

Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

Examining women's leadership identity development

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Identity plays a critical role in understanding the process of leadership. Further, leadership has been defined as a socially constructed process of claiming and being granted a leadership identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Thus, leadership development and ultimately leadership success must begin with the claiming of a leader identity. Typically underrepresented and with comparatively less access to power, status, and resources, women potentially find themselves in work roles that may be incongruent with their own identity (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Given social role theory, this paper examines the leadership identity development of women participants engaged in an eight-month leadership development program. Preliminary findings (although non-significant) and themes offer some insight to process of building leadership self-efficacy and the challenge of claiming a leader identity for women. To conclude, our paper ends with next steps and additional research questions in efforts to petition feedback that will allow us to engage in a more comprehensive study of leadership identity development in future investigations.