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Differences Between Women Administrators and Faculty

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THE lack of women in tenured faculty positions has been an acknowledged problem for at least the last twenty years. *Women in Academe* (Chamberlain, 1988), for example, reports that the sex differential for tenured faculty increased rather than decreased during the period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. The percentage of all faculty men who were tenured grew from 64% to 69% while the percentage of women moved only from 46% to 47%, and the sex differential for tenured faculty increased from 18% to 22%. More recently, however, the lack of women administrators has emerged as a source of increasing concern (Stokes, 1984; Chamberlain, 1988; Kaplan and Tinsley, 1989). Faculty and students have become increasingly disgruntled with salary and tenure decisions, especially those which relate to women (Raymond, 1982), and view more women in upper-level administrative positions as the solution to persistent inequities. Contributing to dissatisfaction with the status quo is recent research indicating that women tend to approach moral decisions with a more other-oriented, inclusive perspective, and have an innate preference for education as a dialogue rather than an indoctrination (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky et al., 1986; Lyons, 1983). The perceived need for women administrators has been expanded thereby beyond a simple concern with equitable numbers to include a consideration of decision-making styles as well. It may be that the growing demand for female representation in administration is more of a request for management style modification in the academic culture than it is a request for increased numbers of females.

Simultaneous with the lack of women in academic administration is a shortage of people, male or female, willing to go into any formal leadership position (Hershey and Blanchard, 1982). Changing leadership needs may be one explanation of the shortfall. Academic institutions are now searching for quality candidates who are able to lobby aggressively for funding yet at the same time remain sensitive to faculty and students. The current environment for higher education mandates a more flexible type of executive than the past's "great man" style of leadership. Universities must seek out collaborative decision makers

who are high in both people and task orientations if they are to satisfy the divergent needs of their various constituencies. Institutions are also being pushed by legal and social forces to include more women and minorities in administrative and faculty ranks. Logically, both of these goals—a more sensitive style of leadership and numeric increases—could be accomplished by hiring more females if women administrators truly enact the feminine gender stereotype of a person-oriented management style. Any movement toward a new, collaborative style of university administrator, at least in theory, would be an opening whereby women could effect a change in the administrative style that has characterized higher education (Thibault, 1987, p. 182).

The assumption of a different management style by women comes at least in part from the studies of differences between men and women with respect to moral decision making. According to research by Gilligan (1982), Lyons (1983), and Belenky, et. al. (1986), women tend to use a moral decision-making model that is other-oriented, collaborative, interdisciplinary and based on the care of others. This style is contrasted with a predominantly male decision-making style based on abstract principles of justice, rules and competition. If one accepts such polarized differences in style, women administrators presumably would give higher priority to actions benefiting students and faculty. The academic climate would change supposedly from one of competition and one-upmanship to one of collegiality. If such a management style characterizes females, then an increase in women as chairs, deans, and chancellors should build institutional communities since faculty and students will begin to respond emotionally to being listened and attended to by their administration. It follows from this view of the feminine management style that women administrators would make decisions in line with their connected, collaborative orientation toward others and thus act differently as a group than male administrators.

The problem in drawing such conclusions, of course, is that one may be trading one gender stereotype for another in addition to confusing biological and psychological gender. There is a tendency to equate maleness with stereotypically masculine characteristics and to accept these as the model of effective management. For example, Powell (1988) and Butterfield hypothesized that students would perceive the effective manager as well as the effective person to be relatively androgynous, meaning high in both masculine and feminine characteristics, and therefore, quite flexible in her/his responses. Surprisingly, studies they conducted both in the mid-1970s and mid-1980s using the Bem Sex Role Inventory found that students (graduate as well as undergrads) overwhelmingly viewed the masculine manager as the effective or good manager. Powell (1988) minimizes this gender preference, however, by noting that differences found in experimental settings have not been replicated in the real world with respect to the actual effectiveness of female vs. male managers.

Both political and psychological studies have shown that women as a population tend to have different opinions and to employ different means of reaching those opinions than men (Gilligan 1982; Baxter and Lansing, 1983). Women have been shown to favor (in greater numbers than men) peace, nuclear disarmament, increased funding of education, and daycare (Baxter and Lansing, 1983). Yet women in political leadership positions have not shown those differences from men in either their voting behavior or in their introduction of legislation (Kathlene, 1989). Studies on leadership behavior in other fields have found similar paradoxical results. Kantor (1977) found that once women achieve positions of power the gender differences in behavior disappear. Similarly, Macoby and Jackson found no evidence that men are competitive and women are nurturing and dependent while acting in leadership positions (Cimperman, 1986). Some people maintain that leadership behavior simply is not related to gender, but changes based on the situation (Hershey and Blanchard, 1982; Cimperman, 1986).

For whatever reasons, then, the women who attain positions of leadership are not acting in a manner consistent with a uniquely feminine style. It is difficult to know whether the

women who attain such positions are those who do not agree with the majority of women on issues, or whether the process of moving up through the system actually affects the way they approach issues. Sargent (1981), in *The Androgynous Manager* claims that the system changed women into "mechanical figures whose behavior was almost exclusively determined by their work role" (p. 4).

A change in values, encouraged by the system, could have caused this "change," or their communication styles could simply be reflecting a more rational, task-oriented environment. Another explanation is that women may be represented in such small numbers that they have insufficient support to act as they really feel. In Powell's (1988) discussion of possible reasons why managerial stereotypes have not changed despite increasing numbers of women managers, he notes that women managers are frequently tokens (Kantor, 1977) or underrepresented group members treated as representatives of their sex rather than as individuals. This is especially true in the upper echelons of management where the culture is controlled by the majority (males), and Powell states that,

> As long as women remain in the minority in management circles, they may be expected to behave in the same way as men. Thus a masculine stereotype of the good manager is self-reinforcing and inhibits the expression of femininity by women in or aspiring to management positions (Powell, 1988, p. 150).

It is possible, therefore, that women in positions of leadership may not differ in actual behavior from men although they continue to be different in values or attitudes. If women who obtain leadership positions cease to make decisions based on a feminine other-orientation, the diversity of perspective argument for more women becomes moot. (Such behavior does not, of course, eliminate the affirmative action argument for equitable numbers of women.)

Stokes' survey (1984) at the University of Florida indicates that barriers to women's advancement continue to exist even if they make it into administration. She states that the existence of such barriers can create the impression that women are deficient in skill, achievement and personality characteristics desirable in administration, and that often, women will change their natural style in order to succeed. To achieve more success and have greater influence on decisions, women may attempt to be "less emotional, more assertive, more precise and more perfect. The other pressure is to conform to the more stereotypical female role or behavior and adopt a less threatening, more feminine, and passive work style" (Stokes, 1984, p. 20). If either is the case, it is quite probable that women in administration are not making decisions based upon Gilligan's model, simply because the organizational pressures and barriers make it too difficult.

These issues are particularly salient at the university we studied where increasing dissatisfaction is being expressed by women faculty (Finley, 1990; Romano, 1990) with the seeming inability of the administration to respond to issues like women's salary equity, and low female representation in tenured faculty ranks (Calhoun, 1987; Corbridge, 1988). In the four campus system investigated, 41 percent of graduate students are women, and though the total percentage of women faculty hovers around 37 percent (*Affirmative Action Report on Faculty*, 1989, p. 44), only about 13 percent (166/1176) of the *tenured* faculty in the system are women (*President's Report on Affirmative Action*, 1987-1989). Additionally, only about 7.9 percent (57/718) of those holding the rank of full professor are women; and women hold only 13 percent (8/60) of the officer positions (*President's Affirmative Action Report*, 1988).

Change, whether cultural or numeric, is not coming fast enough for women at the university. Conversations with faculty and students indicate that one or two women in academic administration on each campus have not solved the problems faced by women

faculty and students. Many faculty, in fact, perceive women administrators to be harder on women than the men are. At the same time, the willingness of the limited numbers of tenured women faculty to move into the halls of administration remains tepid at best. Several questions are raised, therefore, about whether women administrators are representative of women faculty, i.e., are the women in administration "like" the women faculty, in terms of their conception of themselves, their communication style, and their perception of the climate in academe? If not, why is this so? Has the system "changed" the women to fit masculine bureaucratic roles, or are the only women who succeed those who are most "unlike" other women in academe? Why are many women faculty reluctant to even consider taking on the role of an administrator? Why are current women administrators not changing the traditionally masculine administrative style?

Because the university system examined is representative of the national picture in terms of its low number of females in administrative and faculty leadership, our study examined its population of women administrators and senior faculty to investigate these questions and to ascertain what types of barriers exist, both from the women themselves, and the university culture, that might contribute to the dearth of female administrators. The study focused on three groups of academic women: those once in formal positions of leadership, those currently in such positions, and those who are eligible because of their tenured faculty status, but who are not presently in administrative roles.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Sixty-four women from the Colorado University system provided the data for this study. Administrators were defined as those persons occupying an academic post of department chair or above. Tenured faculty were selected as a comparison group because they have the potential to end up in administration (Warner, 1988); and because they should have the best understanding of various barriers experienced by women faculty. Thus, the perception and cultural experience of faculty could be compared to that of administrators.

After accounting for faculty and administrators that were on sabbatical or no longer in their positions, the adjusted total of surveys sent was 105. A response rate of 60.95 percent (64) was achieved after follow-up calls to all recipients.

In order to understand women's self-perception, communication styles and perception of barriers, three separate survey instruments were used: The RHETSEN scale (Hart and Burks, 1972), the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BRSI) (Bem, 1974), and the Stokes (1984) questionnaire developed to measure perceived barriers that exist for women in higher education. Two of the three types of communicators described in the RHETSEN (noble self, rhetorical reflector, and rhetorical sensitive) are similar to the moral types both Gilligan (1982) and Lyons (1983) discuss (separated or instrumental knower, and connected or contextual knower). The noble self follows its own communication agenda with no adjustment to others while the rhetorical reflector loses its individuality by constantly subordinating its values to the wishes of others. The rhetorical sensitive person, on the other hand, remains true to his/her own style while simultaneously considering the attitudes and values of others (Hart and Burks, 1972). Littlejohn (1983) comments that the term, rhetorical sensitive, itself implies an adaptive view of communication, inferring that the communicator can express ideas in many ways, in a variety of situations. Hart (Hart and Burks, 1972) argues, however, that communication style is a trait tied to personality, and therefore measuring communication styles for both faculty and administrators should provide some insight with respect to their personality and its moral decision-making style.

RESULTS

The greatest difference between current administrators, faculty, and former administrators was found in the Bem Sex Role Indicator (BRSI) t scores. Of the three groups, the faculty scored closest to an androgynous rating, the current administrators more masculine, and the former administrators the most masculine. It is important to remember that definitions of masculinity and femininity are generated by the respondent's self-perception of traits consonant with sex-role stereotypes and not by conformity to any generalized principle of masculinity or femininity. Thus, administrators perceived themselves as fitting best with stereotypical assumptions of masculine qualities, while faculty perceived themselves to fit best with androgynous characteristics.

While looking at raw averages for each communicator style, it appears that all three groups are predominantly rhetorical sensitive, however, Hart (Hart and Burks, 1972) notes that the scores must be analyzed as a composite and not in isolation. When comparing relationships by group, the current administrators seemed to be more homogeneous while faculty have the most variation on the three scales. For current administrators, there is a statistically significant negative relationship between the noble self scores and both the rhetorical reflector and rhetorical sensitive scores. For faculty, there were no significant correlations between communication styles. When comparing RHETSEN results to those of the Bem Sex Role Inventory, we found that those who are more androgynous vary more among communication style; and those who perceive themselves as having "masculine" characteristics generally are more consistent in their communication style. This coincides with Bem's definition of androgynous as one who varies styles.

When one compares the group responses of faculty and current administrators on Stoke's barriers, it is obvious that faculty perceive self-barriers to exist more often than do current administrators. In 14 of 17 items, a higher percentage of faculty than administrators perceived self-barriers as occurring "often" or "occasionally". In 12 of 17 items, the percentage of faculty responding who perceived barriers occurring for female colleagues was greater than the percentage of current administrators perceiving such barriers. In addition, in 14 of 17 items, more administrators than faculty responded "never" to a perceived self-barrier. In short, faculty perceived their climate to be more hostile than current administrators did.

Three self-barriers appear to be experienced most "often" by all three groups: Barrier 8 (women have to work twice as hard as men), Barrier 12 (women are more likely to assume personal responsibility for failure than men), and Barrier 2 (an informal system of information sharing and networking occurs that excludes women). The two barriers experienced least by all three groups (those with the highest percentage of "never" responses for self-perceived barriers) were Barrier 6 (treated as pets), and Barrier 11 (women have lower expectations than men). Importantly, however, 16 of 17 items were experienced "often" or at least "occasionally" by more than 50 percent of current and former administrators, and all of the barriers were experienced "often" or "occasionally" by 50 percent or more of former administrators and of faculty. The results of this study reveal three important differences between women administrators and faculty at the large western university system we studied:

1. Administrators, both current and former, are consistently sex-typed masculine with its inherent rejection of feminine qualities while faculty members were androgynous as a group and more heterogeneous in their sex-typing.

2. Faculty perceive more barriers more frequently for self and female colleagues than do administrators, hence a more hostile cultural

climate is seen by faculty; although no group viewed it as highly supportive since over 50 percent of all three groups perceived 16 of 17 barriers to occur "often" or at least "occasionally."

3. Current administrators as a group are more homogeneous than faculty or former administrators. This was true both with respect to sex-typing and communication style, but the anticipated close relationship between communication style and personality type was not found. The only significant connection of the two was the negative correlation for faculty between femininity (BRSI) and the "masculine" communication style of the noble self.

DISCUSSION

That administrators perceived themselves as identifying more with masculine characteristics than faculty is not unusual since masculine traits are typically more valued in administration. Nieboer (1975) notes that,

> Without models of women who have succeeded (and still managed to be "feminine") it is not surprising that so few women have been willing to gamble and pay the price (p. 100-101).

Administrators scoring more "masculine" on the BRSI test also carries implications with respect to their behavior. Although we cannot assert that "masculine" typing indicates a masculine moral decision-making style (i.e. Gilligan), Bem asserts that sex-typing does affect one's actions. In a study observing the interaction of people with a kitten and a baby, she found that those who interacted very little with the baby had masculine behavior scores (Bem, 1975). Sargent goes on to say, "whether they were unwilling to display the tender emotions they were experiencing or whether they were sufficiently inhibited that they did not experience such emotions is not known, according to Bem" (1981, p. 212). Nonetheless, if a relationship does exist between the BRSI scores and behavior, we could anticipate that those administrators who score "masculine" do not follow Gilligan's model for female moral decision making or the feminine gender stereotype of a person-oriented management style.

In addition, the perception by faculty that one needs to give up "feminine" characteristics to be successful in administration is substantiated by the fact that administrators (both groups) perceived themselves more "masculine" than did faculty members. Consonant with that perception, "feminine" faculty of both sexes may choose to stay out of administration.

The data do not indicate that a stylistic difference exists between the communication style of administrators and that of faculty. All groups were rhetorical sensitive in their dominant style. Two conclusions seem to follow from this. First, it may well be the academic experience itself that precipitates the flexibility of the rhetorical sensitive style; and secondly, communication style appears to be an amoral skill that one acquires and utilizes rather than being an inherent aspect of one's personality as Hart (Hart and Burks, 1972) asserted. The latter conclusion is supported in part by the fact that the sex-role identification of both groups of administrators differed from that of the faculty although all three groups shared a common communication style. Consequently, it appears that communication style is unrelated to self-perceived personality characteristics or resultant decision-making style.

In addition, the difference in perception of barriers indicates that the administration and the faculty have different views of the cultural climate since it is logical to assume that the respondents answered in terms of barriers they currently experience. Along with the significant difference in sex-role identification, it could be postulated that when one is in

administration and has a greater identification with masculine characteristics, the barriers are fewer. When one is a faculty member, implying a greater identification with androgynous and feminine characteristics, the barriers are greater. This assumes the dominant masculine culture is the salient factor. There may be, however, unidentified differences between the climates of administration and faculty that influence barrier perception. For example, it could be that formal institutional power reduces one's experience of barriers. Although both groups of women administrators did not populate the higher administrative levels, they may still have seen themselves as having more power than regular faculty members perceived themselves to have.

One general explanation of group differences is the influence of social role expectations. The very nature of an administrative role differs from that of a faculty member. Traditional formal organizations are set up so that certain types of behaviors are prescribed for certain organizational roles. Because the administrative position is strictly defined within a reporting structure, whether the role is filled by a man or a woman may make little difference. Previously-cited literature on the lack of differences between men and women in leadership positions could be interpreted to support this proposition. It could be that administrative positions as currently defined require more masculine behaviors, and thus those in the positions enact more masculine behaviors. In other words, the behaviors are mandated by the organizational culture of administration.

If this is true, then an increase of women in administration by itself would do little to change how decisions are made. Moore (1987) agrees: "It is important to realize that merely increasing the numbers of women, although a large challenge in itself, is not sufficient. In addition, what is called for is a thorough examination of the structures and processes by which such bodies operate" (p. 32). If that is the case, and traditional pyramidal bureaucracies elicit more masculine behaviors, then a move toward alternative leadership styles and organizational structures should loosen up the rigid role expectations for leaders of today's universities. Consequently, following the corporate movement away from the "great man" style of leadership is a positive trend, especially if those positions can be filled with feminine or androgynous women as well as men.

This study corroborates, however, that many faculty are choosing to stay out of administration, and the open question responses provide some insight for this. One explanation is that they anticipate the administrative environment to be even more unfriendly to women than their own. That view of reality was not confirmed in this university system since our findings suggest that women faculty are encountering a "chillier" climate than their administrative counterparts. However, if women faculty are uncomfortable in their current positions, it is not likely that they would choose to move into positions that they expect, albeit erroneously, to be even more fraught with discrimination. One women faculty member suggests that,

> Women's <u>perception</u> that advancement of women in academic administration at...would be difficult reduces their incentives for such jobs.

The perception of administrative duties as less appealing than other career options available is another impediment for many faculty, as one faculty woman states,

> The women most likely to be accepted into administration (e.g., most assertive and ambitious) are the least likely to <u>want</u> to enter the administration because they would be most likely to be successful in research.

Another explanation for the reluctance of women to enter administration is blatant discrimination against women because of stereotypes about the way they communicate or

make decisions. Women who are not tough and aggressive may be seen as weak by men and women who are hiring. Whether women are hired because of their more "masculine" style, or whether the job rewards that style and not others is a question that cannot be answered by this study. However, our results indicate that no matter what their reasons might be for initially avoiding management, women in academic administration identify more with a "masculine" style once they are there. One former administrator suggests this identification comes from both self-selection and hiring practices by saying, "These front-line women are the most male-like women the men could find to promote...."

Current administrators consistently answered "never" when asked if they encountered certain barriers (i.e., being ignored during discussions) in contrast to the answers of "often" that we received from faculty. This indicates that the climate is more comfortable for current women administrators than for faculty, and perhaps this is due to the latter's androgyny or to the power presumably inherent in the administrative role. One current administrator demonstrates this difference in perception with her response to the question asking about specific barriers at the university by saying,

> I'm not aware that there are any. To the contrary, I think...is actively trying to increase the number of women in administration. Women may be less able to advance due to more responsibilities than men at home, but they're not being held back by men.

When women who are currently in administration perceive that there are few or no barriers to other women moving into these ranks, it may be difficult for them to empathize with those women who feel they do face barriers. Even if the above administrator did not experience barriers herself, for her to act as a mentor, she must strive to understand the perceived existence of such barriers. Other current administrators, however, agree with faculty that administration is not the best place for a woman to be. In response to the query of why few women are going into administration, one current administrator said:

> Few women [are] available or willing to go into administration. Who wants to work with such a collection of uninteresting and sexist men? It is days spent in meetings, peculiar male rituals and one-upmanship games, bureaucratic routine. If there were more feminist women in administration, more would be willing to give it a try. Administrators are caught up in power games (with few rewards and little control). This does not appeal to me.

It is obvious that she is not thrilled with her environment, implying that the typical woman administrator is not interested in "feminist issues," but rather conforming to her sexist environment. Her viewpoint is consistent with the idea that the bureaucracy itself mandates enacting "peculiar male rituals." The fact that this woman's perspective of what would constitute a satisfying leadership role varies from the norm suggests that at least some women might indeed prefer a different leadership style if it were permitted. Kantor's (1977) work on tokens provides support for the idea that the female administrator must conform to the majority's normative behavior if she is to have any chance of "succeeding" in management.

Faculty frequently responded that indeed, the style of an administrator is different than that required for women who are not in administration despite the similarity in communication style between faculty and administrators. The following faculty woman's comments reveal, however, that she views communication style, as measured by the RHETSEN, and one's method of moral decision-making, as defined by Gilligan (1982), as two very different things:

> The current administration philosophy is not interpersonally oriented, not oriented to welfare of "employees." Women's traditional strengths conflict with the dominant ideology.

This woman agrees with Gilligan's idea that a woman's traditional strengths are interpersonal and nurturing skills, and sees that those qualities will not mesh with what is expected in the university's administration. However, what she describes is not one's manner of conversational response, but rather a deeper underlying philosophy about the mission of the university.

One woman faculty member notes that "the problem is that a woman is often not taken seriously by men if she uses her own style. This only matters because men run the show here. " Another faculty member notes that to be an administrator, "I would have to be more thick-skinned, tough, and aggressive than I presently am." A woman administrator shares these perceptions of the faculty when she says, "I think women must be more careful about reacting emotionally to situations." She did not provide specifics to clarify what constitutes an "emotional" reaction, but our assumption is that she is referring to the stereotype of women being empathic and easily moved to tears. In any event, it appears that the perception exists for faculty that administration is not a place where they can retain their preferred communicative or decision-making style. Administrators, on the other hand, were more likely to deny any mandated changes in their style.

While most administrative positions may utilize a rhetorical sensitive style of communication skill, that does not necessarily mandate rhetorical sensitive type results. One can use diplomacy to make changes that are not in the best interest of one's constituents. Consequently, even though female administrators are using a rhetorical sensitive communication style, it does not follow that their decisions reflect Gilligan's integrated style of moral decision making.

If, in fact, the decision-making style of an administrative position is traditionally masculine as defined by Gilligan and others, it is not surprising that women currently in administration perceive themselves to be more sex-typed masculine, and also do not perceive their styles to have changed. On the other hand, for faculty members who tend to be either androgynous or feminine typed, more barriers to advancement in academic administration will exist.

The possibility is suggested by our results that token female administrators are shaped into the Pallas Athenas of our age. When Clytemnestra killed her husband in revenge for the murder of their daughter, she was tried for murder; and Athena was the sole "woman administrator" in the Greek court which was to decide her fate. At the moment of her final judgment the vote was tied, and Athena was forced to break the tie. Because Greek law held that the killing of a daughter by a father was not considered murder, but that the killing of a husband by a wife was, Athena voted to convict Clytemnestra of murder.

Although Athena was female in form, her personality embodied the masculine attributes of her father, Zeus, and she was noted for her power of reason. She typically relied on her adherence to abstract rules rather than to what Gilligan would have called a tendency toward caring. In this case, Athena's logical mind caused her to reinforce a male-dominated system that discriminated against women. Although she was personally successful because of her masculine qualities, she was also unable to vote in favor of Clytemnestra, and was unable to change the system by introducing a woman's perspective.

Women administrators in the university system we studied, while not in any sense condemning women to death, may be having the same difficulty breaking out of the system's expectations as Athena. We must be certain when we argue for women administrators in higher education that we provide them with sufficient numerical and cultural support so that they may use their full repertoire of both objectivity and caring, both logic and intuition, to

reach decisions. The last thing we need is women administrators who, due to their isolation or cultural pressures, are unable to represent their true style and be the best administrators that they can be.

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