

# Leadership and Gender

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## Opening Case: A Day in the Life of a Leader

Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, rises in the morning between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. in her unpretentious, rent-controlled apartment located in the center of Berlin. She makes breakfast and eats with her husband sometime between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. After being transported in an armored vehicle to the chancellor's office, she meets with her close advisers and discusses world news and other issues for which her staff has prepared background information. This being Wednesday, the day of weekly cabinet meetings, she meets with them at 9:30 a.m. and discusses, among other issues, the continuing refugee crisis. As chair of this meeting, she invites discussion but skilfully mediates to settle matters that become contentious. Among these cabinet ministers and advisers, women are well represented, with Beate Baumann serving as her office manager, speechwriter, and gatekeeper.

A working lunch follows, where she discusses the Syrian crisis with her defense minister, Ursula Von der Leyen, and other advisers. She then meets with Julia Klöckner, chair of the Christian Democratic Union Party in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, who arrived together with several of her associates. A keen strategist, Merkel advises them how to overcome the political challenges they are facing from opposition parties.

Because the Bundestag (i.e., parliament) is meeting this afternoon, she immediately goes there to deliver a planned speech on the refugee crisis. As usual, she is wearing her signature black pants and bright-colored blazer. Just before speaking at this

televised event, she has a quick visit with her hair stylist. In this speech, she reviews the recent history of the refugee crisis and current situation. In particular, she adroitly defends the agreement that she brokered with Turkey to retain refugees and to pass on only Syrian nationals to Germany and the rest of Europe. She delivers this speech in her usual calm style, which is free from bombast and high-flying rhetoric. She presents facts and concrete solutions in a straightforward, low-key manner. The speech is generally well received, consistent with the German public having accorded her a high approval rating and bestowing on her the nickname of “Mutti,” or “Mommy.” However, she is worried because the welcoming policy that she has fostered in the refugee crisis has already threatened the high level of trust that she has enjoyed.

After leaving the Bundestag, Merkel returns to her office, where she works at a simple writing table instead of the large, imposing desk inherited from her predecessor, Gerhard Schroeder. The wall above her writing desk displays a portrait of Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of postwar West Germany. On a shelf behind her desk sits a small, framed portrait of Catherine the Great, the German-born Russian empress who set transformative change in motion in 18th-century Russia. Yet, in the presence of these inspiring role models, Merkel faces the mundane task of looking over and signing documents that her staff bring to her. She also listens to a report from several of her advisers about civil unrest involving right-wing protesters of the surge in immigration. This meeting extends to a working dinner at the chancellery.

Merkel returns to her apartment sometime after 10 p.m. She is in bed by midnight, allowing 6 to 7 hours of sleep before beginning her routine the next day.<sup>1</sup>

### Discussion Questions

1. How would you characterize Angel Merkel's leadership style? Do you think her gender has affected the way she leads?
2. What characteristics of Merkel do you believe make her a particularly strong leader? What weaknesses do you think she has?
3. How are expectations, and, consequently, the evaluations of female leaders, affected by the cultural context? Compare and contrast what one would probably find in the U.S. versus Norway.”

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## Chapter Overview

In many societies, women have made considerable progress in attaining leader roles, as symbolized by the ascension of Angela Merkel to the very powerful position of chancellor of Germany. However, gender equality remains a distant goal, with men currently possessing considerably more power and authority than women in organizations and governments. Patriarchy, although weakened, still prevails. In this chapter, we review the social science for why gender inequality remains, while still slowly diminishing.

We focus on leadership exercised in formal positions, not the informal leadership that often goes unrecognized and unrewarded. In accounting for the relative deficit of

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1. See Kreller (2014); Orth (2014); Packer (2014); Rinke & Brown (2010).

**Table 10.1** Summary of Findings Testing Theoretical Explanations for the Gender Gap in Leadership

<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Finding</i>
Human capital	Women favored in education and general school extracurricular activities; men in business schools and school sports
Family responsibilities	Men favored; due to family, women more often quit and work part-time
Leadership styles	Women favored in use of transformational style and rewards, and in avoiding punishment, waiting to act, and laissez-faire leadership, unclear effect of democratic leadership
Effectiveness	Mixed findings on financial outcomes for organizations; for ratings of leader effectiveness, women and men favored in different contexts
Evolutionary approach	Evidence favors flexibility in gender roles; female and male leaders favored in different contexts
Trait differences	No clear advantage in the Big Five traits or intelligence; unclear relevance of aggressiveness and competition
Discrimination	Men favored; women discriminated against in hiring, promotion, and pay
Stereotyping	Men favored overall because women are subject to the double bind, although context affects the male advantage
Organizational obstacles	Men favored due to demand for long hours and women's lack of access to networks, mentors, and desirable assignments

women in leader roles, we consider five factors. First, does women's lesser human capital contribute to the deficit? Second, is women's leadership style disadvantageous? The third explanation considers whether men's nature gives them an advantage. The fourth explanation focuses on prejudice and discrimination, and the fifth considers organizational barriers. We begin by reviewing women's current status as leaders.

## Representation of Women and Men in Leadership Roles

In most developed societies, women have gained considerable access to management. In the United States, women currently hold 39% of all managerial positions, up from 11% in 1940 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Although the proportion of women declines with higher organizational rank (Helfat, Harris, & Wolfson, 2006), across all organizations, 28% of chief executive officers are women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016, Table 11). In nonprofit organizations, women fare better, constituting 43% of chief executive officers and 43% of board members, but are less common in the larger, wealthier nonprofits (Stiffman, 2015). In the Fortune or S&P 500, women constitute 25% of senior executives and managers, 19% of board members, but only 4% of chief executive officers (Catalyst, 2016).

Globally, the percentage of female managers has risen in the last decade and ranges from 59% in Jamaica to 3% in Pakistan (International Labor Organization, 2015a). A study of large listed corporations in 39 nations reported 11% median female corporate board representation, with the highest representation in Iceland (48%), Norway (37%), and France (30%), all nations with quotas requiring a minimum female membership (Deloitte, 2015).

Despite gradual increases, women remain underrepresented in political leadership (United Nations, 2015). Currently, U.S. women hold 19% of congressional seats and 25% in state legislatures (Center for American Women and Politics, 2015). Globally, women hold 23% of parliamentary seats: 19% in Asia, 23% in Africa, 27% in the Americas, and 24% in Europe excluding the Nordic nations, which are highest at 41% (International Parliamentary Union, 2016).

A few women have emerged in very high places. Currently, women lead governments as presidents or prime ministers in 19 nations, including Germany, where Angela Merkel continues as chancellor (Christensen, 2016; Kent, 2015), and a woman serves as managing director of the International Monetary Fund. Thus, instead of the impenetrable barrier implied by the *glass ceiling* metaphor, women face challenges that are difficult but not impossible to overcome. To symbolize women's often challenging paths to leadership, we offer the metaphor of the *labyrinth* (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Some women do make it to the center of the labyrinth and attain leadership, but compared with the men's relatively straight paths, women's less direct routes require more careful navigation. We now consider what forms the labyrinth takes. Why do women remain underrepresented as leaders?

## Human Capital Investments and Family Responsibilities

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### Human Capital of Women and Men

One explanation for the leadership gender gap is that women lack human capital due to deficiencies in the skills, knowledge, and psychological attributes that enable leadership. However, in industrialized countries, women typically now exceed men in education (United Nations, 2015). In the United States in 2014, women received 57% of bachelor's degrees, 60% of master's degrees, and 52% of PhDs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, Table 318.30). In the United States (Voyer & Voyer, 2014) and many industrialized countries (United Nations, 2015), women and girls earn higher grades than men and boys.

More women are earning the MBA degree—a usual credential for high-level managerial careers. Worldwide, in 2015, women took 44% of graduate management admissions tests and were 40% of the applicant pool for full-time MBA programs (Bruggeman & Chan, 2016). Moreover, more women—now 47% of applicants—are seeking finance degrees (Bruggeman & Chan, 2016). Still, gender gaps remain. One study found that men's higher grades and greater representation in finance were associated with women's lower earnings (Bertrand, Goldin, & Katz, 2010). Yet

sharp critiques have faulted the masculine cultures of elite business schools for disadvantaging women (e.g., Wittenberg-Cox & Symons, 2015).

Young people's experiences outside of classrooms could build human capital in the form of self-confidence and competitiveness (Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016). U.S. studies reveal that boys participate more in sports and girls in other activities such as clubs and student government (e.g., Ingels, Dalton, & LoGerfo, 2008; Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011). These extracurricular activities are associated with well-being, pro-social behavior, and other outcomes (see review by Farb & Matjasko, 2012), including self-rated leadership ability (Hancock, Dyk, & Jones, 2012), and the association is clearer for nonsport than sport activities. In college, men continue to participate more in sports (Quadlin, 2016) and women more in student government except in the leadership roles of president and treasurer (American Student Government Association, 2016). Although such research suggests that extracurricular activity advantages women at least as much as men, there is some limited evidence that participation in competitive sports fosters a taste for competition (Comeig, Grau-Grau, Jaramillo-Gutiérrez, & Ramírez, 2015). Although some economists have argued that women's labor market outcomes are adversely affected by their lesser competitiveness (e.g., Reuben, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2015), the available evidence is sparse.

Occupational interests and preferences are aspects of human capital that shape career decisions. Compared with men, women prefer (Diekmann & Steinberg, 2013) and are employed in occupations that fulfill communal goals—that is, helping and interacting with people (e.g., Lippa, Preston, & Penner, 2014). Furthermore, in research on the specific attributes that people indicate that they seek in jobs, a meta-analysis revealed some gender differences: Women preferred working with people, opportunity to help others, easy commute, resource adequacy, and opportunity to make friends, whereas men preferred solitude and leisure (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000). Women's communal orientation could enhance their interest in management, even while shaping the type of managerial careers that they undertake. For example, a survey of 300,000 U.S. business students found that women outnumbered men by two to one or more in seeking jobs in nonprofits, government and public service, and health care, as well as in retail, fashion, and apparel; marketing and advertising; and consumer goods (Goudreau, 2010).

Women are less attracted than men to political leadership. This finding emerged robustly in three U.S. national surveys of persons employed in the professions from which most political candidates emerge (e.g., lawyers, political activists, business leaders; see Lawless, 2015). Two causes have received considerable support: Women are less likely to be recruited to run for office, and women have lower self-efficacy in relation to running. A national survey of U.S. high school and college students found that this political ambition gender gap increased from high school to college, as men became progressively more involved than women in political activities through courses, political organizations, media consumption, and conversations (Fox & Lawless, 2014).

Women's overall career ambition is similar to that of men. In fact, self-reported desire for a high-paying job is now greater among young women than young men in

the United States (Patten & Parker, 2012). Male and female employees appear to be equally committed to their employing organizations (e.g., Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Also, a study of 1,000 employees of U.S. public and private organizations found that more women than men aspired to top management when they entered these organizations. However, over time, women's aspirations had faded relative to those of the men (Coffman & Neuenfeld, 2014).

All in all, we have a nuanced story to tell about human capital. Women excel in amount of education even though they may face some disadvantage in business schools. Girls, like boys, gain additional capital outside of schoolwork, although boys may gain more experience in competitive contexts. Women's stronger communal orientation attracts them more to some types of leader roles. Finally, women's considerable ambition for leadership may fade as they navigate the labyrinth—an issue we address in the remainder of this chapter.

## Women's and Men's Family Responsibilities

According to human capital theory, family responsibilities undermine women's careers. There is little doubt that, on average, women spend more time than men on childcare and housework in all nations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a, Tables A-6, A-7; World Bank, 2013). Because much domestic work is obligatory and routine, opting out of it because of job responsibilities is generally not feasible. Therefore, women typically sacrifice personal time and, as a result, experience less leisure time than men do (e.g., Sayer, 2016).

Although job turnover is slightly higher in men than in women (see meta-analysis by Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000), a large-scale study of professionals and managers in Fortune 500 companies found a 36% higher quit rate among women than men (Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008). This difference attenuated in positions occupied by more women because of a higher male quit rate in such jobs. Women quit more than men only in the early years of job tenure and more often for family reasons (e.g., Bertrand, Goldin, & Katz, 2010; see Theodossiou & Zangelidis, 2009, for European data). In general, employees suffer long-term income loss from job breaks for family responsibilities, which are more costly than breaks taken for reasons such as obtaining additional training (Theunissen, Verbruggen, Forrier, & Sels, 2011).

Part-time employment, which also slows women's advancement, has been increasing, especially among women (International Labor Organization, 2015b). In 2010, some 26% of women in Europe and 13% in the United States worked fewer than 30 hours a week, compared with 4% to 5% of men (Blau & Kahn, 2013). Having a spouse or children is associated with part-time work for women but with increased hours for men (Greenhaus & Powell, 2012). Even women in high-status occupations often reduce their work hours to accommodate family responsibilities (Herr & Wolfram, 2012).

In sum, part-time schedules and breaks from employment lower women's human capital relative to that of men and thereby contribute substantially to gender gaps in pay, advancement, and authority (Abendroth, Maas, & van der Lippe, 2013; Blau & Kahn, 2013; Mandel & Semyonov, 2014). Such findings can raise questions about the adequacy of female leaders' performance. Do women perform as well as men when they do occupy leadership roles?

## The Leadership Styles of Women and Men

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### Research on Leadership Styles of Women and Men

If women lack adequacy as leaders, perhaps their leadership style is at fault—that is, their typical modes of interacting with their superiors, peers, and subordinates. Because styles influence leaders' effectiveness (Yukl, 2013), any sex differences in style could affect women's advancement.

Meta-analyses of gender differences in leadership style based on people's ratings of individual leaders' typical behaviors found that women overall adopted a somewhat less autocratic and more democratic leadership style, by involving subordinates in decision making (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; van Engen & Willemssen, 2004). Indeed, leading "from behind," as the term is known in the United States, involves working with others to reach collective decisions, a signature effort of German chancellor Angela Merkel. In contrast, women and men did not differ in their task-oriented versus interpersonally oriented leadership—the extent to which they emphasized maintaining rules and procedures versus attending to followers' needs, although women were more interpersonally oriented in nonmanagerial samples, especially among university students.

Eagly and Johnson (1990) suggested that women's preference for democratic and participative leadership styles could stem from gender norms discouraging women from leading in a top-down, autocratic manner (see subsection Restrictions on Women's Agency). Yet norms about appropriate managerial behavior likely differ across organizations, given that women tended to manifest more democratic and more interpersonally oriented styles than men in leader roles that were less male-dominated. Thus, there may be more leeway for culturally feminine relational and participative styles with greater numbers of women in leader roles.

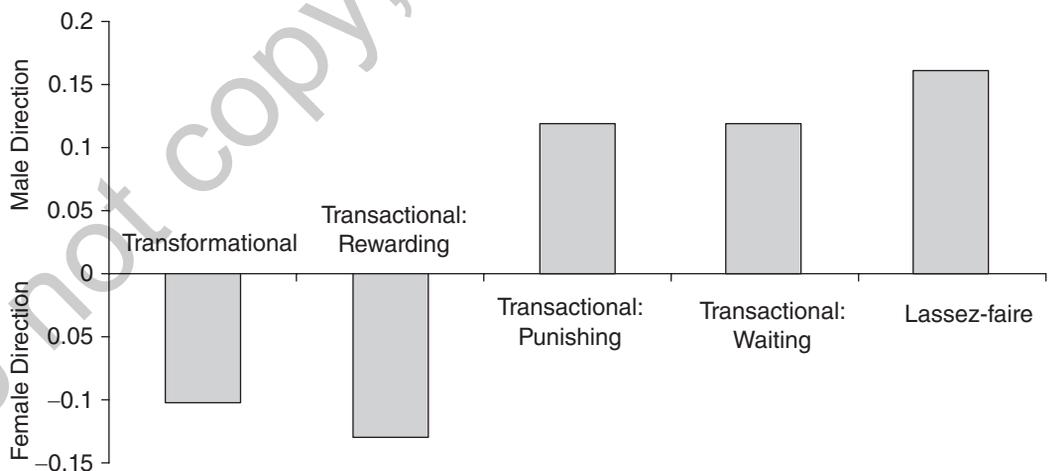
In the 1980s and 1990s, many researchers shifted their research to transformational leadership: a style that is future oriented rather than present oriented and that strengthens organizations by inspiring followers' commitment and ability to contribute creatively to organizations. Transformational leadership involves establishing oneself as a role model by gaining followers' trust and confidence (Bass, 1998). Transformational leaders state future goals, develop plans to achieve those goals, and innovate, even when their organization is generally successful. By mentoring and empowering followers, such leaders encourage them to develop their full potential and thus to contribute more effectively to their organization.

Researchers contrasted transformational leaders with *transactional* leaders, who appeal to subordinates' self-interest by establishing exchange relationships with them. This type of leadership involves clarifying subordinates' responsibilities, rewarding them for meeting objectives, and correcting them for failing to meet objectives. In addition to these two styles, researchers distinguished a *laissez-faire* style that is marked by a general failure to take responsibility for managing (see Antonakis, Chapter 3, this volume).

Because transformational leadership combines masculine qualities with feminine communal ones, especially in its individualized consideration dimension,

the style is likely to be more attractive to female leaders than more masculine styles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Testing this idea, a meta-analysis compared men's and women's transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles of leadership (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). The findings revealed small sex differences (reported as means in the  $d$  metric of standardized differences, with differences in the male direction given a positive sign, see Women were generally more transformational and more transactional on the transactional subscale of providing rewards for satisfactory performance. Women's transformational leadership differed most from men's in *individualized consideration*, focusing on developing and mentoring followers and attending to their individual needs. In contrast, compared with women, men showed more transactional leadership by emphasizing followers' mistakes and failures and waiting until problems become severe before intervening. Men were also more laissez-faire than women. These differences were replicated in large-scale studies by Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) and Desvaux and Devillard (2008).

In summary, women's leadership style tends to be more democratic and participative, compared with men's more autocratic and directive style. Female managers also tend to adopt a transformational style somewhat more than men do. Transactionally, female managers use more rewards than men do. In contrast, men, more than women, attend to subordinates' failures to meet standards and display the more problematic styles that involve delay in solving problems or being absent or uninvolved at critical times. Similar findings emerged in a study of people's beliefs, or stereotypes, about female and male leadership styles, suggesting that people are generally aware of these relatively subtle behavioral differences (Vinkenburgh, van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011).



**Figure 10.1** Effect Sizes Reflecting Gender Differences in Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership

SOURCE: Adapted from "Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men," by A. H. Eagly, M. C. Johannesen-Schmidt, & M. van Engen, 2003. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, p. 571.

## Leadership Style and Leaders' Effectiveness

Do these findings on leadership style advantage either male or female leaders? With respect to democratic and participative styles, the answer is not clear. Assertiveness, an aspect of autocratic style that consists of actively pursuing and defending one's own interests, is most effective at moderate levels; high levels can damage social relationships, whereas low levels limit goal achievement (Ames & Flynn, 2007). Additional research could determine whether women's typically more democratic style usually places them in this advantageous middle ground.

The implications of transformational and transactional leadership are clearer. As confirmed meta-analytically (Judge & Piccolo 2004; see also Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011), the behaviors somewhat characteristic of women, the transformational style and the component of transactional style that involves providing rewards, were correlated with effectiveness. In contrast, of the behaviors somewhat more characteristic of men, transactional leadership involving punishment was only weakly associated with effectiveness, and delaying problem-solving and the *laissez-faire* style were associated with impaired effectiveness.

Some caution about this female advantage generalization is appropriate. One reason for caution is that these style differences are quite small. A second reason for caution is the possibility of a selection bias whereby, to attain leader roles, women have to meet higher promotion standards than men (see Blau & DeVaro, 2007). Given such ambiguities, we review other ways of examining the relative effectiveness of female and male leaders.

In business contexts, one way to study effectiveness involves examining the relations between the proportion of female leaders and companies' financial performance. Some early studies found that gender diversity was associated with better financial outcomes (e.g., Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, & Baumgarten, 2007). These and other early studies initiated the so-called *business case* whereby female leadership is said to bring about higher corporate profits. However, basing conclusions on simple group comparisons or correlational analyses is not sufficient to indicate that women cause greater profits. Such associations may suffer from endogeneity—that is, statistical anomalies such as reverse causation, omitted variables, selection biases, and flawed measures (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2010).

In fact, newer research with appropriate statistical controls for endogeneity has not routinely supported the business case (see Adams, 2016). For example, in a large sample of U.S. firms, Adams and Ferriera (2009) found an overall negative average effect of the gender diversity of corporate boards when controlling for individual firm characteristics. However, this effect was moderated by how well governed firms were. Specifically, the presence of female directors reduced attendance problems of boards and increased monitoring of CEOs, holding them accountable for poor performance. This monitoring benefited firms with weak governance, but was counterproductive for firms that were well governed. This study illustrates one way in which differences in female and male behavior may have unexpected consequences.

A meta-analysis of 140 studies examining the effects of increasing board gender diversity on firm financial outcomes revealed a tiny, but significant, positive zero-order correlation ( $r = .03$ ) (Byron & Post, 2016). All in all, the business case for

women on boards lacks support, although some individual studies have produced positive outcomes (see Eagly, 2016). Research has also found considerably more evidence associating women's board participation with enhanced social outcomes, such as corporate responsibility, than with financial outcomes (Byron & Post, 2016).

A final method of assessing leaders' performance is based on ratings of the effectiveness of individual leaders. In a meta-analysis of 96 studies comparing the effectiveness of men and women holding comparable leadership roles, there was no overall sex difference (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). A later meta-analysis of leaders' effectiveness encompassing 95 studies also found no overall sex difference (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014). However, perceived effectiveness depended on whether leadership was rated by the leaders themselves or by others. With others' ratings, women appeared to be more effective than men, whereas with self-ratings, men appeared to be more effective than women. The type of organization affected results in both meta-analyses. In contexts that were male dominated (e.g., military, government), men received higher effectiveness ratings, whereas in contexts that were more female-dominated (e.g., education, middle management), women were perceived as more effective than men. Such contextual findings suggest an influence of gender stereotypes. In male-dominated settings, people may equate good leadership with stereotypically masculine behaviors, creating doubt about women's competence. Similarly, in female-dominated settings, leadership may be infused to some extent with more feminine qualities (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011).

In conclusion, research on leaders' style and effectiveness suggests that style differences between women and men are unlikely to hinder women's performance as leaders but instead could even enhance their performance. Also, findings on leaders' effectiveness suggest neither male nor female advantage, although contextual effects abound. Overall, there is little ground for concluding either that women have ineffective leadership styles or are generally less effective than their male counterparts.

## The Nature Arguments: Men as Naturally Dominant

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### Evolutionary Psychology Theory

Evolutionary psychologists ascribe current psychological sex differences to the differing reproductive pressures on males and females in the early history of the human species (e.g., Buss, 2016). According to one evolutionary approach (Trivers, 1972), because women invested more than men in their offspring (e.g., through gestation and nursing), women consequently became choosier about potential mates. This choosiness presumably took the form of ancestral women preferring mates who could provide resources to support them and their children. As a result, ancestral men competed with other men to obtain resources and sexual access to women, and the winners in these competitions were more likely to have their genes

carried on to the next generation. By this logic, men who fared better in these competitions were dominant, aggressive, risk taking, competitive, and status seeking—attributes that facilitated leadership. Such men's greater control of resources and higher status facilitated their reproductive success, and these qualities became ingrained in men as evolved traits.

Other evolutionary scientists have emphasized the extreme environmental variability and changing adaptive challenges present during human evolution (e.g., Richerson & Boyd, 2005), arguing that this evolutionary history would have enhanced cognition, producing humans capable of responding flexibly to environmental changes (e.g., Lieberman, 2012; Potts, 2012). Also because, over eons, humans lived in groups of increasing size, their evolutionary niche advantaged those who had social skills enabling communication and persuasion. Given this sociality, along with advanced cognition, humans gained the capacity to form different types of social structures, depending on external conditions (Gintis, van Schaik, & Boehm, 2015).

These assumptions about human flexibility suggest that male dominance would not be a human universal. Indeed, anthropological scholarship reveals that most very simple foraging societies were organized into nonhierarchical and nonpatriarchal band structures (e.g., Boehm, 1999; Gintis et al., 2015). In such societies, men and women were likely relatively mutually dependent for their subsistence, depending on each society's environment and ecology. Both sexes would have reaped advantages from pair bonds with effective resource providers. Despite sex-based task specialization, relations between the sexes were probably relatively egalitarian.

Patriarchy emerged along with a variety of economic and social developments, including warfare and intensive agriculture (Wood & Eagly, 2012). With the advent of settled societies that accumulated wealth, roles in the nondomestic economies increasingly required specialized training, intensive energy expenditure, and travel away from the home. Because of men's freedom from the gestation and nursing of infants, they were better positioned to occupy these roles and, ultimately, roles that entailed primary responsibility for providing resources for family units. Women's labor became more confined to the private, domestic sphere because birth rates remained high while nondomestic work moved out of homes and farms and eventually into factories and offices. Therefore, women generally lost power relative to men. Inequality increased, and men came to dominate leadership roles (Miller, 2015).

Given the presumption that the predominance of male leaders reflects the broader social structure, some evolutionary psychologists have theorized contingencies in the expression of male dominance. Espousing what is known as an *evoked culture* approach, they argue that genetically programmed sex differences in qualities such as aggressiveness and dominance can be differentially evoked by contextual factors (Buss, 2016; van Vugt & Ronay, 2014). From the evoked culture perspective, whether people favor leaders with masculine or feminine qualities would depend on the prevailing conditions. Research illustrating the contextual quality of such preferences has shown that priming participants with threats of death elicited a preference for more agentic and masculine leadership (Hoyt, Simon, & Innella, 2011), whereas priming with threats of crime or unemployment

elicited a preference for social change and female leadership (Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011). Moreover, female leaders tend to be preferred for organizations in crisis, in part because they signal the potential for change (Ryan et al., 2016; see section Organizational Obstacles to Women's Leadership). Such findings suggest that the prevalence of male leaders reflects sociocultural conditions at least as much as evolved tendencies.

### Sex Differences in Leadership Traits

Personality traits have also been implicated as important determinants of leadership ability. Most contemporary psychologists take the view that sex differences in traits and behaviors follow from both nature and nurture (Eagly & Wood, 2013). Consistent with this interactionist view, tendencies toward leadership appear to be partially heritable (Ilies, Arvey, & Bouchard, 2006), yet responsive to socialization whereby children and young people can gain leadership skills in many settings.

Of special interest are the gender differences in traits that may be relevant to leadership, which may include aggressiveness and assertiveness. Indeed, meta-analyses have found greater aggressiveness in men than women, particularly for physical rather than verbal aggression (Archer, 2004; Bettencourt & Miller, 1996). A meta-analysis on workplace aggression (Hershcovis et al., 2007) also showed greater male participation. Men also scored higher than women on self-report personality measures of overall assertiveness (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). Consistent with these trends, men show greater motivation to manage in a traditional, hierarchic command-and-control manner (see meta-analysis by Eagly, Karau, Miner, & Johnson, 1994).

Sex differences in competitiveness have also been of interest, given the logic that people often compete for leader positions. As noted in the section Human Capital of Women and Men, behavioral economists have studied competitiveness in laboratory and field settings (see review by Niederle & Vesterlund, 2011). The general finding is that men compete more than women, reflecting both men's overconfidence and their more favorable attitudes toward competition. In research on competitiveness in bargaining and mixed-motive games, a meta-analysis revealed a small sex difference, with men behaving more competitively than women (Walters, Stuhlmacher, & Meyer, 1998; see also Balliet, Wu, & De Dreu, 2014). However, a meta-analysis of social dilemma research found small effects whereby male-male interactions were more cooperative than female-female interactions and mixed-sex interactions produced more competition and less cooperation in men than women (Balliet, Li, Macfarlan, & van Vugt, 2011).

Other research further demonstrates the contextual quality of male and female competitiveness. For example, one experiment showed greater female than male competitiveness in a task related to the stereotypically feminine domain of fashion but greater male competitiveness or no difference in other domains (Wieland & Sarin, 2012). Also, a Chinese experiment showed greater competitiveness of men than women for a monetary incentive but equal competitiveness for an incentive that benefitted children (Caesar, Wordofa, & Zhang, in press).

Although findings on aggressiveness and competitiveness more often lean in the male than the female direction overall, there is little reason to believe that these qualities typically make leaders more effective. Physical aggression is hardly a means of advancement in modern professional organizations. Of course, verbal aggression, negative assertion, and competitiveness may facilitate leader emergence in some contexts. Yet characteristics akin to these dominating qualities, such as arrogance, self-centered ambition, or having an intimidating or abrasive style, are also known to derail leaders (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009).

Much research on the effects of personality on leadership has been focused on the five-factor model of personality, known as the Big Five (e.g., McCrae & Costa, 1987). A meta-analysis of studies assessing these traits' relations to leadership has shown that extraversion, openness to experience and, conscientiousness have small to moderate associations with leader emergence, and along with agreeableness, also relate to performing effectively as a leader. In contrast, neuroticism relates negatively to leader emergence and effectiveness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Regression analyses demonstrated that leader emergence was most strongly predicted by extraversion and conscientiousness and leader effectiveness by extraversion and openness to experience; neuroticism and agreeableness were of little importance. Another meta-analysis found general intelligence also associated with leader emergence and also effectiveness (Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004).

And how do men and women fare in these traits? Comparing their traits suggests that neither sex has a clear overall advantage in leadership. A large cross-cultural study found that women showed higher levels of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, with differences ranging from moderate in the case of neuroticism to small for the other traits (Schmitt, Realo, Voracek, & Allik, 2008). Women and men do not differ in overall intelligence (Halpern, 2012). Thus, women have a disadvantage in neuroticism and an advantage in agreeableness, neither of which has much relevance to leadership. Women show more conscientiousness and extraversion, which do predict leadership.

For effective leadership, managerial experts typically advocate an androgynous mix of qualities that include negotiation, cooperation, diplomacy, team building, and inspiring and nurturing others. Under contemporary conditions, it is thus unlikely that effective leadership derives mainly from traditionally masculine command-and-control behaviors or that men's ascendance to elite leadership roles reflects their natural dominance. Therefore, we turn to the possibility of prejudice and discrimination.

## Prejudice and Discrimination Against Female Leaders

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### Gender Discrimination

Economic studies show that human capital accounts for only a portion of the gender gaps in pay and advancement, suggesting that discrimination probably contributes to the unexplained gaps (Johnston & Lee, 2012; Mandel & Semyonov,

2014). Lending credibility to claims of discrimination, a study of U.S. federal employees found that women had to have higher performance ratings than men to be promoted (Pema & Mehay, 2010). Moreover, studies showing a constant level of discrimination across organizational levels suggest that women face a steady attrition that yields fewer women at higher levels (e.g., Elliot & Smith, 2004).

Evidence of discrimination also comes from experiments that compare the evaluation of male and female job applicants with identical qualifications. Experiments involving actual hiring situations, in which employers evaluate applicants or job applications, show that men are favored for jobs providing higher status and wages and for male-dominated positions, whereas women are favored only for female-dominated jobs (see review by Riach & Rich, 2002). Other experiments involve simulated hiring decisions in which students, managers, or other participants evaluate female or male applicants who have identical résumés. A meta-analysis of 136 such studies revealed that male raters prefer men over women for male-dominated, female-dominated, and integrated jobs, with the biggest male advantage accorded for male-dominated jobs (Koch, D’Mello, & Sackett, 2015). Female raters did not favor either sex except for giving men an advantage for female-dominated jobs.

Organizational studies also reveal discrimination: A meta-analysis of such studies found that women performed as well as men but obtained fewer promotions and less income, especially in prestigious and male-dominated positions (Joshi, Son, & Roh, 2015). Similar results were obtained in another organizational meta-analysis showing that women received higher performance evaluations but were rated as less promotable (Roth, Purvis, & Bobko, 2012). And other experiments show that, even with comparable professional work experience, mothers but not fathers were targets of workplace discrimination (e.g., Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). Finally, research shows that it is unlikely that female employees merely avoid authority positions because of family obligations (Corrigan & Konrad, 2006; Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008). Rather, discrimination may undermine women’s ambition (see subsection Human Capital of Women and Men) and may underlie the gender gap in authority by providing women smaller gains in workplace authority than men for similar human capital investments and conferring fewer advantages in job autonomy, challenging work, and income (Mintz & Krymkowski, 2010; Schieman, Schafer, & McIvor, 2013).

## Stereotypes About Women, Men, and Leaders and the Double Bind

Discrimination against female leaders occurs mainly because people believe that women lack the capacity to be effective leaders. According to role incongruity theory, prejudice toward female leaders derives from gender roles—consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men; these beliefs are either *descriptive* expectations about what women and men are like or *injunctive* expectations about what women and men ought to be like (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Prejudice against

women as leaders flows from the incongruity that people often perceive between the characteristics typical of women and the requirements of leader roles.

According to research in many nations, people expect men to be agentic—assertive, dominant, competent, and authoritative—and women to be communal—warm, supportive, kind, and helpful (e.g., J. E. Williams & Best, 1990). People also ascribe predominantly agentic qualities to leaders, making beliefs about leaders similar to beliefs about men, as Schein (1973) demonstrated in her “think manager, think male” studies. In Schein’s studies, participants rated a man, a woman, or a successful leader on gender-stereotypical traits; correlational analyses then tested whether the leader traits were more similar to the traits of men or women. A meta-analytic review of studies in the think manager, think male paradigms (and two related paradigms) revealed that although the association of leadership and masculine characteristics has weakened over time, leaders continue to be perceived as more like men than women (Koenig et al., 2011), and especially in highly male-dominated and higher-status leader roles. Prejudice is thus more likely when there is more incongruity between a leader role and the female gender role.

Stereotypes can be self-fulfilling. Thinking about negative portrayals of one’s group can cause group members to become concerned about fulfilling the stereotype, and this concern can derail their performance in the stereotypic domain. For example, in one *stereotype threat* experiment, students viewed television commercials featuring female-stereotypic (vs. neutral) content (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). Women, but not men, exposed to the female-stereotypic portrayals expressed less preference for a leadership role versus a nonleadership role. Although stereotype threat usually undermines performance, other reactions are possible, such as distancing oneself from the threatened domain or even challenging the stereotype by behaving counterstereotypically (see review by Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Stereotypes bring women other unique challenges as leaders. On one hand, women are perceived as lacking the agency to be effective leaders; on the other hand, because of injunctive norms about female communion, female leaders are perceived as lacking sufficient warmth if they behave too agentially (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The challenge for women leaders is to balance the leader role’s demand for agency and the female role’s demand for communion, creating a *double bind*. As a result of the double bind, female leaders also face a *double standard*, such that for comparable levels of performance, female leaders overall receive somewhat lower evaluations than male leaders, especially in male-dominated settings (see meta-analysis by Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). In studies of military cadets (Boldry, Wood, & Kashy, 2001) and managers (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995), men received higher evaluations than women who performed equally well. Except in feminine settings, women must display greater evidence of skill than men to be considered equally competent (e.g., Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Carli, 1990). As a result, women have more difficulty influencing others (Carli, in press).

These challenges that gender stereotypes produce for women leaders are often compounded by cultural stereotypes about race and ethnicity. These other stereotypes also contain some attributes disadvantageous for leadership—for example, African Americans are stereotyped as less competent, Hispanics as less ambitious,

and Asian Americans as less assertive (e.g., Gavami & Peplau, 2012). Minority women thus face different challenges than White women (see Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). White women are sometimes evaluated less favorably than Black women for comparable performance (Biernat & Sesko, 2013), although under conditions of poor performance, Black women may receive especially low ratings of competence (Rosette & Livingston, 2012).

### Restrictions on Women's Agency

Paradoxically, becoming prototypical of desirable leadership does not ordinarily protect women from prejudice. Unlike traditional women, who are considered warm and nice but not especially instrumentally competent, women who excel and display leadership are considered instrumentally competent but not particularly warm (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997). This perceived gender-role violation can, in turn, lower evaluations of women in leadership roles.

Compared with men, women's ability to lead is more dependent on their adherence to a constricted range of behaviors (Carli, 1999). In particular, behaviors that convey dominance, negative assertion, self-promotion, or lack of warmth conflict with the communal demands of the female gender role and therefore interfere with female influence. For example, a meta-analytic review revealed that women are more influential using communal rather than agentic influence tactics, but men were equally influential regardless of type of tactic used (Smith et al., 2013). Another meta-analysis demonstrated that people dislike explicit displays of dominance in women more than in men but react more favorably to subtle displays (see meta-analysis by M. J. Williams & Tiedens, 2016). Moreover, competent behavior yields greater benefits for men than women (Biernat, Tocci, & Williams, 2012; Brescoll, 2011). In general, women in powerful positions are seen as less legitimate than their male counterparts, triggering consequences such as reduced cooperation (see review by Vial, Napier, & Brescoll, 2016).

Although both men and women have been found to be more critical of female than male leaders, this tendency is stronger among men than women. Data from 31 countries show that men endorse sexist attitudes more than women do (Napier, Thorisdottir, & Jost, 2010). Men, more than women, associate leadership with masculine traits (Koenig et al., 2011), give less favorable evaluations to female than male leaders (Eagly et al., 1992; Eagly et al., 1995), and are less inclined to hire women (Koch et al., 2015).

One way that women can increase their likableness and thereby increase their influence with men is to "feminize" their behavior by increasing their interpersonal warmth. Warm women are better liked, which results in their increased influence (Carli, in press). Female leaders may therefore display an amalgam of agentic and communal qualities to gain influence and lead effectively. In one experiment, female leaders had to show both communion and agency to be seen as effective, whereas male leaders needed to show only agency (Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008). Pressures on women leaders to conform to gender roles likely contribute to women's motivation to avoid autocratic forms of leadership and their reliance on more democratic and transformational leadership styles.

In summary, gender roles cause people to expect and prefer women to be communal, creating a double bind for female leaders, who must demonstrate exceptional competence to be seen as equal in ability to men and must also avoid threatening others with dominance and lack of warmth. Thus, Chancellor Angela Merkel finesses the double bind with her calm, even-tempered style that is free of the bombast and macho posturing of her predecessor, Gerhard Schroeder. That Schroeder could maintain his leadership with such a style illustrates men's freedom from backlash for dominance. Nor are men penalized for exhibiting moderate communality, creating an advantage for them because they can display a wider range of behaviors, tailoring their leadership style to the demands of the situation. Moreover, men's greater resistance to female leadership also slows women's advancement to higher levels of leadership. Research thus provides strong evidence that stereotypes are a major factor accounting for women's rarity in elite leadership roles.

## Organizational Obstacles to Women's Leadership

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Because men have traditionally held positions of authority, organizations are structured to suit the life experiences of men. Consequently, organizations often establish norms that appear on the surface to be gender-neutral, but that inherently advantage men (e.g., Martin, 2003). In particular, many organizations have increased demands on their managerial and professional workforce, requiring long hours and personal sacrifices. Such demands implicitly presume an ideal employee that fits a traditional male image, with few outside responsibilities and complete devotion to the organization (J. C. Williams, Berdahl, & Vandello, 2016).

These changes have increased the prevalence of *extreme jobs* among professionals and managers that require very long hours of demanding work (Hewlett, 2007) and pressures to work longer and faster, to forswear breaks, to travel a lot, and to be available 24/7 (McCann, Morris, & Hassard, 2008). These demands are especially pronounced in high-status executive and professional positions, where long hours lead to faster advancement and higher pay (Cha & Weeden, 2014). As a result, people employed in management and related fields usually work longer than average hours (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a, Table 5). Rewarding employees for long hours presents a particular challenge to women, who have the bulk of domestic responsibilities (Gascoigne, Parry, & Buchanan, 2015). With their fewer domestic duties and more leisure time, men find it easier to commit to such extreme jobs.

These problems are most serious among women in high-intensity careers. Men have less pressure, given that they often have wives who are not employed. Even at high levels, female executives and professionals often have considerable family responsibilities that create stresses in meeting ideal employee standards. An example is Anne-Marie Slaughter's much-discussed article in *The Atlantic*, "Why Women Can't Have It All," which recounted her travails in balancing the demands of a high-level U.S. State Department position with her responsibilities toward her husband and two young sons (Slaughter, 2012).

Fathers also report stresses in reconciling their jobs with their family life because they generally profess a desire to devote equal effort to their families and their jobs (Harrington, Van Deusen, & Humberd, 2011). Nevertheless, a common division of labor is what J. C. Williams et al. (2016) label the *neo-traditional family*, defined by the father having a big, demanding job and the mother having a less time-consuming job allowing her to undertake more domestic work and thus support his career. Ambivalence about mothers' high-intensity careers is reflected in a Pew survey, revealing that 70% of respondents endorsed full-time employment for fathers of young children, compared with only 12% for mothers (Parker, 2015).

Women's greater family responsibilities can also undermine their ability to form work-related networks, which depend on socializing at bars and restaurants after work and through activities such as golfing or attending sports events. Regardless of whether women are welcome in such venues, mothers no doubt find that such activities interfere with time with their children. Consequently, women have less access to powerful career networks than men do (Burt, 1998; Dreher & Cox, 1996). Yet having networks and mentors is associated with increased salary and promotions (see meta-analysis by Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). Thus, women's relative lack of social capital impedes their leadership opportunities.

Women face other challenges in traditional male corporate cultures. Female executives have reported difficulty fitting in with the culture of their organizations and obtaining developmental work assignments and international travel opportunities (e.g., Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2014; Lyness & Thompson, 2000). Part of the reason why women advance less rapidly than men is they receive fewer challenging developmental assignments (King et al., 2012). Mirroring this phenomenon, in an experiment in which pairs of men and women negotiated about working on challenging or easy assignments, women were equally interested in the challenging work but ultimately received less of it than the men did (De Pater et al., 2009).

In general, managers view female employees as having less career motivation than male employees and treat them accordingly (Hoobler et al., 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that corporate women more than men exit corporations or shift into staff management roles instead of the line management roles that typically lead to senior management (Barsh & Yee, 2012). However, women are more often given highly risky, high-level assignments where they are likely to fail, a phenomenon known as the *glass cliff* (see review by Ryan et al., 2016). Consequently, women are denied achievable challenging assignments but receive more ill-fated assignments that are unlikely to advance their careers.

Given in-group favoritism, it might be that women fare better in organizations in which women have more decision-making power. Providing evidence that senior women benefit the advancement of female subordinates, one national sample of 20,000 U.S. firms found that the percentage of women in senior management predicted subsequent increases in the percentage of women in middle management (Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012). Yet other studies have produced inconsistent findings (see review by Kunze & Miller, 2014). Moreover, not all senior women are equally supportive of female subordinates: Some are *queen bees*, who distance

themselves from junior women (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2016). Although this behavior exacerbates gender inequality, it appears to be a response to existing gender discrimination and the social identity threats experienced by token female leaders.

In conclusion, organizational structure and culture implicitly favor men. Because men typically lack women's domestic duties, men can more easily satisfy the corporate demands for long work hours and continuous availability. Corporate cultures and male networks are also often unwelcoming to women, undermining their ability to create valuable social capital on the job. And women have difficulty obtaining desirable assignments with advancement potential. These obstacles discriminate against women and contribute to their relative absence from leadership positions.

## The Rise and Future of Female Leaders

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Despite barriers, women are rising into leadership roles in many nations, and not merely into lower and midlevel roles, but slowly into visible roles at the tops of organizations and governments. Powerful women such as Angela Merkel, Janet Yellen, and Christine Lagarde now receive routine coverage in the popular media. We now discuss the changes that have enabled at least some women to rise into leadership roles that women have very rarely occupied in the past.

One important factor in women's rise is their increasing educational advantage relative to men that we noted earlier. Also, the domestic division of labor has changed, with housework and childcare shared more equally by women and men (Bianchi, 2011). This shift reflects changing attitudes about family and employment roles. Endorsement of traditional gender roles in the United States is at an all-time low, especially among younger Americans (Galinsky et al., 2008).

Women and men have converged considerably in employment and income: Whereas in 1973, 79% of men and 45% of women were in the labor force, by 2015, those percentages were 69% and 57%, respectively (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016, Table 2). Furthermore, in 38% of married couples, the highest percentage ever, women are the primary or sole wage earners (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b, Table 26).

As women shift more of their time from domestic labor to paid labor, they assume the personal characteristics required to succeed in these new roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Research tracking sex differences over time reveals that as women have entered formerly male-dominated roles, they have become more agentic, and increasingly assertive, dominant, risk-taking, and interested in science, math, and engineering (see review by Wood & Eagly, 2012).

The qualities that now are seen as characteristic of good leadership have become more androgynous over time, incorporating more feminine, communal qualities (see Koenig et al., 2011). These new themes reflect organizational environments marked by accelerated technological growth, increasing workforce diversity, and a weakening of geopolitical boundaries. Leadership experts now recommend that leaders employ more communal qualities: democratic relationships, participatory

decision making, delegation of responsibility, developing subordinates, and relying on team-based skills (e.g., Kanter, 1997; Lipman-Blumen, 2000).

If women have become more masculine and leader roles more feminine, could characteristics ascribed to women eventually match leadership roles as well as those ascribed to men? We think so, but as we have shown, gender prejudice and discrimination have diminished but not disappeared. People still associate leadership more strongly with male than female traits. Women's agency is still met with resistance, particularly in male-dominated and traditionally masculine settings. The domestic division of labor remains unequal, and women continue to earn less and advance more slowly. Moreover, effective leadership in some situations may favor an authoritative, directive approach, which may elicit backlash and be risky for women.

Still, organizations are experimenting with a wide range of reforms, such as family-oriented work-life practices, to achieve greater gender diversity in their managerial ranks. These practices, especially family-friendly leave arrangements and direct provision of services (e.g., childcare or eldercare) can have positive effects, but generally only after a substantial time lag and only in some organizational contexts (see Kalysh, Kulik, & Perera, 2016). Moreover, the potential benefits of family-friendly reforms are often countered by *flexibility stigma*—negative reactions against those who take advantage of such practices (e.g., J. C. Williams et al., 2016), and this can result in underuse of these benefits. In response, some organizations have attempted to destigmatize options such as flextime and flexplace. Others have focused on making work practices more efficient to shorten long work weeks (J. C. Williams et al., 2016) or on reducing employee's gender stereotypes through education and diversity training (e.g., Carnes et al., 2015). Still other interventions, often based on government mandates, modify selection and promotion procedures to increase the representation of women and minorities. Examples include mandating affirmative action, goal-setting targets, reporting requirements, and the institution of quotas. These policies usually do increase female leadership, but can have unintended effects (see Sojo, Wood, Wood, & Wheeler, 2016). Companies sometimes take actions to avoid being included in the mandate. Also, such interventions can stigmatize the women targeted to benefit from them, antagonize those who do not benefit from them, and foster stresses in work groups (e.g., Heilman & Haynes, 2006). Finally, research is required to determine which interventions are most effective and under what conditions (e.g., Dobbin, Schrage, & Kalev, 2015).

The rise of women into elite leadership roles has gained momentum in recent years. In progressive circles, female leaders have come to symbolize modernity and future-oriented leadership. For example, when Justin Trudeau, prime minister of Canada, was asked why he chose equal numbers of women and men for his cabinet, he replied, "Because it's 2015" (Editorial Board, 2015). Although the effects of increased female leadership are not fully understood, the addition of women greatly increases the pool of leadership talent. Therefore, both the rationality of bureaucratic organizations in capitalist societies and the fundamental fairness that is highly valued in democratic societies should facilitate women's increasing entry into the ranks of leaders in the future.

### Discussion Questions

1. What can employers do to reduce conflicts between family obligations and workplace responsibilities?
2. What popular images are there in the media of male and female leaders? Are there more images of male than female leaders? Have these images changed over time?
3. How can the double bind be addressed beyond encouraging women to lead with a mix of masculine and feminine qualities? Can people be educated about gender stereotypes and the challenges that women leaders face?
4. Imagine that you had to make the case for more women in positions of authority to organizational leaders and male coworkers. What arguments would you make?

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### Recommended Case Studies

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