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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes recent research on the way women define themselves, the way they reason about moral dilemmas, the way they learn, and how they view success and maturity. Two related questions are then addressed: (1) Are the characteristics of women compatible with the dominant mode of operating in organizations or institutions? and (2) How much of the nature of organizations is bound up with masculinity? The answer leads to another question: How can women survive and succeed in masculine organizations and still value and nurture their own differences? Since the operational mode in organizations is clearly masculine, the popular literature advises women to think, talk, and dress like men in order to succeed. Several suggestions are offered to women who wish to nurture their own way of seeing and reasoning and their own sense of connectedness. It is suggested that if women speak out and share their perceptions they can help humanize the organizations that many men as well as women find alienating. A 16-item bibliography is included. (Author/TRS)

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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes recent research on the way women define themselves, the way they reason about moral dilemnas, the way they learn, and how they view success and maturity and then addresses two related questions. Are the characteristics of women compatible with the dominant mode of operating in organizations or institutions? Or, how much of the nature of organizations is bound up with masculinity? The answer leads to a final question: How can women survive and succeed in masculine organizations and still value and nurture their own differences? Since the operational mode in organizations is clearly masculine, the popular literature advises women to think, talk, and dress like men to order to succeed. Several suggestions are offered to women who wish to nurture their own way of seeing and reasoning and their own sense of connectedness. The author suggests that if women speak out and share their perceptions they can help humanize the organizations that many men as well as women find alienating.

WOMEN AS OUTSIDERS WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

The proliferation of popular literature advising women how to "fit in" provides ample evidence that women have "outsider" status within many organizations. Women are advised how to think, talk, and dress like men in order to succeed (Koester, 1982). Clearly this abundance of advice would not be forthcoming if women and men did not perceive gender differences which pose problems for women in fitting into organizations.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize recent research on women, the way they define themselves, the way they reason about moral dilemnas, the way they learn, and how they view success and maturity and then to address two related questions. Are the characteristics of women compatible with the dominant mode of operating in organizations and institutions? Or, how much of the nature of organizations has been bound up with masculinity? This question was suggested by Evelyn Fox Keller (1985), the physicist who raised a similar question for science. The answer leads to a final question: How can women survive and succeed in masculine organizations and still value and nurture their own differences?

Within the last ten years women scholars have published accounts of gender differences--differences which often have been overlooked, denied, or devalued (Gilligan,

1982; Miller, 1977).

According to sociologist Jessie Bernard (1981), women do inhabit a distinct environment as she has so thoroughly documented in her book, The Female World. Yet female experiences have seldom been represented in the theories of developmental psychology (Gilligan, 1982). Jean Baker Miller (1977), psychoanalysist and author of Toward a New Psychology of Women, points out that women "stay with, build on, and develop in a context of attachment and affiliation with others" and that women's sense of self is "organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliations and relationships" (Miller, p. 83), but psychology lacks a language to express development based on female experiences.

While listening to men and women talk about moral dilemnas, Carol Gilligan heard two modes of describing "the relationship between other and self" (1982:1). Men tended to describe the self as separate, independent, and autonomous; whereas, women tended to describe the self in relationships and as connected. Nancy Chodorow (1978), writing from a psychological perspective, explains that differences in gender roles and in masculine and feminine personalities are likely the result of the fact that women are the primary caretakers of infant children. Girls therefore experience themselves as similar to their mothers and are able to remain attached and connected during identity formation. Boys, on the other hand, experience themselves as different and in

order to develop masculine personalities and roles they must separate themselves from their mothers. Thus, the "interpersonal dynamics of gender identity are different for boys and girls" (Gilligan, 1982, p.7).

Empirical data established that these modes, which were gender-related but not gender-specific, were associated with the framing and the considerations involved in moral dilemnas (Gilligan, 1982; Lyons, 1983) Men tended to follow a morality based o justice and rights, striving to be fair. Women tended to follow a morality based on care and responsibility, striving to avoid hurt and to maintain relationships. To be fair, men tried to be impersonal and treat all equally; to be caring, women tried to see the dilemna embedded within a network of relationships.

. her book on practical ethics, Nel Nodding (1984) describes the feminine view as one "rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (p. 2). She cautions:

> This does not imply that all women will accept it or that all men will reject it....It does not imply either that logic is to be discarded or that logic is alien to women. It represents an alternative to present views. (p. 2)

The title of Gilligan's book, In a Different Voice, was deliberately chosen. She did not entitle her work In a Female Voice (1986), for both voices or modes are experienced by both men and women. Unfortunately, the development of

connectedness or of "affiliations and relationships," to use Miller's phrase, has been missing from the human development literature which emphasizes independence and autonomy (Gilligan,1982). The inclusion of the different voice provides a fuller vision of the human experience for both men and women.

While testing William Perry's developmental scale on a sample of Wellesley women, Blythe Clinchy and Claire Zimmerman (1985) identified and described a different way of learning. Using a sequential longitudinal design, they discovered that women moved rather quickly through the early stages to reach Perry's Position IV which they refer to as procedural knowing, a position requiring detachment and the ability to "stand back from oneself" (Perry, 1970, p.35). According to Perry, who formulated his developmental scheme by studying Harvard men, "standing back is forced in liberal arts colleges by the impact of pluralism of values and points of views" (p. 35). Students "learn to apply more than one perspective to a problem, to compare and contrast differing opinions" (Clinchy & Zimmerman, p. 3). Clinchy and Zimmerman also found, however, that these women instead of stepping back, actually stepped up closer--seeking to understand another viewpoint, to see through the eyes and experiences of another whose ideas seemed strange and even alien. These researchers refer to the Perry position as "separate" knowing and the other mode as "connected" knowing,

adopting terms used by Carol Gilligan (1982)and Nona Lyons (1983) to describe two different conceptions of the self which are related to moral decision making.

The connected knower believes that to understand another person's idea she must try to share the experience which led the person to form the idea. What is required is attachment. Her aim is not to assess the validity of the perspective she is examining, but to understand it; therefore, she deliberately adopts a stance of uncritical acceptance.

As part of a larger study, I asked thirty graduate women their views of success and maturity. In defining success women considered personal as well as professional goals. When asked to describe a mature woman, these same graduate students listed qualities which promoted identity and independence: knowing oneself, possessing a sense of identity, being true to oneself; but they also listed qualities which promoted and sustained relationships: loving, caring, giving, listening, understanding, supporting, and nurturing (Scherr, 1983). The responses supported Gilligan's statement: "the developmental markers of separation and attachment...seem in some sense to be fused" for women (1982, p. 156).

Maturity for most women meant being able to assume responsibility for another. They understood responsibility in its original meaning---the ability to respond to another (Lyons, 1983, p.137). Women frequently mentioned that they

felt responsible for their co-workers and their subordinates as well as friends, spouses, children, and parents.

Although no men were included in the study and therefore no claims of gender differences can be made, the findings are summarized in this paper since these views seem problematic for women in large organizations.

Gender and Organizations

Are these characteristics of women compatible with the dominant mode of operating in organizations? Or, how much much of the nature of organizations has been bound up with masculinity--or more precisely---a particular form of white masculinity?

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (1985), the authors of Leaders, interviewed 90 people, a group that included governors, senators, and labor leaders although 60 of them were top executives of large companies. The authors concluded that there were no obvious patterns for their success:

> They were right-brained and left-brained, tall and short, fat and thin, articulate and inarticulate, assertive and retiring, dressed for success and dressed for failure, participative and autocratic (p.23).

Eighty eight of the leaders, however, were white males. Six

were women and six were black men, "reflecting," the writers acknowledged, "the legacy of sexism and racism in the corporate world" (p.25).

In an article on educational leadership, George Kaplan (1985) refers to "the lamentable absence of women, blacks, and Hispanics from the top of the hierarchy of leadership" and asserts: "The sluggish, even decelerating, pace at which women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups are passing into the upper reaches of educational leadership remains a rankling sore spot" (p.15).

Considering both the high percentage of men at the top of organizations and their tenure, it is not surprising that the male pattern of thinking is the operational mode in organizations, for it is the justice orientation that has been institutionalized. Bureaucratic institutions tend to stress impersonality, fairness, equality, rights, rules, and regulations.

After studying 28 books in the popular literature that advise women on how to become a success in corporate America, Jolene Koester (1982) concluded that according to this literature women need to become more like men, become male clones, or as Adrienne Rich (1979) would phrase it, become "amateur males" (p. 134). A woman is advised to learn the games that her mother never taught her, learn to use analogies from the military or competitive sports worlds and be sure and wear a jacket that represents "the mantle of

authority" (Harrigan, 1977). Koester argues that these books encourage women to accept:

> the male standard of performance and the male model of success... a woman accepts the assessment of her deficiencies and learns to overcome them by adapting her behavior to male characteristics ... A woman who accepts this view of reality does not question the wisdom of the present structure, nor does she argue for changes in the organization (Koester, p. 170 quoted by Smircich, p. 11).

Survival in Organizations

How then can women survive and excell in male-dominated organizations and still nurture their own different voice? A desire to seek answers from women themselves was the impetus for a follow-up study of the 30 women whose views of success and maturity have been summarized above. Initial findings confirm the difficulty women experience in many organizations. Three women gave the following responses to the question: What do you find difficult about working in your organization?

A member of the research staff in a government office replied:

During my job interview I was told: 'Feel free to make suggestions. There's room for initiative.' But I've found that suggestions are not well received. Too often they're considered 'making waves....and there's a rule for everything and a chain of command. Takes a long time to resolve any difficulty. There are days when I feel like I'm hiding--like wearing a mask. Nobody really knows me.

A program administrator at a west coast university charged:

It's male dominated...They take men more seriously. You have to be better than men. Even in an educational institution where it's more fair to women, there's still a double class.

And a new counselor who works for a large agency reported:

The first time I cried with a client I felt I really blew it. Then I decided this time it's all right. I'm willing to share my feelings with a client and share my experiences too becuase it builds a bond and [otherwise] they think I don't understand and never have been there. But there's a belief that aloofness is somehow equated with professionalism. Some counselors are confrontive and aloof.

The sales records of the popular literature suggests that women are at least reading advice on how to follow the

male mode of operating. Some who follow the advice may feel they are "wearing a mask;"but others may find the system challenging and rewarding. Consider the following response from the same university administration quoted above:

> I prefer the male method; I have no quarrel with it. Every step toward masculine management style has equalled growth for me... I've trained myself to be extremely analytical and direct. If I had a choice to work in a male-centered or female-centered organization, I'd choose male. I was in an institution run by women. They went round and round; didn't want to hurt feelings.

A response such as this reminds us that the different modes are definitely not sex specific. Some women do prefer the masculine approach. More research is needed to reveal how and under what circumstances women succeed in organizations.

Joy Schneer (1985) "suggests that the inconsistent findings of past sex difference research are due to varying gender contexts," which she defines as the "relative proportion of the group's members that can be identified as male versus female" (p. 1). Most of the research on the gender context dynamics has been limited to occupations that formerly and traditionally were homogeneous, such as medicine, law, and nursing. Recently these fields have attracted token numbers of the opposite sex (Schneer, p. 3).

The studies found that these token members were "stigmatized as deviant and cut off from informal and formal group communications..." leading to "an inability to function efficiently and effectively in the organization due to exclusion from important learning situations" (Schneer, p. 4 citing Kanter, 1977).

In the meantime, women must survive in organizations for economic as well as psychological reasons. For those women who do feel alienated in bureaucratic organizations, what can they do to nurture their own inner, different voice? The following suggestions may be helpful.

In a recent article Patricia Schmuck (1986) has emphasized the importance of networking. "Women growing up do not absorb the male lesson that they need one another," she writes. "For women to network they must consciously acknowledge that (1) 'I am a woman,' and (2) 'I am a woman who must connect myself to other women.'" (p.61)

Carol Gilligan advises women to express their own views and to support each other:

> It is imperative for each to speak out and make her perceptions known--in the classroom, at the office, at the polls. "Women are tremendously sensitive to abandonment. It's very critical to all of us not to feel isolated. So one of the issues right now, I think, is do we abandon each other? Do women faculty in the

> universities abandon the support staff? Do women physicians abandon the women nurses? If you're a corporate lawyer and you see that the structure leaves no one with any time to deal with sick children, do you put pressure on the system and stand with each other---do you say, "You're not crazy, I know what you're talking about"'---or do you fall into a competitive stance? (Gilligan, interviewed by Gelder, p. 48)

By speaking out within organizations women can promote policies that do express the different voice. One large technical division has endorsed a set of values that strongly reflects the importance of collaboration and human connectedness (T. Dearstone, personal communication, March 1986). It is worthy of note that the consultant who guided the planning was a woman, but a man was the one who hired her. A few businesses have stated their mission in language that reflects both a justice and care orientation. The Kollmorgen Corporation believes it has a responsibility to the employees as well as the shareholders and strives to create an environment in which " a spirit of freedom, equality, mutual trust, respect and even love prevails" (Kiefer and Stroh, 1983, P. 27).

Women can also promote research which questions rather than merely documents the world around us. Smircich (1985) points out that organizational researchers usually fail to critically question that which they are researching. Instead

they buy into the "the criteria that organizations define as important: efficiency, orderliness, impersonality, expedience" (p. 11). She asks: "Why don't organizational researchers investigate organizational toxicity: How organizations are hazardous to our health, not only because of the way they pollute the environment, and expose people to dangerous chemicals, but because they force a depersonalized mode of being and relating that many find alienating" (p.12).

In conclusion, I submit that women striving to fit into the dominant, masculine way of operating in organizations often are "wearing a mask," training themselves to be more analytical, suppressing their own views and perceptions, or accepting the status quo. They are, in effect, silencing their own voices. By so doing, they rob the institutions of the special talents of women. They also deny and devalue their own unique characteristics, their own ways of seeing and reasoning, their own sense of connectedness. If women speak out and share their perceptions, they may help humanize the organizations that many men as well as women find alienating. Organizations need an ethic of care; organizations need to hear the voices of women.

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