing highly accomplished business women. Taking a qualitative and narrative perspective, this collection of stories from women who have found success at work offers a different lens through which to view the issue of women and leadership. This book takes a narrative approach to understanding the experiences of a range of successful female leaders. Rezvani seeks to interpret and understand patterns that can be internalized and tested by the reader.

Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results by Judith E. Glaser

Perhaps one of the most interesting and helpful perspectives, *Conversational Intelligence* explores the communication and relationship building aspect of leadership. Given that women do tend (on average) to be more relational and affiliation-based in their leadership styles, one way to take advantage of this skill is to hone the ability to build trust and communicate effectively. While Glaser's book is helpful for women and men, women in particular may find it to be a very important tool to have in their leadership arsenal.

Motherhood and leadership

Motherhood is a unique experience. These books speak specifically to the challenges that working mothers face in navigating leadership careers and offer suggestions for doing so successfully.

Work. Pump. Repeat.: The New Mom's Survival Guide to Breastfeeding and Going Back to Work by Jessica Shortall

If the stress of balancing responsibilities of work and of being a new mother are taking their toll, this book provides a humorous break while supplying practical guidance. Shortall draws on stories and experiences from a range of women to offer advice on negotiating the balance of time and problem-solving at work.

The Fifth Trimester: The Working Mom's Guide to Style, Sanity and Success After Baby by Lauren Smith Brody

The Fifth Trimester refers to the introduction of a new mother back into the work world. Smith Brody offers personal and practical advice for navigating some of the unexpected challenges (e.g. how and when to pump most efficiently), while also drawing on scientific research to help navigate life through sleep deprivation. Easy and entertaining to read, this book offers practical guidance for new mothers who are returning to work.

To close

As gender norms continue to shift and leadership expectations evolve, it is important for women and men to understand the gender disparity in leadership in order to advance our ability to lead. This set of resources is a starting point for anyone who wants to learn more about leadership and identify ways to test leadership skill development.

