Women are slowly emerging as leaders in many nations, despite the challenges inherent in the cultural definition of leadership as requiring masculine qualities. Even though robust gender stereotypes disadvantage women as leaders, they are especially gaining ground in institutions that serve the public good, including universities. Looking beyond the social justice gains that follow from including women in leadership, researchers are inquiring how and why the presence of women leaders may affect group and organizational outcomes. The most consequential differences in female and male leaders pertain to women’s typically more participative and relational leader behaviors and their more compassionate, other-oriented, and egalitarian attitudes and values. When women leaders display these attributes, groups and organizations may be more effective under some conditions and gravitate toward new goals. The relevance of this conclusion for university leadership will be explored.

This CHESS lecture is a cooperation with the Guest Colloquium in Social, Organizational and Business Psychology at the Department of Psychology at the University of Zurich. With the combined topic of the lecture, CHESS focuses on a specific gender issue and its challenges of today’s leadership in academia and elsewhere.

Alice Eagly is Professor of Psychology, James Padilla Chair of Arts and Sciences, and Faculty Fellow in the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. She is a social psychologist who is well known for her work on gender, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping, leadership, and feminism. Her extensive publications include the books, Psychology of Attitudes, written with Shelly Chaiken, and Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders, written with Linda Carli. Her work has been recognized by numerous awards, including the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from the American Psychological Association, the Gold Medal Award for Life Achievement in the Science of Psychology from the American Psychological Foundation, and the Eminent Leadership Scholar Award from the Academy of Management.

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