

RIVISTA DI  
**POLITICA ECONOMICA**

**Call for papers**

WOMEN IN COMPANY OWNERSHIP, GOVERNANCE,  
AND MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.  
FROM DOING TO BEING.

**Submission Due Date:**

June 30, 2011

**Guest Editor:**

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**Introduction:**

For years, an ongoing debate in practice and in research has taken place about both why there are so few women in company ownership, governance, and management positions, and whether a higher proportion of women in top positions affects firm performance. This is an evidence that the glass ceiling still strikes. Although gender quotas for top positions have brought women in the realm of leadership, they still lag far behind in corporate and elite professional contexts. In Europe, women constitute about a third of managerial positions but only three percent of CEOs (European Commission, 2007). Strong barriers that women have to face in getting leadership roles then still exist. Moreover, gender expectations and practices shape people's experiences even after they reach the top. Therefore, a challenge to women's leadership arises from the mismatch between skills traditionally associated with leadership, and those usually attributed to women. The assertive, authoritative, and dominant behaviors linked with leadership tend not to be viewed as typical or attractive for women. Anyway, if gender discrimination exists, i.e. the firms are hiring more male managers irrespective of the fact that more talented female potentials exist, the firm performance would eventually increase in case of a more balanced recruitment policy for managers.

According to the literature, there are several arguments advocating for women in firms' ownership, governance, and management. The key argument is that more diverse shareholders, directors or managers would be able of making more diverse and creative decisions based on different opinions and experience. Furthermore a larger number of women in ownership, governance, and management most likely positively

affects the career aspirations of younger women in lower positions. As a consequence the pool of potential candidates for top positions within the firm will increase and in the long run affect firm performance positively. But the glass ceiling is still there. It remains a striking disconnect between the performance imperative and the actual numbers of women sitting in seats of influence. Across the countries and throughout industries, numbers at the top are dispiriting.

That about-face well captures the contemporary ambivalence about women and leadership. Are we sure that women's under-representation in leadership positions is only attributable to traditional gender expectations and practices? The dream was that filling the pipeline would take care of the problem, but it is now clear that time alone is not the answer. For more than two decades, women have been earning about one-third of the MBAs awarded in the U.S., yet they comprise only two percent of Fortune 500 CEOs and eight percent of top leadership positions.

Feelings toward women are generally positive, but when women achieve distinctly male arenas, they are considered competent, but less liked than equally successful men. Besides, when women performing male roles, they are liked but not respected. In sum, it seems that women exchange achievement for affiliation in traditionally male roles. In leadership contexts, these biases play out on several levels: in the ways that organizations structure leadership paths and positions, in the ways people perceive women leaders, and in the ways women leaders perceive themselves and what they must do to succeed.

If leadership is about who leaders are and the contexts in which they lead, then the problem could be reframed by considering how gender biases play out at both the individual and organizational levels. At the individual level, one central problem is developmental: the way gender affects skills for leadership identity. At the organizational level, the problem is structural: the way unconscious biases and work practices constrain women's leadership opportunities and performances. For this reason we think that a further effort should be done by management scholars and economists to invest in these issues. Our purpose is to report an updated and original research in a special issue of **Rivista di Politica Economica** (<http://www.rivistapoliticaeconomica.it/>) which contents will also be proposed for publication in a book of the Palgrave-Macmillan series: Central Issues in Contemporary Economic Theory and Policy.

### **Research questions:**

Imaginative interpretations of the theme of the special issue are welcomed. Possible topics include, but are not limited to the following ones:

- Why the glass ceiling occurs? Why have women apparently not received the same opportunities for career advancement as men? Why does the advancement of women often stop just short of the general management level? Why is the problem still apparent despite several years of efforts, represented by affirmative action and equal opportunity?
- Could failing to accept women as legitimate leaders make gender bias a significant problem not only for women but for organizations as well?
- Is there an unexploited opportunity between gender diversity in ownership, governance, and management and firm performance? What are the mediating consequences of the presence of women on top positions just before firm performances?
- Are organizations, if unwittingly, communicating that women are not fitting for leadership roles?
- Are there some forms of organizations/businesses that fit better than others with women? E.g. family businesses, entrepreneurial business, venture backed firms, startups, and so on?

- In organizations, as women may view their leadership through a cultural lens distorted by gender bias, may a woman have difficulties in developing a viable *self*-view as a leader?
- May women leaders, unable to firmly ground their self-identity in the leadership role, be missing a critical requirement for leadership development?
- How women leaders might navigate a different societal and organizational terrain, not rooted in cultural ambivalence, from their male counterparts more effectively? And how organizations might support them and stand to gain in the process?
- How ambivalence about women emerges in organizational structures and practices, as well as in individual attitudes toward women? How the resulting double bind that women face shapes their experiences and identities in leadership roles? How these dynamics in turn may limit their capacity to exercise leadership effectively?

Papers on related issues not explicitly listed above are also welcome. Quantitative evidence and theoretical frameworks are welcome. We will accept only original papers.

### **Submission and review process:**

Electronic submissions in Word (.doc) and .pdf format should be addressed to the special issue Editor (see contact details below) and to **Rivista di Politica Economica** (rpe@confindustria.it) within **June 30th , 2011**. Contributions should be kept within 35 single-spaced pages including Figures, Graphs, Tables, References, and Appendices (if any).

All papers will be externally reviewed according to the journal's standards.

### **Tentative time line:**

June 30, 2011	Deadline for electronic submission of papers to the Special issue.
September 30, 2011	Notification to authors regarding acceptance to the Special Issue, which may be conditional on completing the revisions indicated in the reviewers' reports.
November 1, 2011	Delivery of the revised submission to the Editors.

### **Further information:**

For additional information, please contact the Special Issue Editor:

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