

Chapter 3

Voice Dispossession and Attributional Accommodation for Career Persistence: A Systematic Review of Gender Parity in U.S. Higher Education Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the results of a systematic review to analyze the current research since 2019 for voice dispossession as attributional accommodation among women in higher education leadership. The authors sought to quantify and categorize these attributes to better identify the verbal and nonverbal accommodations made by women in higher education leadership to extend prior critical review of gender parity and equity for these leaders. Study findings may inform higher educational leadership to better understand voice dispossession among female leaders and the resulting attributional accommodations made to improve gender equity and parity for leadership roles in higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

In previous work, the authors have noted the lack of gender parity in higher education leadership within the United States and internationally using an intersectional theoretical framework to view voice dispossession (Stewart et al., 2020). In this chapter, the authors present the results of a systematic review of the literature on women in higher education leadership from 2019-2021. The existence of voice dispossession within the recent scholarship was systematically sourced and examined to determine these findings. Specific attention was given to the categorization of the attributional accommodations made by women in higher education leadership roles. Attributional accommodation was previously defined by the authors as the “filtered or silenced voice, constraint of image, vocality, and behavior, or adoption of invisibility as a means of survivability within specific power domains or organizational dynamics” (Stewart et al., 2020, p. 114). In this systematic review, the authors sought to quantify and categorize these attributes to better identify the accommodations made by women in higher education leadership.

Since the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services deemed systematic review as scientific research (Impellizzeri & Bizzini, 2012), various forms of systematic review as research methods have advanced rapidly over the past decade in other disciplines (i.e. medicine, software engineering, business, economics, environmental studies). This review adopts these systematic procedures for guiding analytic question, sourcing, data extraction, coding/ categorization, and data representation. This systematic process, specific to systematic reviews in education (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020), has been used for this presentation of findings related to five aspects of voice dispossession and attributional accommodation identified in previous study. These include (a) vocality, (b) tone, (c) silence, (d) filtering, and (e) nonverbal cues.

The chapter objective is to examine the extent to which voice dispossession as attributional accommodation among women leaders in higher education is researched with the purpose to better identify the accommodations made by women in higher education leadership. The research has shown that women accommodate aspects of voice, both verbal and nonverbal, within higher educational settings to survive and persist in leadership roles. Additionally, the authors sought to extend prior critical review of gender parity and equity for these leaders. It is important to recognize the times that women must shift from their authentic selves to meet the parameters often assigned to qualify as leaders or individuals for higher education leadership potential.

BACKGROUND

Cavanaugh (2020) noted that despite the incremental gains women have made over the past 50 years toward higher education leadership, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles even though women earn more higher degrees than men. Within the absence of mentoring, role models, and peer groups, women who attain leadership roles are often left to themselves to navigate an uneven culture where conscious and unconscious biases exist (Cavanaugh, 2020). Women leaders are too often left ill-equipped to successfully deal with the institution’s leadership community where many members “demonstrat[e] behaviors based on various stereotypes and misconceptions, displaying sexism, implementing pay inequity, and subtly discriminating” (Cavanaugh, 2020, p. 6). Similarly, Reis and Grady (2019) noted women college presidents too often face gendered perspectives of followers and these “stereotypical perceptions

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