

Leading Public Policy Change through Women and Leadership Research

Preconference Workshop

Wednesday, 24 October

13:00 - 16:00 | Palm Beach County Convention Center - 2C

Introduction and Background

Despite advances in research on gender and leadership, the number of women holding leadership positions still lags behind men in nearly all cultures and contexts (Goryunova, Scribner & Madsen, 2017). Women leaders are under-represented in business and industry, in government and communities, and despite a global focus on economic empowerment, the wage gap persists as a social justice issue (World Economic Forum, 2017). Moreover, women are disproportionately subject to domestic abuse, sex trafficking, workplace harassment, and other forms of violence (United Nations Women, 2017). Although women and girls are exerting leadership in tackling these issues whether or not they are in formal positions of power, still the effects are far smaller than women's numbers would warrant.

Scholars and practitioners are not adequately connecting research about gender-based discrimination in the workplace, electoral politics, and public policies to the art and practice of women and leadership. And, although continued expansion of theory and research is important, developing new ways to scale up the practical applications of research is essential. Our goal as scholars and scholar practitioners should extend to achieving parity in representation of women in businesses, government, and nonprofit leadership positions, and to securing women-friendly public policies more generally.

There are multiple routes forward to accomplish this goal. One area of practice that is becoming more important in advancing women in leadership roles is politics and public policy. Policy changes are critical to guide individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and governments to improve conditions of women and girls (and ultimately everyone) throughout society. However, most women and leadership scholars and practitioners don't receive training on how to contribute to public policy making, driven by theory and research. This session is designed to fill this gap.

This will be achieved by working with scholars and scholarly practitioners to learn how to create public policies that represent the interests of women across the globe. The workshop is designed specifically for scholars and scholarly practitioners from any country who focus their work on women and leadership or related equality issues. The workshop experience will train and then catalyze individuals to move theory and research into policy. These goals will be met by stimulating interest in and knowledge about public policy, connecting participants from different organizations and disciplines, and mobilizing new and established scholars and practitioners to effect public policy change. The organizers seek participants who are serious about increasing their knowledge and skills regarding public policy, discovering how they can move current research and theory into the policy realm, planning how they can make this happen, and then influencing others to do the same

Workshop Schedule and Highlights

After a welcome and introductions from facilitators, we will move into a brief activity focused on pulling out the attendees' assumptions about public policy. This will be with the large group or in small groups, depending on number of attendees. The rest of the preconference workshop will be arranged into three primary sections: 1) overview, 2) skills and strategies, and 3) integration and application.

The first section will focus on an overview of public policy and help attendees begin to build connections between their policy and research interests. The section will start with presentations and discussion around the following questions: What is public policy? How does policy change? And, how does this fit with women and leadership research and theorizing? To help participants make connections to their own work, next we will facilitate a small group activity in which individuals identify their own public policy interests and envision how to connect their policy interests to their research. Time will be allocated to this activity in order to allow for participant discussion and reflection. This portion will be interactive as we expect many questions from the attendees.

The second section will focus on the identification and development of specific skills, strategies, and perspectives relevant to policy influencing and change. Content will be delivered by a recognized policy expert, and a discussion facilitated on the following questions: What skills are needed to be successful in moving theory and research to public policy? (Examples that will be discussed here will include analyzing stakeholders, relationship building, discourse analysis, articulating a vision, recognizing and building coalitions, and employing multiple modes of thinking and evaluating). A small group discussion and sticky note activity will also be integrated into this section to help participants start thinking about what policy competencies they may already have and what skills they may need to develop to move their interests and passions into policy work.

The third section of the workshop—Integration and Application—will help participants draw together the learning from the previous sections to help them integrate and apply the new learning within their own contexts. Our goal is for attendees to form a personal action plan that will help them move their own research and theory to public policy. To accomplish this goal, we will have a full group discussion focused on the following: What are the areas, issues, and topics of women and leadership theory and research that can be moved into public policy changes? We will then give attendees time for reflection on the issues related to their own individual scholarship, interests, and passions and ask them to identify initial steps they can take to catalyze needed policy changes. We will then wrap up by doing a review of the day and offer ways to remain involved in the discussion.

We find much work remains to be done in terms of influencing public policy for gender equity. Changes in the representation of women in leadership will foster progress, peace, and prosperity in organizations, communities, and nations (Madsen, 2017). This preconference will begin the process of training and then catalyzing individuals and groups to move women's leadership theory and research into both domestic and foreign policy. We believe that this is the start of a movement that would make the difference that has been needed for generations.

References

Chowdhury, D., Wilson, M., Lowe Morna, C., Makaya Magarangom, M. (2013). The impact of women's political leadership on democracy and development. Commonwealth Secretariat, London.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14217/9781848591677-en>

Goryunova, E., Scribner, R. T., & Madsen, S. R. 2017. The current status of women worldwide. In S. R. Madsen (Ed.), *Handbook of research on gender and leadership*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
Madsen, S. R. (Ed.) (2017). *The handbook of research on women and leadership*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Paffenholz, T. (2016). *Making women count—not just counting women: Assessing women’s inclusion and influence on peace negotiations*. Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies), UN Women.

United Nations Women. 2017. *Facts and figures: Ending violence against women*. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

World Economic Forum. 2017. *The global gender gap report*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>