



# Positive Gender Identity for Women in Leadership: Examining and Embracing Experiential Learning through Deborah as a Mother in Israel

*DeLoria Savoy*

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Experiential learning is a powerful educational approach that involves learning through direct experience, reflection, and active engagement. It promotes critical thinking and allows for a deeper understanding of the subject matter. While Deborah's story predates modern educational theories and does not explicitly describe her learning through experiential means, her triumphant leadership journey embodies several elements that depict and align with the principles of experiential learning. Deborah's experiences, challenges, reflections, and mentorship demonstrate the value of learning through direct engagement with real-life situations. Deborah's

---

D. Savoy (✉)  
Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, USA  
e-mail: [deloriacsavoy@verizon.net](mailto:deloriacsavoy@verizon.net)

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature  
Switzerland AG 2024

S. Ertel et al. (eds.), *Women in Leadership*, Christian Faith Perspectives  
in Leadership and Business,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50016-9\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50016-9_5)

story serves as an inspiration and a model of leadership, showcasing how experiential learning plays a vital role in developing effective leaders.

Deborah was a prophetess and judge in ancient Israel, known for her wisdom, courage, and ability to lead. Deborah's story as described in narrative in chapter four and celebrated in poetry in chapter five in the Book of Judges provides lessons on the intersection of gender, leadership, and motherhood; for in 5:7, Deborah identified herself as a "mother in Israel." By exploring the story of Deborah through the lens of experiential learning, valuable insight into women's leadership is gained along with a deeper understanding of how women can thrive in leadership positions while embracing their gender identity. Conversely, examining experiential learning through the story of Deborah as a mother in Israel allows for the recognition of positive gender identity for women in leadership. The experiential learning within and gleaned from the accounts of Deborah's leadership acumen supports that women can excel in leadership while staying true to their gender characteristics. By applying experiential learning to Deborah's story, it allows for reflection on concepts such as leadership development, learning from challenges, mentoring, leading by example, adaptability, and empowerment.

Deborah's diverse social identities intersected to shape her unique position as a significant and instrumental figure in ancient Israel. Her roles as a prophetess, judge, leader, and warrior defied traditional gender norms and demonstrated a woman's capabilities in ancient societies and today. Her story continues to inspire discussions about the representation of women in leadership roles and emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing diverse social identities in positions of authority and influence. While Deborah's narrative comes from an ancient biblical context, the principles and characteristics that define her leadership are timeless and can be applied to modern organizational settings.

## 5.2 SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY BACKGROUND

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a psychological theory developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s. The development of SIT was underpinned by Tajfel integrating work on categorization and social perception with a desire to understand prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict in society (Hogg, 2016). SIT seeks to explain the psychological processes underlying group behavior, intergroup relations, and the formation of social identities (Hogg & Terry, 2014). The theory is based on the

premise that individuals define themselves and others based on the social groups to which they belong, and these group memberships play a significant role in shaping their self-concept and behavior (Hogg, 2016). The premise of SIT saved Tajfel's life when he, a Polish Jew, was categorized as a French prisoner of war during the Holocaust.

SIT includes three cognitive processes as core elements: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison.

- **Social Categorization:** According to SIT, individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into various social groups based on shared characteristics, such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or even simpler categorizations like the preference for a particular sports team. These social categories help people make sense of the social world and simplify complex social interactions (Trepte, 2013; Trepte & Loy, 2017).
- **Social Identification:** Once individuals categorize themselves as members of a particular social group, they tend to identify with that group. Social identification involves adopting the norms, values, and behaviors associated with the group, leading to a sense of belonging and a feeling of “us” versus “them” regarding other groups (Trepte, 2013; Trepte & Loy, 2017).
- **Social Comparison:** SIT is also influenced by social comparison, where individuals evaluate their own group positively in comparison to other groups. This process of positive distinctiveness enhances self-esteem and contributes to group cohesion (Trepte, 2013; Trepte & Loy, 2017).

Additional concepts in SIT are intergroup behavior, self-esteem, in-group and out-group, identity salience, and social change.

- **Intergroup Behavior:** SIT proposes that people's social identity significantly influences their intergroup behavior. In-group favoritism and out-group derogation occur as a result of individuals seeking to enhance the status of their own group. This leads to prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict (Ferguson & McKeown, 2016; Trepte & Loy, 2017).
- **Self-Esteem:** SIT is closely tied to self-esteem. When individuals positively evaluate their own social group, they experience a boost

in self-esteem. Abrams and Hoggs (2010) argued that the social comparison aspect of SIT is crucial to the self-categorization process because an individual is trying to place themselves into the best self-esteem enhancing group. “Social identity provides important sources of meaning, continuity, and direction in people’s lives” (Abrams & Hogg, 2010, p. 189).

- In-Group and Out-Group: In-group refers to the social group to which an individual belongs and identifies with, while out-group refers to other groups with which the individual does not identify. SIT explains that people tend to favor their in-group over out-groups and may exhibit behaviors that promote their in-group’s interests. The in-group and out-group concept is the output of the evaluation process within social identification and social comparison (Treppe, 2013).
- Identity Salience: The salience of SIT refers to how prominent or relevant a particular group membership is in a given situation. The more salient a social identity, the more likely it is to influence behavior and attitudes (Treppe & Loy, 2017).
- Social Change: SIT highlights how social change occurs when individuals redefine their group identities or engage in collective action to challenge the existing social order and norms attitudes (Treppe & Loy, 2017).

SIT has been applied to various domains. The theory provides insights into the underlying psychological processes that contribute to intergroup conflicts and hostility (Brewer, 2011). SIT helps to understand the formation of prejudice attitudes and discriminatory behaviors based on group identities (Spears, 2011). The theory has been used to study group dynamics and intergroup relations within organizations, affecting employee motivation, job satisfaction, and team performance (Lewis, 2011; Loi et al., 2014). SIT has been applied to analyze the formation and dynamics of social movements based on shared identities and collective action (Thomas et al., 2012; Van Zomeren et al., 2012). SIT remains a fundamental concept in the fields of social psychology and sociology, contributing to the understanding of group behavior and intergroup relations. It continues to be a valuable framework for studying various social phenomena and informing strategies to promote positive intergroup relations and reduce intergroup conflicts (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012).

### 5.3 GENDER AS SOCIAL IDENTITY IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Gender, as a social identity, plays a significant role in organizational leadership. Social identity refers to the part of an individual's self-categorization that is derived from membership in social groups, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and other shared characteristics (Hertel et al., 2019). In the context of organizational leadership, gender identity influences how individuals perceive themselves and how others perceive them as leaders. Organizational cultures can either promote or hinder gender diversity in leadership (Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011). Inclusive and diverse cultures encourage the representation of women in leadership roles and provide support to overcome gender-related challenges. On the other hand, male-dominated and patriarchal cultures may reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting women's leadership opportunities (Scheifele et al., 2021).

Gender can influence the opportunities individuals receive to assume leadership positions. Historically, leadership positions have been male-dominated, leading to the glass ceiling effect, where women may face barriers in advancing to top leadership roles due to discriminatory practices or implicit biases (Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011). While leadership style varies among individuals, research has suggested that men and women may tend to display different leadership behaviors. Women leaders may exhibit transformational leadership traits, emphasizing collaboration, empathy, and relationship-building, while men may lean toward transactional leadership traits, focusing on task-oriented goals and rewards (Zbihlejšová et al., 2018). Both leadership styles can be effective, but gendered expectations may affect how these styles and leadership abilities are perceived. Research has shown that both men and women might unconsciously associate leadership with male characteristics. This can lead to implicit biases, where male leaders are more readily associated with leadership competence and authority, while female leaders may be scrutinized more closely or have to work harder to prove their capabilities.

When identifying gender as a social identity in organizational leadership, individuals must recognize and be cognizant of gender stereotypes and intersectionality within the organizational culture. Gender stereotypes are culturally and socially constructed beliefs about the traits, behaviors, and roles that are expected of men and women (Werhane &

Painter-Morland, 2011). These stereotypes shape perceptions of leadership qualities. For example, there may be biases associating assertiveness and decisiveness with male leaders and nurturing and collaboration with female leaders. Such stereotypes influence leadership opportunities and may hinder the advancement of women in leadership roles. It is essential to consider intersectionality in the context of gender as a social identity in leadership (Allen, 2023). Women's experiences in leadership are not uniform, as they can be influenced by factors like race, ethnicity, class, and other social identities (Sales et al., 2020). Women of different backgrounds may face unique challenges and opportunities in leadership. By recognizing gender as a social identity in organizational leadership and actively addressing biases and barriers, organizations foster environments where both men and women can thrive as leaders. Embracing diversity in leadership leads to improved decision-making, creativity, and overall organizational performance (Allen, 2023).

#### 5.4 LEADERSHIP THEORY AND ROLE ALIGNMENT

Leadership theory and role alignment are interconnected concepts that relate to how leaders function within an organization and how their roles align with the organization's goals and objectives (Drath et al., 2008). Leadership theory serves as a framework that seeks to explain the nature of effective leadership and its behaviors, traits, or characteristics that contribute to successful leadership and desired outcomes (Samimi et al., 2022). There are several prominent leadership theories, each offering different perspectives on what makes a leader effective such as authentic, complexity, adaptive, ethical, distributed, situational, transformational, strategic, and servant (Seidel et al., 2019).

Role alignment refers to the process of ensuring that individual roles within an organization are consistent with the organization's overall objectives and strategies (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015). It involves matching the responsibilities and tasks of individuals to the goals and priorities of the organization. When roles are well-aligned, employees understand their contributions to the broader organizational vision, and their efforts are directed toward achieving common objectives (Inegbedion et al., 2020).

Leadership theory and role alignment are crucial for organizational success by cultivating an environment that promotes effective leadership development; within it is goal clarity and focus, fertile ground for employee engagement, transparent decision-making and delegation, and

pivotal space for organizational adaptability and performance improvement (Drath et al., 2008). Leadership theoretical constructs help organizations identify and develop individuals with the potential to become effective leaders (Gedro et al., 2020). Understanding different leadership styles and behaviors inform leadership development programs. Leaders who are aware of various leadership theories can adapt their decision-making and delegation styles based on the situation and the capabilities of their team members (Deshwal & Ali, 2020).

Role alignment allows organizations to adapt to changes in the internal and external environment more effectively. It facilitates the allocation of resources and talent in response to shifting priorities and challenges. Role alignment ensures that employees understand how their individual roles contribute to the achievement of the organization's goals. This clarity enhances focus and alignment of efforts toward common objectives. When roles are aligned with employees' strengths and interests, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to perform at their best (Inegbedion et al., 2020).

Leadership theory provides valuable insights into effective leadership practices, while role alignment ensures that individual roles within an organization are consistent with its overall goals and strategies. By understanding and applying appropriate leadership theories and aligning roles effectively, organizations enhance their performance, adaptability, and overall success (Drath et al., 2008). Leadership theory and role alignment contribute to improved organizational performance by optimizing leadership effectiveness and aligning individual efforts toward achieving organizational objectives.

## 5.5 GENDER DIVERSITY AND LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

Gender diversity in leadership refers to the representation and involvement of both men and women in leadership positions within organizations. Historically, men have predominantly occupied leadership roles, leading to a lack of gender diversity in many workplaces. However, recognizing the importance of diversity and the benefits it brings, organizations are increasingly focusing on promoting gender equality and inclusivity in leadership (Fine et al., 2020). Gender diversity in leadership is essential for several reasons. It brings different perspectives, experiences, and problem-solving approaches to the decision-making process.

Diverse leadership teams lead to more innovative and creative solutions, enhanced collaboration, and improved overall organizational performance (Birindelli et al., 2019). By promoting women into leadership roles, organizations challenge the notion that certain leadership qualities are inherently gender-specific.

Having women in leadership positions serves as role models for other women within the organization. It encourages aspiring female leaders to pursue their career ambitions and provides evidence of the possibilities for advancement. Research suggests that women leaders often exhibit more transformational and inclusive leadership styles, emphasizing communication, collaboration, and empowerment (Pierli et al., 2022). These leadership styles positively impact organizational culture and employee satisfaction. Organizations that prioritize and demonstrate commitment to gender diversity in leadership are often perceived as more progressive, inclusive, and attractive to diverse talent pools (Birindelli et al., 2019).

Providing leadership development and mentorship programs for women can support their career advancement and equip them with the skills needed for leadership roles. Ensuring that hiring practices are unbiased and based on merit rather than gender lead to a more diverse pool of candidates for leadership positions. Implementing flexible work policies can help support work-life balance and remove barriers for women seeking leadership roles. Creating an organizational culture that values diversity and promotes equal opportunities for employees is essential for fostering gender diversity in leadership.

Gender diversity in leadership is a crucial aspect of building successful organizations. By recognizing the value of diverse perspectives and challenging traditional gender norms, organizations can create environments where both men and women can thrive as leaders. Emphasizing gender diversity in leadership is not only a matter of equity and social justice but also a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to remain competitive and innovative in today's globalized world (Fine et al., 2020).

## 5.6 DEBORAH AS A MODEL OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

Deborah, a character in the Bible, serves as a model of gender diversity in leadership. As one of the few female leaders and judges in ancient Israel, her story challenges traditional gender norms and provides valuable lessons about the capabilities and contributions of women in positions



of authority (Lederman-Daniely, 2017). Deborah's role as a prophetess, judge, and leader of Israel challenged the prevailing gender stereotypes of her time. In a society where leadership was predominantly male-dominated, Deborah's ascendancy to a position of power shows that women are equally capable of assuming leadership roles (Thomas, 2021). Deborah is depicted as a wise and decisive leader (McClain-Walters, 2015). Her ability to inspire and unite the people of Israel in times of crisis highlights the effectiveness of her leadership. Her courage and strategic thinking in leading the Israelite army into battle demonstrate her leadership prowess.

Deborah's leadership extended beyond herself. She acknowledged another woman who played a crucial role in the defeat of the enemy army. Deborah's willingness to uplift other women exemplifies her commitment to gender diversity and empowerment. Deborah's leadership style was inclusive, emphasizing consultation and collaboration (Thomas, 2021). She held court under a palm tree, where people sought her counsel and judgment. This approach demonstrates her commitment to hearing diverse perspectives and making informed decisions. As a prophetess, Deborah's leadership was not solely based on secular authority but was grounded in her spiritual connection and guidance (McClain-Walters, 2015). This highlights the potential for gender diversity in both religious and secular leadership roles.

Deborah's story has left a lasting legacy, inspiring generations of women and men to challenge gender norms and embrace gender diversity in leadership. Her example serves as a reminder of the potential that exists in diverse leadership teams. Deborah's story is a powerful testament to the importance of gender diversity in leadership. It showcases the strength and wisdom that women leaders can bring to the table and emphasizes the need for environments that value diverse perspectives. Her narrative calls for question and for the dismantle of societal norms that limit opportunities based on gender; and to create spaces where all individuals, regardless of their gender, can contribute to leadership and decision-making roles (Lederman-Daniely, 2017). As a historical model of gender diversity in leadership, Deborah's story remains relevant in contemporary discussions about promoting women in leadership, fostering inclusive organizational cultures, and embracing the diverse talents and abilities that individuals of all genders can bring to leadership positions (McClain-Walters, 2015).

## 5.7 A MOTHER IN ISRAEL—AND THE WORKPLACE

The phrase “a mother in Israel” originates from the Bible, specifically from the Book of Judges, referring to Deborah, who was not only a prophetess and judge but also described as “a mother in Israel.” The phrase symbolizes her nurturing and caring role, not only as a leader but also as someone who cared for the well-being and welfare of her people (Lederman-Daniely, 2017). Drawing parallels between the role of “a mother in Israel” and the workplace offers insights into the importance of caregiving and support within organizations.

Nurturing leadership is a leadership approach that focuses on supporting, empowering, and caring for the well-being of team members (Hashimy et al., 2023). Rather than using traditional top-down authority, nurturing leaders prioritize the needs of their team, fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. Nurturing leadership is effective in building trust, fostering employee engagement, and creating a positive organizational culture (Hashimy et al., 2023). By placing the needs of team members at the forefront, nurturing leaders create an environment where individuals can thrive, innovate, and achieve their fullest potential (Pierli et al., 2022). This approach to leadership has a positive impact on employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational success.

Like “a mother in Israel,” leaders in the workplace can adopt a nurturing leadership style that emphasizes caring for the well-being of their employees. This involves fostering a supportive and compassionate work environment that values employees’ physical and emotional health. The concept of being “a mother in Israel” reminds us of the significance of work-life balance. Just as mothers balance their caregiving roles with other responsibilities, organizations should promote policies and practices that support employees in achieving a healthy work-life balance. “A mother in Israel” is often associated with empathy and understanding. Leaders who embrace these qualities can build stronger connections with their teams, leading to increased trust and loyalty (Pierli et al., 2022). The phrase also highlights the importance of supporting employees who are parents. Organizations can provide parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and on-site childcare facilities to enable working parents to effectively balance their professional and family responsibilities.

Embracing the concept of “a mother in Israel” contributes to creating an organizational culture that values caregiving and recognizes the contributions of employees beyond their work tasks. This includes acknowledging the caregiving roles that employees may have outside of work. “A mother in Israel” reminds us that individuals bring diverse talents and skills to the workplace. Organizations should appreciate and leverage the unique strengths of employees who are parents (Pierli et al., 2022). To embrace the spirit of “a mother in Israel,” workplaces may have policies that address issues such as gender equality, parental leave, family-friendly benefits, and support for caregivers. The phrase “a mother in Israel” signifies not only leadership and wisdom but also caring, empathy, and nurturing qualities. These attributes are essential in the workplace to create a supportive and inclusive environment for employees. By recognizing and valuing caregiving roles and supporting working parents, organizations can foster a more compassionate workplace culture (Pierli et al., 2022).

Gedro et al. (2020) suggested that “a combination of direction setting, organizing, and evaluating along with collaboration, communication, supportive and nurturing are optimal feminine leadership styles” (p. 402). In times of crisis, characteristically feminine styles of leadership are ideal (Eagly & Heilman, 2016 as cited in Gedro et al., 2020, p. 403). According to Gedro et al. (2020), “Perhaps it is wise to consider leadership development that embraces feminine ways of leading and that mindfully equips leaders to incorporate those styles into their repertoires given the current societal conditions of organizational turbulence and social and economic unrest” (p. 403). The leadership literature often shows both masculine and feminine leadership skills that are valuable, needed, and appropriate for organizational life.

## 5.8 TOWARD A FULFILLING VOCATION FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Achieving a fulfilling vocation for women in leadership requires concerted efforts to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create supportive environments that empower women to thrive in their leadership roles (Clerkin, 2017). Organizations should actively promote gender diversity in leadership positions and create environments where women have equal opportunities to advance and contribute to decision-making processes. Potential avenues in which an organization can encourage

women in leadership roles include recognizing and addressing unconscious biases that may hinder women's career progression, promoting fair evaluation and promotion processes, establishing mentorship and sponsorship programs that pair women with experienced leaders who provide guidance, support, and advocacy for their career advancement, and offer leadership development programs specifically tailored to the needs of women with a focus on building essential skills, such as communication, negotiation, and confidence, to help women excel in leadership roles (Clerkin, 2017). To increase women in leadership roles, organizations should address providing flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies to support women in balancing their professional and personal responsibilities effectively and recognizing and rewarding women on par with their male counterparts for contributions and achievements (Clerkin, 2017).

In order to move toward creating a fulfilling vocation for women in leadership, individuals should leverage their sphere of influence in the work to inspire women to challenge stereotypes and societal expectations that may limit their aspirations; promote a growth mindset that emphasizes continuous learning and self-belief; provide platforms and opportunities for women to showcase their expertise and ideas, ensuring their voices are heard and valued in decision-making processes (Clerkin, 2017). Men and other allies should be encouraged to actively support and advocate for women in leadership, fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment (Smith & Johnson, 2020). There should be clearly defined career paths and advancement criteria to eliminate ambiguity and ensure transparency in the promotion process. The work culture needs to recognize and appreciate the value of diverse leadership styles, especially those traditionally associated with women, such as collaboration, empathy, and relationship-building (Smith & Johnson, 2020). Celebrate both men's and women leaders' achievements and highlight their contributions to inspire and motivate others (Kulkarni et al., 2021).

Organizations and societies should create an environment that empowers and supports women in leadership, leading to fulfilling vocations and gender equality in leadership positions (Smith & Johnson, 2020). Embracing the full potential of women's leadership drives innovation, improves organizational performance, and contributes to a more prosperous future for all. While Deborah's leadership was situated in a historical and religious context, her qualities and approaches offer valuable lessons for contemporary organizational leaders. Her story encourages

leaders to embrace courage, inclusivity, vision, and ethical principles while breaking barriers and fostering a nurturing and empowering environment.

Lessons from Deborah for the woman leader today:

**Embrace Courage and Vision:** Deborah's courage to step into leadership roles and her visionary outlook in guiding her people are qualities that women leaders today can emulate. Be bold in pursuing goals and lead with a clear vision that inspires others.

**Challenge Gender Norms:** Deborah's story challenges traditional gender norms, demonstrating that women are fully capable of assuming positions of authority and leadership. Do not let societal expectations limit aspirations; break barriers; and pave the way for future generations of women leaders.

**Demonstrate Inclusive Leadership:** Deborah's inclusive leadership style, reflected in her willingness to hear diverse perspectives and consult others before making decisions, underscores the value of inclusive leadership. Foster an environment that encourages diverse voices and ideas.

**Cultivate Empathy and Understanding:** Deborah's empathy and understanding of her people's needs made her an altruistic and conscious leader. Strive to understand the experiences and concerns of team members, and lead with compassion and empathy.

**Lead by Example:** Deborah's story serves as an example of leadership by example. Demonstrate integrity, ethics, and values for the employees within the organization to see and emulate in their work life.

**Empower Others:** Deborah empowered others to fulfill their roles effectively. As a leader, focus on empowering and mentoring others, fostering an environment that encourages growth and development.

**Adaptability and Resilience:** Deborah faced challenges during her leadership journey, and her ability to adapt and be resilient was crucial to her success. Embrace change, learn from setbacks, and display resilience in navigating obstacles.

**Foster Collaboration and Teamwork:** Deborah's collaborative approach in leading her people highlights the importance of teamwork and collaboration. Encourage open communication and foster a sense of camaraderie among team members.

**Engage in Reflective Practice:** As Deborah's story suggests, reflective practice is essential for leadership growth. Take time to reflect on

experiences, decisions, and actions, and use those insights to improve leadership effectiveness.

**Be a Role Model:** Deborah's leadership exemplified the power of being a role model. As a woman leader, be mindful of influence on others and inspire future generations of women to pursue leadership roles.

**Lead with a Purpose:** Deborah's commitment to her people's welfare and her devotion to her faith underscore the importance of leading with a purpose beyond personal gain. Align leadership with a meaningful mission and make a positive impact on the lives of followers.

Deborah's story serves as an enduring testament to the capabilities and potential of women in leadership. By drawing inspiration from her experiences and qualities, women leaders today can navigate challenges, cultivate effective leadership styles, and contribute to positive change in their organizations and in society.

## 5.9 CONCLUSION

Deborah's multifaceted leadership journey underscores the complex interplay between gender roles, social identity, societal expectations, and personal aspirations. Using the lens of experiential learning as a pivotal tool to investigate the idea of Deborah as a mother in Israel, women leaders are provided evidence and proof that they can navigate and transcend barriers, harnessing their unique experiences to drive innovation, collaboration, and change (Hill et al., 2016). It is necessary to recognize and celebrate the versatile dimensions of identity that women bring to their roles. The lessons drawn from Deborah's journey offer valuable insights for organizations, policymakers, and individuals alike, encouraging them to foster environments that empower women to leverage their experiences and perspectives as catalysts for positive transformation (Hill et al., 2016). Motivated by Deborah's story, members of society can collectively work toward a future where women in leadership flourish and are embraced for their uniqueness (Riforgiate & Ruder, 2017).

The story of Deborah serves as a reminder that women's multiple identities need not be compartmentalized, but rather integrated harmoniously to forge a formidable leadership presence. Deborah's ability to

balance the roles of a mother, judge, and military strategist exemplifies the potential for women to draw strength from diverse facets of their lives, fostering innovation and resilience in the face of challenges (Kaufman & Williams, 2010). In navigating the ongoing journey toward gender equality, the story of Deborah offers a beacon of inspiration and a roadmap for future progress. Fostering a culture of support can collectively propel women in leadership roles to reach their fullest potential and shape a more diverse and prosperous world. Deborah's exceptional ability to synergize nurturing qualities with assertiveness and strategic acumen emphasizes the potential of a holistic leadership approach that draws from diverse life experiences (Fine, 2007). Deborah's story is a reminder that embracing one's identity and individual narrative can lead to a more authentic and effective leadership style, benefiting both women and the larger organizational landscape.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. A. (2010). Social identity and self-categorization. In *The SAGE handbook of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination* (pp. 179–193). SAGE.
- Alagaraja, M., & Shuck, B. (2015). Exploring organizational alignment-employee engagement linkages and impact on individual performance: A conceptual model. *Human Resource Development Review, 14*(1), 17–37.
- Allen, B. J. (2023). *Difference matters: Communicating social identity*. Waveland Press.
- Brewer, M. B. (2011). Identity and conflict. In D. Bar-Tal (Ed.), *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution: A social psychological perspective* (pp. 125–143). Psychology Press.
- Birindelli, G., Iannuzzi, A. P., & Savioli, M. (2019). The impact of women leaders on environmental performance: Evidence on gender diversity in banks. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, 26*(6), 1485–1499.
- Clerkin, C. (2017). *What women want—And why you want women: In the workplace*. Research Report. Center for Creative Leadership.
- Deshwal, V., & Ali, M. A. (2020). A systematic review of various leadership theories. *Shanlax International Journal of Commerce, 8*(1), 38–43.
- Drath, W. H., McCauley, C. D., Palus, C. J., Van Velsor, E., O'Connor, P. M., & McGuire, J. B. (2008). Direction, alignment, commitment: Toward a more integrative ontology of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 19*(6), 635–653.
- Ellemers, N., & Haslam, S. A. (2012). Social identity theory. *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology, 2*, 379–398.

- Ferguson, N., & McKeown, S. (2016). Social identity theory and intergroup conflict in Northern Ireland. In *Understanding peace and conflict through social identity theory: Contemporary global perspectives* (pp. 215–227).
- Fine, C., Sojo, V., & Lawford-Smith, H. (2020). Why does workplace gender diversity matter? Justice, organizational benefits, and policy. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 14(1), 36–72.
- Fine, M. G. (2007). Women, collaboration, and social change: An ethics-based model of leadership. In J.L. Chin, B. Lott, J.K. Rice, & J. Sanchez-Hucles (Eds.), *Women and Leadership* (pp. 177–191). Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470692332.ch8>
- Gedro, J., Allain, N. M., De-Souza, D., Dodson, L., & Mawn, M. V. (2020). Flattening the learning curve of leadership development: Reflections of five women higher education leaders during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020. *Human Resource Development International*, 23(4), 395–405.
- Hashimy, S. Q., Jahromi, A., Hamza, M., Naaz, I., Nyamwero, N. B., & Basavarajappa, H. T. (2023). Nurturing leadership and capacity building for success: Empowering growth. *International Journal of Rehabilitation and Special Education*, 3(2), 1–14.
- Hertel, C., Bacq, S., & Belz, F. M. (2019). It takes a village to sustain a village: A social identity perspective on successful community-based enterprise creation. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 5(4), 438–464.
- Hill, C., Miller, K., Benson, K., & Handley, G. (2016). *Barriers and bias: The status of women in leadership*. American Association of University Women.
- Hogg, M. A. (2016). *Social identity theory* (pp. 3–17). Springer International Publishing.
- Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. J. (2014). Social identity processes in organizational contexts. *The Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 121–140.
- Inegbedion, H., Inegbedion, E., Peter, A., & Harry, L. (2020). Perception of workload balance and employee job satisfaction in work organisations. *Heliyon*, 6(1).
- Kaufman, J. P., & Williams, K. P. (2010). *Women and war: Gender identity and activism in times of conflict*. Kumarian Press.
- Kulkarni, V., Vohra, N., Sharma, S., & Nair, N. (2021). Walking the tightrope: Gender inclusion as organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 34(1), 106–120.
- Lederman-Daniely, D. (2017). “I arose a mother in Israel”: Motherhood as a liberating power in the biblical stories of Miriam and Deborah. In *Motherhood in antiquity* (pp. 9–27). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-48902-5\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-48902-5_2)
- Lewis, T. (2011). Assessing social identity and collective efficacy as theories of group motivation at work. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(04), 963–980.



- Loi, R., Chan, K. W., & Lam, L. W. (2014). Leader–member exchange, organizational identification, and job satisfaction: A social identity perspective. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 87(1), 42–61.
- McClain-Walters, M. (2015). *The Deborah anointing: Embracing the call to be a woman of wisdom and discernment*. Charisma Media.
- Pierli, G., Murmura, F., & Palazzi, F. (2022). Women and leadership: How do women leaders contribute to companies' sustainable choices? *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 3, 930116.
- Riforgiate, S. E., & Ruder, E. M. (2017). Embracing and contesting gender roles. In C. M. Cunningham, H. M. Crandall, & A. M. Dare (Eds.), *Gender, communication, and the leadership gap* (pp. 89–110). Information Age Publishing.
- Sales, S., Galloway Burke, M., & Cannonier, C. (2020). African American women leadership across contexts: Examining the internal traits and external factors on women leaders' perceptions of empowerment. *Journal of Management History*, 26(3), 353–376.
- Samimi, M., Cortes, A. F., Anderson, M. H., & Herrmann, P. (2022). What is strategic leadership? Developing a framework for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 33(3), 101353.
- Scheifele, C., Ehrke, F., Viladot, M. A., Van Laar, C., & Steffens, M. C. (2021). Testing the basic socio-structural assumptions of social identity theory in the gender context: Evidence from correlational studies on women's leadership. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 51(7), 1038–1060.
- Seidel, A., Saurin, T. A., Tortorella, G. L., & Marodin, G. A. (2019). How can general leadership theories help to expand the knowledge of lean leadership? *Production Planning & Control*, 30(16), 1322–1336.
- Smith, D. G., & Johnson, W. B. (2020). *Good guys: How men can be better allies for women in the workplace*. Harvard Business Press.
- Spears, R. (2011). Group identities: The social identity perspective. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 201–224). Springer.
- Thomas, E. F., Mavor, K. I., & McGarty, C. (2012). Social identities facilitate and encapsulate action-relevant constructs: A test of the social identity model of collective action. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 15(1), 75–88.
- Thomas, L. (2021). A template for the future: Resonant leadership in the song of Deborah. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(6), 3–10.
- Trepte, S. (2013). Social identity theory. In *Psychology of Entertainment* (pp. 255–271). Routledge.
- Trepte, S., & Loy, L. S. (2017). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory. In *The international encyclopedia of media effects* (pp. 1–13). Wiley.
- Van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2012). On conviction's collective consequences: Integrating moral conviction with the social identity model of collective action. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 51(1), 52–71.

- Werhane, P. H., & Painter-Morland, M. (2011). *Leadership, gender, and organization* (pp. 1–8). Springer Netherlands.
- Zbihlejšová, L., Frankovský, M., & Birknerová, Z. (2018). Leadership styles of managers from the perspective of gender. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 7, 340–347.