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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study of community college women administrators explored patterns of women's leadership. The study group consisted of 30 women holding senior-level administrative positions at community colleges in the Midwest: 24 of the study group were white, 6 were African Americans. The study involved a review of the literature and in-depth interviews with each of the women. Interviews focused on how the women themselves viewed their leadership roles, the challenges they faced as women administrators, their perceptions of gender issues within their organizations, how they negotiated the organizational context, and how they managed the intersection between personal and professional lives. The study found that while each woman tended to display a preference for one of three general strategies adaptation, reconciliation, or resistance, each found ways within the traditional work context to develop a unique leadership identity and communication style. While a few of the women denied gender as a force in their organizational lives, most found the gender difference challenging. If they followed male leadership styles, they were often rejected by female colleagues; if successful, they were often unaccepted by men simply because they were women. The study concludes that in order to develop women's leadership, institutions will have to examine critically the organizational culture. (Contains 39 references.) (CH)

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SENIOR WOMEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS:

Life in Higher Education's Inner Circle

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Senior Women Community College Administrators:

Life in Higher Education's Inner Circle

INTRODUCTION

Dean Regina Ibsen uses the metaphor of a "lone wolf" to describe her leadership style and the organizational challenges she faces as a senior-level administrator at a Midwestern community college. Like a wolf, she sees herself both as cunning and caring. She devotes much time and energy to preserving the complex social relations that give meaning to everyday life at her institution. The "lone wolf" metaphor also describes her social location at the college: She feels resentment from her predominantly female staff, and the president keeps his distance despite Regina's 22 years at the institution. As Regina explains, "I'm sure that the staff thinks that I'm an ogre. I'm just kind of out there. . . . I don't really fit in over here with the men and I don't fit in here with the women." Her staff's lack of cooperation and the president's distance is puzzling and hurtful. Not knowing what to do about the organizational dynamics, she shrouds herself in a ritualistic devotion to tasks. Regina has learned to conform to the organizational culture and has adapted an instrumental style of leadership. In this sense, she is following the leadership steps of the men who mentored her throughout her career in the community college arena. Her adaption to traditional norms and practices reflects the behavior of nine other women who participated in a study of women leaders in community college settings.

A second common pattern uncovered by this study is that of "reconciliation." Sonya Ziegler, Director of Community Relations at a suburban community college, uses the metaphor of a "magician" to capture the high expectations placed on her: "Magicians use interlocking rings to

separate and put back together. I think that probably typifies me because I can't do this by myself. Yet, there are times when I have to be independent. . . So I think the fact that the rings fit together and yet can be separated when necessary probably describes my leadership best." Sonya sees herself as "fixing" situations and problems as they emerge; Or, at the very least, she must give the impression they are fixed. She must keep the community happy with the college and the faculty happy with her department by meeting everyone's needs. Sonya has learned to work both independently and collaboratively as part of reconciling the many organizational tensions she faces. The essence of Sonya's leadership is knowing her place and playing the various roles expected of her. As a leadership response, Sonya uses both relational and instrumental behaviors in an organizational culture largely defined and dominated by men.

A third pattern of women's leadership identified by this study is that of "resistance." Terry Rheinhart compared her organizational role as a president to that of a "teacher." For Terry, creating organizational change involves enacting teaching and learning strategies. For example, she has hired many women over the years, but her commitment to improving opportunities for women has run against the organizational grain at times. In particular, she has had to work extensively with the board of trustees to convince them of the importance of hiring women administrators and faculty. By using an educational approach, she has built a strong coalition of supporters and has broken through some of the unchallenged assumptions inherent in the culture of her institution.

Regina Ibsen, Sonya Ziegler, and Terry Rheinhart provide a glimpse into three general patterns of leadership uncovered through a qualitative study of community college women administrators. We explore the patterns of adaption, reconciliation, and resistance further in the

"Findings" section of this paper. But first, we explore the literature on women's leadership connecting it to higher education in general and the community college in particular. We then discuss the methodology employed in conducting a study of women community college administrators. Following a presentation of the findings, we conclude by discussing the implications of this study.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Women in higher education are less likely than men to participate in upper levels of administration (Warner & DeFluer, 1993). Nevertheless, community colleges have reported the greatest increase of women in senior-level positions between 1986 and 1991 (Faulconer, 1995; Warner & DeFluer, 1993). Yet, the literature is vague concerning what may be at work in shaping women's career paths at community colleges.

A number of reasons suggest that community colleges may be an interesting site for analyzing women's leadership. For example, more than a few scholars have described the organizational context of the community college as considerably more accepting than that of four-year institutions (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Griffin & Connor, 1994; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). Given the rich student diversity characterizing today's community college (National Profile, 1997), and recent research describing high percentages of women faculty (Townsend, 1995), one might conclude that community colleges are quite open to diversity and are particularly supportive of women.

Although there is evidence of high levels of support for women in the community college, there is also a significant counterbalance that often works against women: Community colleges,

like most organizations in the United States, are distinguished by their traditional bureaucratic structures and instrumental leadership conceptions (Amey, in press; Amey & Twombly, 1993; Twombly & Amey, 1994). Instrumentalism, as an organizational orientation, has been found to be more closely associated with masculine ways of leading (Ferguson, 1984; Iannello 1992). Consequently, women who enact more egalitarian or relational styles of leading are likely to face marginality within their organizations and be marked as "outsiders" (Brown & Geis, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Wahl & Vocante, 1993). As Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) noted in their study of women in the academy, they often become "outsiders in the sacred grove."

Relational and instrumental ways of knowing are connected to socially constructed gender roles of women and men (Lever, 1976; Maccoby, 1990). Women most often use relational ways of knowing to perceive the world, while men are more likely to embrace instrumental ways (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Moreover, studies suggest that most cultures expect women to use more nurturing behavioral styles (Williams & Best, 1990) and treat them harshly when they do not (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1994, 1998). If organizations, including community colleges, are more likely to support instrumental leadership styles, then it is no wonder that despite high percentages of women involved in lower-level administrative work, the percentages of women at the senior level continue to be proportionally smaller (Phillippe, 1995).

A significant body of literature tends to support the idea that problems related to the inclusion of women in upper-level administrative work is more than simply a matter of hiring additional women. For example, Baxter and Lansing (1993) found that women generally have different opinions than men regarding war, peace, child care, the poor, and education, yet when in

leadership positions they do little different from their male counterparts. This finding and the evidence that women do in fact enact different ways of knowing leads one to ask: Do organizational barriers exist that limit the ability of women to enact their ideals when they enter higher education's inner circles?

Work by scholars such as Bensimon (1989, 1995), Ferguson (1984), Iannello (1992), and Smircich (1985) suggests that a fundamental problem women face in many work settings is that the organization, at its most basic level, is male centered. Consequently, women trying to succeed in such environments face significant psychological and communicational challenges, including having to construct a complex language to ensure their own survival (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1994, 1998). Thus, creating change to improve the lives of women community college administrators may involve a transformation of the organizational culture. Such change likely involves shifting the emphasis on instrumental styles to more inclusive structures that incorporate relational styles of leadership as well. Organizations are likely to benefit from such shifts. For example, Bensimon (1989) suggests that traditional organizations need relational leadership styles for achieving change. Additionally, there has been a significant push by a variety of organizational scholars, most notably Senge (1990), for organizations to adopt flatter structures and reduce hierarchy.

Traditional organizational theories centering on ideas such as politics, resource allocation, efficiency, systems (natural, open, or learning), and rationality are not adequately equipped for uncovering organizational problems linked to gender and gender differences (Bensimon, 1989, 1995; Ferguson, 1984; Smircich, 1985). A thorough analysis of women's issues likely requires a cultural focus primarily aimed at understanding the experiences of women as "women."

With the preceding in mind, we offer two basic assumptions about people and the nature of organizations that serve to frame this study. First, women are more likely than men to employ relational ways of knowing and leading. We base this assumption on the extensive body of research and theory highlighting fundamental identity differences between men and women. Second, traditional organizational theories do not provide an adequate lens for analyzing women's leadership, because they do not consider gender as a cultural force in shaping organizational lives. The fact that many traditional theories have failed to unearth the significant problems that women face in organizational contexts leads us to utilize a feminist lens, thus placing gender at the center of our inquiry.

METHOD

Qualitative methods were employed to gather data about the processes women employ in constructing a leadership identity within the community college. Senior women administrators working at community colleges within the geographical region (a section of the Midwest) were consulted about the possibility of participating in the study. These women initially were identified through the 1996 Higher Education Directory and through contacts made via the Institute of Women's Leadership in Phoenix, Arizona. The final study group was composed of 30 senior-level women holding positions such as director, dean, vice-president, provost, assistant to the president, president, or chancellor. Each participant was a member of the senior executive staff and held a position with high-level responsibilities. The women's average age is 52.3 years. Their average number of years of experience in senior-level administration is 8.2. The racial breakdown is as follows: 24 Whites and 6 African Americans.

The guiding research question focused on how women view themselves in their leadership roles within the community college. In particular, the women were asked to discuss the challenges they face "as women" within their institutions, their perceptions of gender issues within their organization, the responses they use to negotiate their organizational context, and how they managed the intersection between their personal and professional lives. Thus, at the very center of the research design are issues of leadership identity, organizational culture, and the role of gender within community college administration.

Data collection involved 30 in-depth interviews which were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then returned to the research participants and a short follow-up interview was conducted to clear up any confusion or disagreement over the transcribed interview. This technique increases the authenticity of the data and amounts to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as a "member check."

A useful investigative tool involved asking the women to create a metaphor to discuss their view of themselves as a leader. Metaphors help to generalize a complex phenomenon. The metaphors the women constructed gave meaning and form to the feelings at the heart of their organizational experience. What became clear from the metaphors was the degree to which the organizational culture shaped the women's experiences and the price they often paid for going against the organizational grain.

The interview transcripts formed the entire body of data to be analyzed. The data were read repeatedly to build an interpretive understanding of key themes (Geertz, 1973). Several themes were identified based on the theoretical focus on leadership identity and gender (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Additional themes emerged through a more inductive process in which the

data itself drove the construction of categories (Patton, 1980). For example, while the theoretical focus on leadership identity and gender focused the analysis on issues women face in constructing meaning within their organizational environments, the more inductively-oriented analysis yielded the three general patterns of women's responses: adaptation, reconciliation, and resistance.

FINDINGS

Not too surprisingly, the study found that senior women administrators largely constructed their leadership identity as a response to organizational expectations and norms grounded in the experiences of men. The women tended to display a preference for one of three general strategies: adaption, reconciliation, or resistance. An important point needs to be stressed here. While every woman in the study can be placed in one of the categories, all the women tended to use strategies across the full range. Their placement in one category or another simply reflects the preponderance of their leadership thoughts and actions as described by the women during the interviews. Finally, in exploring the three general types, we examine three facets of each: leadership identity, communication style, and gender issues.

Adaption

The nine senior women who constructed their leadership identity around adaption filled the "big shoes" of their male colleagues by duplicating the men's instrumental behaviors. Each distinguished herself through a concern for hierarchy, efficiency, and productivity as well as by a more depersonalized communication style.

Leadership Identity. Adapters used leadership images reflective of a strong authority figure. In keeping with the image of "the strong leader," adapters tried to maintain order primarily through the use of authority. One woman explained why her organization demands that she lead from the front and from the back.

They're like kids. Your kids don't set limits; you set the limits. Everybody here pushes limits all the time. I'm the one who sets the limits. I'm not just a gatekeeper [by picking who is in or out]. . . I'm also the limit person. Do limits change? Yes, they will change.

And I'm the sheepdog. . . I'm trying to change the direction.

Another woman highlighted how she uses her authority as president to get the job done: "Some of the faculty and administrators didn't respond to the needs [of the community] and that's the main problem of this college. So, I fired the vice president, which was exceedingly unpopular. I mean, people thought he was the only one doing anything in the college, but he wasn't doing the right thing. I had to get a vice president whom I could trust and who would deliver the appropriate message to the college."

Another president captured the instrumentality reflected by many of the adapters. She wants "can do" people who do not make excuses for failures. Staff members who deal with facts and the bottom line are her preference. She frowns on "theoretical people," because they cannot seem to turn their ideas into results. Order is central to the way this community college administrator defines success; she wants her staff to make few mistakes and to keep a meticulous facility. Another woman administrator, a vice president, explained that her leadership success is based on her knowledge of formalized faculty expectations (the "faculty contract") and understanding of the institution's norms. Moreover, she enforces them in an unbiased manner, to

friend or foe, so that everyone will know that she does not play favorites. Overall, these examples illustrate how an adaptive response to traditional organizations prompts senior women leaders to set limits and standards, gate keep, and manage impressions.

Communication Style. For adapters, communication tends to be a depersonalized verbal performance placing emphasis on one's organizational position. One woman explained that her staff never questions who is boss. She recently told a woman who reported to her, "This is what has to happen. . . and if it doesn't, this is how I am going to make it happen." And another woman offered this example: "I have been known to say to people, 'You know, you have certain choices. If you're unhappy with the boss, you can change yourself, or you can stay unhappy, or you can leave. But, you don't change the boss.' That's not an option."

One administrator explained how depersonalized communication and keeping one's distance is part of being effective: "Some people think I'm just not open enough and they would like to get closer, but there's some distance you have to keep. There's a certain kind of isolation that you have to have in order to be effective." A president explained how she uses silence to keep her distance and to present a position of neutrality. For instance, at meetings she strategically remains silent so that people will not get the sense they know her very well or that they know what she thinks. She wants to analyze the entire setting before making a decision. Moreover, she doesn't take a stand on issues, but instead allows others to reveal their commitments while she steps back as if she is neutral. Friendships are nonexistent because people will think she has favorites. Her behavior does not nurture a support network, so she is isolated at the top of the organization. When she needs someone for support, she will have lunch with a family member.

Gender Issues. Adapters use depersonalized language to distance themselves from issues. In particular, adapters denied or minimized gender issues. One woman discussed gender issues she personally faced in her early career, but denied such issues existed in the present. She dismissed the notion that the many women on her staff influenced the college's climate. "How people perform is a far greater issue at this college than whether they are men or women."

Statements from other women who used adaption strategies suggested that gender issues didn't exist, because they had more trouble with women colleagues. None of the women who used an adaptive framework considered how their college's organizational culture created a competitive, independent environment and thus pitted one woman against another. This points to an important finding: the organizational "double bind" for women. Each senior woman administrator who adapted or conformed to traditional standards held important positions at her college. However, each found herself in a double bind: By breaking with relational norms expected of women, the women who adapted were isolated from other women. Paradoxically, while they conformed to male norms of leadership they nonetheless were never fully accepted by the men simply because they were women. At work, they were always on guard against betrayal and highly concerned with maintaining authority. One woman explained that she made a special agreement with her president: Should a faculty or staff member try to bypass her authority, he would keep her informed so she could take care of the problem herself. In such adversarial situations, even when senior women had a collegial network, they could rarely count on their staff to be fully open with information. Nor could their staffs be counted on for creative solutions for fear of rebuke or failure.

Reconciliation

The thirteen senior women who constructed their leadership identity around reconciliation knew their place and conformed to expectations of both women and men depending on the organizational context or situation. This is because when institutions include women at the senior level, but maintain traditional standards and values, the women are often cast as outsiders. To reduce the tension and stress of their outsider status, they choose behaviors that reconcile traditional organizational expectations with their identity as women. Reconciliation is based on the woman's ability to read her context and react to the situation by appropriately drawing from relational or instrumental styles. As part of reconciliation, a woman's leadership identity reflects a duality.

Leadership Identity. Reconciliatory leadership reflects the defensive use of both instrumental and relational behaviors. One vice president explained that she sees her leadership as a kaleidoscope, because she tries to creatively respond to the ever changing "patterns" of her responsibilities. "Some patterns or days are pretty, but on other days it is like crawling and digging through rock, like a miner." The different demands placed on her depend upon with whom she is working.

Another vice president described her college as a cold and demanding family. She explained that she had to reconcile its high demand for perfection while maintaining a commitment to caring and being inclusive. When she was first hired into her institution with ten years of experience, she had to prove her competency for several years by passing her boss's daily "pop quiz." She placated the demands because her professional fate rested on his opinion of her competency. While her boss made these demands of her, she had little control over her staff. For

example, colleagues expected her to transfer her own vacation time to an office worker with a family crisis. Ironically, the kindness expected of her was not reciprocated when, understaffed, she labored to meet a deadline. Because she did not want to be judged incompetent, she feared making a special request for help. Thus, she often became the "care giver," but rarely was she the "cared for."

Communication Style. Sheldon's (1992) research on communication suggests women as young girls learn a "double-voiced discourse." Using this communication style, a woman learns to consider her own and another's agenda, while constantly taking initiatives to achieve group harmony. No guidelines exist for this strategy, as one president lamented: "You just have to figure it out yourself." Another woman said her biggest compliment about her use of various styles came from her maintenance crew who told her she was just "one of the guys." "If he sees me as a feminist bitch, I am not going to be able to work with him." Another woman says she keeps her opinions lighthearted by using humor and stories. When asked to play racquetball by one of the guys, she answered him this way: "You know Bill, I appreciate the invitation, but unless I'm going to the locker room with you, it won't put me any closer to the dean's job. . . 'cause they do not cut those positions on the court."

A vice president said her college's culture is "lets take tea with a task orientation." While she is very goal oriented and a perfectionist, her president expects that she present a caring, almost motherly, front at its employees' recognition dinners. "You know, every person has something nice said about them. We tell some little bit of their story." When she works with her all-male staff in a team situation, they are often nonparticipatory. Yet, when she asks if they want to stop, they say no. She is in a quagmire and doesn't know what to do: "Shared decision-making

is very difficult. I think I try to do that. . . Perhaps I try too hard to get a consensus and go too long trying to get it." She further reflected on why she can't seem to achieve the appropriate style: "There is undeclared strife between women and men that goes unacknowledged. The men [with whom she works] believe that they are dominated by women and that is an undercurrent among all the men. I have no empirical proof of this. They would deny it."

Gender Issues. Women who relied on reconciliation were aware of gender issues and their effect on their leadership. One woman cut to the heart of the problem:

I have learned that the best way to collaborate with the guys is to keep my mouth shut. To respect the good ol' boys and their power is important. . . I try not to be real judgmental when I think they are ignorant. I try to learn how their system works even though I can't get in it. I want to only know enough so I can do what it is that I need to do.

She recognizes the power of the "boys" and knows direct competition with them can be fatal. Moreover, they appear to go after the most vulnerable, which frightens her at times and forces her to keep up her guard.

Reconciliators saw their response as necessary to survive. Many senior women wondered if their strategy helped them or their institution. As several women explained, they may have won their senior position by keeping their place, but they lost confidence over the years, never mentored anyone, and endured high levels of stress.

Resistance

The eight senior women who constructed their leadership identity around resistance

worked to create a context where relational leadership styles had equal status with the traditional instrumental paradigm. These women emphasized that they wanted to work at an institution where they could "be themselves." Notably, the women stressed pedagogical work with their staff and institution as a means to develop a more open and tolerant organization. Leaders using this response saw themselves as social change agents or transformative educators and played the role of facilitator, group organizer, and consciousness-raiser.

Leadership Identity. Resistance leadership looks to develop the whole person through ongoing education and dialogue. Moreover, through collective resistance strategies instrumental and relational organizational paradigms are situated as complements rather than adversaries. One president explained her leadership and what she needed to do to change her culture. To her leadership was akin to baking an angel food cake. The ingredients cannot be "beat in" but must be blended a little at a time. She uses resistance more because she finds that the traditional system "stymies and does not provide incentive for creativity at the upper levels. . . . When I move down the ladder here, I find lots of creativity. Those are brighter folks. . . . I like intelligent hell raisers."

A president of one community college sees herself as a crossing guard helping to lead a group of people hand in hand across a busy street. She sees her role as asking the hard questions about who is included and who is left out. She also envisions herself helping to work with her faculty and staff to find the answers. Fighting and competition does not produce answers she has concluded.

Another women president who has used collective resistance to empower people at her college says she finds this kind of leadership gratifying: "It is sheer joy because I am having a good time." She has found when people are respected, they are more creative and invested in

doing a good job. Therefore, she worked to break down barriers when she first came to her college by creating a warm and respectful work environment where hard work was appreciated regardless of one's status within the organization. "It wasn't easy because the college was near financial collapse." After ten years of stability, she can say she has been successful.

Communication Style. The communication styles of the women who resist demonstrate the integrated nature of their leadership. They do not fragment their lives into personal and professional, intellectual and spiritual, informal and formal, but integrate them across their organizational experiences. Ferguson (1984) calls this personal communication style "resistance discourse." For one woman administrator, this means that she tells humorous stories as a means to eliminate barriers between herself and her staff. One story she likes to share took place when she informed her doctoral advisor that she was appointed assistant dean. Her advisor suggested that her experience as a pig farmer would help her more than her Ph.D. in English Literature. This senior administrator also integrates the spiritual and the intellectual by constantly referring to both in her speaking and writing.

Most women emphasizing relational styles were not afraid of offering their opinion. Some revealed a preference for participating in social justice issues and rejected trends like Total Quality Management (TQM) if they perceived them to be dehumanizing in any way. They preferred spending time setting up "open systems" that empower their constituents, such as with "mutual gains bargaining," where adversarial groups work together to solve institutional issues.

Finally, the women integrated the informal and the formal by not behaving in "queenly" and overly authoritative ways. Instead, they tended to create an egalitarian environment where they could work with everyone. Moreover, at staff meetings they openly discuss issues with

passion and verve and without fear of retribution. One woman explained that when she arrived at her college during a financial crisis she took an attitude that all books were open. Moreover, she explained, "Yes I get angry and yes I let people know it, but I'm also quick to resolve issues and forgive." She has come to understand that some people will never agree or understand.

Gender Issues. Resisters tended to openly address gender issues. For example, Terry Rheinhart, the resistance archetype introduced earlier in this paper, expressed her conviction that at the core of gender problems is male insecurity: "I think that people get nervous when there are too many women." Terry explained that when she took a stand and worked in alliance with others, she could better defend her choice of adding another woman to an already predominantly female staff. She and the other women resisters saw gender issues as potentially demoralizing if not dealt with strategically. As one woman explained, "I think we have many men on our senior staff who are old personalities, who have been with this institution a long time. These men, in my estimation, haven't done the kind of self-development that would prepare them to be good leaders. They are confrontational with women on the staff."

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We brought certain assumptions about organizational life to this study. Our assumptions were grounded in feminist work on organizations and primarily reflected a belief that men and women, in general, enact different styles of knowing and leading, and that organizations primarily operate from a masculine paradigm. While these assumptions framed our initial inquiry, we also wanted to evaluate the assumptions themselves. Do organizations in fact reflect male understandings and does gender matter in community college contexts? These are questions that

the interviews with women administrators were intended to address. Through strategies grounded in adaption, reconciliation, or resistance, the senior-level women administrators in this study found ways to develop a leadership identity within their traditional work context. While each woman tended to use one response strategy over another, in reality, each used all three responses at different points in her organizational life. While a few of the women, mostly those who embraced adaption as a leadership strategy, denied gender as a force in shaping their organizational lives, the vast majority of the women found their working lives as women to be doubly challenging, with gender differences being the root cause. When they were successful and employed competitive and independent leadership styles (styles most often associated with male ways of knowing), they were often rejected by female colleagues and staff for failing to embrace women's ways of knowing. At the same time, and no matter the level of their success, they were often unaccepted by the men simply because they are women. This is the double bind that women leaders face in the community college context, and likely elsewhere as well.

When women resisted norms rooted in male conceptions of organizational life, they often were able to re-create their working lives, but the fallout often involved excessive amounts of psychic energy spent devising transformative strategies. As "outsiders" to the inner circles of the community college, women thus had to manage their marginalized identities. In Erving Goffman's (1963) terms, the women had to continually manage a "spoiled identity," and work extra hard to "save face" in their organizational contexts. Nonetheless, the vast majority of the women employing resistance strategies took heart in knowing that their personal convictions were expressed through their organizational behaviors. This had an energizing effect on these women. Given the changing needs of community colleges, the study's findings suggest that resistance

strategies may offer the greatest hope for creating more inclusive and diverse community college environments.

Because traditional organizations serve as a barrier to the development of women's leadership, the study's findings indicate change will not occur unless key members of the institution are willing to critically examine the college's culture. Women leaders who embraced resistance strategies helped their organizations to value difference, share authority, and create more inclusive forms of decision making. These qualities are essential to success in today's complex, organizational environments and likely will continue to be key into the next century (Senge, 1990; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Tierney, 1993).

A problem concerns the fact that adaption, reconciliation, and even resistance are, at the most fundamental level, reactive strategies--the women are "reacting" to a male dominated organizational context. Also, having to enact these complex strategies places a greater psychological burden on women in comparison to their male counterparts. The negative consequence is that women spend a good deal of time and energy simply trying to survive, when instead, they should be thriving. Thus, the ultimate concern raised by this study is: How can community colleges create organizational environments in which women's ways of leading are more fully embraced? If this can be accomplished, the energy that women expend in constructing complex survival strategies may be applied instead to other more proactive concerns.

The following are some points to consider. Community colleges need to reexamine the kinds of professional development programs offered to their administrators, faculty, and staff. Those who commit their working lives to the community college need to understand the complex ways in which gender influences organizational behavior and how organizations continue to

operate based on a masculine paradigm.

Relatedly, administrators, faculty, and staff need to better understand how traditional organizations have framed women's working lives. Such an understanding should take into account both the structural and individual levels. At a structural level, activities should be implemented that help employees examine how various policies, procedures, rules, and norms may limit the success of women. Just as racism is often institutionalized within complex organizational structures, the same is true of sexism.

On an individual level, employees need to be challenged about the assumptions they hold about women and women's abilities. Research on behavioral patterns and communication differences among men and women is one thing. Harmful stereotypes about women's inabilities is something else. For example, while some women may prefer and in fact may work quite well in competitive environments, time and time again their success results in negative comments and hostile views expressed by male colleagues. The research undergirding this paper reinforces such findings and suggests that much work remains to be accomplished in this area.

Finally, to develop women's leadership, community colleges must engage in critical reflection about issues of inclusion and expand the opportunities for women at all levels. The changes suggested in the preceding paragraphs perhaps are more likely to take place as more women become part of the community college's inner circle. We need to create community college cultures in which diverse leadership styles are possible and move away from a "one size fits all" culture of administration (Amey, in press). With the present day environmental demands for greater cultural awareness and diversity, women are critical resources in moving community colleges toward truly becoming the people's college.

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