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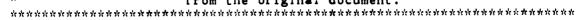
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#### ABSTRACT

A study focused on the administrative training and leadership practices used by communication chairpersons. Of particular interest is the comparison of leadership practices of male and female chairpersons and how those practices are influenced by the length of term as chair, the size of the institution, the size of the department, whether or not the chair exerts budgetary or programmatic control, and tenure. A 68% response rate was achieved from a random sample of 265 communication chairpersons proportioned by gender. Results indicate that the percentage of women communication chairpersons increased to 27%. Chairpersons surveyed scored highest in the leadership practices of Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart, two practices reflective of feminine leadership style. (Contains 27 references, 6 tables, and 6 figures of data.) (Author/RS)

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### Abstract

The administrative training and leadership practices used by communication chairpersons is the focus of this study. Of particular interest is the comparison of leadership practices of male and female chairpersons and how those practices are influenced by the length of term as chair, the size of the institution, the size of the department, whether or not the chair exerts budgetary or programmatic control, and tenure. A sixty-eight percent response rate was achieved from a random sample of 265 communication chairpersons proportioned by gender. The results of this study reveals the percentage of women communication chairpersons has increased to 27%. Chairpersons surveyed scored highest in the leadership practices of Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart, two practices reflective of feminine leadership style.



# A Comparison of Leadership Practices Used by Male and Female Communication Department Chairpersons

The position of academic department chair has the potential to be one which most influences faculty, and yet it remains the "most . . . underrated position in a college or university" (Fife, 1993, p. xv). Some of the problems facing today's department chair include the way in which chairs are selected and how that process influences their ability to lead a department, how these new administrators learn to exercise leadership responsibility, and the need for greater representation of women as department chairs. Women, particularly, seem to encounter barriers to the position as department chair because of perceptions regarding male and female leadership styles, as well as the difficulty women have in attaining tenure.

The image of being "caught in the middle" best describes the challenges faced by today's academic department chair. Seagren, Creswell, and Wheeler (1993) use the analogy of a block of wood held in a vise for shaping to describe the chairperson's dilemma. Being squeezed between the demands of upper administration and expectations of faculty. students, and staff, the chair "is caught in the middle, required to provide the most sophisticated leadership and statesmanship to avoid being crushed by those two opposing forces" (p. iii). The manner in which chairs are chosen probably contributes to this



pressure. As noted by Tucker (1992), the selection of a department chairperson may be made by the dean, or the chair may be elected by colleagues, or the position as chair may rotate on a regular basis among departmental professors.

The academic department is a relatively recent development in American higher education. The academic department emerged as an administrative unit during the early 1900's. Specifically, in the discipline of communication, the academic department began to play a key role in curricular and administrative decisions by the 1920's (Smith, 1954).

Tucker identifies the department chairperson as holding a "key position" which provides leadership for the faculty and helps translate academic goals into academic practice.

However, Tucker notes that "most chairpersons are drawn from faculty ranks and assume the position having had little administrative experience" (p. vi). Hickson and Stacks (1992) agree: "Most academic administrators especially at the department level are educated on the job" (p. vii). Therefore, how department chairs learn to exercise their leadership function can determine their effectiveness.

Another problem to be explored in leadership in higher education is the participation of women. Gmelch and Miskin (1993) report that about "ten percent of the department chairs are female" in doctorate-granting institutions (pp. 16-17). Most analysts expect the number of women serving as academic chairs to increase as the number of women



doctorates increase. (See Gmelch and Miskin, 1993; Seagren, Creswell, and Wheeler, 1993). However, women in academia face problems in getting into the pipeline to administrative positions at major universities. Tack and Patitu (1992) indicate women are disproportionately located at two-year and four-year institutions. In fact, Leatherman's (1993) review of the American College President reveals that only twelve percent of institutions surveyed have female presidents with only four percent (N=11) serving at doctorate-granting institutions. Kelly (1991) states: "Women clearly meet more challenges and barriers in their efforts to reach higher management positions than men" (p. 55).

DeWine (1987) reported that of the more than 1500 theatre administrators in American colleges only 11 percent are women and only 20 percent of communication departments, leading her to the conclusion that the discipline of communication is male dominated.

Research in the communication behavior of men and women managers has revealed that neither men nor women seemed to favor characteristics defined as "feminine." For example, Fitzpatrick's (1983) study concludes that "the best-liked individuals, male or female, were assertive, decisive, and intellectual, rather than nurturant, responsive, and emotional" (p. 77). Powell (1993) maintains that "women and men do not differ in their effectiveness as leaders, although some situations favor women and others favor men" (p. 175). In the field of education, McPherson, Crowson, and Pitner (1986) cite the work of



Miskin whose studies indicate "women's habits of being more consultative and relationship-oriented than men...may be an important key to the success of female educational administrators" (p. 226). Kelly (1991) agrees that "women administrators are viewed as being better than men at giving information, strengthening interpersonal relationships, being receptive to ideas and encouraging effort" (p. 107).

Women in higher education seem to face a much more arduous path to tenure than do men. Even though as noted by Kolodny (1993) "women comprise 28% of the faculty and are receiving 36% of the Ph.D.'s awarded annually, women make up just 12 percent of full professors" (p. 2). Hensel (1991) notes: "Women make up 50 percent of undergraduate enrollment yet remain broadly underrepresented in tenured faculty positions" (p. 1). Tack and Patitu (1992) report that women typical "represent a small percentage of the faculty cohort, hold lower professional ranks, work in part-time rather than full-time positions ... work in less prestigious institutions and are not tenured" (p. 33). Although the tenure issue may not be related directly to leadership styles of men and women, the lack of tenure obviously mitigates against women moving into department chair positions.

This study investigates the following questions: (1) Has the number of women communication department chairpersons increased since 1987? (2) What activities do communication chairpersons identify as providing administrative training prior to the

appointment as chair? (3) Are there differences in those activities that provided administrative training for men as compared to women communication chairpersons? (4) What leadership practices are currently used by communication department chairpersons? (5) Do these leadership practices differ according to the length of term and gender of communication department chairpersons, the institution size, the departmental size, and tenure status of the individual? (6) Are there differences in leadership practices of chairpersons who exert budgetary as compared to only programmatic control?

### **METHOD**

During the fall of 1993, 265 communication chairpersons listed in the 1993-94

Speech Communication Association Directory were mailed copies of an author-designed survey and the LPI-Self, an instrument developed by Kouzes and Posner (1992). The random sample was chosen from the entire published list which had been coded as "female." "male," or "gender unidentified" based on their given names. Seventy-three women's names were chosen and 192 men's names were chosen. These proportions reflect the percentages of men and women in the total list. After two follow-up letters, 180 instruments were returned with 172 providing usable data.

The LPI-Self is a 30-item instrument created by Kouzes and Posner (1987) to measure five leadership practices. (A sample questions reads as follows: I take time to



celebrate accomplishments when project milestones are reached.) This is a self-report scale which uses a Likert-type ranking for each time. Five leadership practices are measured: Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. Since the practice of Challenging the Process is characterized by "taking risks," it is associated with a more masculine leadership style. The visionary aspects of "gazing across the horizon of time." which typifies the practice of Inspiring a Shared Vision, also is more often linked with men, as is evident by the examples Kouzes and Posner cite (p. 10). The practice of modeling the way implies that the leader is in a position of power so that any actions taken can influence subordinates, implying a hierarchical view of leadership. On the other hand, the practice of Enabling Others to Act stresses collaboration and the practice of Encouraging the Heart relies on good interpersonal relationships, practices more reflective of feminine leadership styles. Reliabilities for the LPI-Self range from .70 to .85. This instrument has been applied to several contexts in higher education (Spontanski, 1991; McNeese-Smith, 1991; Roundy, 1991; Okoric. 1990; Taranzai. 1990).

The author-designed questionnaire collected data about length of term, sex of subject, activities providing administrative training, size of institution, size of department, tenure status, type of control, and demographic data. The items on the questionnair



relating to activities providing administrative training were validated by previous studies conducted in 1991 and 1992. The thirteen item instrument used a scanable format, allowing respondents to simply color in appropriate circles. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were included to encourage return of the two instruments.

### RESULTS

Of the 180 instruments returned, 172 provided usable data, representing a response rate of 68 percent. Demographic data gained from the questionnaires revealed that chairpersons responding were most likely to classify themselves as "White Caucasian." Of the 169 respondents indicating ethnic background, 96.4 percent (N=163) were "White Caucasian," 1.2 percent (N=2) were "African American." 1.2 percent (N=2) were "American Indian," 0.6 percent (N=1) were "Other Latino," and 0.6 percent (N=1) marked "Other."

All of the women respondents indicated that they were White Caucasians. The average age of the respondents was 46 years, with the average term of office being 7.67 years. Of the 172 respondents, 71.5 percent (N=123) were male and 28.5 percent (N=49) were female.

The highest degree earned for chairpersons responding was most often a Ph.D. This is illustrated in Figure 1. Of the 172 chairpersons indicating their highest degree, 66.1 percent (N=113) had earned a Ph.D., 27.5 percent (N=47) had Master's degrees, 3.5 percent (N=6) had earned Ed.D's, 0.6 percent (N=1) listed the bachelor's degree, 0.6 percent (N=1)



had a law degree, and 1.8 percent (N=3) listed "other" professional degrees. Of chairpersons who had at least one degree in communication (N=152), the most frequently listed specialty was speech communication (53.3 percent, N=81), followed by theater (23 percent, N=35), mass communication (19.1 percent, N=29), and journalism (4.6 percent, N=7). This trend was the same for both men and women surveyed.

### Insert Figure 1 about here

Regarding the type of control exercised by communication department chairpersons, 91.8 percent (N=156) indicated they had budgetary responsibility and 97.1 percent (N=165) indicated they had programmatic responsibility. When asked if their institution provided an orientation for their role as department chair, 82.9 percent (N=102) responded "no." Those chairs responding more often served at public institutions (N-94, 76.4 percent). Proportionately, more women (N=18, 36.7 percent) were employed at private institutions than men (N=47, 27.3 percent).

When analyzing the highest degree earned according to gender, proportionately more women (N=20, 40.8 percent) were likely to cite a Master's degree as their highest degree completed, as compared to male respondents (N=27, 22.1 percent). These results can be seen in Figure 2



### Insert Figure 2 about here

Women respondents also appeared to have had shorter terms as chairpersons. The average length of term as chair reported by women was 6 years while that reported by men was 8.3 years. These results are illustrated in Figure 3.

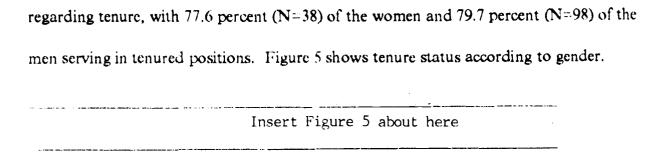
### Insert Figure 3 about here

In terms of institution size, 54.7 percent (N=94) of the chairpersons served in universities, 21.5 percent (N=37) served in four-year colleges, and 22.7 percent (N=39) served in two-year colleges. When analyzing size of institution according to gender, women were more often chairing departments in two-year colleges (38.8 percent, N=19) while men were more frequently chairing university departments (62.6 percent, N=77). Chairpersons' institutional size, according to gender, is shown in Figure 4.

### Insert Figure 4 about here

Most of the respondents indicated they had tenure (79.1 percent, N=136) while 9.3 percent (N=16) indicated they were not tenured and 11 percent (N=19) checked "not applicable." Both male and female department chairs reported similar percentages





Respondents departmental size ranged from 1 to 88 fulltime faculty and none to 90 for part-time faculty, with a mean size of 10.36 for full-time faculty and 7.96 for part-time faculty. Male chairs typically presided over larger departments (11.29 full-time, 7.96 part-time) than did women chairs (9.18 full-time and 5.88 part-time). The results are charted in Figure 6.

### Insert Figure 6 about here

From the demographic data, the profile of respondents that emerges revealed that the communication chairperson was most often a white male, who had earned a Ph.D. in speech communication, was 46-years-old, in a tenured position at a university, had served as department chair for 7.67 years, exercised both budgetary and programmatic control over a department staffed with an average size faculty of 10.86 full-time professors and 7.96 part-time professors.

To gain an understanding of the current participation of women as communication



department chairs, a chi-square was calculated using the frequencies reported by DeWine (1987) as the expected frequencies. A chi-square of 39.7961 (df=2), significant at the .05 confidence level was observed. The number of women serving as communication department chairs has increased from 20 percent observed by DeWine to 27 percent in this present study.

The most frequently cited activity providing administrative training was serving on departmental committees (N=51, 32.5 percent). Over ten percent of the respondents (N=17) cited campus governance as giving them administrative training. The next most frequently cited activities were theatre management (N=15, 9.6 percent), basic course director (N=14, 8.9 percent, and forensics coach (N=14, 8.9 percent). Similar numbers were reported for serving in professional associations (N=12, 7.6 percent) and serving as an assistant chair (N=11, 7.0 percent). Only five percent of the chairs marked either consulting (N=8) or graduate coursework (N=8). Least frequently marked activities included faculty in-service (N=4, 2.5 percent), reading a book about administrative roles (N=3, 1.9 percent), and serving an internship (N=1, 0.6 percent.) The results are reported in Table 1.

### Insert Table 1 about here

A frequency table showing activities providing administrative training comparing



those reported by men and those reported by women communication chairpersons is shown in Table 2.

### Insert Table 2 about here.

Since a cell size numbering at least five is required to conduct a valid chi-square test, it was necessary to collapse the twelve categories into four broader categories. The twelve categories listed on the questionnaire were collapsed into the following four categories: Administrative Function. Service Function. Teaching Function, and Scholarship Function. The rationale for using these broader categories is that they parallel the four areas that most faculty members in administrative positions use to complete their annual professional summaries. The Administrative Function includes the preparatory activities of theatre management and serving as assistant chair. The Service Function includes leadership in professional associations, serving on a departmental committee, campus governance, and acting as a consultant. Under the Teaching Function, the preparatory activities of serving as Basic Course Director, a Forensics Coach, and taking part in faculty in-service programs was placed. The Scholarship Function includes graduate coursework in administration. reading a book about administrative duties, and serving an administrative internship. The



results of the chi-square test yielded a non-significant score of 3.039, df=3, alpha=.05 The four functions as compared by gender can be seen in Table 3.

### Insert Table 3 about here

For those research questions dealing with leadership practices, only responses from those chairs who indicated they had earned at least one degree in the discipline of communication were used. The mean scores reported for the LPI-Self (N=133) ranged from 22.51 for Inspiring a Shared Vision to 26.15 for Enabling Others to Act. This same trend is seen in the mean LPI-Self scores of male chairpersons (N=93) with the scores ranging from a low of 22.22 for Inspiring a Shared Vision to a high of 26.46 for Enabling Others to act. Women chairpersons (N=38) reported a low mean score of 22.63 for Modeling the Way to a high of 25.34 for Encouraging the Heart. Table 4 shows the comparisons of mean LPI scores.

### Insert Table 4 about here

T-tests conducted on the scores for men and women reveal no significant differences in mean scores. A comparison of the mean scores for each of the practices with the percentile ranking developed by Kouzes and Posner in studies of more than five thousand



leaders, reveals that the practices of Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart fall within the seventieth percentile and are considered "high."

A MANOVA was conducted to investigate the interaction of gender and length of term of office with the five leadership practices. In conducting the test, the continuous variable of term of office was defined as "short" for less than one year, "medium" for one to six years, and "long" for six years and greater. No significant interaction effects were found. However, in the practice of Enabling Others to Act, the F value was significant for gender (F=4.13, df=1, alpha=.05) and term of office (F=2.90, df=2, alpha=.05). Male chairpersons engaged more frequently in the practice of Enabling Others to Act. Those chairs with terms longer than six years also appear to use more often the practices of Modeling the Way and Enabling Others to Act. The results of the MANOVA are shown in Table 5.

## Insert Table 5 about here

No significant differences in the leadership practices were observed when analyzed according to the institutional size or the departmental size. However, there are significant differences in the leadership practice of Inspiring a Shared Vision for those chairs who have tenure as compared to those who do not have tenure. Tenured chairpersons differed significantly in this practice from those who were not tenured (F=4.56, df=2, alpha=.05).

Chairpersons who exert budgetary control and/or programmatic control also differed significantly from those who did not in the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act. Chairs who exercised budgetary control had an F value of 4.74 (p<.05) for Enabling Others to Act. Those chairpersons who had programmatic control had an F value of 16.33 for the same leadership practice. These results are shown in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here

### **DISCUSSION**

This research project provides useful information about the administrative training and leadership practices used by communication department chairpersons. The results provide a picture of the participation of women in the key role of department chair.

Viewing leadership as "human (symbolic) communication," as suggested by Hackman and Johnson (1991); this study investigates how gender may affect leadership practices in the discipline of communication.

Results reveal an encouraging increase from 20 percent in 1987 to 27 percent in 1994 in the number of women serving as communication department chairpersons. However, the findings of this study indicate that women still seem to be underrepresented at the university level. When compared to men, women were more often (38.8 percent, N=19) serving at the



two-year college level while men were more often chairing university departments (62.6 percent, N=77). Since women proportionately more frequently had Master's degrees, they had the credentials necessary for two-year colleges, but not for similar positions in universities. Another encouraging measure was found in the tenure status of women as compared to men. A majority of women chairpersons (77.6 percent, N=38), as well as men (79.7 percent, N=98) reported being tenured.

The administrative training of communication chairpersons seems largely to be a function of informal, extracurricular activities. Respondents reported most frequently serving on a departmental committee as being the activity which provided the "most training" prior to the assumption of administrative duties. Although no significant differences were found in the twelve activities identified as providing training for men and women, it does appear that women have less administrative training through theatre management or coaching forensics. Women appear to be underrepresented in forensic coaching positions at the college level. Women also did not report participation in faculty in-service programs as providing administrative training. Attention should be directed toward the fact that both men and women more frequently reported engaging in preparatory activities that were classified as fulfilling a service function, rather than a scholarly function. Since 82.9 percent of the chairpersons surveyed indicated that their



institutions provided no orientation to the position as department chair, "on-the-job" training continues to be prevalent so far as communication chairpersons are concerned.

Communication chairpersons surveyed scored highest in the leadership practices of Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart. These two practices are characterized by shared decision-making, consensus building, and supportive environments. This study indicates that "feminine" leadership practices are frequently used by communication chairpersons. There are several explanations why communication chairpersons use leadership practices more characteristic of feminine leadership style. Perhaps, these practices are more likely to be typical of communication chairpersons whose academic backgrounds have provided experiences in conflict resolution, small group, and interpersonal communication. However, since chairs are often placed in positions to lead others who hold the same or higher rank, it probably is necessary to use collaborative techniques to gain cooperation because power does not exist in the same way it occurs in the traditional hierarchical framework. As Tucker (1992) emphasizes, a department chair serves as a leader among peers. Those departments whose chairs serve on a rotating basis would also foster a climate where cooperation is the rule since those who serve as chairs will someday have those same colleagues overseeing the department.

Another possible explanation for the presence of "feminine" leadership practices in



this study is the nature of higher education itself. Because the shared governance model is more characteristic of the academy than is the hierarchical structure associated with business and industry, the environment in college and university departments may often foster skills that are cooperative rather than competitive. However, the bureaucracy associated with the business world is obviously present to some degree at all colleges and universities. With increasing demands and workloads because of governmental requirements, communication department chairs may resort to collaboration and shared decision-making just to meet deadlines and manage a multiplicity of assignments in an efficient manner.

As a chair's term of office lengthens, then so do the chances of the chair being able to Model the Way. Additionally, if a chair has attained tenure, then the opportunity to Inspire a Shared Vision seems more likely. Whether a communication chair serves at a university, four-year college, or two-year college and whether the chair presides over a small or a large department does not seem to influence the leadership practices used. However, having budgetary and programmatic control increases the likelihood of a chair using the leadership practices of Enabling Others to Act.



### IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several implications that deserve to be investigated in other studies.

Leadership practices of communication chairpersons should be compared to chairs in other disciplines. Are the practices of communication chairpersons unique to the discipline or do chairs in other disciplines engage in similar practices with the same frequency? This study also used biological sex as the determinant of "gender." Studies which use a psychological measurement of gender may provide added insight into what attributes constitute "feminine" and "masculine" leadership styles. Additionally, this project was concerned with "position." As noted by Astin and Leland (1991) many women have been, and currently are demonstrating leadership roles in "non-positional" situations. How these women exert influence in non-positional roles would provide more information about decision-making and leadership.

Further study should be directed toward discovering how leadership practices may be influenced by institutional size since Tucker's research (1992) indicates there are differences at the two-year college and the university and four-year college. Since women are more frequently serving as chairs at two-year colleges, research efforts should be directed toward analyzing whether or not recruitment efforts at two-year colleges benefit women more than at the four-year college or university level.

An interesting dimension of a chair's leadership effectiveness not explored in this



study is the opinion of department members about their chairperson's leadership practices.

By surveying department members, their opinions could be compared with the selfperceptions of the chairpersons to see if their views are similar or if they are divergent.

Since there is some indication that women leaders in the academy may, over time, abandon "feminine" leadership practices and adopt "masculine" practices, further inquiry using a longitudinal study of department chairs is recommended. Whether the traditional model based on a masculine concept of power and control is being replaced by a new model based on cooperation and shared decision-making deserves careful investigation.

Efforts to increase the participation of women in administrative roles in Higher Education should continue to be explored. The better use of human potential, the reconceptualization of power, the need for diversity, and the desire to provide more female role models for an ince tasing population of female students are reasons for pursuing women's participation. Bunch (1991) stresses that the "empowering, cooperative approaches most often associated with women are not exclusively female terrain" (p. xii). Just as she urges that both men and women adopt these "crucial models for leadership in the twenty-first century," so should those serving as communication department chairpersons be encouraged to adopt practices that foster cooperation rather than competition (Bunch, 1991, p. xii).



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Table 1

Activities Providing Administrative Training

Percent
32.5
10.8
9.6
8.9
8.3
7.6
7.0
5.1
5.1
2.5
1.9
0.6



Table 2

Preparatory Activities Compared by Gender

Activity	Mer	n (N=122)	Women (N=49)		
	f	percent	f	percent	
Departmental Committees	33		18		
Campus Governance	14	12.5	3	6.7	
Theatre Management	13	11.6	2	4.4	
Basic Course Director	8	7.1	6	13.3	
Forensics Coach	12	10.7	1	2.2	
Professional Associations	7	6.3	5	11.1	
Served as Assistant Chair	8	7.1	3	6.7	
Consulting	4	3.6	4	8.9	
Graduate Coursework	5	4.5	3	6.7	
Faculty In-Service	4	3.6	••		
Read Book	3	2.7			
Internship	1	0.9	**		



Table 3
Four Functions Compared by Gender

Male		Female			
Function	f	Percent	f	Percent	
Administrative	21	18.75	5	11.11	
Service	58	51.79	30	66.67	
Teaching	24	21.43	7	15,56	
Scholarship	9	8.04	3	6.67	



Table 4

Mean Leadership Practice Scores of Respondents

Practice	All (N 133)	Men (N=93)	Women (N=38)
Challenging	23.21	23.36	22.89
Inspiring	22.51	22.22	23.18
Enabling	26.15	26.46	25.23
Modeling	23.02	23.22	22.63
Encouraging	24.07	24.52	25.34



Table 5

Analysis of Variance of Gender and Length of Term by LPI Scores

	F Value			
Practice	Mean Score	Gender	Term	Gender*Term
Challenging	23.22	.46	1.55	.20
Inspiring	22.50	1.54	2.00	.72
Enabling	26.10	4.13*	2.90*	.29
Modeling	23.06	.89	5.33*	.79
Encouraging	24.76	1.16	1.57	.58
(N=131)				
			·	

<sup>\*</sup>p < .05

Table 6

Analysis of Variance of Budgetary and Programmatic Control by LPI Scores

Practice	Mean	F Value	Mean	F Value
	Budgetar	Budgetary (N=130)		atic (N=130)
Challenging	23.24	.46	23.23	1.63
Inspiring	22.50	3.57	22.48	0.00
Enabling	26.19	4.74*	26.10	16.33*
Modeling	23.11	1.39	23.05	1.11
Encouraging	24.84	.22	24.76	1.86

<sup>\*</sup>p < .05



Leadership Practices

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Figures



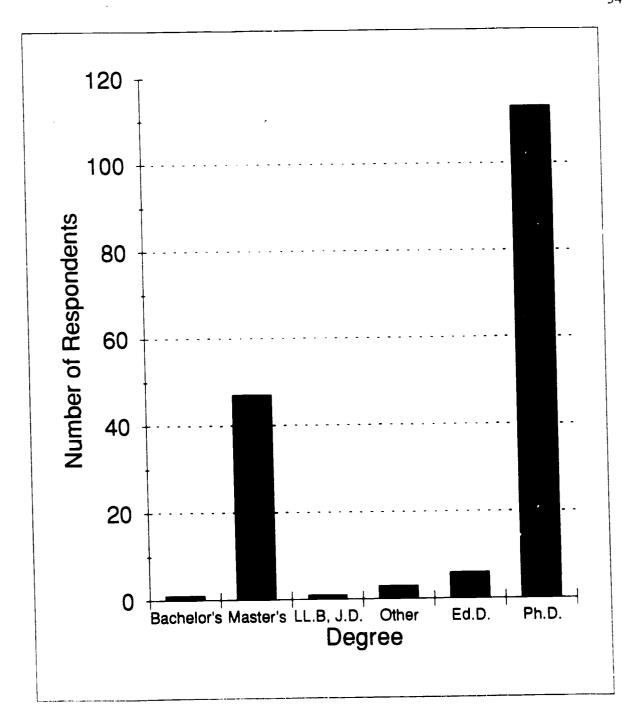


Figure 1. Highest Degree Earned



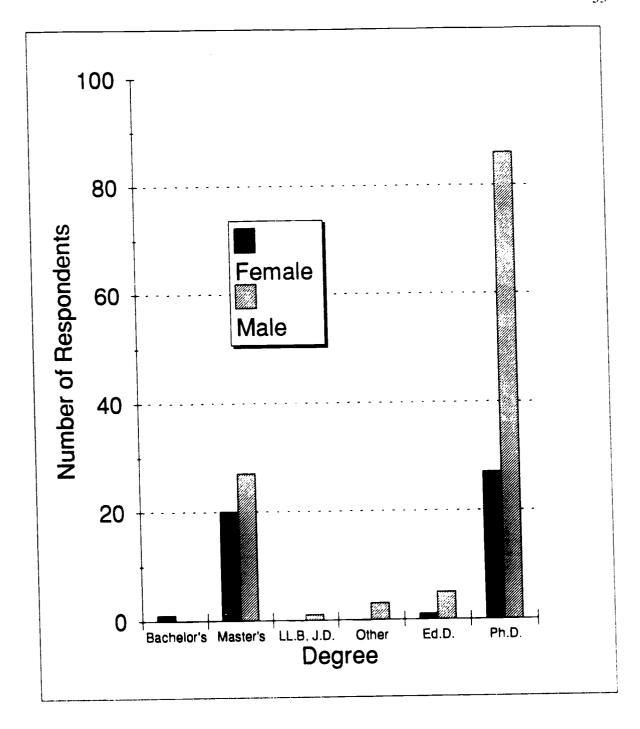


Figure 2. Highest Degree Earned by Gender



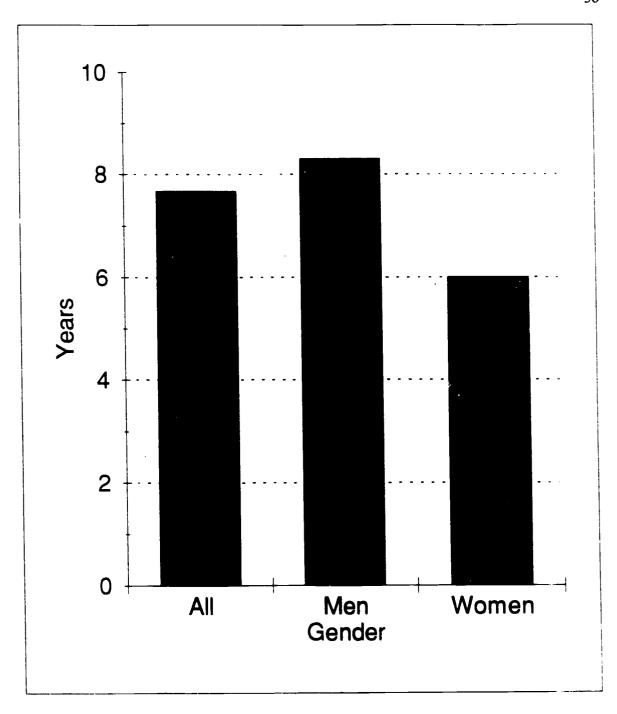


Figure 3. Length of Term



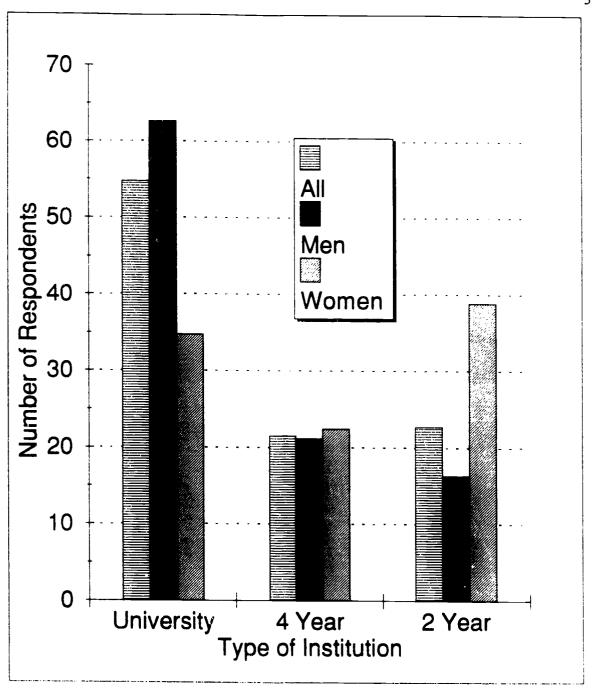


Figure 4. Institutional Size



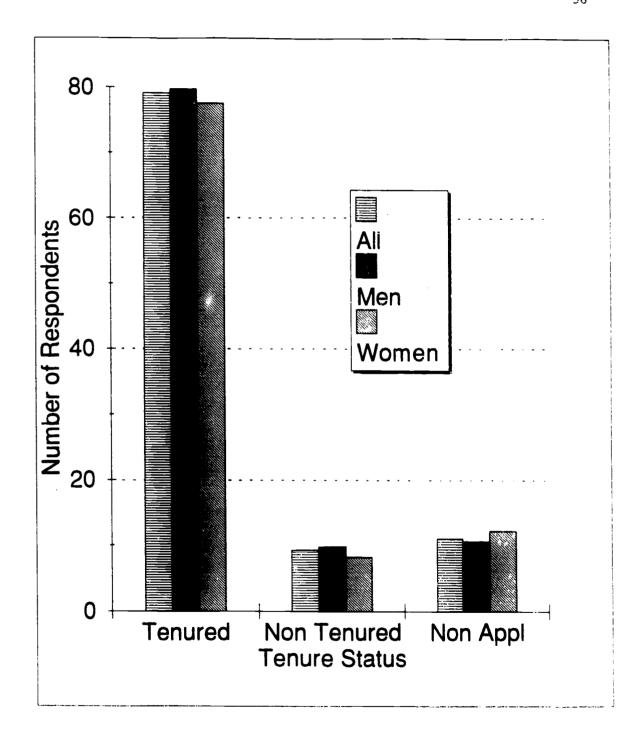


Figure 5. Tenure



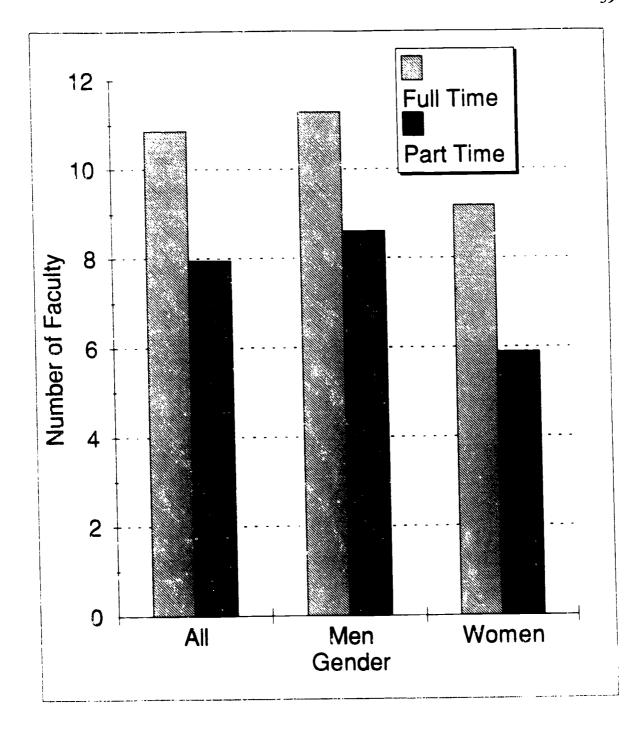


Figure 6. Department Size

