

# Women and Leadership Around the World

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**Title:** Women and Leadership Around the World

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*Women and Leadership around the World* is a compelling body of international research that provides a comprehensive vision of the triumphs, journeys, and challenges encountered by women in various contexts across the planet. This third volume in a new series explores issues pertaining to women's leadership from four regions of the world including the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Asia Pacific. This title is published under the rubric *Women and Leadership: Research, Theory, and Practice*.

The book sets out to theorize and problematize women's access to leadership, power, and their agency as leaders from the grassroots to the national and international levels. The text covers skill sets that run the occupational gamut from teaching to politics, entrepreneurship, community leadership, and motherhood. This insightful volume is a call to action for policymakers and other stakeholders to operationalize the Asilomar Declaration, which agitated for the rise of women to leadership and power on the world stage. Authoritative and featuring a rich array of qualitative methodologies, the book maps out pathways for greater engagement of women in leadership. Within its pages, the reader is introduced to original thinking based on networking theories, the intersections of identities, interconnectedness in intellectual thought, and unique leadership descriptors befitting trailblazers.

The editors provide a summary of each chapter captured in an expansive introductory section. It reflects on contemporary trends and provides access to data on international perspectives. In the book's quest to advance the engagement of women in leadership, which is underpinned by both theory and research, *Women in Leadership around the World* accords the reader the opportunity to assess studies and discover what sets female leaders apart from their male counterparts, all within a culturally sensitive milieu. For example, it includes a study on women in Islamic Afghanistan where restrictions are placed on their dress and public presence. From a Western perspective, this practice may be deemed oppressive and grounds for advocacy and retraining. However, the Afghan women who participate in these training programs understand that sustainable change can only be gradual, even as they acknowledge the cultural impediments to their aspirations for autonomy. In the book, Thompson poses the question: might the brand of leadership espoused by these Western trainers camouflage their political quest for cross-cultural dominion?

A key asset of this book lies in its near-global outlook, with each chapter exploring a facet of life that is of immediate interest to the region studied. For instance, the book depicts women in Afghanistan as *dying to lead*, and women in Israel and Palestine as placing a premium on peace vis-à-vis their leadership agenda. For women in the United Arab Emirates, an Islamic country typified by gender separation, the means through which leadership positions are cemented work through networking associations.

The scholarship from North America and Europe exemplifies the post-industrial achievements and considerable

strides toward moving the women and girls' agenda forward. There is a sense of optimism from Rosser-Mims, who invites readers to learn from Black women in the United States. In spite of their oppressive past, these women are shown to have made strides in political leadership. In a separate chapter, five substantive lessons are shown to emerge from a portrait study of a community leader in North Dakota, whose transformative leadership experience documents the congruence of motherhood and community leadership. The stance, which resonates with a study of women in Finland, underscores the role of motherhood in shaping leadership competency and pathways to career advancement. In another chapter, Canada is depicted as a nation typified by the movement of women in leadership, but one hit by a shortage of qualified women. The result of this is inadequate representation in both public and private organizations. There is a similar trend in the United Kingdom where organizations are portrayed as lacking in the mandate to foster the visibility and career progression of women. To help the reader understand how political machinery often circumvents women's quest for leadership, the authors present a unified voice of *underrepresentation* in a predominantly male domain. Hejnova's report of the political debasement of Czech women dissidents following the post-communist democracy of Slovenia adds new insights into the state of helplessness and relegation of women to low-status political positions.

In their assessment of the research-rich Asia-Pacific region (covering women's engagement in the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, India, and New Zealand), the authors cite both internal and external challenges confronting women. They argue that religious ideologies and local belief systems have shaped women's roles and social statuses in a backdrop of vast diversity in history, culture, and ethnicity. Clearly, the push to narrow the gender gap is a priority for the authors. Perhaps this quest is best captured by the inspirational stories of the Maori women in the film and screen industry. The underlying question they face is to what extent are they making their mark? Also considered is female entrepreneurship, especially as it enhances leadership skills and fosters independence. In *Women and Leadership around the World*, entrepreneurship is shown to be on the rise, more so as it relates to the feminist mission of leveling the playing field, which historically has skewed in favor of men.

Although the book succeeds in its objective of advancing the science of women's studies, particularly through its unique use of culture and race as a lens, the volume overlooks lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) perspectives as a valid additional vantage point through which to assess women's leadership issues. Research studies on women in Latin America and Africa are also lacking, including the silenced voices that persist in agitating for change. In a sense, the portion of the book title that alludes to coverage of *the world* in its entirety is inappropriate because a significant sociogeographical segment was passed over.

Overall, *Women and Leadership around the World* succeeds and the reader is left with a keen appreciation of the intersection between gender, race, ethnicity, and institutional factors in women's pursuit of vocational self-determination, leadership, and power. The book's impact is especially far-reaching considering that its 14 authors share cutting-edge research from a wide sociogeographical region including Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific. The volume will undoubtedly earn prime shelf space among researchers, faculty, and graduate students in fields such as sociology, anthropology, women's studies, and ethnic and cultural studies. Indeed this text would appeal to anyone who seeks solutions to complex questions pertaining to the age-old disparities between the sexes.