

Common Trends in U.S. Women College President Issues

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Abstract

This study documented the experiences of women college presidents in associate, baccalaureate, masters and doctoral institutions in the United States. Using the quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher looked at the women college presidents' perceptions on how gender affects leadership abilities, professional relationships, and personal characteristics. Participants surveyed included 46 women presidents from different institutions of higher education. The quantitative data were analyzed using the t-test. During the qualitative analysis of the data, the responses from the survey were reduced to categories. Following this, relationships that existed among the categories were established, and themes were developed. The themed highlighted the meanings that woven through the narratives. The data indicated that women presidents experienced discrimination and sexism in some colleges/universities. The researcher proposes that the oppositional discourse of masculine versus feminine leadership is outdated and calls for a new conversation on the appropriate characteristics for effective leadership.

Introduction

Within the last 44 years, the United States Congress has passed the 1963 Federal Equal Pay Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1970s Title VII and IX of the Education Amendments to address issues of discrimination. Since that time women have made significant progress in terms of access to institutions of higher education and degree attainment.¹ Prior to the Civil Rights era, women were virtually locked out of senior administrative positions in colleges and universities especially the presidency. Since the 1980s the number of women presidents in colleges and universities has grown, increasing from 9.5 percent in 1986 to 23.0 percent in 2006.² Although more women are presidents of these institutions, inequities still exist. Data from the American Council on Education (ACE) suggest that women college presidents are more prevalent in less prestigious institutions.³

A majority of the women presidents are expected to retire within the next five to ten years. The impending retirements of women college presidents provide the opportunity to examine their experiences in the academy, an enterprise that excluded women in the past. Do college/university milieus continue to be "chilly climates" for women college presidents? Although the number of women college presidents has increased over the years, many of them continue to be affected today by traditional beliefs regarding their abilities. Similarly, research suggests that these beliefs are salient components of some colleges/universities discourse and culture. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the women college presidents' perception on how gender

- affects individuals' perceptions of their leadership abilities,
- impacts their professional relationships,

- influences colleagues' perception of their personal characteristics.

The information solicited from current college presidents provides insight on the work environment for prospective women college presidents.

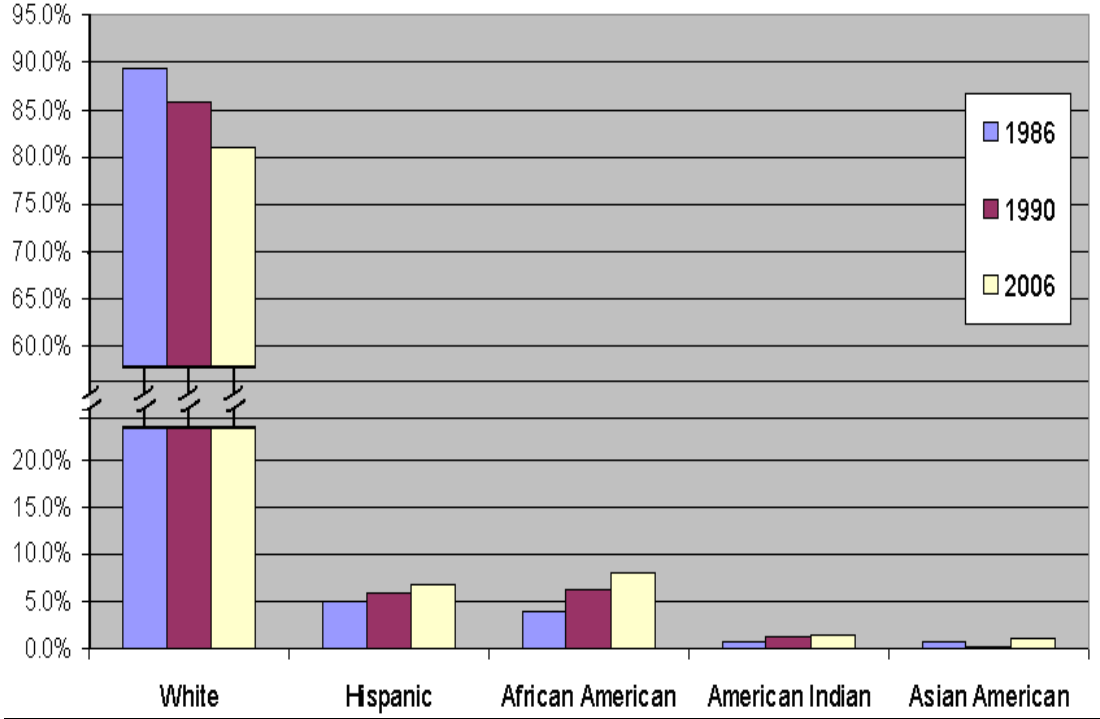


Figure 8:1. Race/ethnicity profile of female college presidents in the United States

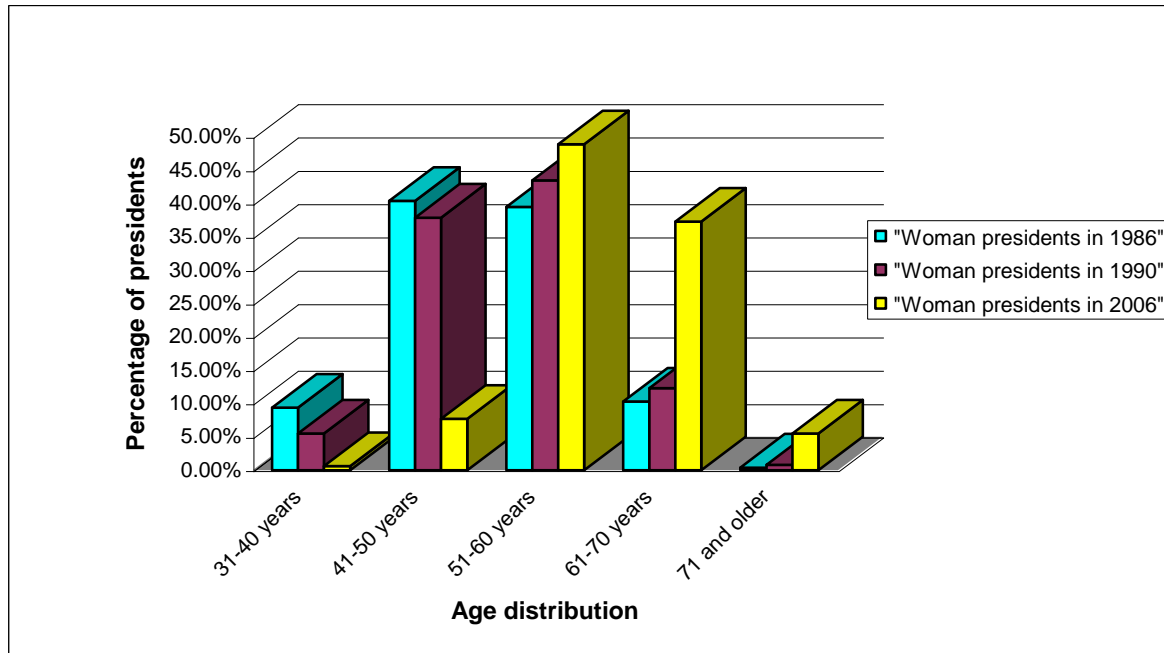


Figure 8:2. Distribution of age for women college presidents in the United States

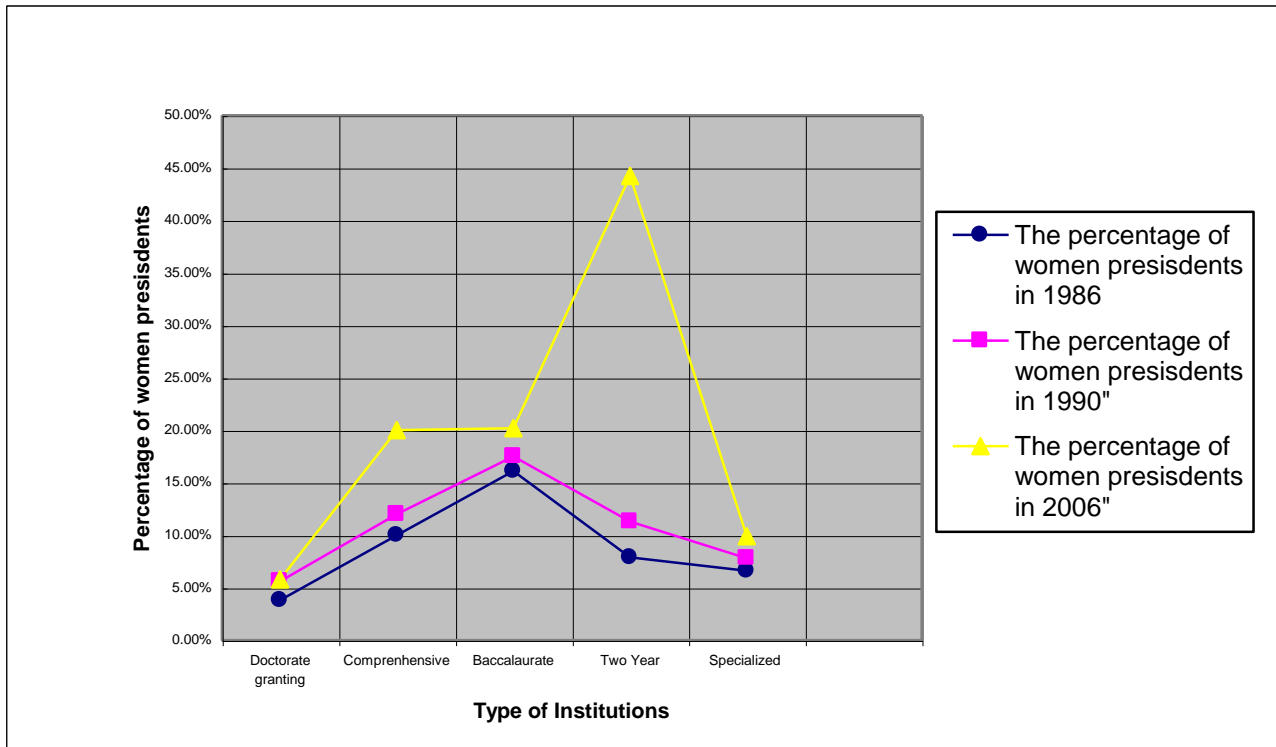


Figure 8:3. The percentage distribution of women presidents in the United States

Status of Higher Education

Harvard University’s decision to hire its first woman president subsequent to the former president’s controversial statements regarding women’s intellectual abilities ignited the debate on women’s abilities to effectively lead institutions of higher education. Many observers hailed Harvard’s decision as a landmark for women in academia. For others, this decision prompted reflection on the state of the “glass ceiling” in the academy. Luke argues that invisible barriers to senior management positions still exist resulting in the tendency for women to cluster near the bottom of the organizational hierarchies.⁴ Scholars have applauded women’s gains in entry level administrative positions; however, they have expressed concern regarding the low representation of women in senior management. Bain and Cummings claim that parity is not coming as fast as expected because “women have not achieved success in advancing in higher-level managerial jobs.”⁵

The causes for the perpetuation of the gender gap in the college/university presidents' position could be best understood from a historical perspective. According to Chliwniak, "The first institution of higher education in the United States was founded on the belief that women were intellectually inferior to men."⁶ Many momentous events changed the way society viewed women attending post-secondary institutions. One significant event was the passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act 1862 which provided funding to increase the number of public higher education institutions. Although this legislative bill did not target women, this population seized the opportunity to attend the burgeoning institutions.

From 1870 to 1900, the number of women enrolled in institutions of higher education proliferated. Concurrently, the number of male faculty increased exponentially to accommodate the growth in the student population. Although more women enrolled in institutions of higher education, male faculty dominated the classroom, which suggested that women were not welcomed in the academy. It is important to note that from 1925 to 2000, the number of full-time women faculty has increased from 19 percent to 24 percent; in 1989, 22 percent of tenured faculty were female, and in 1998, the number increased to 26 percent.⁷ Although the status and representation of women in the academy has improved over the years, women faculty remain underrepresented on the more prestigious campuses and in the more esteemed departments.

There is evidence that the academy has reproduced itself and a male-dominated culture is present. This type of culture affects faculty and administrators' experiences at these institutions. There are still inequities in faculty teaching assignments, research opportunities, service assignments, and access to graduate teaching assistants. These inequities and challenges discourage many female faculty from pursuing senior administrative positions.

Gender affects perception of leadership abilities

For many years feminist scholars have addressed the low representation of women in higher education leadership positions. One scholar argues that one of the causes for the overrepresentation of male administrators is that colleges/universities have comfortably reproduced themselves for centuries.⁸ Consequently, the structure of many of these institutions is hierarchical with an ingrained patriarchal culture. Concomitantly, much literature on leadership focus on male experiences in colleges/universities and therefore perpetuates the male patriarchal organizational structure and culture. Feminists have argued that the predominant

patriarchal leadership on many campuses has marginalized women in socially constructed gender roles.⁹

Some scholars have linked the marginalization of women in higher education to the curriculum. Chliwniak challenges the basic assumptions of the traditional curriculum, and therefore has argued for “gender balance both in context and content.”¹⁰ Collard claims that the “sexist assumptions that infuse the university coursework” reinforce the western canon tenet that men are better suited to serve in high-level management positions.¹¹ For example, the underrepresentation of women in the leadership curriculum may have contributed to the negative perception of their abilities. The lack of women leaders in the curriculum perpetuates the traditional notions of gender specific roles.

Colleges/Universities governing boards’ play pivotal roles in selecting presidents. Chliwniak suggests that “boards may not be comfortable with selecting women for leadership roles because of the belief that men prefer to work with other men”¹² Luke supports Chliwniak’s assumption by claiming that the membership of many governing boards is predominantly male and “men are more comfortable with and appoint others like them.”¹³ The current institutional culture and structure in many colleges/universities tends to cause systematic discrimination or marginalization of women in gender specific roles. Therefore, women presidents may encounter institutional obstacles that may thwart their full acceptance in the workplace.

Leadership is typically equated with power. Studies on gender difference in the orientation to power have shown that women and men use power differently. Brunner poses that women tend to use their power for the “benefit of others” whereas men use their power to “influence others.”¹⁴ Male use of power tends to be associated with domination and oppression of marginalized groups.

Institutional policies and practices can in many ways affect individuals’ perceptions of presidents’ leadership abilities. Park suggests that many colleges/ universities have a gendered division of labor which leads to advantages for males.¹⁵ Bellas decried the academic reward structure where research and administration are seen as masculine, highly compensated skills, and teaching as an “emotional labor” that is considered feminine and less noteworthy.¹⁶ The fact that women’s contribution to the academy is seen as less significant may lead to the misinterpretation of women presidents’ leadership skills.

Gender impact on professional relationships

Literature on women in leadership positions indicates that gender impacts women presidents' relationship with the governing board, politicians, and their informal peer networks because of preconceived notions regarding women's leadership abilities. The success of a president is dependent on the relationship with the governing board. Therefore, it is important that college presidents develop collegial relationships with their governing boards to enhance their working relationship. Chliwniak claims that some women presidents may experience difficulty cultivating relationships with some governing board members because this group may envision a strong charismatic male as a presidential figure.¹⁷ Basinger supports Chliwniak's claims by suggesting that some board members may be uncomfortable working with women presidents.¹⁸

Luke argues that "informal peer networks" could "shut women" presidents out of the institutional culture and that isolation could negatively impact on their work experiences.¹⁹ The lack of support from the peer networks could affect the presidents assimilation into the institutional culture. Chliwniak emphasized that informal peer networks are essential because women in senior management positions tend to experience more difficulty assimilating in male-dominated organizations.²⁰ The feeling of isolation associated with the president's position may produce an enormous amount of stress for some women. One of the implications of exclusion from informal networks is that the president may not be privy to informal information and mentoring opportunities which could negatively impact on job performance.

Women presidents could find themselves in a double bind situation; they could be excluded from both the "good old boys" and "good old girls" networks. The "good old boys" networks tend to reproduce a patriarchal culture because the group tends to promote other men. Women presidents may become isolated from old boys networks, which impact their mentorship and sponsorship opportunities. Grogan suggests that mentors are important because they enhance success in organizations and serve as a measure to prevent isolation.²¹ One could argue that the "good old girls" networks also could serve as mentors and sponsors for women college presidents. However, the lack of critical mass of women presidents limits the number of sponsors or mentors available. In some instances, women leaders may have difficulty establishing relationships with other women administrators or the old girls networks. Jackson and Harris

coined the phrase “we do not hire the competition” to highlight the uneasy relationships between female administrators.²²

Gender Influence Perception of Personal Characteristics

How men and women lead illustrates the oppositional discourse between masculine and feminine leadership. While not exclusively feminine, leadership skills associated with women are illustrated in topics such as collaborative decision-making, authentic participation, consensus building, and nurturing. Since higher education institutions tend to be a male-dominated, patriarchal culture, leadership style is normed on male standards. Therefore, it is not surprising that a woman president, especially the first for that institution, may be more visible and under closer scrutiny because she is seen as less likely to have leadership skills. Madden poses that the deep-rooted perceptions regarding women’s leadership skills are still prevalent because women presidents are “less often given a second chance after a failure” while inept male presidents are rehired.²³ In addition, the college presidency tends to be equated with male leadership and therefore women presidents may be perceived as less likely to demonstrate key leadership behaviors. The stereotypical behaviors associated with effective leadership could disproportionately affect women administrators’ job performance.

Labeling and stereotyping tend to affect the paths of women who are climbing the rungs of the higher education administrative ladder. Although men and women are stereotyped, women are negatively affected by stereotyping. For example, scholarly literatures have the penchant to present women leaders as caring and nurturing, stereotypes which could influence perceptions of their leadership abilities. Court argues that the perceived gender differences in leadership styles “emerged out of socially constructed roles for men and women.”²⁴

Data suggest that men and women respond negatively to women leaders who do not exhibit stereotypical behaviors. According to Chliwniak, male and female faculty members evaluated women leaders with autocratic behavior negatively, while male leaders exhibiting female stereotypical behaviors were not evaluated negatively by either sex.²⁵ Another example of the double standard posited by Chliwniak is that men who stand up for themselves are considered competent and assertive while females who exhibit the aforementioned characteristics may be labeled obnoxious and aggressive.²⁶

The assumptions that effective leadership is primarily a male attribute are not shared worldwide. The Carless study on gender differences in Australian leaders showed that female

managers were seen as more effective leaders.²⁷ Another study conducted in Sweden on male and female leadership abilities suggested that there are little differences in their abilities.²⁸ Leadership is a complex matter and while gender stereotypes may offer some explanations for behaviors, they cannot be regarded as the template for evaluating leadership effectiveness.

The perceptions of the stereotypical behaviors of women are embedded in the fabric of our culture. As long as higher education institutions maintain a male-dominant culture and structure, perceptions regarding women's leadership behaviors and characteristics will be viewed through the male lens. Consequently, the oppositional discourse of masculine versus feminine leadership will continue rather than the debate on the appropriate qualities of effective leadership.

Theoretical Framework

The post-structuralist theory will be used to deconstruct hidden assumptions on leadership. The discourse on leadership styles and characteristics tends to focus on the differences between masculine and feminine leadership. Literatures on leadership present masculine leadership as competitive, hierarchical, unemotional, strategic, and controlling, and feminine leadership as cooperative, team working, collaborative, and empathetic. The post-structuralists argue that we are living in a new and different kind of world. The world is much more diverse and technological advances have changed the way we interact with each other. Therefore, leadership discourses should not focus on the innate characteristics of each gender or the "monolithic patriarchy structures"; rather the focus should be on the construction of identity.²⁹ The new discourse will move the argument beyond gender differences in leadership styles. Franzèn notes, "Central to the post-structural theory is intersection between discourse, subjectivity, and power," which are embedded in dialogues that construct identities.³⁰

In the academic arena, the meanings of words are determined by discourses. Franzèn defines discourse as "a certain way of talking of and understanding the world."³¹ It is important to note that discourses are contextual. These venues provide the opportunity to challenge the stereotypically taken-for-granted truths on leadership and contribute to the construction of the college administrator identity. In addition, the discourses may affect the higher education community views of effective leadership. Court suggests that new discourses may lead one to assume several different positions because "new experiences will shift the sense of self."³²

Discourses provide the opportunity for marginalized or excluded voices to be heard and included.

An important component of the post-structuralists paradigm is subjectivity. Court poses that “a person’s subjectivity is the sense of who he or she is.”³³ The sense of self is influenced by exposure to new experiences, new discourses, and diverse perspectives on issues. In applying the post-structural concept of subjectivity, the innate differences in administrative leadership styles will be illuminated rather than the preconceived notions regarding male and female leaders. The administrator’s subjectivity tends to be influenced by the interactions with others during discourses. For example, a college president using a collaborative approach may shift to autocratic because major college initiatives are held up in the slow moving deliberative process of the faculty culture. One can assume that the president’s leadership styles and characteristics will be evolving because subjectivity is predicated on the understanding of self and the differing positions available.

Literatures on power tend to focus on the relationship between power and domination and masculine versus feminine use of power. This conception of power holds within it the notion of the powerful and the powerless. The discourse on power is expected to produce conflict because of the various views on the definition and the use of power. Post-structuralists promote discourses that endorse discursive practices that do not marginalize individuals based on gender, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.³⁴

Method

Sample

The data on women college presidents’ perceptions on the effects of gender on perception of their leadership abilities were drawn from a survey of female college presidents across the United States. The sample was derived from the researcher identifying the gender of the presidents on the colleges’ web site. The snowballing method of sampling was used to identify the target population. This method involves asking participants to identify other women presidents. The method was effective because the researcher was able to survey presidents who otherwise would have been unknown. The researcher identified 100 female presidents from doctorate, masters, baccalaureate, and associate degree granting institutions. Each president was initially sent a survey and a cover letter through email. For those presidents who did not respond to the initial request, follow-up letters with the survey, and self-addressed stamped envelopes

were sent. Forty-six percent responded to the survey, yielding a final sample size of 46 participants. The presidents were assured of anonymity in the cover letter.

Instrument

The survey was divided into two parts. The first part is a 15-item questionnaire made up of close-ended questions. Each item had a five-scale response, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire covered numerous aspects of the presidents' job such as negotiating the work environment, ability to establish professional relationships, and perceptions of personal characteristics. The second part was optional. Presidents were given the opportunity to discuss any areas of concern that were not included on the questionnaire and to offer advice to prospective women presidents. The researcher transferred the presidents' comments from the survey into Microsoft word and then imported the information into NUD*IST (non-numerical unstructured data indexing, searching and theorizing). This software sorted the document and identified common themes. The researcher developed the questionnaire based on the literature on women presidents' experiences. Therefore, the survey was not normed for reliability and validity.

Results

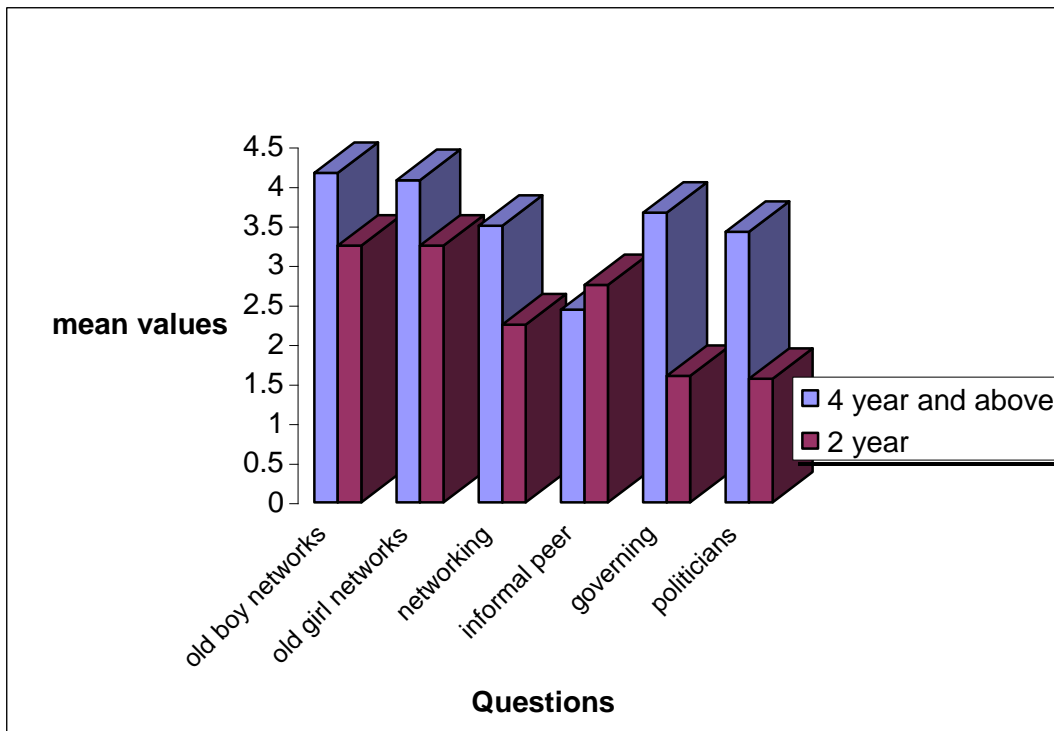
The responses from the 15-item questionnaire were grouped according to the following themes: Effects of gender on perceptions of ability, effects of gender on professional relationships, and effects of gender on perceptions of personal characteristics. The optional questions provided a second source of data for this study, and many presidents responded to those questions. Those responses were reviewed for common themes. The themes were then linked to the types of institution to discern the relationships.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The participants were divided into two groups: one group consisted of two-year college presidents and the other group was comprised of presidents from baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral institutions. The population was then identified as either two-year or four-year and above. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean frequencies of the responses for each question in both groups. Inferential statistics, specifically t-test was used to test the differences between two group means for each question. For the purpose of this study, the significant level is lower or equal to 0.05. The descriptive and inferential statistics identified the same questions as significant. The

researcher will review questions that showed differences between both groups with a significant level that is lower or equal 0.05. The results from the survey are below.

Figure 8:4 **Effects of gender on professional relationship**



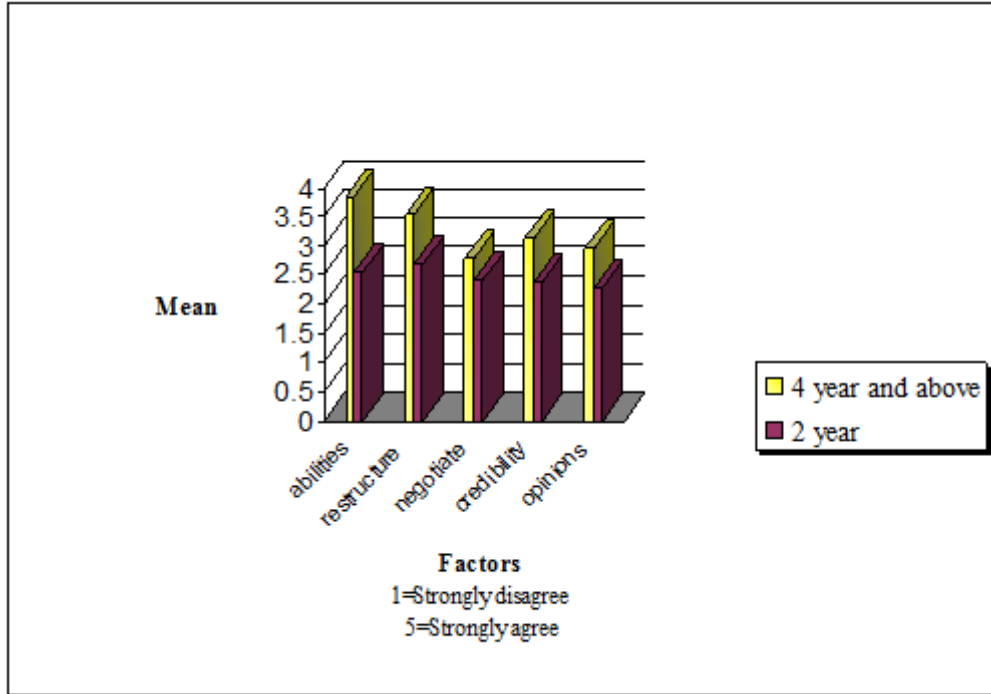


Figure 8:5 Effects of gender on perceptions of ability

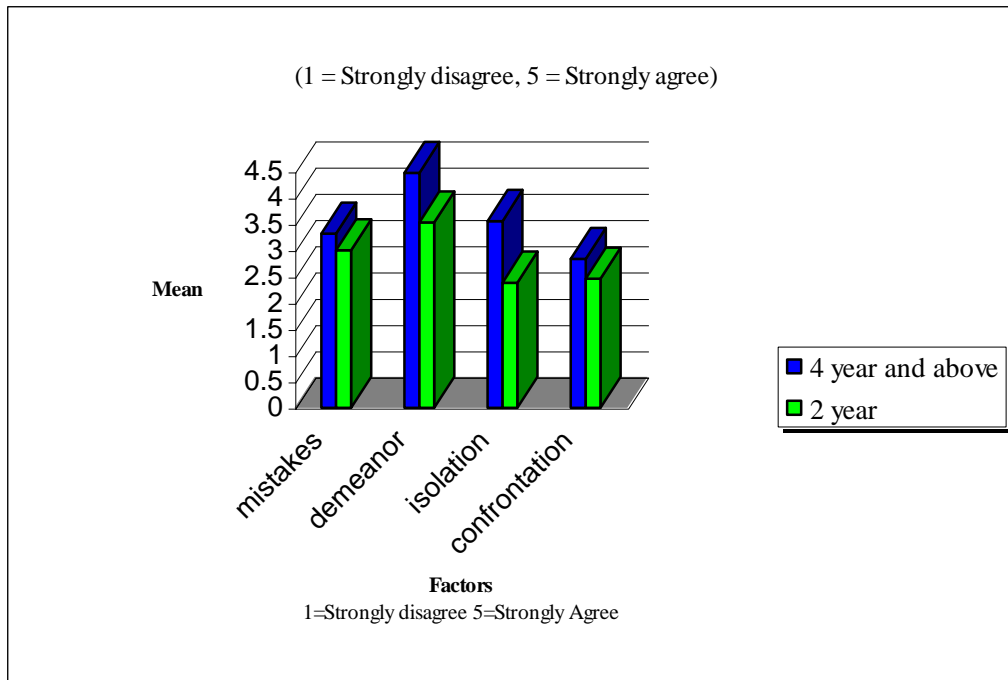


Figure 8:6 Effects of gender on perceptions of personal

Forum on Public Policy

	Type	Valid N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
The college perception regarding my abilities	2-year	16	2.56	0.96	0.01
	4- year+	30	3.60	1.22	
My ability to restructure the institution	2-year	16	2.69	1.01	0.02
	4- year+	30	3.40	0.97	
My relationship with the old boy networks	2-year	16	3.25	0.93	0.00
	4- year+	28	4.07	0.66	
My relationship with the old girl networks	2-year	16	3.25	1.06	0.05
	4- year+	30	4.00	1.29	
My ability to negotiate the college position to key players	2-year	15	2.40	1.18	0.38
	4- year+	27	2.78	1.40	
My ability to gain credibility	2-year	16	2.38	1.26	0.04
	4- year+	30	3.10	0.99	
My need to make fewer mistakes	2-year	16	3.00	1.10	0.32
	4- year+	29	3.34	1.11	
How my demeanor is judged	2-year	15	3.53	1.36	0.04
	4- year+	25	4.36	1.04	
My feelings of isolation	2-year	13	2.38	1.33	0.01
	4- year+	28	3.50	1.00	
My networking opportunities	2-year	16	2.25	1.13	0.01
	4- year+	30	3.40	1.45	
My exclusion from Informal Peer Network	2-year	12	2.75	1.14	0.64
	4- year+	28	2.54	1.37	
The level of confrontation	2-year	13	2.46	1.05	0.16
	4- year+	28	2.89	0.83	
Value people assign to my opinions	2-year	14	2.29	1.27	0.07
	4- year+	30	2.90	0.88	
My relationship with Governing Board	2-year	15	1.60	0.74	0.00
	4- year+	28	3.36	1.19	
My relationship with Politicians	2-year	16	1.56	0.81	0.00
	4- year+	30	3.23	1.25	

Figure 8:7. **Independent t-test**
The Effects of Gender on College Presidents' Job Performance: Female College Presidents Perspectives

Results

The descriptive statistics and t-test results, comparing two-year and four-year and above institutions, showed significant differences regarding the following factors: ability, restructure, credibility, old boys network, networking opportunities, governing board, politician, demeanor, and isolation. The data from the four-year and above institutions suggest that gender negatively impacts on the aforementioned variables. Research studies on gender discrimination support the findings from the four-year and above institutions.³⁵ The data from a recent study on gender discrimination at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology suggest that subtle forms of

discrimination and gender inequities still exist.³⁶ The “chilly climate” in some masters and doctoral institutions impede women from occupying senior management positions. Literatures on higher education indicate that women in many of these institutions were less likely to be tenured, more likely to be part-time, less likely to participate in research, spend more time teaching, have more service commitment, less likely to be department chair, paid less than their male counterparts, and more likely to work in the humanities, social sciences, and professional programs.

Abilities:

The data from the survey indicated that 53 percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender impacted perceptions of their abilities. Chliwniak argues that whatever leadership approach is selected by women administrators, it might be particularly difficult to achieve the respect and confidence from the members of the academic community.³⁷ Literature on leadership suggests that one of the barriers to achieving respect and confidence in the education arena is poor communication skills. Researchers purport that some women’s communication skills may influence perceptions of their abilities. For example, women tend to use “tentative speech,” such as “I suppose” or “I may be wrong” in conversations. The researchers further suggest that women who use “direct speech” are perceived to be more knowledgeable than women who use “tentative speech.”³⁸ It is important to note that men are more inclined than women to negatively judge women who use direct speech. In addition, men’s language styles do not affect perceptions of their leadership abilities.

Women who talked about past accomplishments may be perceived either negatively and positively. Males and females perceive self-promoting women, especially those who speak about their past accomplishments, as competent. However, men are more receptive to self-promoting women who are colleagues rather than administrators.³⁹

Restructure

The data from the survey indicated that 53 percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender affects their ability to restructure the institution. The process of restructuring organizations tends to be an insurmountable task for colleges/universities leaders because these institutions are not receptive to change. Both males and females might devalue women presidents using stereotypical

masculine or feminine leadership styles.⁴⁰ In contrast, men using stereotypical masculine or feminine leadership styles are not devalued. It is a well-known fact that presidents involved in the restructuring process may not receive support from some members of the college community, especially those with the most to lose. However, research studies suggest that male presidents might have an advantage because the college community perceives them as more competent leaders.⁵²

Credibility

The data from the survey indicated that 57 percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender affects their ability to gain credibility. Madden argues that women presidents have more difficulty than men “establishing credibility as leaders.” This scholar suggests that many women developed expertise in “finance, strategic planning, research, and worked harder in order to gain credibility.”⁴¹ Feminist scholars indicate that the lack of credibility may be associated with the stereotypical perceptions that women are incompetent leaders. Steele’s work on stereotype threat poses that stereotyping may negatively impact on women presidents’ job performance.⁴² The notion of stereotype threat comes into play when a person’s gender is associated with negative stereotypical behaviors. Women presidents may experience this threat in academic settings populated by peers who are likely to perceive them as incompetent leaders.

Old Boy Networks

The data from the survey indicated that 66 percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender affects their relationship with the old boy networks. These networks tend to be the power brokers in some colleges/universities because they are knowledgeable about insider information. Social exclusion from these networks might limit women presidents’ knowledge of inside information which could negatively impact on their influence in the academic community.⁴³

Networking Opportunities

Survey data indicated that 53 percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that gender affects their networking opportunities. Studies suggest that positive interpersonal relationships and support systems are important for successful careers in academic leadership.⁴⁴ In an academic setting, supportive networks are particularly important for women presidents because the environments are often unfriendly and isolating.

These networks could reveal rather than hide glass-ceiling barriers, and help pave the path to achieve leadership goals.⁵⁷ It is a well-known fact that college presidents' career successes usually do not happen serendipitously. College presidents, especially new ones, usually reach out to other presidents for guidance and support.

Literatures on leadership suggest that presidents tend to reach out to presidents similar to themselves for advice and guidance. Therefore, female presidents might reach out to other women presidents who might also be excluded from the male networks. Some scholars are encouraging cross-gender networking opportunities because there are male administrators mentoring female administrators.⁴⁵ The benefits of cross-gender mentoring are still under investigation.

Governing Board

Survey data indicated that 54 percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender affects their relationship with governing boards. Many governing boards have predominantly male membership and many of those members prefer working with male presidents. Madden poses that some board members believe that masculine leadership is more congruent with the higher education environment.⁴⁶ Because men are perceived as highly competent leaders, they are more likely to be considered leaders and given the guidance and support to succeed. Therefore, it is not surprising women presidents in four-year and above institutions might have less than collegial relationships with board members.

Politicians

Fifty percent of the women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender affects their relationship with politicians. Over the years, politicians have become more involved with the administration of publicly funded colleges/universities. There is a growing movement towards higher education institutions competing for their place in the market. State legislators, rather than protecting these institutions from the market and competition as they have done in the past, now often welcome the competition. The line of reasoning is that the market forces will compel institutions to develop workable systems of accountability. The president's gender may impact on her relationship with state legislators because of differences in philosophical viewpoints on leadership. Kirkpatrick conducted a research on state legislatures and concluded that women searched for

solutions to serve the common good whereas men competed to advance their interest.⁴⁷ One possible ramification of a negative relationship with politicians is the devaluation of the presidents' work.

Demeanor

Seventy-two percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender affects how their demeanor is judged. The word "demeanor" was qualified to mean non-verbal behaviors. There is a perception that non-verbal behaviors could impact on leadership abilities. An APA Task Force on Women in Academe report noted that men tend to react negatively to women's non-verbal behaviors such as "posture, hand gestures, high degree of eye contact" or assuming the leadership role in a group.⁴⁸ Some men perceived the aforementioned behaviors as threatening and non influential. However, women tend to respond in a complementary manner to other women with the aforementioned non-verbal behaviors. Males or females do not perceive men who demonstrate those non-verbal behaviors negatively.

Isolation

The data from the survey indicated that 61 percent of women presidents from four-year and above institutions agreed or strongly agreed that their gender contributed to their feelings of isolation. The presidents' feelings of isolation may be related to their limited networking and mentoring opportunities. An APA Task Force on Women in Academe report noted that some faculty do not trust or respect administrators and therefore do not socialize with them.⁴⁹ Women presidents are in a double bind position: women faculty may perceive them as a "sell out," or betraying to other women. Concomitantly, males may not associate with the women president because they are not part of their social network. Some women administrators may not want to develop relationships with women presidents because others may view them as using social relationships as a means to advance their career. The women presidents may be further isolated if they employ leadership styles that are perceived as ineffective.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data from the optional questions provided insights into other areas of concern for the presidents. The most common themes for both the two-year and four-year and above presidents were the need to be knowledgeable about finances, be selective about whom you chose as your confidant, and lead based upon your value system. The most salient themes for presidents of two-year institutions were to investigate your institution, especially the finances, before accepting the presidency. Some of these presidents mentioned accepting positions in financially challenged institutions without prior knowledge of the institutions' financial status, and the negative experiences that ensued. In addition, the presidents also emphasized the importance of carefully selecting confidants, and cautioned that failure to do so could create negative and challenging experiences.

Presidents of four-year and above institutions encouraged prospective presidents to align core values with leadership styles. These leaders posited that strong core values would help presidents to lead with integrity and convictions. Presidents from the different types of institutions stated that knowledge of finances enhance the presidents' credibility and positively impact on their decisions.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact gender has on women presidents' leadership abilities, professional relationships, and personal characteristics. The findings suggest that some women presidents in four-year and above institutions indicated that gender negatively impacted their leadership abilities, professional relationships, and personal characteristics. These findings suggest that those women presidents experienced discrimination and sexism, which negatively impacted their work experience. Scholars pose that some academic environments are intractable, and therefore women administrators should "accept the reality that men are in control and learn to work" in the male-dominant system.⁵⁰ Feminist scholars have decried colleges/universities "chilly climates" and have been advocating for change.

The academy is currently at a crossroad. There are many forces transforming higher education, but the most powerful is policymakers' shift from a regulated to a market-oriented system. The current higher education system has been effective in orchestrating expansion and responding to societal educational needs. However, the system has been ineffective in addressing program overlap, cost, and quality of learning. Many institutions' organizational

structures reflect the Late Industrial Era and therefore these institutions' structure and culture should change in order to make transition to the Early Information Era.⁵¹ As competition intensifies among the institutions, the Presidents will be under greater pressure to meet student enrollment targets and educate the populous for an evolving global economy. The new landscape offers greater opportunity for college/university presidents to restructure these institutions to be more responsive to students and society needs.

The need for a new kind of leadership has been on the horizon. Post-structuralists argue that the oppositional discourse on leadership is outdated and advocate for new discourses. These leadership discourses would deconstruct the cultural process responsible for creating the masculine versus feminine model. The deconstructing process would allow plurality of voices and perspectives on the characteristics of good leaders. In applying the post-structural conceptual model to some women presidents' marginal position in the academic environment, the initial discourses would deconstruct the patriarchal leadership model. Schwandt poses that deconstruction allows for the unmasking of the supposed "truth," reversing and displacing taken-for-granted oppositions that structure perceived right over wrong and men over women.⁵² Feminist post-structuralists emphasize the importance of including the population's history, ethnicity, context, and politics in the discourses.

Deconstructing the term "good leaders" requires an understanding that the definition might be influenced by race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation. Karnes and Chauvin describe "good leaders" as those who are articulate, decisive, and have good writing, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills.⁵³ The above scholars also believe that these skills are teachable through professional development workshops. Sergiovanni suggests that a "good leader" embodies commitment to ideas and values instead of power and control, and has the ability to create other leaders.⁵⁴ There is a segment of society that calls for leaders to guide using moral authority rather than their self interest.

Leadership is viewed by many as the ability to influence others in order to meet institutional goals. How one views leadership is often reflected in the definition of the term. Hershey, Blanchard and Johnson viewed the leader as someone who is capable of influencing the behavior of an individual or group regardless of the reason.⁵⁵ The term 'leadership' tends to be synonymous with management. However, leadership has a broader implication than management and includes creating innovative ways for responding to changes in society.

One of the important terms in the leadership discourse is “power.” In the academic environment, the word “power” is associated with influence, and is used to enact change. Brunner (2005) described the different types of power as “coercive,” “connective,” “reward,” “legitimate,” “referent,” “informative,” and “expert” power. The discourse on power should include the influence of race, age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation on the use of power. The gender-based discussion on power showed that male and female enact power differently. In a 1998 study, Brunner and Schumaker found that male superintendents tended to use power to advance their own self interest.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Kirkpatrick study found that women tend to use power to benefit the collective good. Post-structuralists suggest that the discourse on the use of power should be expanded to include marginalized voices.

Feminist post-structuralists argue that subjectivity, or sense of self, is evolving because it is influenced by new experiences, interactions with others, and the work place. The individual subjectivity is constructed during discourses. The stereotypically taken-for-granted notions about males and females would be challenged during these discourses. In addition, questions on presidential leadership would be explored: for example, how do presidents define presidential leadership and how do they regard themselves as leaders? The answer to such questions would provide insights on how presidents construct themselves as leaders.

The current leadership model uses the male-dominant paradigm to assess leadership competencies. Post-structuralists argue for new discourses on leadership to construct leaders’ identity. The deconstructing of various leadership terms provides the opportunity to construct new conceptual frameworks for assessing leadership effectiveness. A new discourse on leadership will provide the opportunity for diverse constituencies to define good leadership practices. The post-structuralist model enables us to understand leadership in different terms than those that were used in the past.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions in the United States started over 300 years ago and a majority of presidents for these institutions have been males. The number of women college presidents has increased over the years, especially in less prestigious institutions. The data from this study support other findings that gender inequities are still prevalent in some colleges and universities. Gender stereotypes undoubtedly support organizational structures and power relations that endorse singular, masculinist forms of leadership. Women are viewed as being less

likely to demonstrate key leadership characteristics whereas men are perceived as having the prerequisite characteristics to lead effectively. Literatures on leadership suggest that women who employed the stereotypical male leadership styles tend to be perceived negatively while men who demonstrated stereotypical female leadership styles were not viewed negatively.

Some respondents in this study indicated that women presidents' gender influences perceptions of leadership abilities, restructuring efforts, credibility, relationships with old boy networks, networking opportunities, relationships with governing boards and politicians, responses to demeanor, and feelings of isolation. Feminist scholars maintain that the "chilly climate" in many institutions of higher education is related to the male-dominant culture. The patriarchal culture has reproduced itself and dictates the outcomes of discourses and practices. These organizational discourses have shaped the academic community behaviors. Consequently, some women presidents tend to work in non-supportive higher education milieus.

The post-structural conceptual model was employed to delve into the various assumptions regarding leadership and to present alternative discourses on leadership. This model stresses the importance of deconstructing the gender-based stereotypical identities and includes voices that were once silenced in the discourses. The process of deconstruction allows the participants to unmask the perceptions and to create new paradigms for leadership. These new discourses will promote personal reflection and will act as a catalyst for disempowering discursive practices, such as those that allow the marginalization of minority voices.

¹. National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education (Washington, D.C: 2002).

². The first data on women presidents was collected in the 1980s. The American Council on Education surveyed the presidents and this group has been collecting information on the presidents every decade subsequent to 1980. See: American Council Education, *The American College President* (Washington, D.C 2007).

³. Ibid.

⁴. Carmen Luke, *Globalization and Academia: North/west-South/east* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2001):10

U.S Department of Labor data suggest that women have increasingly entered managerial and professional occupations. However, these broad occupational categories mask the fact that women continue to cluster near the bottom of the organizational and professional hierarchies, and have less advancement potential in comparison to men.

⁵. Olga Bain and William Cummins, *Academe's Glass Ceiling, Professional-Organizational, and Institutional Barriers to the Career Advancement of Academic Barrier*. *Comparative Education Review* (2000).

⁶. Luba Chliwniak, *Higher Education Leadership: Analyzing the Gender Gap*. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports* (1997):6.

Harvard College was the first institution of higher education in the United States. The mission of this institution was to educate men because women were expected to remain in the domestic sphere. For further

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discussion on women in the academy, see: Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) and Kimberly Tolley and Nancy Beadie, eds. *Chartered Schools: Two Hundred Years of Independent Academics in the United States, 1727-1925* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2002).

⁷ The dichotomy between male and female leaders has divided the educational communities. One leadership is defined as egalitarian and collaborative while the other is competitive and hierarchical. The new discourse on leadership will transform the higher education community. For more discussion on campus leadership, see: Mary Dee Wenniger and Mary Helen Conroy, *Gender Equity or Bust! On the Road to Campus Leadership with Women in Higher Education*. (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

⁸ John Collard, Does size matter? The Interaction between Principal Gender, Level of Schooling and Institutional Scale in Australian Schools. In *Leadership, Gender, & Culture in Education: Male & Female Perspectives*, eds. John Collard and Cecilia Reynolds (Berkshire, England Open University Press, 2005).

⁹ Feminist scholars in education have argued for long-term agendas to reverse the gender imbalance. These scholars reworked Foucauldian post-structural work and retheorize and de-essentialize feminine subjectivity, often with specific reference to leadership. See: Marian Court, *Negotiation and Reconstructing Gendered Leadership Discourses*. In *Leadership, Gender, & Culture in Education: Male & Female Perspectives*, eds. John Collard and Cecilia Reynolds, (Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Luba Chliwniak, 9.

¹¹ John Collard, 19.

¹² Luba Chliwniak, 3.

¹³ Carmen Luke, 5.

¹⁴ Cryss Brunner, Women Performing the Superintendency: Problematizing the Normative Alignment of Conceptions of Power and Constructions of gender. In *Leadership, Gender, & Culture in Education: Male & Female Perspectives*, eds. John Collard and Cecilia Reynolds (Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2005), 131.

¹⁵ The bureaucratic approach to faculty workload with its emphasis on research tends to neglect the different components of the work milieu. In the male-dominant paradigm, faculty tend to be isolated and productivity is often similar the factory model. See: Shelly M. Park, *Research, Teaching, and Service: Why Shouldn't Women's Work Count?* *Journal of Higher Education* (1996).

¹⁶ Marcia L. Bellas, Emotional Labor in Academia: The Case of Professors. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (January 1999).

¹⁷ Luba Chliwniak, 3.

¹⁸ Julianne Basinger, Most female College Presidents Earn Less, Face More Challenges Than Male Peers, report says. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 2001).

¹⁹ Carmen Luke, 5.

²⁰ Luba Chliwniak, 3.

²¹ Mentor is presented as a paradox: on one hand links access yet, on the other hand, maintains the status quo. A good discussion on the mentoring process of educational administration is Margaret Grogan, *Influences of the Discourses of Globalization on Mentoring for Gender Equity and Social Justices in Educational Leadership*. In *Leadership, gender, & culture in education: Male & female perspectives*, eds. John Collard and Cecilia Reynolds (Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2005).

²² In general, women presidents experiences challenges in higher education institutions. However, researchers have documented the finding that women of color encounter more barriers to professional socialization and success in the academic workplace, than their white female counterparts. See: Sandra Jackson and Sandra Harris, African American Female College and University Presidents: Experiences and Perceptions of Barriers to the Presidency. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership* (2007), 122.

²³ Margaret E. Madden, 2004 division 35 presidential address: Gender and Leadership in Higher Education. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (2005), 6.

²⁴ Marian Court, 4.

²⁵ Luba Chliwniak.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Sally Carless, Gender Differences in Transformational Leadership: An Examination of Superior, Leader, and Subordinate Perspectives. *Sex Role* (1998).

²⁸ Karim Franzèn, Gender and School Leadership Discourses: A Swedish Perspective. In *Leadership, Gender, & Culture in Education: Male & Female Perspectives* eds. John Collard and Cecilia Reynolds (Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2005), 68. In the past the Swedish workforce is gender

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segregated, most female leaders were in “girl schools.” Today, female leaders are over represented in the educational system. The educational system differs from the U.S in that a leader could be responsible for several schools. Have these women use the male-dominant paradigm to lead? A good recent discussion of Swedish women leaders is Karim Frazén.

²⁹. Marian Court, 5.

³⁰. Karim Franzén, 50.

³¹. Ibid.

³². Marian Court, 6.

³³. Ibid.

³⁴. Ibid.

³⁵. Task Force on Women in Academe, *Women in Academe: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back*. Washington, D. C: American Psychological Association (2000). Task Force on Women in Academe was established to delineate and evaluate issues related to recruitment and retention of women in the psychology discipline. In general, this profound report illuminates the status of women in the academe. Good discussions of the status of women in the academy can be found in Task Force report.

³⁶. Ibid.

³⁷. Luba Chliwniak,

³⁸. Task Force on Women in Academe,

³⁹. Ibid.

⁴⁰. Luba Chliwniak,

⁴¹. Margaret E. Madden, 6.

⁴². Task Force on Women in Academe,

⁴³. Luba Chliwniak,

⁴⁴. Sheila T. Gregory, Black Faculty Women in the Academy: History, Status and Future. *The Journal of Negro Education* (Vol 70 Summer 2001)

⁴⁵. Terry Moore Brown, Mentoring and the Female College President. *Sex Roles* (2005).

⁴⁶. Margaret E. Madden, 6.

⁴⁷. Cryss Brunner, 131.

⁴⁸. Task Force on Women in Academe,

⁴⁹. Ibid.

⁵⁰. Ibid.

⁵¹. Gail O. Mellow, *The Role of the Community College Chair in Organizational Change: Chaos, Leadership and the Challenge of Complexity*. Unpublished Paper presented at the Annual Mid-Atlantic Community College Chair/Dean Conference (October 1996).

⁵². Thomas A. Schwandt, *Dictionary of qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

⁵³. Frances A. Karnes and Jane C. Charmin, *Leadership Development Program: Leadership Skills Inventory and Leadership Development Program Manual* (Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential. Press, Inc, 2005).

⁵⁴. Thomas G. Sergiovanni, *Value-added leadership: How to Get Extraordinary Performance in Schools*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

⁵⁵. Paul Hershey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, and Dewey E. Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Leading Human Resources* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001).

⁵⁶. Cryss C. Brunner and Paul Schumaker, Power and Gender in “New View” public schools. *Policy Studies Journal* (1998).

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