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Editor's notes

Pamela L. Eddy
College of William and Mary, pamela.eddy@wm.edu

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Editor's Notes

The first volume of *New Directions for Community Colleges* (NDCC) on the topic of gender in community colleges was edited by Barbara Townsend in 1995. This seminal work focused on the role of power in 2-year organizations and how this power was influenced by and in turn influenced social identities of gender. At the time, this work was groundbreaking as it provided a snapshot of the experiences of women in community colleges—a perspective that heretofore was absent in the literature. Consider at the time that only 13% of women were college presidents (American Council on Education [ACE], 1986) and that gender was still viewed predominantly as a binary—men or women—versus the more complex understandings of gender present today.

Women have comprised the majority of all college students since 1979 and have held half of community college faculty positions since 2003 (National Council on Education Statistics [NCES], 2013). Yet, women remain less represented in leadership ranks as currently only one of three community college presidents is a woman (ACE, 2012). In 2008, Jaime Lester edited a second NDCC volume focused on gender in community colleges. This volume sought to extend the work that Townsend and colleagues presented as well as broaden the discussion of gender to include issues facing men and masculinity. It is fitting that this new volume in 2017 focusing on constructions of gender has such a robust and strong history upon which to build and therefore can present another portrait of gender from the vantage point of the passing of another decade. Building on previous work, this volume tackles new and extended conceptions of gender to include issues facing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community; highlights the intersections of race and gender; and addresses how gender performance (Butler, 2003) continues to influence the experiences of men and women in the 2-year college sector.

Some may question why a volume on gender in community colleges is still needed and argue that the "women's issue" in higher education is no longer a problem. But, even today, issues of gender are relevant (Eddy, Ward, & Khwaja, 2017). Though parity in numbers is evident for student enrollment and faculty representation, the glass ceiling—or as some argue the plexiglass ceiling (Glazer-Raymo, 2008) remains intact. Despite the fact that women now represent half of chief academic officers (CAO), the typical stepping-stone to the presidency, they are not advancing to the presidency in equal numbers. Part of the issue is that sitting CAOs (including both men

and women), like their presidential counterparts, are at or near retirement age (ACE, 2012; Eckel, Cook, & King, 2009). The bigger issue, however, is that both men and women holding CAO positions are not considering a presidency, and the major reason (60%) given is because the work is unappealing (Eckel et al., 2009).

Yes, women are faring better in community colleges relative to their 4-year counterparts (ACE, 2012; NCES, 2013), but these statistics tell only part of the story. Historically, community colleges, as the "people's college" have been viewed as sites for inclusion for students, faculty, staff, and administrators (Townsend & Twombly, 2007). But this inclusiveness often meant that it was White women who were reaching these levels of parity rather than women of color. Faculty and leaders of color, overall, are less represented in community colleges (23% of faculty and 13% of presidents; ACE, 2012). When we complicate the idea of gender and view it in its socially constructed state versus a mere binary of men and women, other topics for consideration emerge. First, the foregone conclusion that men are by default the privileged norm ignores the fact that not all men are reaping the benefits of the system. Indeed, recent focus on masculinity, Black men, and men of color paints a more complex portrait than the foregone historic dominance by White men (Bush & Bush, 2005). Second, as a social construct, gender is represented in many forms. Research on LGBTQ populations in higher education settings expands binary reduction of gender. To date, the bulk of LGBTQ research in community colleges focuses on students (Ivory, 2005; Zamani-Gallaher & Choudhuri, 2011), and there is scant research regarding LGBTQ faculty roles and leadership in community colleges. Finally, the recent publication by Sheryl Sandberg (2013) titled *Lean In* argues that women are holding back in their aspirations and that if they just try harder, gains will be made. This argument ignores the structural issues challenging women—and men as they seek work–family balance (Eddy & Ward, 2015, 2017).

When we reduce concerns of gender in community colleges to White women, we miss the opportunity to understand more fully the broader manifestation of gender and how individuals are affected by structural constraints. Butler (2003) discussed the role of gender performance in which individuals get rewarded for acting within their "gender" and punished when acting outside these gender norms. This volume intends to challenge these historic concepts of gender performance and highlight how gender is much wider in its application and influence on campus already. What continues to be needed are changes in 2-year college culture to offer true inclusivity. When we get to this point, community colleges will truly be the people's colleges for *all* people.

The first portion of this volume discusses the ways in which structures and policies promote or challenge women seeking advancement. Chapter 1 by Jaime Lester and Carrie Klein sets the stage for the volume by providing an overview of the status of women in community colleges. They

underscore how institutional structures and policies reinforce larger societal beliefs about the work that have prescribed expectations for women and men, but they note how the community colleges also can and do work toward equity. Yet, inequities persist. Lester and Klein highlight how gender performance dictates particular types of exhibition of masculinity, particularly for men of color. The authors offer several suggestions for ways to change practices on campus to achieve more inclusivity.

Amy Edwards presents in Chapter 2 a review of women in leadership in community colleges. Here, she focuses in particular on the role of communication in leadership. Findings highlight evidence of gendered communication and also the performance of gender by women leaders that is reified by physical appearance. Another challenge faced by the women leaders included in the research Edwards conducted were issues of pay equity. Chapter 3, by Rosemary Gillett-Karam, continues the focus on gender and leadership. She provides a detailed history of the evolution of women and leadership in the community college and reports on data collected from 30 participants, including administrators, board members, and presidents. Gillett-Karam found that efforts to improve gender parity in leadership are aided by the narratives of successful leadership. Leaders who see leadership as learning (Amey, 2013) are able to frame their leadership differently and create positive meaning for campus stakeholders. But, in order for leaders to be effective on campus, they must first be hired for the job. Gillett-Karam found that proactive board hires to promote gender equity are essential to obtaining more inclusive leadership in community colleges.

In Chapter 4, using 15 years of longitudinal data, Kelly Ward and Lisa Wolf-Wendel report on how women community college faculty juggle work and family. A robust long-term inquiry into the reality of academic career pathways provides insights into what best supports women and how they see their experiences. Ward and Wolf-Wendel found that their participants had intentionality in choosing the community college as a place of work given the flexibility it provided for balance. Over time, however, women noted a decreased desire to seek top-level leadership positions, citing bureaucracy and a satisfaction with their current positions based on the flexibility afforded by not moving up. A question that emerges from this research is whether community colleges act to cool women's intentions to move to senior leadership positions.

Ashleigh Lee reviews the evolution of the Cleary Act since its inception in 1990 to the present day in chapter 5. This legislation requires colleges to report statistics on various criminal activities occurring on campus. Recent focus on sexual assaults occurring on college campuses spurred public demands for attention to this problem, and other safety issues, facing college students. Because women and LGBTQ students are most often victims of sexual assault on campus, the ways in which we think about constructions of gender and how in turn we define gender are critical to the creation of policy and procedures on campus.

The next set of chapters reviews the experiences of specific groups in community colleges to determine how they construct their gender identity. It is at the point of intersection that multiple identities connect and interact but are often not accounted for in conversations on various campus roles. Specifically, Chapter 6 by Dawn Person, Robert Dawson, Yvonne García, and Andrew Jones, focuses on the intersection of race and gender for men of color. The authors cull data from three different studies that allow for a multiple perspective analysis of the issue. This chapter highlights the evolution of masculinity studies over the past decade. Because community colleges enroll the largest numbers of minority men (NCES, 2013), it is important to understand what supports their success. Findings from the research by these authors suggest that despite challenges at the college (e.g., finances, academics) and outside of the college (e.g., family, work) that men participating in the three projects reported they had strong desires to be successful and drew on internal resiliency and support via engagement on campus with others and through student organizations and programs. A set of best practices are identified to help better support men of color in community colleges.

Chapter 7, by Judie Heineman, also deals with intersecting identities. In this case, Heineman studied the experiences of women veterans. She found specific differences between the experiences of the women veterans compared to what is known of the experiences of male veterans. "Despite only making up 10 percent to 12 percent of military personnel, women make up 27 percent of veterans enrolled in post-secondary education" (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014, para. 4). The women participants in Heineman's study reported on how their gendered military experiences influenced how they interacted with veteran support services on campus, as they typically did not access this resource. Instead, the women veterans took a more individualized and self-focused approach to their transition to being a student–veteran. Heightened awareness of ways to best support this population is provided.

Another group that experiences intersections of gender construction is LGBTQ students. In Chapter 8, Eboni Zamani-Gallaher discusses the fluid nature of gender development for these students. She explores the privilege afforded to cisgender students and how the community college climate influences the student experience. Because the college years are a time of exploration and development of identity, LGBTQ students often run into challenges if their community college does not have a progressive system in place that allows for a range of gender expression or gender identity, including preferred name and pronoun use. Yet, the biggest conclusion of this chapter is how much remains unknown about the LGBTQ student experience in community colleges.

The final chapter of the volume, Chapter 9 by Pamela Eddy, reviews emerging trends regarding the construction of gender in community colleges and provides a summary of areas for future research. Critically,

strategies are provided for individuals, leaders, and boards of trustees on ways to create a more gender-inclusive 2-year sector. As evident throughout the chapters in this volume, not all changes will occur through individual action given the role and sway of structures, norms, and policies in place. A key start to change is questioning these unseen assumptions and norms and continuing to ask a central question—why?

Leaders in community colleges and researchers can use these chapters as information sources to help guide consideration of the role of gender in institutional policies, governance, student and faculty experiences, and leadership. Individuals holding a range of roles covered in this volume will find sources of identification for shared experiences and importantly understanding for experiences of gender outside of their own. The intention of this volume is to reinforce the complexities inherent in discussion of gender in community colleges and to encourage more sustainable ways to increase inclusivity to help secure equity for all.

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Pamela L. Eddy
Editor

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PAMELA L. EDDY is a professor of higher education and department chair of Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership at the College of William & Mary. Her research focuses on community college leadership, gender, and faculty development.