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## GENDER STEREOTYPES OF LEADERS: DO THEY

## INFLUENCE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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**Abstract:** This article reviews social psychological and organizational development literature on gender stereotypes and leadership style and effectiveness and explores its relevance for leadership in higher education. Implications of the dichotomous stereotypes of “friendly vs. competent” and “agentic vs. communal” frame a discussion of social psychological research on how stereotypes affect perceptions of leaders. Ways to overcome stereotypes and the application of feminist values to leadership strategies are also discussed.

Gender stereotypes are pervasive and have an impact on all aspects of women’s and men’s behavior. Social psychology and organizational development literature on gender stereotypes provide insight into pervasive expectations that influence how women are perceived or view themselves in situations where leadership is required. Differences in leadership styles associated with gender affect the perceived effectiveness of leaders. This paper explores the application of this literature to leadership in higher education, comparing descriptive studies of gender issues in leadership in education with studies of leadership in other settings, and providing suggestions about responding to stereotypic expectations.

**Social Psychology of Gender Stereotypes**

Two themes from the voluminous research on gender stereotypes are particularly pertinent to a discussion of leadership because they point to the contradictory expectations imposed upon women leaders. One stereotypic dimension applied to women posits that “competent” and “friendly” are bipolar opposites on a single trait dimension (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Goodwin & Fiske, 2001). That is,

an individual can not be both competent and friendly: the choices are to be either competent and cold or incompetent and friendly. In relationship to leadership, people who are more masculine than feminine in appearance are judged as more competent. Furthermore, cold women are perceived as unfeminine, creating another overlay dimension: women can be feminine, warm, and incompetent *or* masculine, cold, and competent.

A second dichotomy that pertains to leadership is between “agentic” and “communal” leadership styles. Agentic behavior is task-oriented and focused on outcomes; communal behavior is focused on group dynamics and the process of decision making. Because these behaviors are seen as mutually exclusive, it is expected that one cannot be both agentic and communal; the gendered expectation is that women are more communal and men more agentic (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Research on the social psychology of stereotypes emphasizes that the context in which judgments occur is important. While there is much research on contextual impacts on judgments, a recent study refines the analysis in regard to leadership. The study involved placing people in situations that created varied degrees of attentiveness. People in a situation where they are paying close attention are more likely to adjust their view of leadership for influence of a stimulus person’s gender, in contrast to people who are overloaded cognitively. Overloaded individuals are apparently not focusing on characteristics of the stimulus people such as gender in their analysis of a leader’s effectiveness and therefore gender does not influence assessment of leader efficacy in that condition (Sczesny & Kühnen, 2004).

These cognitive conditions are related to how stereotypes influence thoughts about leadership. Scott and Brown (2006) actually looked at the information processing that occurs as people view leaders in action. In their study perceivers had difficulty encoding leadership *behavior* into leadership *traits* when behavior was agentic and the actor was female. That is, agentic leadership traits came to mind

less readily than communal leadership traits with female leaders. In addition, agentic traits were also less accessible mentally when the leader was female than when the leader was male. A similar phenomenon occurred when people rated their own leadership abilities, suggesting that people internalize stereotypic perceptions.

Gender bias in leadership emerges *early* in information processing and the underlying process is that relevant traits are encoded automatically when corresponding behaviors are processed. In other words, stereotypes color how behavioral information is encoded. This suggests that female leaders will have difficulty getting subordinates to perceive them as possessing agentic characteristics and this perceptual bias may undermine the effectiveness of women leaders. Scott and Brown also found, though, that individuating information is an effective means of eliminating the impact of stereotypes both for perceptions and self-ratings. This lends hope that people stereotype less when they actually get to know a person and her leadership style.

### **Organizational Psychology on Gender and Leadership**

Understanding the cognitive processes that underlie stereotyping illuminates causes of phenomena studied by organizational psychology. Research on gender and leadership focuses on both college students and on leaders in various business settings. One common theme concerns the notion that good leadership is inconsistent with feminine behavior, sometimes described as the “think manager- think male” model (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Sczesny, 2003). The extent and prevalence of this effect varies from study to study, again pointing to the importance of contextual factors such as cultural shifts across time and situation. For example, some settings may provoke more pronounced stereotypes. If the expected management style of an organization at a given time is direct, uncaring, or top-down, traditionally masculine behaviors may be expected of leaders. That expectation may exacerbate the impact of stereotypes of women which hold that competence and warmth of personality are dichotomous,

making it difficult for women leaders to find a balance that is effective in that organization.

Historical changes may account for some discrepancies in conclusions regarding gender and leadership. In a recent, thorough review of literature on gender, Eagly and Sczesny (2009) posit that women leaders are usually disadvantaged when people's stereotypes of women, men, and leaders are dissimilar. Such stereotypes are influenced by historical and cultural trends. Cultural stereotypes about women, men, and leaders have shifted somewhat in a feminine direction, but such shifts are not consistently seen in all studies. There is also some evidence that prejudice has lessened, although there is still a clear preference for male bosses despite the fact that that preference has decreased in recent studies compared to previous years. Eagly and Sczesny point out that men's roles have changed far less than women's roles in spite of some shifts of men into female-dominated professions. The continued gender division of labor in home continues to contribute to fewer women in influential leadership positions.

Research also discusses differences among leaders in different contexts. For example, in a study of students in a leadership program at a military academy, Boyce and Herd (2003) found a disparity between stereotypes of femininity and perceived leadership characteristics. In fact, senior military students had more gender-based perceptions of leadership than first-year students, suggesting enculturation. However, successful female cadet leaders saw leaders as having both feminine and masculine characteristics.

In another study of leaders and followers from a variety of organizations, gender produced only a small effect on leadership behavior, but was related to education level and was largest among those with only high school education (Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin, & Mars, 2007). A study with management students found that ratings of the importance of various leadership characteristics were not

very gender-stereotypic, especially among women. Self-evaluations of men and women did not differ on person- vs. task-oriented skills or on the importance of possessing those skills. However, women said they had lower task-oriented abilities than they perceived “leaders in general” as having (with gender unspecified), implying that they devalued their leadership ability (Sczesny, 2003).

Research tells us that one of the ways in which stereotypes impact real behavior is that they become internalized. In other words, people assimilate stereotypes and believe them in reference to their own behavior (Bennett & Gaines, 2010; Thomas, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2004). When stereotypes are negative, some call this internalized oppression (Thomas et al., 2004). A discussion of the conditions under which internalization occurs is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is clear that stereotypes can be primed by situational features; that is, they are more likely to be invoked when cues in a situation suggest them, even in subtle ways (Bennett & Gaines, 2010). Thus, it is not surprising that women may devalue their own leadership potential if they believe the stereotypes about their gender.

Some research has looked at perceptions of leaders in various cultural groups. For instance, in a study comparing four cultural groups in Western Europe, people in all cultures perceived gender-based leadership differences, in that males stereotyped women’s leadership negatively, but stereotyping was least prevalent among Latino respondents and most prevalent in Nordic and Anglo groups (Prime, Jonsen, Carter, & Maznevski, 2008). Men thought women were ineffective at basic leadership tasks, *e.g.*, intellectual stimulation, influencing superiors, role modeling, problem solving, and competence in delegating or inspiring others. Although the statistical effect size was small, the authors argue that these statistically small effects compound over the course of a woman’s career to have a significant negative impact on her long-term success.

Knowing that men tend to stereotype women is instructive as to how women experience stereotyping. Prime et al. (2008) suggest that men's stereotypes have the potential to undermine women, even when stereotypes may be seen as positive. For example, males felt women were good at supporting others, but the authors argue that even this may be potentially damaging because supportiveness is not considered an important leadership trait. In other words, men's endorsement of men leaders gives them the edge in advancement.

However, another study looking at gender typing of managers in Australia, Germany, and India, reported few cultural differences. People in all three groups felt that women were more competent at leadership styles that are person-oriented. However, self-descriptions of men and women were similar, implying that actual leadership may not have differed by gender (Sczesny, Bosak, Neff, & Schyns, 2004). Thus, the extent of cultural variations in perceptions of gender and leadership is not clear, but one can say that culture can have an impact.

#### *Role congruity theory*

Before discussing a theory about gender stereotyping of leaders a caveat is in order. Underlying assumptions about gender dichotomies can be criticized for promoting polarization, relying as they do on bipolar categories such as masculine-feminine and male-female. In a fascinating and clever analysis, Bowring (2004) uses Star Trek's Captain Catherine Janeway as an illustration and "subverts her gender by queering her character" (p. 381). She proposes that removing assumptions of bipolar characteristics can lead to richer theory and practice of leadership and gender. This is a legitimate concern, one that always arises in research that focuses on differences between women and men. These studies inevitably exaggerate differences and fail to acknowledge that *within-gender* differences are almost always greater than differences *between genders*. In other words, there is likely much more variability among women or among men in their leadership styles than the

variability between the two gender groups (Hyde, 2005). Thus, the differences discussed here are overgeneralizations and probably exaggerated. The notion that women's success has been undermined by the incongruity between beliefs about characteristics of good leadership in a particular setting and gender stereotypes has been called *role congruity theory*. This theory has been proposed and tested in some detail by Alice Eagly and her colleagues. Eagly's argument is that incongruity between leadership roles and female gender roles (*i.e.*, prescriptive expectations for women's behavior), leads to prejudicial judgments and actions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Karau, Miner, & Johnston, 1994). Because people more easily perceive men as being highly competent, men are more likely to be considered leaders, given opportunities, and ultimately to emerge as leaders than women.

An extensive meta-analysis summarizing numerous studies of leadership effectiveness was consistent with this theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women leaders are seen as less effective when the proportion of male subordinates is greater, in highly masculinized environments like military organizations, and when a larger percentage of male raters is evaluating them. However, Eagly and Karau found that women are perceived as modestly more effective in education, government, and social services than in other kinds of organizations, suggesting that higher education may be a place where women can make inroads into leadership positions. The assumption is that these masculinized environments exacerbate the pressure to conform to gendered leadership stereotypes, making them more salient to both subordinates and the leaders themselves; for instance, by invoking the masculine tendency to equate warmth and friendliness with weakness.

More recently, in Spain, Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006) examined respondents' projections about fictional job candidates and showed that male candidates were seen as masculine in a masculine industry (auto manufacturing) and as feminine in a less masculine industry (clothing manufacturing). Women were

perceived as masculine regardless of the industry, suggesting incongruity of feminine gender role and leadership role. When female candidates were predicted to succeed in a congruent industry, their success was attributed to their competencies, but in masculine contexts, women's success was attributed less to ability than was men's success. This is important because if women's success is seen as the result of chance, their performance does nothing to change views about whether women *can* be good leaders. Through a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism, the notion that women are not competent leaders is reinforced and stereotypic notions are perpetuated.

Yet, not all studies support the role congruity theory. In a study presenting vignettes of leaders and followers, raters responding to female leaders with a masculine style said that the leader's subordinates were less satisfied. The opposite was true with responses to male leaders, *i.e.*, men using incongruent styles were perceived more positively (Embry, Padgett & Caldwell, 2008). Because of limited support for gender congruity in this study, the authors argue that what is considered truly masculine is being redefined and it is now more acceptable for women and men to behave in a gender-inconsistent manner and many managers use aspects of both masculine and feminine styles. In other words, stereotypes of what constitutes leadership *are* in transition, permitting more latitude for personal differences in leadership style rather than forcing gendered behavior.

Another study found that leaders were seen as more competent and efficient regardless of sex and were evaluated more favorably when they adopted feminine leadership styles, contrary to role congruity theory (Cuadrado, Morales, & Recio, 2008). This research hypothesized that women are evaluated less favorably when they use stereotypically masculine management styles, but actually found that *both* women and men were evaluated negatively with that style. The results were the same for both gender evaluators, and, hence, contradict role congruity theory. The context was a hospital, which may be important because



change in leadership styles may be demanded by certain organizations. The authors argue for greater valuing of feminine or androgynous modes of leadership, pointing out that some women may feel compelled to adopt masculine styles and that may account for role congruity results, *i.e.*, women who use feminine styles are actually evaluated more positively. They conclude that organizations should train feminine leadership styles, especially if the organizations are masculinized. It appears that stereotypes are changing, at least in some settings.

One thing that is quite clear is that context matters. For instance, in an experimental study of group dynamics, Ritter and Yoder (2004) found that, when the task was masculine, men who were less dominant than women (by virtue of their college class standing) emerged as leaders and were often appointed by the dominant woman herself in mixed-sex dyads. In same-sex dyads, however, the dominant person always emerged as leader. Given that so much of higher education governance and administration occurs in committee settings, group dynamics are likely especially important for leadership emergence in educational institutions.

### *Higher education*

Very little research examines gender differences in leadership styles in any systematic way. One comparative study examined leadership styles of community college administrators and found slight gender differences, stereotypical in that respondents viewed male leadership as more directive and autocratic, and female leadership as more participatory and merit-based (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). Other research is anecdotal and qualitative, but there is a consistent pattern indicating that stereotypes operate in higher education with consequences for women leaders, in terms of both their chosen leadership style and perceived effectiveness. Consistent with organizational psychology literature, historical changes and elements of the higher education context influence how gender affects leadership.

*Historical context.* Historical patterns clearly have affected gender expectations in higher education leadership. The impact of historical context is illustrated by Astin and Leland's (1993) analysis of three recent generations of women leaders in academe and other social organizations, whom they name the *Predecessors*, the *Instigators*, and the *Inheritors*. The *Predecessors*, who came of age during the Depression and World War II, emphasized education and its value for achieving equality for women. They were "solo" leaders who often adopted male models of leadership. *Instigators* came of age during the 1960s and became leaders during the wave of feminism that followed the civil rights and anti-war movements. They focused on concerns about opportunity in education and other work settings and the inclusion of women in scholarly and curricular concerns. *Inheritors* are those who were ascending to leadership positions in the 1990s. They often recognize Instigators as role models and visionaries, but have extended their vision and values as they begin to articulate alternative modes of leadership.

While the research on gender stereotypes does not go back farther than the 1970s, it is assumed that stereotypes are not static and change with cultural transformation, as evidenced by shifts that have occurred in recent decades. These historical patterns, then, most likely reflect changes in the gendered expectations of leaders; gendered scripts play out differently in different historical contexts (Reynolds, 2003). A recent study looking at generational differences in women leaders in student affairs is illustrative (Kezar & Lester, 2008). Second-wave feminists who matured in the 1970s wanted to change their organizations. Third-wave feminists (the next generation) were content to work in existing cultures. The authors posit that differences in style and expectations create points of conflict between second- and third-wave feminists as third-wavers attempt to redefine feminism. Among points of contention are unwillingness of the younger cohort to sacrifice family for career advancement and their focus on day-to-day change rather than revolution and on embracing mainstream organizations rather than trying to dismantle them.

Second-wavers feel the third-wavers may not be able to see needed change and subtle discrimination that persists on campuses. However, the article also provides some valuable ideas for potential common ground between the generations in regard to such matters as family friendly policies, opportunities in careers, campus climate for advancement, and dialogue about important leadership characteristics.

*Hierarchies and masculinized environments.* Hierarchies assume gendered constructs overtly and subtly (Acker, 1998). Hierarchies abound in education: colleges vary in prestige and reputation, administrative layers reflect stature, disciplines vary in status, tuition is equated with value, and faculty prominence is correlated with salary. Certainly women are in the minority in higher education and are in the smallest proportion in the most prestigious colleges or positions (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). A recent report showed that the salary gap of academic women is due largely to institution type because women are concentrated in public, master's level institutions with higher teaching loads and lower salaries (Umbach, 2008). Even at the level of boards of directors, women are underrepresented and are not assigned to the higher status committees such as audit, compensation, governance (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). Women of color are even less well represented at all administrative levels (June, 2008; Turner, 2008).

Some contend that hierarchical line management has replaced administration in colleges and attaining a majority will not increase the numbers of women in leadership roles without dramatic changes in the campus climate (White, 2003). In a study that examined leaders in the Australian "technical and further education" sector, restructuring was highly gendered, with evident marketization and managerialism. Women could move into middle management, but the culture was highly masculinized and bureaucratic, and this, the respondents reported, reduced their passion for their work (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003). This phenomenon appears to illustrate a form of reverse self-fulfilling prophecy: women find the leadership expectations in organizations

less satisfying when the organizations become more masculinized and therefore are less motivated to take such positions.

Acker (1998) argues that even feminists who write on leadership have assumed that organizations are gender-neutral. Male dominance has been treated as too obvious to discuss, leading to failure to thoroughly analyze how deeply embedded gender constructs are in organizations. Yet gender is implicated fundamentally in maintaining the current social structure. Organization logic, work rules, labor contracts, managerial directives, job evaluations, and comparable worth analyses of gender-imbalanced jobs all rationalize organizational hierarchy. Gender stereotyping of leadership is likely another aspect of this unacknowledged masculine culture of work organizations.

Yoder (2001a) says leadership occurs in social contexts that vary in how congenial they are to women. Highly masculinized contexts are those in which men are the numerical majority; tasks are stereotypically masculine; the main goal is task completion; and hierarchy and coercive power are stressed. Leadership in masculinized contexts depends on status and autocratic, self-promoting, competitive behavior, all of which are viewed negatively when engaged in by women (Eagly et al., 1994; Yoder, 2001a).

Former college president Rita Bornstein (Bornstein, 2008) points out that gendered expectations are greater when one is the first woman president of an institution, that is, at institutions that have been dominated by masculine values in the past. She quotes one president who says that first woman presidents must defy stereotypes and prove themselves. Masculinity may be more entrenched at certain types of institutions, such as universities with medical schools or division I athletics.

*Power, politics, and overcoming stereotypes.* Women administrators Kettle (1996) interviewed reported that the power structure was dominated “by what was described as a team, but

was really a group of competing individual men” (p. 55). Amey and Twombly’s (1993) discussion of women presidents at community colleges vividly illustrates a masculinized leadership context. Historical accounts of leaders in the community college arena focus on a few “great men” who have shaped the role of these colleges in higher education. These descriptions are often couched in terms that evoke frontier, pioneer, athletic, and military images. To the extent that leadership is masculinized, the leadership styles of women and ethnic minorities are seen as problems, rather than as offering diverse strengths, and this limits access to leadership positions.

The frequently noted political character of academe also illustrates its masculinized nature. In her book about her experience as Dean of Humanities, Annette Kolodny (1998) describes how she tried to model management based on cooperation, consultation, and team building and asked it of others who reported to her, but found that institutional culture forced her to become territorial and entrepreneurial in relation to other colleges in the university to compete for resources. Using psychological language, the congruity expectations were so powerful that Kolodny felt that alternatives were neither allowed nor effective.

Changes in higher education may exacerbate the impact of these factors. Glazer-Raymo (1999) notes that solving financial and political problems have become more prominent in the role of president. To the extent that these are seen as masculine strengths, the presidency is equated with males. Women college presidents note that they feel they must work harder to gain the confidence of the very Board of Trustees that hired them and less often are given a second chance after a failure than male presidents (Brown, Van Ummersen, & Sturnick, 2001). Women of color are especially *unlikely* to be given second chances (Valverde, 2003). A recent notion about women in businesses, the *glass cliff*, described in an archival study by Haslam and Ryan (2008), makes this observation even more frightening. The glass cliff metaphor illustrates the observation that women are overrepresented in precarious

leadership positions. Women are more likely than men to be appointed to positions with great risk of failure and criticism because they involve the management of units in crisis. When organizations' performance is declining, women are seen as better suited as leaders than men. The stereotype of women as communal leaders is evoked, perhaps because women will be better at dealing with pain sensitively. The glass cliff effect is, in part, due to beliefs that women have distinctive abilities because traits such as understanding, intuition, and tact are seen as valuable for organizations in crisis. While this is an affirmation of women's ability, on one hand, it puts women at risk for failure and implies they are less valuable or even expendable; on the other hand, the glass cliff may provide opportunities for women that are otherwise not available. Women may get jobs men do not want, but the phenomenon also offers women's best opportunity to break into management and demonstrate these abilities. Stereotypes operate at these highest levels of management; women must prove they can be both agentic and competent, countering the stereotypes.

Acknowledging the interplay among differences in perspectives based on gender, culture, ethnicity, and other dimensions is essential. To the extent that ethnic stereotypes promote status differences in social roles, similar dynamics surely impact members of non-white ethnic groups and interact with gender in complicated ways (Ridgeway, 2001). Some people who write about higher education administration feel that race stereotypes overpower gender expectations in treatment from others (Moultrie & de le Rey, 2003). Others argue that gender is more salient (Turner, 2008; Warner, 1994). Still others say the point is moot (Valverde, 2003), because ethnic and gender stereotypes are inextricably intertwined and effects of each cannot be isolated (Moses, 1997).

Certainly, though, women of color have to deal with both sexist and racist stereotypes of leaders and the effects of related discrimination. The representation of women of color decreases at level of full professor and senior administrator compared to lower

ranks and definitions of competence that eliminate diverse candidates occur in hiring of both faculty and administrators (Turner, 2008). Even when hired, minority women have fewer opportunities for professional socialization. Because marginality is multiplied by various statuses in different context, women of color say it is difficult to tell if race or gender is operating often.

Turner (2008) describes some of accounts of the interplay of gender and ethnicity or cultural differences that present challenges from racial and ethnic stereotyping, gender bias and cultural differences, and resultant feelings of dissonance in workplace. For instance, Latina administrators discuss functioning in two distinct sociocultural environments; Native American leaders say tribal college leadership is inseparable from their culture; and Asian American women are stereotyped as not engaging in leadership behaviors like displays of power, authority and fortitude. Common themes, though, among diverse groups are the challenge of their authority by both colleagues and students; underemployment and overuse by departments; policies that make balancing family, community and career needs difficult; and excessive expectation that they must serve as role models for the profession on both gender and ethnicity; as well as their own desire to be active in their racial or ethnic communities. Bornstein (2008) echoes these themes from interviews with college presidents: Women of color face both gender and race-normed expectations and often need to work hard to overcome them. For example, African American college presidents report needing to take more time to talk with people about projects to make sure they are not interpreted through the lens of stereotypes.

How can women counteract the impact of stereotyping? First of all, educating people does help. Studies of outcomes from women's studies courses frequently document attitudinal change (Bryant, 2003; Katz, Swindell, & Farrow, 2004; Stake, 2007; Stake & Rose, 1994). In a study of graduate students in a cultural diversity course, a content analysis of journal entries showed that students became more aware of effects of gender stereotyping,

gender discrimination, and power differences (Andrews & Ridenour, 2006).

In a study of graduates of an education leadership program who were K-12 principals or assistant principals, students said they graduated with preferences for leadership style. The authors attributed the program's success to helping participants resist socialization and gain strong self-knowledge. These characteristics associated with feminine style were cited by these leaders as reasons for their success as principals or assistant principals (Williamson & Hudson, 2001).

Hogue and Lord (2007) developed a complex model on how to change women's leadership opportunities, saying that multiple solutions at individual, group, and organizational levels are required to change how people respond to female leaders. Briefly, it recommends that organizations need to encourage a culture of fairness; allow time for emergent processes; combine cultural and individual change strategies; provide experiences that develop leadership self-schema of women; offer multi-level increased opportunities for women especially in times of organizational change; and intervene to directly impact self-schema to become leaders. All of these actions can be seen as counteracting the effects of stereotypes on organizations and the individual leaders and subordinates within them.

#### *Leadership values or valuing leadership*

As someone who has tried to fashion leadership based on feminist values, I conclude with how my own leadership style has been affected by these values (Madden, 2002, 2005). I believe that most women leaders can tell anecdotes about how stereotypes have affected them and how they have worked to overcome gendered expectations as they grew into leadership positions. Speaking about college presidents, Bornstein (2008) describes the double bind identified by social psychology literature described previously in this paper: "When [women presidents] exhibit a caring,



consultative style, they are called weak and indecisive; when they adopt traditional authoritarian and directive behaviors, they are criticized for being too heavy-handed (p.172).”

Whether explicitly feminist or not, women who become leaders have behaved so as to acquire their positions. Whether motivated by social activism or not, women’s presence in leadership positions counteracts stereotypes to some extent. I suspect that one of the differences between feminist leaders and others, however, is that the desire and strategic planning to counteract gendered expectations is explicit and intentional.

In general, my advice to women who ask about overcoming stereotypes is: don’t let the stereotypes define you and don’t let others define your situation. Define your leadership style for yourself. Recognize stereotypes and discrimination and counteract them when they arise, but gain hope in the evidence that stereotypes do change over time and that one individual can alter the environment in which she works. In an article for community college presidents, DiCroce (1995) makes a similar “call to action,” arguing that women presidents need to use the power of their positions to break down institutional gender stereotypes.

Explicating one’s leadership style clearly is important because it may help others redefine what constitutes leadership. This is the most direct way to counteract gender stereotypes. Almost every biographical or case study of women leaders in the academy focuses on this. Bauer argues that feminist leaders are successful because of their values, not in spite of them (Bauer, 2009; DiCroce, 1995). McDade and colleagues (McDade, King, Chuang, Morahan, Nooks, & Sloma-Williams, 2008) surveyed fellows of an Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program, developing a framework for women leaders on these themes: “Leadership as activities, relationship to followers, envisioning and strategy, traits, communication, influence, and transformation (p. 75).” However, in addition to defining leadership in our own terms, we need to articulate our intent when it appears that perceptions of leadership

are working against us. This requires the need for sensitivity to institutional political dynamics and focus on structural change. It may also require confronting and addressing how gendered values influence what constitutes leadership and directly addressing the perception of collaborative leadership as weak.

*Commitment to empowerment and promoting equity.* Women administrators are ambivalent about the perceived need to play power games in order to advance before being able to change the rules of the game, finding it difficult to succeed while articulating a critique of male management models (Johnson, 1993; Kolodny, 1998). They are often deeply ambivalent about power, feeling pleasure at its influence, but fearful of it because it can play into masculine definitions of leaderships (Blackmore, 1999). One way of resolving this dilemma is to be clear that power can be defined as the ability to influence *outcomes*, rather than the ability to influence *people*. Instead of a “fixed boundary” view of power, the view is one of “expanding the pie” of energy to influence (Valverde, 2003, p. 105). DiCroce articulates this as “Penetrate the institution’s power structure and redefine its sense of power (1995, p. 85).”

Nontenured faculty are one group which lacks power in the organizational hierarchy of faculty at most colleges and universities. Twice in my career, groups of primarily nontenured women have formed the backbone of efforts to convert interdisciplinary programs in women’s and gender studies to major degree programs. In each case, I saw resolute strength emerge when faculty were reminded that, while they may feel relatively powerless as individuals in their departments – recognizing the vulnerability in tenure decisions is very real – as a group they could have a strong voice.

Almost every interview with women administrators mentions something about assuring equity and equal treatment. For example, biographies of three women of color, who were the first Mexican American, Native American, and Asian American presidents of

their respective institutions, talks similarly about adherence to core values of the institution and of treatment of people (Turner, 2007). Bauer (2009) also discusses three deans who all say that introducing diversity and equity in workplace environments has been important to them.

DiCroce (1995) is explicit in her charge to women presidents that they should “Use power of office to alter gender-related institutional policy (p.86)” and ensure their colleges have strong policies on sexual assault, harassment and “raise collegial consciousness and initiate collegial dialogue on gender and related issues (p. 86).”

I have had the opportunity to promote equity regarding many issues during my administrative career. One example is the parental leave policy at my current institution. Because teaching faculty members operate under different contractual expectations for annual calendar and sick leave than full-time professional staff members, their needs in terms of parental leave are different. That is, full-time professional staff members were entitled to use sick and vacation pay to cover the federally mandated parental leave and could simply leave their jobs at the time of a birth or adoption and continued to be paid. However, because teaching faculty are teaching during a set timeframe, the semester, they could not simply leave whenever the need arose. Faculty members told stories of grading papers in their hospital beds and returning to classes a week after delivering a baby. This is an equity issue: teaching faculty members did not have the same opportunity as staff members to arrange parental leave that was suitable for their own situations. Thus, we developed a policy that allows faculty members to have the same level of leave as other staff members, while also avoiding having to interrupt classes mid-semester.

In daily activities, using the justice and equity lens to evaluate decisions is sometimes obvious. For instance, there is empirical evidence that women and people of color are treated differently in student teaching evaluations and it is imperative to look for the

kinds of code words that mask gender or ethnic biases. I myself experienced this as a young faculty member. Social psychology, my major specialization, includes a section on discrimination. Early literature focused on racial discrimination, but in the 1980s the literature on gender discrimination grew and I decided to use gender frequently to illustrate the principles that relate to discrimination. I was stunned when a faculty member in the business program, which had a lot of students who took the course, asked me if I'd changed the syllabus because his students said "all you talked about in the course this semester was gender." Yet, I had changed the focus of examples in only a few lectures. Students apparently perceived that I discussed gender much more frequently than I really had, I assume because I am female. Having had that experience, I know I'm more sensitive to these kinds of comments in the student evaluations that I read and I make sure that others involved in the faculty evaluation process interpret them appropriately.

Using an equity lens is also helpful and can bring clarity in situations where there are legitimate, but opposing, arguments to support alternative courses of action. Sometimes the determining factor may be whether a particular decision will promote these values in the long run.

Women leaders often express an explicit commitment to changing cultures, either by transforming societal notions of leadership (Blackmore, 1999; Bryans & Mavin, 2003; Dillard, 2003; Marshall, 2003; Moultrie & de la Rey, 2003; Nidiffer, 2001; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Valverde, 2003); or by transforming the culture of one's own organization by confronting masculinist styles directly (Astin & Astin, 2000; Valverde, 2003; Vaughn & Everett, 1993; White, 2003; Yoder, 2001b). While not always explicitly stated, when women leaders talk about changing the cultures of their organizations, they often imply that they are attempting to counteract and, ultimately, alter stereotypic expectations of leadership related to their gender and other social identity characteristics. Sometimes, also, this theme is couched in an

obligation to give back to the community and mentor others, as African American administrators frequently mention (*e.g.*, Miller & Vaughn, 1997). Furthermore, social values go beyond focusing only on women to explicitly include work against racism, violence, and heterosexism (Strachan, 1999).

DiCroce (1995) is explicit in her charge to presidents to “Become an active player for public policy development and debate beyond the college level (p. 86).” On the policy level, the opportunity for changing organizational culture is profound, given the resistance to policy changes at academic institutions, once a change is made it is likely to be sustained for some time. For the same reason, transformation often takes a long time to accomplish, and sometimes I gain the strength to persist through roadblocks, bottle necks, and hurdles by reminding myself to take the long view, keeping the “eyes on the prize.” The most significant policy changes that I’ve been involved in as faculty member and administrator have required this view, along with strategic thinking and collaboration.

Bornstein (2008) offers tips for presidents who, she argues, should be aiming to redefine leadership for 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations in ways that are, in fact, a good fit for culture of the academy. However, she says, a new president may need to fit in first and then gradually change the culture to suit her own style. By embracing relational attributes of feminine stereotypes, leadership can be seen as building bonds with external and internal constituent. Acknowledging that the dualism posed by straddling two cultures experienced by women of color is an issue, Turner argues that social and cultural interconnections are key to success. Concealing one’s “real” identity to fit in with campus culture may be necessary at first, despite the desire to acknowledge who one is and how that affects work. Breaking through barriers, then, allows women to challenge assumptions that created barriers and discomfort in workplace.

*Collaboration and consensus-building.* Bauer's three deans describe collaborative and consensus-building styles of leadership and the difficulty of reconciling hierarchical environments with egalitarian feminist values (Bauer, 2009). Women administrators interviewed by Baker (1996) emphasized their interdependence with followers. The skills they relied upon involved empowering, team building, and facilitation, along with problem solving and risk taking. Arguing from the viewpoint of relational psychology, Bensimon (1993) says that women leaders define their identity in terms of relations, view themselves as interdependent, and perceive the world as made up of physically and socially embodied entities that are continuous and governed by needs other than control. Bornstein (2008) suggests that women presidents redefine roles to use their focus on relationships authentically. For example, women sometimes express discomfort with fundraising, but it can be viewed as building relationships to increase resources. Given that presidents are judged by successful capital campaigns and new facilities more than by academic initiatives, this is important for perceived competence.

This self-identity as a communal leader raises the interesting question of whether women have internalized communal leadership values or simply conform to the communal expectation because they have discovered that they are more successful when they do. Certainly we know that stereotypes can be internalized and are more likely to be so in certain situations (Bennett & Gaines, 2010; Thomas et al., 2004), but none of this research specifically concerns leadership. Thus, the psychological literature does not answer the question as to whether internalization of leadership values has occurred because gendered styles have been successful. Perhaps the distinction is so subtle that the question is unanswerable. I suspect that there are great individual differences and that individuals themselves may vary at different points in their lives in how much their behavior is motivated by situational successes rather than intrinsic values. Maybe motivation does not matter if the outcome is the same, but that is a philosophical question beyond the scope of this paper.

Beyond personal inclination, higher education may benefit from relational leadership. Bornstein (2008) posits that higher education organizations are less bureaucratic and more egalitarian than businesses, and therefore can serve as a model of collaborative decision making, and inclusiveness. New organizational systems require new leadership styles. If women are more likely to take adaptive and situational approaches to leadership, as some literature suggests, this is beneficial to organizations. The ideal leader is able to use different styles in different situation.

One of the ways I have found to approach institutional culture is by drawing on a well established aspect of the academic culture, shared governance. I have argued elsewhere that traditional notions of shared governance are consistent with and complement feminist values, particularly the focus on collaboration (Madden, 1997). Shared governance does, in fact, require a great deal of discussion and cooperation and when it operates effectively it is truly collaboration among faculty and between faculty members and administration. The colleges at which I have worked have all explicitly valued shared governance which was a consideration in my job decision. While the success of shared governance has varied with institutional circumstances and changes of leadership among both faculty and administration, I have found it useful to evoke the values of shared governance as a way to articulate feminist values in a manner understood within the academic culture.

At the other end of the authority spectrum from presidents, women who lack power must also rely on collaboration to influence academia. Collaboration appears to be even more important for members of underrepresented groups (Chrisler, Herr, & Murstein, 1998; Price & Priest, 1996). African American women writing about academe unanimously mention the importance of forming coalitions, networking, finding supportive communities, and seeking support from other members of their ethnic group and sympathetic people from other groups. With the appreciation of the

importance of networking comes the obligation to mentor others, which is also mentioned by many women leaders.

Seizing on the opportunity to collaborate has been important to me. The most pronounced example of that in my career arose before I was even offered the job of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at SUNY Potsdam. In response to gender-related concerns persistently raised by faculty activists on campus, the president had appointed a Task Force on the Status of Women. They completed their report as the provost search was underway and literally handed the report to me when I interviewed on campus. That report was a wonderful gift. First of all, it was a factor in my decisions to accept the job, because I knew that it afforded me the opportunity to start working immediately on some issues that I would have, eventually, identified myself. Secondly, it gave me a list of people with whom to collaborate, along with an agenda to undertake.

Shepherding Women's and Gender Studies majors through faculty approval processes at two colleges have also been significant collaborations. In both instances, there was a great deal of resistance, often couched in terms that were familiar academic arguments at the time. In one instance, the major objections involved the interdisciplinary nature of the program, as no interdisciplinary majors existed at the college. Faculty members and I enlisted the support of another group of faculty who wanted to start an interdisciplinary program in environmental science and developed criteria for interdisciplinary programs an argument based on the legitimacy and timeliness of emerging interdisciplinary scholarship. After a great deal of behind-the-scenes politicking, both programs were approved by a strong majority of faculty because they irrefutably met the criteria previously approved. Without a thorough analysis of the power dynamics in that faculty and strategic collaborations, the proposals would likely have been squelched by powerful senior faculty members.



In summary, women leaders do seem to have different propensities for leadership style based on their own reports and others' observations. Gender stereotypes affect how information is processed, in this case, whether behavior is perceived as demonstrating effective leadership. The nature of stereotypes is influenced by historical and cultural contexts, and leaders are perceived as effective when they adopt roles congruent with expectations. Descriptive literature about women's experiences in higher education administration is consistent with the research on leadership in other domains, also varying with historical and cultural changes and with situational features of particular institutions, such as masculinization of workplace dynamics and academic power and politics. Articulating the benefits of leadership that reflects feminist values with a full understanding of the impact that stereotyping may have on its effectiveness is a vital step to empowering women in higher education and changing the cultures of colleges and universities.

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