**A REVIEW OF LEADERSHIP THEORY FROM A GENDER AND RACE PERSPECTIVE**

# Abstract

This paper considers extant organisational leadership theory which emerged roughly over the last century. The development of this field of study is discussed and framed within the historical context. It emerged that the dominant approach to theorising about leadership has been principally psychological with a strong focus on “the individual”. Psychological approaches are discussed in more detail, specifically as they pertain to gender and race issues in organisation. One of the key themes in this doctoral project is that of equality. From this it was also necessary to discuss the more sociological literature on leadership, since psychological approaches seem unable to address larger social inequalities as it pertains to leadership. The review of both psychological and sociological schools of thought on leadership is then discussed within Layder’s framework for multi-level social research.

# Introduction

Leadership as a field of study within the management and social sciences is quite wide. I have therefore attempted to narrow the focus on extant literature and issues within leadership that relate to gender and race inequalities. When critically discussing the development of (organisational) leadership theory an interesting phenomena, which came out of the literature review, should be mentioned from the onset. Although it can be roughly pin-pointed when a certain school of thought or paradigm pertaining to leadership emerged, none of these ever ‘ceased to exist’. This is quite interesting as it, at least to a certain extent, seems like each subsequent paradigm (historically) is the result of a rejection or refinement of the preceding one.

Contents

[1. Introduction 1](#_Toc348656176)

[2. Leadership theory: An overview in historical context 3](#_Toc348656177)

[3. Psychological Paradigm of Leadership 5](#_Toc348656178)

[3.1 Trait theory 5](#_Toc348656179)

[3.2 Style / behavioural approach 6](#_Toc348656180)

[3.3 Leadership and context-based approaches 11](#_Toc348656181)

[4. Critical Management Studies 13](#_Toc348656182)

[5. Sociological Paradigm of Leadership 15](#_Toc348656183)

[5.1 Weberian perspective of domination 16](#_Toc348656184)

[5.2 Institutional perspective to leadership 16](#_Toc348656185)

[5.3 Neo-Marxist perspective of power structures 17](#_Toc348656186)

[5.4 Relational perspective of leadership 17](#_Toc348656187)

[6. A discussion of gender and race within organisational leadership, using Layder’s (1993) resource map 18](#_Toc348656188)

[6.1 The self 18](#_Toc348656189)

[6.2 The situated activity 19](#_Toc348656190)

[6.3 The setting 19](#_Toc348656191)

[6.4 The context 21](#_Toc348656192)

[7. Conclusion 22](#_Toc348656193)

[8. References 24](#_Toc348656194)

# Leadership theory: An overview in historical context

Leadership has been a source of fascination that dates back to antiquity, but it only entered (social) scientific study in the 20th century (Yukl 2010). Various scholars (Burns 1978; Grint 1997; Bolden et al. 2011; Bryman et al. 2011; Daft 2011) concur about the general progression of mainstream leadership theorising. The earliest thoughts on leadership were concerned with the ideal of ‘*The Great Man*’. It was believed that one person with extraordinary skills and abilities would be able to lead followers to a desired outcome – hence also the term ‘H*eroic Leadership*’, which positions the leader as idealised saviour who needs to ‘protect, save or liberate the masses’ in same way or form. Arguably, and possibly for lack of a better point of reference, this could be as a result of preoccupation with warfare and military strategy. As a result of this way of thinking political- and organisational leadership is viewed as a kind of warfare during which the leader must act as the brave General.

More or less a decade into the 20th century saw a rise in appreciation for efficiency, precision, reduced waste and optimisation in manufacturing. Industrial views of individuals like Frederic Taylor[[1]](#footnote-1), Frank Gilbreth[[2]](#footnote-2) and Henry Ford[[3]](#footnote-3) gained massive popularity and scientific management as a means of organising business had a major impact, but died out as formal management practice by the 1930’s (Nelson 1941; Doray 1988). Even though strict adherence to the rigid principles of scientific management had ceased, certain ideals and basic concepts still lingered in other business functions (Kumar & Sharma 2000). One such remnant was an increased concern for assumed ‘*traits*’ which would enable a person to act as a good leader. Now, the notion of ‘*The Great Man*’ became too vague and scholars theorised about certain personal characteristics that would enable leadership abilities above and beyond that of the everyday man. One could also argue that advances in psycho-analytics by such individuals as Sigmund Freud[[4]](#footnote-4) and Carl Jung[[5]](#footnote-5), which significantly raised awareness around concepts of personality, had an influence on the ‘*trait theory*’ perspective of leadership. What we assume as common knowledge today regarding personality profiles and their relationship to action was relatively new in the early 20th century (scientifically speaking of course). This ‘new’ way of thinking about people provided an opportunity to think about leadership more scientifically and systematically than merely attributing leadership ability to inherent ‘greatness’.

The mid-20th century saw the rise of the civil rights movement. Up to the start of the movement many countries in the Western world was severely segregated in terms of race, gender and class (among others). This segregation was supported, maintained and defended by various social norms and pieces of legislation worldwide (James & Busia 1993; M. Newman 2004). The movement gained global momentum to such an extent that various governments realised and acted upon the imperative for change – some earlier than others. In terms of leadership theory, ‘*trait theory*’ now seemed insufficient to address organisational needs, impacted by the social change. Since ‘*trait theory*’ held a strong relationship with the heroic white male archetype, and since this theory assumes that only certain individuals possessed the inherent qualities to be a leader, it did not sit well with changing business environments that saw an influx of non-white, non-male persons. Behavioural theories to leadership offered an alternative to the assumption that only certain, biologically/psychologically predisposed, individuals are able to act as leaders. The behavioural approach to theorising about leadership supposed that certain human behaviours lead to desired outcomes and not necessarily inherent traits. Probably behavioural theories’ biggest conceptual departure from trait theory is that leadership can therefore be developed by teaching an individual certain ‘leadership behaviours’ and competencies.

Increased interest in behavioural approaches to studying leadership, however, brought to light a significant amount of evidence that a static ‘ideal’ set of desirable leadership behaviours are not necessarily applicable to every situation. From this realisation, the ‘*contingency theory*’ approach to studying leadership was born. Massive popularity among management professionals of models such as *Theory X-Theory Y* by McGregor in the 1960’s, *Situational Leadership* by Hersey and Blanchard in the 1970’s, or Vroom and Jago’s *Model of Decision Participation* in the 1980’s arguably sparked the most attention to this approach (Grint 1997; Daft 1999; Bolden et al. 2011).

After the behavioural approach to studying leadership it is difficult to pin down a specific school of thought, although diverse theorising definitely did not stop there. To this day theorists are thinking of different ways to address leadership in ways that previous theories failed to do. Some of the more well-known theoretical frameworks are ‘*Charismatic Leadership*’, *Transactional Leadership*’, ‘*Transformational Leadership*’, ‘*Servant Leadership*’, ‘*Distributed Leadership*’, ‘*Ethical Leadership*’and ‘*Authentic Leadership*’.

Sociologist Max Weber (1922) proposed the idea of ‘*Charismatic Leadership*’ which essentially involved someone with extraordinary ‘*gifts*’ beyond that of the ordinary person. This ‘*charismatic leader*’ was seen to be able to accomplish amazing feats and as a result secured the followership of masses of people. This was further developed in later years by other scholars of leadership and integrated with other mainstream theories such as trait and behavioural theories (House 1999; Bryman et al. 2011). Willner (1984), however, suggested that since different contexts (societies, cultures, etc.) ascribe different attributes to being ‘extraordinary’, that such a ‘*charismatic leader*’ could not be identified or described by a standard set of traits or exhibited behaviours.

James MacGregor Burns (1978) drew on theories about charisma and leadership and proposed the ‘*Transactional vs. Transformational’* duality. Similar to Weber’s perspective of ‘*Charismatic Leadership’*, ‘*Transformational Leadership’* involved being able to achieve ‘more than the average person’. Within ‘*Transformational Leadership’* this ‘more’ related to the ability to establish a shared vision and goal between leader and followers and initiating action towards it. In contrast, ‘*Transactional Leadership*’ involved individual follower needs being identified and satisfied through a transactional approach that involves them satisfying the leader or organisation’s needs.

Resonating strongly with the ‘*Transactional* Leadership’ stance that the leader needs to determine individual follower characteristics, needs or attributes, ‘*Servant Leadership*’ is also primarily concerned with what each individual follower brings to the table, in a manner of speaking. First proposed as theoretical concept in the 1970’s and gaining increased popularity at the end of the 20th century ‘*Servant Leadership*’ involves leaders actively developing individual followers and in doing so ‘*serving*’ followers (Bryman et al. 2011).

Keeping with the focus on follower and arguably the furthest departure from earlier views of leadership such as ‘*The Great Man*’ perspective, ‘*Distributed Leadership*’ posits that the best person to improve a job is the one who is doing it (Bryman et al. 2011). This concept gained popularity at the turn of the century and while maintaining the vertical leadership function, leadership in this instance is seen as more of a team effort than something that one individual is responsible for. ‘*Distributed Leadership*’ means that each follower also has a role to play in how the team is lead and not necessarily only the formal team leader. Thus, concern for leadership emerge, rather than individual leaders as object of study.

With an evolution of popular managerial styles from autocratic to more democratic (arguably as a result of more macro social developments) as well as attention being drawn to the importance of business best practice and transparency, another very contemporary subfield within leadership is that of ‘*Ethical Leadership’*. ‘*Ethical Leadership’* assumes that leaders who lead with honesty and integrity are more effective than those who do not (Daft 2011). This assumption therefore greatly rests on the argument that organisational leaders have a major role to play in the maintenance of relationships with stakeholders that sustain the organisation. These include shareholders, customers, the media and the like.

In close proximity with ‘*Ethical Leadership*’ is the concept of ‘*Authentic Leadership*’. The latter, however, involves more than mere ethical behaviour. In order to be seen as an authentic leader, one must possess superior self-awareness. The authentic leader is one who knows who he or she is and then acts accordingly within the context of the environment and the self (Bryman et al. 2011).

# Psychological Paradigm of Leadership

The extant leadership literature theory is undoubtedly dominated by psychological approaches. The majority of the literature is based in the premise that leadership rests with some kind of attribute of ‘the leader’. As the previous section indicates, these different approaches are all quite diverse. However, there are three major schools of thought that can be identified. These are the trait approach, the behavioural approach and the context-based approach. Although not every single theory of leadership necessarily fits nicely into these ‘boxes’, examining leadership theory from these three schools of thought, does give a good sense of how the psychological paradigm positions the concept of leadership.

## 3.1 Trait theory

The trait approach to leadership rests on the belief that in order to be a leader one must possess a static and predetermined set of traits or abilities. At this point it is important to note that “traits” do not refer to *leadership* skills. The term *skill* implies something that can be taught – this is not the case with “traits as they are assumed to be inherent to a person. Despite Stogdill's (1977) critique of trait-based leadership theory, a focus on leader characteristics as central to the leadership phenomenon still prevail in current studies (Grint 2005). These include (but are not limited to) leadership and emotional intelligence (Bryman et al. 2011), leadership and ethics (Yukl 2010), leadership behaviour (Eagly & Johnson 1990; Eagly & Carli 2003) and leadership hereditability (Chaturvedi et al. 2012).

Ideologies of the ‘*heroic leader*’ fill accounts of years gone by. Especially in times of deep crisis people tend to turn toward a person who will ‘*save them*’ from their circumstances. One’s memory tends to drift towards these images when one is asked to conceptualise the term leadership. This ‘*heroic leadership*’ occurs when followers in crises project their needs and wants (mostly fuelled by fear and uncertainty) onto some kind of social symbol (Burns 1978). This projection then offers some type of perceived solution. The result of this conceptualization of leadership is a tendency to envision leadership as a person-centred entity or activity.

There is an abundance of critique against trait approaches to studying leadership. Arguably the most popular is that of Stogdill (1981) who asserted that no empirical evidence supports the assumption that a single set of traits, across all leadership contexts, can distinguish a leader from a non-leader. More importantly, when considering gender and race equality in organisational leadership, it is not the assumption that leadership require specific traits, but the nature of these traits. According to Burns (1978) ‘*Trait Theory’s*’ close proximity with the ideal ‘*heroic leader*’ has meant that assumed desirable leadership traits were significantly gendered to reflect male characteristics. A continued focus on assumed leadership traits runs the risk of reproducing inequality by fixating on an idealised ‘*heroic* leader’ (Acker 2006) and could also positively downplay the importance of complex interaction occurring between leader, followers and various other stakeholders (Grint 1997; Ladkin 2010).

Disregarding evidence against trait-based leadership theory, the question of whether leaders are born or made still rages on. In an attempt to answer this question Chaturvedi et al., (2012) reviewed the literature on heritability, gender and leadership. Among the findings were indications that a significant level of variance in leadership role occupancy and exhibited leadership style could be ascribed to genetic factors. It should however be noted that a limitation to most findings in this instance is the low statistical power of the small samples which were used. Chaturvedi et al., (2012) conclude that total variance in leadership role occupancy and leader behaviour is a product of both genetic and situational factors. In addition to this finding, there also was not sufficient evidence to distinguish genetic impact in males from genetic impact in females.

My major critique of trait-based leadership theory is threefold. Firstly, trait-based theory is too overly focused on the leader and does not give due consideration to the leader-follower dynamic. Secondly, because of aforementioned shortcoming trait-based theory also does not acknowledge the existence of social processes that occur between leader, follower and other stake-holders. Lastly, because of the inherently gendered and ethno-centric nature of organisations, a trait-based approach to leadership runs the risk of reproducing and promoting discriminatory practices by idealising the ‘*Heroic Leader*’. One alternative to trait-based theory, within psychological approaches, is that of behaviour- or style-based theory.

## 3.2 Style / behavioural approach

A move away from the classic trait theory, but still maintaining a strong focus on the individual leader, is that of the behaviourist approach to studying leadership. This approach is more concerned with behaviours and styles of leadership than with inherent traits. Even though some of these approaches, especially that of ‘*transformational leadership*’ seem to incorporate a more feminist approach, it is still focused on the ‘*heroic individual*’ or ‘*great man*’ and perpetuates the notion that the female gender role is that of caring nurturer (Chin et al. 2007).

Where classic views of a good leader often assumed a kind of authoritarian style (Daft 2011), the behavioural study of leadership allowed for investigations into alternative leadership styles that could also offer positive results. One such alternative is that of the dualism between ‘*Initiating* *Structure’* and ‘*Concern for* People’ (Bryman et al. 2011). This leadership style dualism assumes that the good leader is able to balance the needs of the business (or tasks) with the needs of the people performing them (therefore maintaining relationship). It is no secret that the world of work in the West is gender-stratified. Women (arguably due to their gender role as primary care giver in a family setting) have often been assumed to be more suitable for work roles that require more emotional labour (Witz 1992; D. L. Collinson & Hearn 1996)– roles that are not easily reconciled with the work of an authoritarian leader. It therefore comes as no surprise that when thinking of leadership styles, that women leaders are often assumed to be more inclined towards the ‘*Concern for People*’ styles. The notion that one may adopt a ‘*feminine style*’ of leadership also assumes that people must act within their socialised gender roles (Chin et al. 2007). So although this approach does not prescribe to women that they should ‘*think manager, think male*’ (D. L. Collinson & Hearn 1996), it still marginalises women within the leadership context. This assertion is supported by the literature in the form of studies indicating negative evaluations of leaders who are perceived to be acting outside of their (socialised) gender (Rudman & Glick 1999; Eagly 2005; Brescoll et al. 2010). Women perceived to act with agency (i.e., not being submissive) or adopting a more ‘aggressive’ leadership style are found to be more likely rated negatively by peers and subordinates when asked about leader performance.

However, if women do voice their unique challenges at work, it only promotes the assumption that they are different from their male counterparts and therefore need to ‘*become like them*’. This then perpetuates gendered practices in that females are considered to only have reached their potential after they have fully adopted male styles of leading (Smithson & Stokoe 2005). These perceptions of leader effectiveness as well as perceived likelihood for success pose challenges for leader emergence and race equality. Findings suggest that females may receive negative responses when behaving in an assertive and dominant manner (Livingston et al. 2012)and that non-white groups may have their performance negatively evaluated when they are perceived to be significantly responsible for organisational success (Rosette et al. 2008). If marginalized groups foresee negative treatment, one may argue that they would attempt to avoid these situations. If this is the case, poor representation of women and racial minority groups may be ascribed to this. Knowledge is however needed on the lived experiences of female and non-white leaders to determine if they experience said backlash from reluctant followers and if so, how it affects their ability to lead.

According to Sears et al. (1991) there are few significant differences in the way men and women lead. They state that notable differences only occur in controlled laboratory-type studies and then even in those instances women tend to emphasize both social and task leadership behaviours whereas men would generally emphasize task behaviours. Other scholars, however, assert that an increase in women into the workforce and an increasing appreciation for what is considered as more ‘feminine’ leadership styles, which are considered by some to be a more suitable way of leading in modern organisations (Ashcraft & Mumby 2004; Eagly 2005; P. S. Parker 2005; Eagly 2007), may offer an opportunity to combat inequality (Bass & Avolio 1994). This is indeed an on-going debate with many scholars differing on the matter.

In a meta-analysis on gender and leadership style, Eagly and Johnson (1990) did not find evidence of the commonly proposed gender stereotype of men leading with a task-orientation and women leading with a more interpersonal-orientation. They did however find evidence that men and women leaders differ in style in the sense that women tended to lead more democratically and men autocratically. However, their findings were based on data from experimental research and they contend that in organisational settings where behaviour would be influenced by other factors – like that of long term relationships – that classic gender-stereotypical behaviour might be less evident.

Once again, under experimental conditions, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) found that the leadership style among women was more transformational and more management-by-exception and laissez-faire among men (also refer to Figure 1). These findings resonated with popular literature on leader effectiveness that women are more suited for leadership positions in contemporary management contexts. In contrast to these findings, Vecchio (2002) asserts that leader effectiveness relating to gender-based behaviours is overstated. He cites various other factors which may impact on leader effectiveness – such as context and temporal dynamics – and states that a prediction of significant gender differences in leader effectiveness is too extreme. Vecchio (2002) also affirms that data collected from experimental research designs plays off the possibility that behaviour may be significantly different, given the relevant leaders’ natural work setting.

Notwithstanding Vecchio’s position on the matter, Eagly and Carli (2003) found that even when taking into account contextual challenges or barriers to advancement into leadership roles, that females still maintained some advantage over men when considering their leadership style. They argue that, even in male dominated roles and organisational structures like discussed in the ‘Gender’ section, women still advance into top leadership positions. They reiterate their previous findings of small effect sizes in gender-based leadership behaviour and assert that even though small, these differences may have significant practical implications. Eagly and Carli (2003) go on to say that contributing factors to the so called ‘*female advantage*’ include a shift in the female identity, a change in the leadership role, a change in organisational practices, as well as a shift in organisational cultures.

Still unconvinced of the evidence supporting a gender advantage in leader effectiveness, Vecchio (2003) contends that methodologies used, along with biased assumptions on the part of the researcher, has led to overestimated proclamations of a gender-based advantage with regards to leadership roles. He states that an assertion of a ‘*gender advantage*’ connotes competitive superiority and should therefore have more empirical evidence which it does not Vecchio (2003).

Contrary to earlier assertions that female leaders possess an advantage over their male counterparts in terms of leadership style, Eagly (2005) states that females face different challenges with regards to establishing relational authenticity[[6]](#footnote-6) with their followers. She posits that perceived differences in values and incongruency with traditional gender hierarchies may result in negative evaluations of female leaders. This is an integral component of transformational leadership – which Eagly and Carli (2003) concluded women tend to exhibit more than male leaders – which involves an emotional attachment to the leader and an emotional and motivational arousal on the part of the follower (Den Hartog et al. 1997).

Studies using various version of the LBDQ[[7]](#footnote-7) from the mid 1960’s to early 1970’s found that women scored higher than their male counterparts on various scales relating to leader effectiveness (Stogdill 1981). Grint (1997) cites a study done by Bass and Avolio (1990) on leadership style differences between men and women and then proposes various explanations for these differences. Figure 1 is a graphic depiction of the findings by Bass and Avolio (1990) and Table 1 summarises the aforementioned explanations.

Figure : Mean differences between men and women managers on MLQ scores (by subordinates)

*Adopted from Bass and Avolio (1990)*

Table : Possible explanations for mean differences between men and women managers on MLQ scores

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Proposed solution** | **Source** |
| Women managers are more proactive, trusted, respected and show more concern for follower needs. | (Grint 1997) |
| Negative male behaviour (like chauvinism) might prompt women leaders to ‘rise above’ in order to gain the support of subordinates as a means to gaining the same leadership positions as their male counterparts. | (Grint 1997) |
| Women tend to be more nurturing and socially sensitive. A more caring approach lends itself to positive evaluations on the MLQ. | (Rosener 1990) |
| Women tend to be more willing to accept vulnerability as they are socialised to accept emotions, while men might respond with anger when confronted with weaknesses. | (Miller 1986) |
| Women exhibit more servant leadership behaviours (like providing resources and autonomy), which followers respond positively to. | (Block 1993) |
| Transformational leadership involves certain moral and ethical issues. Women tend to be more sensitive about rights and justice. | (Kuhnert & Lewis 1987; Powell et al. 1984) |
| Men and women interpret the world differently and therefore will interact differently with in (through their leadership). | (Gilligan 1982) |

*Adopted from* (Grint 1997)

The majority of the explanations of Bass and Avolio (1990) indicated in Table 1 is in support of Figure 1. The problem, however, associated with the assertion that women have an advantage over their male counterparts is that this assumes cross-sectional similarity in all women. Not all women are the same and instead of treating gender, race and other dimensions of identity as separate parallel constructs, they should be viewed as inter-related and compounding (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). In addition to this, prejudiced behaviour towards women leaders still prevails because leader stereotypes (*The Great Man*) are not compatible with the gender stereotype of women (Bryman et al. 2011).

If one is concerned with the possibility of a gender advantage in leadership, the ‘dark-side’ of a possible gender advantage should also be taken into consideration. The ‘*Glass Ceiling*’, is a metaphorical barrier to women’s (and minorities’ in general) management advancement in organisations (Ledwith & Colgan, 1996; Pichler, Simpson, & Stroh, 2008; Powell & Butterfield, 1994; as examples). Haslam and Ryan (2008), however, proposed the possible existence of a ‘*Glass Cliff*’. This involves women being ‘*set up for failure*’ in times of organisational crisis. There may be foul play involved, women may tend to overestimate their ability or female leadership behaviour (transformational for example) may be perceived as the most appropriate in crisis situations. Whatever the real reason, it has allegedly resulted in an increase in organisational failure under female leadership. Once again, it is proposed that the lived experiences of women in these situations be explored to gain insight into the nature of the phenomenon.

In terms of the behavioural approach to leadership, in response to the question of ‘Who makes better leaders?’ I would like to pose another question: ‘In our quest for equality, should we be considering whether men or women make better leaders?’ I ask this since Bryman et al. (2011) state that male dominance in leadership positions is not the product of an inherent inferiority or dependence of women, but rather the result of factors and conditions that gave preference to men in terms of the bestowal of power and authority. If we desire equal representation, should the focus then not shift towards the aforementioned ‘conditions’?

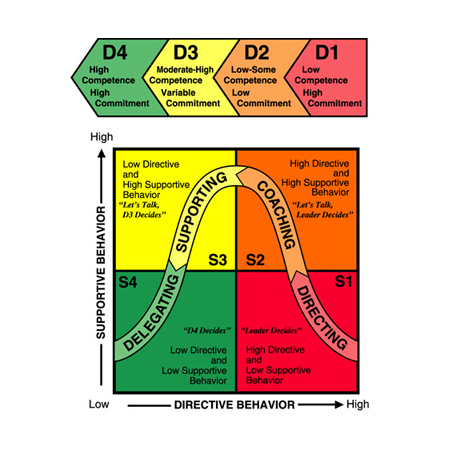
A major limitation with the behavioural approach is prevailing research strategies that assume causality. Self-administered questionnaires and the subsequent quantitative analysis have shaped the field of leadership as we know it. This approach assumes causality on the part of follower behaviour, given leader behaviour. However, there is strong evidence to support that leader behaviour is in fact also a dependent variable (like that of follower behaviour) as leaders may adjust their behaviour under varying conditions (Bryman et al. 2011). This necessitates a consideration of the context in which said leadership behaviours are manifest. Varying findings on leadership styles suggest that contextual influences may have a significant impact on how leadership is manifested (Chin et al. 2007). As evident from existing theoretical models, this is hardly a new concept. The next section will outline the contextual approach to the study of leadership.

## 3.3 Leadership and context-based approaches

The preceding two approaches – namely trait and behavioural approaches to leadership – emphasize only one side of the dichotomy of leadership as indicated by Burns (1978). Trait and behavioural approaches to leadership do not necessarily account for structural factors including those factors which may influence the leadership dynamic, but which the leader does not have full control over. This section will be looking at leadership from a structural approach as well. Bryman et al. (2011) highlight the importance of context by referring to Machiavelli’s *Prince*, which asserted that a leader needs to do what is necessary for the greater good. These actions, taken out of context may seem immoral, but when considering all impacting factors are not.

But leadership is not merely something that one person does in a vacuum to others. As Grint (1997) explains, leadership is a function of no less than three factors, namely the leader, the follower and the conditions. In fact, he states that the nature of the organisation should receive more attention than the individual leader, when one examines leadership. Two classic frameworks that attempt this, namely Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership and Fiedler’s contingency model, along with some more contemporary research will be considered.

The Hersey and Blanchard (1977) model for ‘*Situational Leadership’* is one of the earlier theorizations which incorporated contextual factors into a leadership framework. Their model was prescriptive in nature and in essence involved the leader adjusting behaviour to suit the follower’s ‘level of maturity’ – ‘maturity’ in this context referring to task-level ability, motivation to perform and self-esteem. Although widely popular among practitioners and academics, this theory of leadership has received much critique. Selected critique and relevant authors are tabulated in Table 2.

Table : Critique of the Situational Leadership Theory

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Critique** | **Source** |
| Ambiguous constructs; internal consistencies; conceptual contradictions and conflicting guidelines; a lack of theoretical justification for proposed links between constructs; excessive changes in revisions | (Graeff 1983; Graeff 1997) |
| Insufficient substantive empirical evidence relating to performance; incomplete descriptions of leadership styles; overly simplistic | (Butler & Reese 1991) |
| Problems with prediction in ‘high-maturity’ employees; ambiguous constructs; overly prescriptive | (Vecchio 1987) |
| Inappropriate variables; unfocused constructs; ambiguous constructs; unclear construct measurement guidelines | (Blank et al. 1990) |

*Source: http://elmundopequeno.wordpress.com*

Another approach to leadership which acknowledges the significance of situational variables is that of ‘Contingency Theory’. ‘Contingency Theory’ is an umbrella term for the conceptualizations of leadership as a fluid set of behaviours including task-related behaviours, relations-oriented behaviour, participative leadership and contingent rewards behaviours (Bryman et al. 2011). Possibly one of the most well-known ‘contingency theories’ of leadership is that of Fred Fiedler. In essence, Fiedler’s model proposed that leaders should be able to diagnose their situations and adapt their behaviour accordingly (Daft 2011).

Figure : Fiedler’s Contingency Model

**SITUATIONS**

**Leader-Member relations**

**Task structure**

**Position power**

**Favourableness of situation**

**Appropriate leader behaviour**

Good Good Good Good Poor Poor Poor Poor

High High Low Low High High Low Low

Strong Weak Strong Weak Strong Weak Strong Weak

MOST FAVOURABLE MODERATELY FAVOURABLE MOST FAVOURABLE

TASK ORIENTED RELATIONS ORIENTED TASK ORIENTED

Fiedler’s contingency model (Figure 2) focuses on leader power and how the situation (leader-follower relationship) dictates how power should be exerted (Nohria & Khurana 2010). The model is divided up into opposing dichotomies for leader-member relations (Good/Poor), task structure (High/Low) and related position power (Strong/Weak). A combination of situational variables then dictates a task- or relationship orientation.

From a contingency approach, intersectional research offers an opportunity to gain valuable insight into how contexts affect the leadership experience of marginalised groups. Parker and Ogilvie (1996) emphasise the necessity to examine the lived experiences of successful African-American women executives in order to understand how they strategically control aspects of their oppressive environment in order to maintain their leadership role occupation. In doing so, one must however remain mindful of the fact that organisations are not the result of objective laws and regulations, but a product of historical events (Bryman & Bell 2007) and therefore remain engrained with racial and sexist structures that reproduce marginalization.

According to Grint (2005), however, even consideration of context as a determining factor in leadership is fundamentally flawed. This assertion is based on the constructionist view that ‘context’ itself is socially constructed. If people are actors in a socially constructed reality, then context cannot be viewed as an independent variable. Instead, leader traits (race and gender), perceived leadership style (or collection of behaviours) and the organisational context are all socially constructed and mutually interdependent. From this argument, a model which most concisely describes the social phenomenon of leadership is that of Ladkin (2010). In this instance, leadership is not a set of desirable traits, it is not a collection of appropriate behaviours, not is it the correct response to a given context. Rather, it is a ‘*moment*’ that occurs when all the aforementioned, socially constructed, conditions allow it to occur. Indeed, Chin, Lott, Rice, and Sanchez-Hucles (2007) state that leadership should be seen as a social process and should move away from trying to pin down the ideal traits, behaviours or context that could make one person into a good leader.

In addition to various critiques (Graeff 1983; Vecchio 1987; Blank et al. 1990; Butler & Reese 1991; Graeff 1997; Chin et al. 2007; Ladkin 2010), it can also be noted that mainstream leadership theories claiming to incorporate the ‘*contextual*’ effects hardly go beyond those contextual effects that occur within the organisation. This is not to dispel the relevance or importance of considering factors such as follower maturity, task structure or position power, but as leadership is a social phenomenon, it should arguably also take into account broader societal influences. These may include more macro societal issues such as social norms, culture and tradition, political agendas, class structure, etc. None of the aforementioned approaches to studying leadership covers any of these macro-societal factors. Contingency theories also tend to be extremely rigid in their prescriptiveness. This prescriptiveness does not allow for various diversities in modern organisations.

# Critical Management Studies

Individuals do not exist independently from historical frameworks and society. In fact, critical theory suggest that people’s consciousness, understanding and beliefs are influenced and manipulated (Akella 2003). This influence and manipulation, according to critical theory, occur in order to maintain power structures (Acker 2006) and eventually result in a (white, middle-class, male dominated) hegemony.

Exploring historical frameworks are absolutely crucial from a critical theory perspective. Putting to the side past historical events benefits the group attempting to maintain power structures by suggesting that they did not take place when the truth they it did and in addition may have had significant political motive for the historically constructed event (A. J. Mills & J. H. Mills 2012). These events more often than not shape current practices. Considering underrepresentation of minorities in leadership positions and revisiting the ‘wage gap’ between men and women in the same position (amongst others) is a clear indication that the gender-stratification and race discrimination practices of colonial times is not so securely in the past. Looking critically and fundamentally questioning existing practices hold the potential for change.

According to Humphries and Dyer (2005) critical management studies (CMS) includes theorising by critically reflecting on the taken-for-granted assumptions that occupy the very structure of our existence. CMS aims to develop credibly reflections into mainstream management theory and discourse. One such example is that of ‘*Post-heroic Leadership Theory*’. It was mentioned in the preceding sections that early conceptions of leadership involved the idea of an idealised ‘*Great Man*’ and from this sprouted various theories of what traits, behaviours or conditions it would require to bring into being this ‘*great*’ leader who is expected to be responsible for everyone’s survival. Huey and Sookdeo (1994) state that ‘*post-heroic leaders*’ realise that the extreme pressures and complex demands of the modern corporate environment cannot be addressed by one individual. According to Dutton (1996) ‘*heroic leadership*’ has become engrained in many cultures because of its predictability and stability, but in the new business age this is no guarantee of success. Modern organisational leaders need to think differently about how they lead in order to survive. Working together in teams, building relationships, bilateral communication and delegation, it is said, has become the new way of running businesses. It can be argued that this shift in practice have allowed more women to advance into leadership positions. With the focus moving away from authority and control and more towards building relationships, it is argued that “feminine” styles of leading are challenging the idea of the male dominated business environment (McCrimmon 2009).

This happens when we take for granted certain practices and ways of thinking. We assume that because something can be rationalised and because something was done so in the past that it is right, or simply the best way to do it (Humphries & Dyer 2005). According to Alvesson and Spicer (2012) the majority of leadership discourse grants more importance onto the idea than is warranted. In mainstream leadership discourse the construct of leadership is treated with incredible reverence and awe, which to a certain extent ignores the inherent ambiguity and uncertainty related to it. As social scientists we might be wise to let go of our wild fascination with the concept and admit that, although history has shown us that leadership can direct the motives of the masses, it can also be quite feeble in its inability to occur without all the conditions being just right.

It is also suggested that a focus shift, away from classic views of traits, behaviours and conditions, should be explored. Even new findings on the possible heritability of leadership manifestation support archaic ways of thinking about leadership. This is done by disregarding the possibly complex social process involved in leadership. As a result, these ways of thinking perpetuates gendered and racist organisational practices. Alternative views of leadership in modern organisations proposed by Alvesson and Spicer (2012) and more focus on empowerment and agency should be explored. Alvesson and Spicer's (2012) view on the concept of leadership resonates with Chin et al.'s (2007) proposed ‘coaction’. Coaction thrives on collaboration and involves the constant renegotiation of goals and contexts and resists oppressive structures and practices. However, this process is challenging since coaction also states that the context is in a constant state of flux, and considering that collaborative processes have some restrictions (like group maturity, group commitment, external pressures) that make collaboration difficult if not impossible – hence Chin et al.'s (2007) assertion for more empirical data.

CMS does not call for a complete abolishment of previous studies of leadership (or management) although some factions within the discipline would see this be done (Rowlinson & Hassard 2011). The key here is to not take business processes for granted, to challenge power frameworks (Akella 2003) and to advance the field of organisational leadership by asking questions about race and gender equality, for example.

# Sociological Paradigm of Leadership

Although the different approaches to leadership theory in the section on psychological paradigms are all very different, they all have one fundamental core, namely the individual. They all position ‘the leader’ as central to the theorising process. This might seem like an obvious statement, especially considering the fact that the psychological paradigm has dominated organisational leadership theory, since leadership’s inclusion in scientific study and specifically in organisational studies. Burns (1978) states that psychological perspectives tend to misconceive leadership as merely a type of control exercised over followers. In addition to this, and quite central to my argument, is Burn’s assertion that an emphasis on the psychology of leadership has also resulted in an assumption of male leadership (and arguably also ‘white leadership’). These embedded assumptions of leadership, permeating the study and practice thereof, may then be a significant contributor to the current leadership inequality that abounds. Therefore, taking a step back, putting ‘the leader’ aside and viewing leadership from a more social perspective might yield some very valuable insights, especially as far as race and gender equality is concerned.

When considering issues of equality in organisational leadership, adopting a psychological perspective is not adequate. It is true, that within this perspective (especially from a behavioural approach) questions such as “do men or women make better leaders” or “is there something like African leadership” do seem to address the issue. However, it is my position that these perspectives merely scratch the surface. A psychological approach does not place the researcher in the proper position to investigate larger scale societal phenomenon and problems, which affect organisational leadership. So, even though whether men or women make ‘better’ leaders is nevertheless an important question, being concerned with equality, diversity and inclusion within organisational leadership would seem to be better viewed from a more macro-societal perspective, as will be demonstrated in this next section.

According to Nohria and Khurana (2010), researchers concerned with leadership from a sociological perspective should consider four main schools of thought. These are the Weberian-, Institutional-, Neo-Marxist- and Relational approaches. Within each there is a different approach to how leadership manifests and plays its role in the functioning of society. For the sake of completeness I will briefly explain all four. However, in the discussion section (Layder’s research map) thereafter, the Weberian and Neo-Marxist perspectives will be included due to their focus on the legitimization of domination as well as the maintenance of power structures.

## 5.1 Weberian perspective of domination

Central to the Weberian sociological approach to leadership, named after German sociologist Max Weber, are the concepts of domination and legitimacy. The former in this context refers to an individual (or group) enjoying the obedience of followers, whereas the latter refers to a condition where followers (voluntarily) accept domination provided a basis for domination is in place.

This then implies that there is an inherent interest in obeying orders, whether it being positive gain or the avoidance of negative experience. In everyday life, behaviour is generally the result of some habits or customs as well as the calculation of some expected gain. However, according to Weber (1922) habitual influences and the promise of gain are not sufficient to maintain domination; There needs to be in place some kind of legitimacy to the domination of one over another in order to gain voluntary obedience. Since the claim to legitimacy will be different for different situations, one is able to classify types of domination based on the claim for legitimacy. Weber (1922) uses Rational, Traditional and Charismatic as aforementioned classifications.

Firstly, Rational legitimacy includes domination essentially based on expertise (Nohria & Khurana 2010). Basically, if a leader was able to demonstrate expertise by means of qualification, experience, track record or the like, he or she would be able to make legitimate claims to domination based on that. The second category of domination, namely Traditional, involves a relationship of control that has developed over time (Hamilton & Biggart 1988). Typically this type of domination would be found in organisations where heirs inherit the right to dominate and this is accepted as legitimate by followers if said heir is seen to act within the traditions of the family/empire/dynasty (Nohria & Khurana 2010). The third category of domination according to the Weberian approach is that of Charisma. Leaders seeking legitimate domination on a charismatic basis do so in a time of crisis by demonstrating to desperate followers an exceptional ‘Heroic’ ability to bring about a solution for said crisis (House 1999).

## 5.2 Institutional perspective to leadership

As mentioned at the end of the previous section on psychological perspectives, earlier studies on leadership proposed that leadership (and not only organisational leadership) should primarily be concerned with creating meaning and giving purpose to actions (Nohria & Khurana 2010). Within the Institutional perspective the focus is on meaning creation and purpose, but in addition to this, scholars who subscribe to an Institutional perspective also believe that leadership avoids chaos and facilitates social integration.

According to this perspective, the leader is not necessarily a heroic saviour who needs to solve a crisis, but rather the facilitator who must assist followers in solving a problem together. The leader and the follower is therefore mutually dependant on each other. The leader brings cohesion and harmony in action and the follower brings ideas and solutions. Both are necessary for the institution to be maintained.

## 5.3 Neo-Marxist perspective of power structures

Whereas with the Weberian perspective the emphasis in studying leadership was legitimacy of dominance and in the Institutional perspective it being mutual dependence, with the Neo-Marxist perspective of leadership the emphasis is with the maintenance of power structures between social classes. This seems very similar to the Weberian perspective, but is in fact fundamentally different in that Weberian scholars believe the leader to maintain domination over followers, whereas the Neo-Marxist scholars believe leaders maintain domination over followers by means of an intricate system of class structures (Nohria & Khurana 2010). The Neo-Marxist view of leadership in contemporary organisations holds that social structures are put in place, reproduced and replicated in order for the ‘*Powerful Elite*’ to maintain domination over followers (Williamson 2008).

From a Neo-Marxist perspective, the role of the leader and the role of the follower are therefore clearly distinguished and held apart by a set of social classes. This social structure makes it easier for a small group to maintain control over resources and makes it difficult for the rest to gain access to these resources. As a result, moving between classes becomes challenging.

## 5.4 Relational perspective of leadership

The fourth major sociological perspective of leadership as proposed by Nohria and Khurana (2010) is that of Relationships and Social Networks. From a Relational perspective, leadership is the function of regulating various relationships and utilising the advantages of these relationships to the benefit of the collective – A position very similar to that of the Institutional perspective, however, with one fundamental difference. With the Institutional perspective, the core focus is that of the ‘institution’ or ‘organisation’, i.e., everyone involved with the institution working together (via leadership intervention) to gain advantage. In the case of the Relational perspective, the focus is on the relationships the leader has with followers, rather than the institution they all belong to.

Similarly to the Weberian perspective, the Relational perspective implies that the leader is in a position of legitimate power. More so than followers, otherwise one could argue that followers themselves could broker relational benefits to gain various advantages. The ethos of the relational perspective of leadership is visible in contemporary theories like ‘transformational leadership’ and ‘servant leadership’ where the leader needs to leverage his or her relationship with followers in order to attain organisational goals (Daft 2011).

With the Relational perspective we make a full circle back to Trait and Behavioural theory. Many organisational leadership studies emphasise certain personality profiles and skills like emotional intelligence in being able to maintain positive and productive relationships with followers (Rubin et al. 2005; Stein et al. 2009; Harms et al. 2011; Reichard et al. 2011). One could therefore argue that there is an overlap between the Relational perspective and the ‘Great Man’ perspective, in that a leader with the ideal set of ‘traits’ will be able to foster better relationships (than the leader who does not have those traits) and so gain organisational benefits. One could also argue that there is an overlap between the Behavioural Leadership Perspective and the Relational Perspective in that certain behaviours are expected to influence leader-follower relationships more positively than others and in so doing gain certain organisational benefits. This is different, however, from trait and behavioural theory which expects a direct impact of leader traits and behaviours on performance, respectively.

# A discussion of gender and race within organisational leadership, using Layder’s (1993) resource map

The literature on leadership presented in the preceding sections is vast. In truth, it merely scratches the surface of extent leadership theory, but I have attempted to keep the focus on leadership literature as it pertains to gender and race equality. Major critiques of the various different approaches were discussed and my own criticisms were also offered. However, if one is to give a proper representation and critique of leadership theory, the aforementioned literature needs to be discussed critically from a holistic approach. For this, one needs a basis of enquiry. For this purpose, I have opted for Layder's (1993) research map.

The research map as proposed by Layder (1993) offers the researcher to examine and discuss phenomena from a multi-layered approach. Social phenomena do not occur in a vacuum. As social scientist it would be advantageous to examine phenomena in such a way that it takes into account all the various factors to gain a more holistic view. Layder’s map provides us an opportunity for this by setting up a structure of four levels including the self, the situated activity, the setting and the context. Each of these levels represents a different level around which social phenomena should be examined. This section will consider the previously discussed leadership theory from the perspective of each of the four levels.

## 6.1 The self

The level of the ‘*self*’ is concerned with individuals’ sense of identity, personality and personal perceptions. This level, like all the other levels, recognises factors other than those it focuses on, but in this case the main priority is the individual.

One may argue that mainstream leadership theory are all focussed on the ‘*self*’ (i.e. the leader) with some giving slight consideration for ‘*situated activity*’ and ‘*setting*’, but none really considering the ‘*context*’. The approach with probably the strongest focus on the ‘*self*’ is that of ‘*trait theory*’. Even after much critique of its reliability to distinguish leaders from non-leaders and its ability to predict leader behaviour (Stogdill 1981; Willner 1984; Yukl 2010), there is a constant reference back to possible inherent traits of leaders.

In the Neo-Marxist’s approach and all three categories of Weber's (1922) model of domination/authority there is a strong emphasis on power. It is however important to realise, that in modern organisations the power of position is continuously eroding (Huey & Sookdeo 1994). A symptom of this is loss in effectiveness of a heroic leadership approach (McCrimmon 2009). Skills previously highly valued in leaders like intelligence, energy, ambition and self-confidence now hamper their ability to lead as it could be negatively perceived and cut communication off from followers.

Before we can discuss gender within the context of leadership, we need to clarify the term first. Very importantly, ‘gender’ is not the same as biological ‘sex’, although the two terms are often used synonymously. Where ‘sex’ refers to biological male and female differences, ‘gender’ refers to a set of socialised behaviours which either falls into the masculine category or the feminine category (Chin et al. 2007). The former physical trait and the latter social construct are sometimes used synonymously as a result of socialised gender roles, i.e. men are expected to perform certain roles in society and so are women.

## 6.2 The situated activity

‘*Situated activity*’ refers to specific social activities that occur around the ‘*self*’. These social activities have different symbolic meanings and are understood differently by different individuals. The ‘*situated activity*’ level is therefore concerned with how and individual subjectively experiences specific social interactions.

Much like the focus on ‘*self*’ with trait approaches, the behavioural approaches to leadership seem to fit into the ‘*situated activity*’ level of Layder's (1993) research map. Intentional participation in organisational practices with a set of desirable behaviours gives symbolic meaning to activities. Here it is important to consider the behavioural question: Do men or women make better leaders based on their style of leadership? This popular debate reigns on and research into the question seem to attempt to buffer elements of ‘*self*’ (like gender and race) with elements of the ‘*setting*’ (like inequitable organisational practices) and the ‘*context*’ (like masculine power structures). It seems to be doing so by arguing that females have an advantage based on their style and should therefore be afforded more opportunities (Eagly & Johnson 1990; Eagly 2005; P. S. Parker 2005; Herrera et al. 2012). However, these perspectives merely address a symptom of a greater social problem. This social problem lies beyond the boundaries of social activities within ‘*situated activity*’. It is based in the broader social context and relates to the way in which domination is legitimised and power structures are maintained.

## 6.3 The setting

When we move wider, from the ‘*self*’ and ‘*situated activity*’ towards the ‘*setting*’, the focus becomes less micro (person centred) and more macro (socially focussed). On the ‘*setting*’ level the researcher must examine patterns of social activity. This would typically relate to how certain social groups function, like for example political parties or trade unions. This level also includes the dynamics at organisational level.

Of all mainstream leadership theories to consider patterns of social activity into theorising, contingency theory seems to be the only approach to do this. However, the contingency theory approach of leadership seemingly takes into account ‘contextual factors’, but when we look closer the focus still remains with the individual leader. It does, however, incorporate factors at organisational level. As mentioned earlier, however, when considering gender and race equality, it becomes crucial to look at wider social constructions.

Weberian and Neo-Marxist approaches might provide insight at ‘*setting*’ level. Patterns of social activity have engrained the idea of heroic leadership into society’s conceptualization of leadership. This way of thinking about leaders awards undue awe and reverence to leaders (and leadership in general) (Alvesson & Spicer 2012). One may argue that this undeserving admiration is not unintentional and that it is part of the greater macro social context. What I mean by this is that the admiration and awe could possibly be a function to support the leadership role occupancy of the archetypal male leader whose characteristics make up the classic view of a leader (Burns 1978). This then subsequently legitimising the white male hegemony in organisational leadership (Weber 1922).

Organisations do not operate in a vacuum. They are the result of various social influences over many years (Humphries & Dyer 2005; A. J. Mills & J. H. Mills 2012). Consider for example the change in leadership theorising throughout the 20th century. Changes were happening around them and organisations had to keep up. With a change in civil rights in western countries, not only did more women start entering the workforce, but more women also started entering into management positions (Itzin & J. Newman 1995; D. L. Collinson & Hearn 1996). Looking at how this change in the composition of organisational management is presented in the literature may serve as evidence for what is (to this day) considered as a deeply entrenched gendered nature of the world of work. I base this statement on the large amount of texts from the mid- to late 20th century which frames women in senior organisational roles as a ’*special case*’ (Burns 1978; Powell et al. 1984; Miller 1986; Rosener 1990; Ledwith & Colgan 1996). Quite literally, Stogdill (1981) categorises women in leadership in one of the last chapters of the publication under the heading ‘*special cases*’. One would hope that in the quest for fairness and equality that this popular perception would change. However, even when women to manage do penetrate the masculine world of leadership the literature is rife with accounts of challenges of having to fit in to a ‘man’s world’ such as the ‘*Glass Ceiling*’ that inhibits women from progressing past a certain point in the organisational hierarchy, or even the ‘*Glass Cliff*’ which is disguised as an appreciation of women’s leadership styles, but which in essence is trying to set them up for failure (Itzin & Newman, 1995; Ledwith & Colgan, 1996; Parker, 2005; as examples).

In parallel discourse, some theorists believe that females may in fact have an ‘advantage’ over their male counterparts when it comes to leading (Itzin & J. Newman 1995; Eagly & Carli 2003). This stance pertains to the assertion that gender differences have a causal link to preferred leadership style and the advantages of utilizing certain leadership styles. This approach falls within the ‘*setting*’ level of Layder’s research map as it mainly deals with patterns of social activity. The aforementioned scholars therefore in essence identified the pattern that female leaders lead in a way which may give them an advantage over their male counterparts. This stance, however, is overly reductionist and reduces women to a single identity, i.e. woman. But women are not without race, class or sexual orientation, (Cox & Nkomo 1990) all which could arguably have an influence on behaviour and therefore leadership style.

The aforementioned are focused on leadership as a significant position of power in organisations. At the same time it can also be said that a move away from focus on position power is evident in more contemporary leadership literature (Dutton 1996; McCrimmon 2009). Consider examples such as ‘*Distributed Leadership*’ and ‘*Servant Leadership*’. Here teamwork, shared responsibility, empowerment and coaction become more important (Huey & Sookdeo 1994; Chin et al. 2007; Alvesson & Spicer 2012). That said, one may take a cynical view of these approaches to leadership and argue that it is merely a smokescreen for the maintenance of power structures as proposed by the Neo-Marxist approach to leadership. What is important to take into account here is that with approaches to leadership such as ‘*Servant-*‘ and ‘*Distributed Leadership*’ the vertical leadership function is not removed (Bryman et al. 2011). Therefore, even though some increased consideration is given to followers the core (classical) leadership function still remains and as a result could possibly still serve to maintain power structures.

Briefly moving away from gender, it interesting to note that there was little literature available on ‘race and leadership’. However, there were some sources focusing on a race approach to the concept of leadership going as far back as the 1970’s (Stogdill 1977; Stogdill 1981), but when compared to work on gender and leadership the former was significantly outnumbered. This was also noted by Parker (2005) as she states that the majority of research done is on ‘*gendered patterns of organisation*’. After reviewing articles published over a period of 25 years Cox and Nkomo (1990) concluded that existing empirical work was not sufficient when considering the necessity for theorising on race in the world of work. As far as the field of leadership is concerned, this trend seems to have continued (House & Aditya 1997; Nkomo 2006; Ospina & Foldy 2009; Nkomo 2011).

A further cause for concern is highlighted by Ospina and Foldy's (2009) assertion that although work on race and leadership has been done, it still remains on the periphery of mainstream leadership theory. They mention specifically work on identity and context. According to Ospina and Foldy (2009) neither race nor leadership are fixed entities, but rather fluid constructs that respond to context. They also mention that considering other factors of identity – such as gender – will also have an impact on the leadership experience (for both leader and follower). From here we move on to context.

## 6.4 The context

The ‘*context*’ level of Layder's (1993) research map includes all the factors in the macro social context that spans wider than the individual, group or organisation. Here the researcher needs to consider how issues such as values, traditions and larger economic and political power come into play.

Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman, (2009) cite various authors in saying that, although not always necessarily blatant, there are still pervading institutionalised patterns of racism. Indeed, racial inferiority was not the reason for minority groups being treated as subservient, but instead the idea of racial hierarchy was socially constructed to maintain the power of dominant groups (Nkomo 1992). Sadly, traces of these ideals still remain disguised in modern day organisational practices.

Radicalised norms and practices are not the only result of the broader social impact. As mentioned earlier, society (and as a subsection of that society, the world of work) is significantly gendered. Indeed, the gendered nature of work is a reality for all working individuals, not only for women. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) state that not only is the role of women in organisations gendered but also that of men. It is mentioned earlier that organisational structures and practices are engrained with socialised gender-roles. Could this mean that men acting outside the boundaries set by the masculine gender-role face similar challenges to those women who wish to enter into leadership roles? Possibly, since Collinson and Hearn (1996) contend that the activation of masculinities has consequences for both men and women. Male and female gender roles are therefore co-constructed. Also, considering the way in which people conceptualise leadership as either masculine or feminine, denies it its dualistic nature (Parker, 2005). This (dichotomous) way of thinking is arguably a by-product of the inherently gendered nature of work, the way in which men and women are socialised into masculine and feminine roles, along with the rise of studies such as ‘*Women in management*’. Consider, as an additional example, the way in which some female leaders are evaluated when perceived to be acting outside their socialised role. Some studies have found that women leaders are evaluated negatively when acting in agentic or other ‘*non-feminine*’ ways (Rudman & Glick 1999; Livingston et al. 2012).

CMS offers a possible appropriate avenue to explore gender and race inequality issues in leadership. This is due to its appreciation for history and the impact it has on current taken-for-granted social norms and power structures. One may do so by examining leadership from an intersectional approach. As social creatures, humans do not exist as a ‘single-identity-being’. We are not only men or only women. We are not free of race, class or sexuality. Social science studying human phenomena should therefore look at how these multiple dimensions of identity, like the ones already discussed, intersect in social organisation (Parker, 2005). Intersectionality is a method of doing exactly that. Focussing on only single categories of social identity may be misleading and could obscure and oversimplify complex inter-construct processes (Burman 2004; Acker 2006). Booysen and Nkomo (2010) further assert that these various dimensions of identity also impact on each other and result in a compounding effect on the individual’s experience of social stimuli. Intersectionality therefore offers an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the social reality that shape a person or group’s lived experiences (Jean-Marie et al. 2009).

This may avoid reductionist views such as ‘gender and leadership’ or ‘race and leadership’ which tend to box groups of heterogeneous individuals together as homogenous. In doing so, and by giving due consideration for the possibility of legitimization (Weber 1922), the real reasons behind leadership inequalities may be uncovered. Critical theory in general acknowledges the fact that race and racism has been embedded into how society (and therefore organisations as a sub-structure of society) functions (L. Parker & Villalpando 2007). This position is similar to feminist assertions that organisations are built on masculine ideals and that supposed gender-neutral practices reproduce gender discrimination and upholds inequality regimes (Acker 2006). CRT also suggests that the current dominant ideologies serve as ‘*camouflage*’ for the protection of power and privilege of dominant groups and that the investigation of meaning-making (Bryman et al. 2011) is critical in understanding racial discrimination (L. Parker & Villalpando 2007).

# Conclusion

I have to reiterate my first point in stating that the field of leadership is arguably one of the widest fields of research in the management and social sciences. As a result suggested models, theories and frameworks will almost inevitably be ‘flawed’ as it is virtually impossible to include all known knowledge of leadership into one coherent theory (however, not for a lack of trying) (Bryman et al. 2011). The purpose of this paper was not to formulate a leadership theory from existing literature which promotes gender and racial equality, but to deliver a critical review of extant leadership theory from a gender and race perspective.

Juxtaposing gender and race in leadership studies it become immediately apparent that racial issues affecting leadership require significant further inquiry. Existing literature is not sufficient for theorising about race and leadership issues, nor is it sufficient to theorise about race as a compounding dimension of identity with gender. In addition to this, it can also be said that merely examining leadership from a race- or gender only perspective will also yield theorising that is overly simplistic and possibly reductionist.

In embarking on a quest to discover how the process of leadership functions in a socially constructed reality, it is important not to fall prey to previous ways of reasoning. Smithson and Stokoe (2005) advise against following old thought patterns as they are entrenched in structures of inequality. This becomes especially clear when one considers gender and race inequality in leadership from a Weberian or Neo-Marxist perspective. Instead, theorists need to open their minds and see new possibilities for the study of leadership. A focus on ‘what does a leader need to be a good leader’, ‘who makes the better leader’ or ‘what conditions need to be present for good leadership to emerge’ seem so trivial when one considers macro social influences that maintain inequalities.

# References

Acker, J., 2006. Inequality Regimes Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations. *Gender and Society*, 12(4), pp.441–464.

Akella, D., 2003. Giving a voice to the powerless: The role of critical theory in India. *IIMB Management Review*, September, pp.47–51.

Alvesson, M. & Spicer, A., 2012. Critical leadership studies: The case for critical performativity. *Human Relations*, 65(3), pp.367–390. Available at: http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0018726711430555 [Accessed November 6, 2012].

Ashcraft, K.L. & Mumby, D.K., 2004. *Reworking Gender*, London: SAGE.

Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J., 1994. Shatter the glass ceiling: Women may make better managers. *Human Resource Management*, 33(4), pp.549–560. Available at: http://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/hrm.3930330405.

Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J., 1990. *The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*, Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Blank, W., Weitzel, J.P. & Green, S.G., 1990. A Test of the Situational Leadership Theory. *Personnel Psychology*, 43, pp.579–597.

Block, P., 1993. *Stewardship*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Bolden, R. et al., 2011. *Exploring Leadership*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Booysen, L.A.E. & Nkomo, S.M., 2010. Gender role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics: The case of South Africa. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 25(4), pp.1754–2413.

Brescoll, V.L., Dawson, E. & Uhlmann, E.L., 2010. Hard won and easily lost: the fragile status of leaders in gender-stereotype-incongruent occupations. *Psychological science*, 21(11), pp.1640–2. Available at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20876882 [Accessed November 13, 2012].

Bryman, A. et al., 2011. *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, London: SAGE.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E., 2007. *Business Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burman, E., 2004. From difference to intersectionality: Challenges and resources. *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counseling & Health*, 6(4), pp.293–308.

Burns, J.M., 1978. *Leadership*, New York: Harper & Row.

Butler, J.K. & Reese, R.M., 1991. Leadership Style and Sales Performance: A Test of the Situational Leadership Model. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 11(3), pp.37–46.

Chaturvedi, S. et al., 2012. The heritability of emergent leadership: Age and gender as moderating factors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(2), pp.219–232. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984311001275 [Accessed October 19, 2012].

Chin, J.L. et al., 2007. *Women in Leadership*, Carlton: Blackwell.

Collinson, D.L. & Hearn, J., 1996. *Men as Managers, Managers as Men*, London: SAGE.

Cox, T. & Nkomo, S.M., 1990. Invisible men and women: A status report on race as a variable in organization behavior research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 11, pp.419–431.

Daft, R.L., 2011. *Leadership*, China: South-Western.

Daft, R.L., 1999. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Orlando: Dryden Press.

Doray, B., 1988. *From Taylorism to Fordism: A rational madness* F. A. Books, ed., London.

Dutton, G., 1996. Leadership in a post-heroic age. *Management Review*, 85(10), p.7. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9610216036&site=ehost-live.

Eagly, A.H., 2005. Achieving relational authenticity in leadership: Does gender matter? *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), pp.459–474. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984305000329 [Accessed October 4, 2012].

Eagly, A.H., 2007. Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage: Resolving the Contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(1), pp.1–12. Available at: http://pwq.sagepub.com/lookup/doi/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00326.x [Accessed November 8, 2012].

Eagly, A.H. & Carli, L., 2003. The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), pp.807–834. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984303000584 [Accessed October 8, 2012].

Eagly, A.H. & Johannesen-Schmidt, M.C., 2001. The Leadership Styles of Women and Men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), pp.781–797. Available at: http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1111/0022-4537.00241.

Eagly, A.H. & Johnson, B.T., 1990. Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), pp.233–256. Available at: http://doi.apa.org/getdoi.cfm?doi=10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.233.

Gilligan, C., 1982. *In a Different Voice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Graeff, C.L., 1997. Evolution of situational leadership theory: A critical review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 8(2), pp.153–170. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S104898439790014X.

Graeff, C.L., 1983. The Situational Leadership Theory: A Critical View. *Academy of Management Review*, 8(2), pp.285–291.

Grint, K., 1997. *Leadership*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grint, K., 2005. Problems, problems, problems: The social construction of “leadership”. *Human Relations*, 58(11), pp.1467–1494. Available at: http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0018726705061314 [Accessed October 11, 2012].

Hamilton, G.. & Biggart, N.W., 1988. Market, Culture and Authority: A Comparative Analysis of Management and Organization in the Far East. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, pp.S52–S94.

Harms, P.D., Spain, S.M. & Hannah, S.T., 2011. Leader development and the dark side of personality. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(3), pp.495–509. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984311000488 [Accessed November 5, 2012].

Den Hartog, D.N., Van Muijen, J.J. & Koopman, P.L., 1997. Transactional versus transformational leadership: An analysis of the MLQ. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, pp.19–34.

Haslam, S.A. & Ryan, M.K., 2008. The road to the glass cliff: Differences in the perceived suitability of men and women for leadership positions in succeeding and failing organizations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(5), pp.530–546. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984308000957 [Accessed November 6, 2012].

Herrera, R. et al., 2012. The Effect of Gender on Leadership and Culture. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, (January/February), pp.37–48.

Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K.H., 1977. *Management of Organization Behavior: Utilizating Human Resources*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

House, R.J., 1999. Weber and the Neo-Charismatic Leadership Paradigm: A Response to Beyer. *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(4), pp.563–574.

House, R.J. & Aditya, R.N., 1997. The Social Scientific Study of Leadership: Quo Vadiz? *Journal of Management*, 23(3), pp.409–473.

Huey, J. & Sookdeo, R., 1994. The new post-heroic leadership. *Fortune*, 129(4), pp.42–50. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9402177613&site=ehost-live.

Humphries, M.T. & Dyer, S., 2005. Introducing Critical Theory to the Management Classroom: An Exercise Building on Jermier’s “Life of Mike”. *Journal of Management Education*, 29(1), pp.169–195. Available at: http://jme.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1052562904264229 [Accessed December 11, 2012].

Itzin, C. & Newman, J., 1995. *Gender, Culture and Organizational Change*, New York: Routledge.

James, S.M. & Busia, A.P.A., 1993. *Theorising black feminisms: The visionary pragmatism of black women*, New York: Routledge.

Jean-Marie, G., Williams, V.A. & Sherman, S.L., 2009. Black Women’s Leadership Experiences: Examining the Intersectionality of Race and Gender. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(5), pp.562–581. Available at: http://adh.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1523422309351836 [Accessed November 11, 2012].

Kuhnert, K.W. & Lewis, P., 1987. Transactional and Transformational Leadership: A Constructive/Development Analysis’. *Academy of Management Review*, 12, pp.648–657.

Kumar, A. & Sharma, R., 2000. *Principles of business management*, Delhi: Mehra Offset Press.

Ladkin, D., 2010. *Rethinking Leadership*, Northampton: Edward Elgar.

Layder, D., 1993. *New Strategies in Social Research*, London: Wiley.

Ledwith, S. & Colgan, F., 1996. *Women in Organisations*, London: Macmillan Press.

Livingston, R.W., Rosette, A.S. & Washington, E.F., 2012. Can an agentic Black woman get ahead? The impact of race and interpersonal dominance on perceptions of female leaders. *Psychological science*, 23(4), pp.354–8. Available at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22421203 [Accessed November 6, 2012].

McCrimmon, M., 2009. Post-Heroic Leadership: How to Succeed in the 21st Century. *Canadian Manager*, 34(3), pp.10–11. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=44325103&site=ehost-live.

Miller, J.B., 1986. *Toward a new psychology of women* 2nd ed., Boston: Beacon Press.

Mills, A.J. & Mills, J.H., 2012. CMS: A satirical critique of three narrative histories. *Organization*, 20(1), pp.117–129. Available at: http://org.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1350508412460997 [Accessed January 26, 2013].

Nelson, D., 1941. *Frederick F. Taylor and the rise of scientific management*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Newman, M., 2004. *The civil rights movement*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Nkomo, S.M., 2011. A postcolonial and anti-colonial reading of “African” leadership and management in organization studies: tensions, contradictions and possibilities. *Organization*, 18(3), pp.365–386. Available at: http://org.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1350508411398731 [Accessed October 12, 2012].

Nkomo, S.M., 2006. Images of African Leadership and Management in Organisation Studies: Tentions, Contradictions and Re-visions. In *Inaugural lecture*. Pretoria: Unisa, pp. 1–28.

Nkomo, S.M., 1992. The Emperor has no clother: Rewriting “race in organizations”. *Academy of Management Review*, 17(3), pp.487–515.

Nohria, N. & Khurana, R., 2010. *Handbook of Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Boston: Harvard University Press.

Ospina, S. & Foldy, E., 2009. A critical review of race and ethnicity in the leadership literature: Surfacing context, power and the collective dimensions of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(6), pp.876–896. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984309001751 [Accessed September 29, 2011].

Parker, L. & Villalpando, O., 2007. A Racecialized) Perspective on Education Leadership: Critical Race Theory in Educational Administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(5), pp.519–524. Available at: http://eaq.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0013161X07307795 [Accessed November 11, 2012].

Parker, P.S., 2005. *Race, Gender and Leadership*, Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Parker, P.S. & Ogilvie, D.T., 1996. Gender, Culture and Leadership: Toward a Culturally Distinct Model of African-American Women Executives’ Leadership Strategies. *Leadership Quarterly*, 7(2), pp.189–214.

Pichler, S., Simpson, P.A. & Stroh, L.K., 2008. The Glass Ceiling in Human Resources: Exploring the link between women’s representations in management and the practices of strategic human resource management and employee involvement. *Human Resource Management*, 47(3), pp.463–479.

Powell, G.N. & Butterfield, D.A., 1994. Investigating the “Glass Ceiling” Phenomenon: an Empirical Study of Actual Promotions To Top Management. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(1), pp.68–86. Available at: http://amj.aom.org/cgi/doi/10.2307/256770.

Powell, G.N., Posner, B.Z. & Schmidt, W.H., 1984. Sex Effect on Managerial Value Systems’. *Human Relations*, 37, pp.909–921.

Reichard, R.J. et al., 2011. A longitudinal analysis of relationships between adolescent personality and intelligence with adult leader emergence and transformational leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(3), pp.471–481. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984311000464 [Accessed November 25, 2012].

Rosener, J.B., 1990. Ways Women Lead. *Harvard Business Review*, Nov.-Dec., pp.119–160.

Rosette, A.S., Leonardelli, G.J. & Phillips, K.W., 2008. The White standard: racial bias in leader categorization. *The Journal of applied psychology*, 93(4), pp.758–77. Available at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18642982 [Accessed November 11, 2012].

Rowlinson, M. & Hassard, J., 2011. How come the critters came to be teaching in business schools? Contradictions in the institutionalization of critical management studies. *Organization*, 18(5), pp.673–689. Available at: http://org.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1350508410396397 [Accessed November 3, 2012].

Rubin, R.S., Munz, D.C. & Bommer, W.H., 2005. Leading From Within: the Effects of Emotion Recognition and Personality on Transformational Leadership Behavior. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(5), pp.845–858. Available at: http://amj.aom.org/cgi/doi/10.5465/AMJ.2005.18803926.

Rudman, L.A. & Glick, P., 1999. Feminized management and backlash toward agentic women: the hidden costs to women of a kinder, gentler image of middle managers. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 77(5), pp.1004–1010. Available at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10573877.

Sears, D.O., Peplau, L.A. & Taylor, S.E., 1991. *Social Psychology* 7th ed., London: Prentice-Hall.

Smithson, J. & Stokoe, E.H., 2005. Discourses of Work-Life Balance: Negotiating “Genderblind” Terms in Organizations. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12(2), pp.147–168. Available at: http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2005.00267.x.

Stein, S.J. et al., 2009. Emotional intelligence of leaders: a profile of top executives. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 30(1), pp.87–101. Available at: http://www.emeraldinsight.com/10.1108/01437730910927115 [Accessed January 22, 2013].

Stogdill, R.M., 1977. *Leadership Abstracts and Bibliography*, Columbus: Ohio State University.

Stogdill, R.M., 1981. *Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership* B. M. Bass, ed., New York: The Free Press.

Vecchio, R.P., 2003. In search of gender advantage. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), pp.835–850. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1048984303000602 [Accessed November 8, 2012].

Vecchio, R.P., 2002. Leadership and gender advantage. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(6), pp.643–671. Available at: http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S104898430200156X.

Vecchio, R.P., 1987. Situational Leadership Theory: An Examination of a Prescriptive Theory. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 72(3), pp.444–451.

Weber, M., 1922. *Economy and Society*, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Williamson, T., 2008. he good society and the good soul: Plato’s Republic on leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 19, pp.397–408.

Willner, A.R., 1984. *The spellbinders: Charismatic political leadership*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Witz, A., 1992. *Professions and Patriarchy*, London: Routledge.

Yukl, G., 2010. *Leadership in Organizations*, New Jersey: Pearson.

1. Frederick Taylor was a mechanical engineer who sought to improve industrial efficiency and through his work became the father of ‘scientific management’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Frank Gilbreth was an advocate of scientific management and the pioneer of the field of motion study. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Henry Ford was the founder of the Ford Motor Company and proponent of industrial mass production. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sigmund Freud was a neurologist who became known as the founding father of psychoanalysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Carl Jung was a psychiatrist who founded analytical psychology. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Achieving ‘Relational Authenticity’ implies that followers approve of their leader promoting a set of values on their behalf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) is a psychometric instrument that measures leaders’ predisposition toward behaviour relating to ‘*Initiating Action*’ or ‘*Consideration*’ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)