

## Introduction to Guidelines for Feminist Leadership Studies

Alison R. Bernstein, Director, Institute for Women's Leadership and Professor of History and Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University

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Across the country, new programs claiming to prepare college and university students for leadership have been launched in every possible higher education institution from community colleges to flagship research universities. Leadership, as defined by former Duke University president and political scientist, Nan Keohane, in her recent book, *Thinking about Leadership*, is about “providing solutions to common problems or offering ideas about how to accomplish collective purposes, and mobilizing the energies of others to follow these courses of action.” (p. 19) Leadership studies per se, once the exclusive domain of business schools, now finds a home in fields as disparate as social work, environmental science, even arts management.

Recently, several women's and gender studies programs across the country have also taken up the mantle of promoting education for women's leadership. Over the past three years, faculty and administrators from Barnard College's Athena Center for Leadership Studies, Spelman College's Women's Research and Resource Center, and Rutgers University's Institute for Women's Leadership consortium have met on each campus to discuss the topic of feminist leadership – what is it? Can it be taught to undergraduates? And, what are the best pedagogies for teaching it?

Our discussions have been rich and provocative, and have included heated debates around defining leadership. Among the questions we have discussed are: Is there a connection between

social justice and leadership? Are there intentional ways to educate and empower young people, especially women, to envision and pursue justice by taking leadership? And, finally, is there is a difference between promoting women's leadership and promoting feminist leadership? Our group from Barnard, Rutgers and Spelman also considered how differently located scholars use women's leadership as a lens to think about power structures, community organizing, social movements, activism, women's agency, and racial and gender inequality.

After three years of meetings and conversations, we have developed this document, "Guidelines for Feminist Leadership Studies." This document is not intended to be the final word on the subject, but rather, a set of guidelines to help catalyze further discussions among women's and gender studies faculty, and scholars of leadership, whether they be in political science departments, labor studies, public administration programs or in business schools.

Finally, central to the concept of feminist leadership studies is the need to move beyond the study of "positional" or "formal" leadership. The person who is most highly paid or who holds the most visible power is but one kind of leader. There are many other ways of leading – from the bottom, from the margins, and most challenging to understand, from a collective vision. We believe that feminist leadership studies should incorporate collaborative approaches to leadership, not simply the "great man or great woman" approach. Thus, we also question highly individualistic analyses of leadership. Instead, we offer a more complicated, though we believe an equally valid interpretation, of how one or many can exhibit "feminist leadership" in the pursuit of social justice goals.

We welcome your critique, suggestions and commentaries. To do so, please contact Mary Trigg  
at [trigg@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:trigg@rci.rutgers.edu)