Chapter 20
Claws and All:
Women of Color and the Pitfalls of Dominant Culture Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Understanding why women are underrepresented in various levels of higher education leadership fields remains an important area of research. In the United States and in many industrialized nations around the world, higher education professions remain male dominated. Explanations for why women of color are not successful or are experiencing difficulty in higher education leadership professions are many and diverse. This chapter seeks to examine the discourse of Black female leaders in a predominantly White institution. The chapter will focus on types of management and communication styles that are disruptive to women of color in leadership as they lead without readily identified support in upper division administration.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of women and leadership is dynamic. We must engage leadership in multiple domains to include the physical, psychosocial, and the intellectual. It is also the goal of leadership to engage in creating an environment that is conducive to creating a culture that honors it citizens. Along with traditional pedagogical approaches, we must consider current technologies and multiple formats to enhance communication opportunities that build and navigate leadership knowledge bases. These knowledge bases are culturally and linguistically mediated. This process is finely honed, yet robust.

Women leaders are a part of this and must utilize every opportunity to reinforce the "content and process" approach to leading and learning. It is the objective of this chapter to examine the challenges of engaging communication in leadership in higher education; cognizant of diversity. This chapter will also identify challenges that are ever-present for women of color in leadership. Finally, this chapter will provide case scenarios in which the communication style and structure of higher education does not support women of color as leaders.

BACKGROUND

College Leadership

Flowers and Moore (2008) examined systems of higher education and cultural and academic leaders also known as administrators. Researchers report that leaders of color tend to be underrepresented and usually serve in less prominent leadership positions than their white coordinates. The researchers examined two and four year institutions to explore the level of diversity among administration to see if it changes from one decade to the next. The researchers found that not only did the number not increase but administrators of color are less likely to hold faculty track positions than their white coordinates. They also found that this same issue is correlated with a low number of ethnically diverse graduate students which exacerbated the quantity of ethnic minorities in the faculty applicant pools.

This further amplifies discriminatory hiring practices and advancement in hiring at the workplace. These factors exacerbate the shortage of academic leaders of color. They also found that over time racial and ethnic faculty were more likely to service as academic leaders or administrators at two-year institutions than at baccalaureate institutions. So how does that fare with women in leadership roles?

Women in Leadership

The American Association of University Women (2016) state that sexual orientation, income, age, health, ethnicity and race all have an impact women's leadership probabilities and adding these factors can drastically amend the experiences among different factions of women. Women of diverse backgrounds have to encounter race and ethnic disparities that white women often do not have to combat. They also experience gender bias in a vastly different fashion than white women and the racial bias that they experience is immensely different than males within their racial or ethnic group, this is described as intersectionality. Though women have made great strides in out earning degrees in comparison to men they still follow in academic leadership; especially the higher echelon. Women are also under represented in terms of tenure and being professors. It is also unremarkable that men outnumber women among newly appointed president's deans and provosts. The question becomes what does this leadership like and how is it presented?

Chin (2011) reports that there is a great amount of information that bolsters the tendency for women to take on a more democratic approach of leadership or more shared governance style of leadership versus a man's directive, aggressive or monocratic style of leading. The implementation of a collaborative practice seems to be pivotal to the inspections of what is considered leadership that is efficient. The current leadership theories, that would have us to presuppose that gender and ethnic background are insignificant to leadership, reflect cultural worldviews that regulate gender roles in life experiences that

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