

# Gender–Based Leadership Barriers: Advancement of Female Faculty to Leadership Positions in Higher Education

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## INTRODUCTION

“Gender-based leadership barriers,” is a general phrase referring to the more or less visible obstacles in women’s advancement to leadership positions. In this chapter, we specifically explore such barriers in the context of higher education.<sup>1</sup> As promising female faculty leaders face limited access to leadership positions in comparison to male faculty leaders, one of the greatest barriers for women holding formal leadership positions in higher education institutions may be gender discrimination (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Dunn, Gerlach, & Hyle, 2014; Kruse & Prettyman, 2008; Philipsen, 2008; Shakeshaft, 1993; Wolvertson, Bower & Hyle, 2009). There have been varied well-documented gender-based reform efforts in higher education to provide women with the same advancements opportunities as their male colleagues (Philipsen, 2008). Yet, studies continue to document the lack of women in positional leadership roles (Gangone & Lennon, 2014). According to Young and Kochan (2004), the problem of under-representation of female faculty leaders in higher education is primarily due to stereotypes attached to women regarding their lack of capacity to hold leadership positions and, consequentially, their inability to gain entrance into the perceived *masculine* world of leadership (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Dunn, Gerlach, & Hyle, 2014). Through internalization of gendered stereotypes and related interactions, many female faculty tend to perceive themselves as less deserving of praise or promotion for the same performance as male leaders (Madsen, 2008). Therefore, this chapter identifies gender-based leadership barriers according to socio-historical, institutional, and interactional factors that may be external and internal to universities, yet influence women’s advancement in the context of higher education. We conclude with new directions in evidence-practices scholars have put forth for addressing gender-based leadership barriers.

## Framing the Issue

The 21st century brings new changes to organizational leadership, particularly in the domain of higher education where universities and colleges strive to be diverse, effective, efficient, and transparent (Universities, U.K. 2011). Across many university campuses evidence of student diversity is increasingly visible, yet this is less apparent amongst senior-level faculty, despite the fact that women’s representation in higher education throughout the world is on the rise, and is increasingly approaching the gender

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parity of 50 percent (Bradley, 2000). Even whilst more women are poised to enter leadership roles, data continues to show that they remain bunched at the base of the upper leadership pyramid in higher education administration (Tinsley, 1985). In the United States of America, only 22% of four year presidents, 40% of all chief academic officers, and 43% of all other senior administrators are women (The Almanac of Higher Education, 2013). In 2013, just 37.5% of women were in tenured positions and they were more likely to be found in lower ranking academic positions (IPEDS, 2013). We therefore next explore the context of higher education, conceptualizations of leadership, and everyday interactions that help to explain factors influencing the manifestations of gender-based leadership barriers.

## Socio-Historical Factors

There is an enormous amount of symbolism present in higher education that historically embodies and expresses the organization's culture, or the "interwoven pattern of beliefs, values, practices, and artifacts that define for members who they are and how they are to do things" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 217). Not surprisingly, the dominant group within the organization creates and establishes these traditions, which remain embedded in the organization's culture (O'Connor, 2015). Whilst a tipping point might be reached leading to changes in the nature of the dominant group, history has shown that few changes in relation to rituals and traditions occur over time (Sarason, 1996). For this reason, it is important to review institutional symbols' influence on the organizational culture of higher education; more specifically, this review looks to highlight the organizational behaviors and values that favor traits and characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity.<sup>2</sup> To identify clearly the still perpetuating influence of gender, specifically male on higher education organization systems and processes, we review the development of the modern university.

In 814 AD, the Emperor Charlemagne issued a decree that all religious institutions were to establish a school and provide a free education to boys who had the intelligence and the perseverance to follow a demanding course of study (Sypeck, 2006). Charlemagne's intent was to create a large body of educated male priests from which future local and state leaders would be drawn. The course of study consisted of two parts:

1. The grammar school, in which the trivium (three-part curriculum) was taught, and
2. The quadrivium.

The trivium consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Grammar trained the student to read, write, and speak Latin—the universal language of the European educated classes; rhetoric taught the art of public speaking and served as an introduction to literature and logic. As the second part of the course, the quadrivium (four-part curriculum) consisted of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Arithmetic served as the basis for quantitative reasoning, geometry for architecture, surveying, and calculating measurements—all defined as essential to managing a church's property and income. At the time, astronomy was deemed necessary for calculating the date of Easter, predicting eclipses, and marking the passing of the seasons. Music or harmonics theory focused on the study of the proportions between music intervals rather than on practice. By the 1100's elements of the quadrivium had been extended beyond the foundational requirements of priestly training (Sypeck, 2006).

The idea of university is a European creation first established during the Middle Ages in certain European towns, mostly in Italy and France (Rudy, 1984). Contemporary universities are thus the product of 800 years of evolution. The university roles played and rules followed thus have their roots in medi-

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