

CONTEMPORARY VALUE MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

WOMEN AND WORKFORCE 2000

R. A. Fraser, Ph.D.
Miami University
Dolibois European Center
Gr. D. de Luxembourg



Rosemary Fraser is a professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Miami University. She has Bachelor's (Mathematics) Master's (Social Psychology) and Doctoral (Behavioral Science) degrees from the University of Michigan where she also completed post-doctoral study in Administration. She is a frequent speaker of professional and civic groups and has an extensive publication and consulting record with industrial organizations dealing largely with issues of motivation, communication and group dynamics.

Rosemary is a member of the American Psychological Assn. The American Educational Research Assn., the Southwest Ohio Chapter of SAVE and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Miles Foundation. She was awarded SAVE's "Best Technical Paper: in 1974 and 1987.

ABSTRACT

The population of people engaged in value analysis (VA) activity--a population which was once almost exclusively white and male--is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, language and cultural background. We are living in an era in which the role played by diversity is increasingly important. Thus any serious study of the human behavior components in Value Engineering (VE) practice should involve consideration of diverse perspectives. This paper reviews the gender diversity issue. Later papers in this series will focus on cross-cultural aspects.

Introduction

Not only has movement into management roles changed women's relationship to their organizations, but women in management are changing their organizations' relationship to both internal and external environments.

The workplace of the 90's and beyond is relatively unknown territory. We know that workforce demographics are changing. How organizations will change, and how programs and structural aspects within the organizations will evolve are key to our

society's future economic status. The challenge for today's organizations is to go beyond simply doing a better job. Overall vitality in the present dynamic marketplace must be increased. Economic globalization, the greater degree of interdependence among world economies, has been accompanied with rampant geopolitical change. Additionally, major changes in workforce demographics and increased demands for more intrinsically interesting work that is completed more autonomously are forcing major changes in the concepts and practices of organizational leadership.

Some of the modifications required can already be observed in many organizations. Such changes include increased emphasis on collaboration as opposed to competition, increased attention to process as being equal in importance to attention to product, an increase in the extent to which power is shared among organization members, increased predominance of the view of employees as "whole persons" who can be trusted to be responsible, and an awareness of the need for authenticity and open expression of feelings as important characteristics of interactions in the workplace. Managerial competencies appropriate to such interpersonal and emotional requirements are more commonly held by female professionals than by their male counterparts. Not only must present managers develop new skills,

but the barriers to the practice and upward mobility of women in management must be eliminated to allow our society to compete effectively in the world economy.

Change in organizational design.

The bureaucratic model characterized by division of labor, hierarchy of authority and a framework of rules and impersonality was viewed by the German sociologist Max Weber as the most rationally efficient form of organization. Fred Taylor's "scientific management" improved bureaucratic performance through increased specialization, standardization and efficiency of job design and training.

However, bureaucracy is paradoxical. Weber's model with Taylor's improved management efficiencies has come to symbolize the epitome of inefficiency. The pyramidal structure and concentration of power common to this form is best suited to stable environments and routine tasks. With increasing rates of change, bureaucracies are becoming immobilized by their own structure. Novel decisions must be made at a rate which cannot be met in a rigid hierarchical chain of command. More and more links in the chain are bypassed and decisions made by specialist staff members or the workers themselves. Likert and Whistler¹ forecasted that "the pressure to reorganize to deal with the complicated, speeding world will geometrically increase in the next decade...radical rethinking of organization ideas is to be expected". Similarly, over 20 years ago, Alvin Toffler² suggested that "to live, organizations must cast off those bureaucratic practices that immobilize them, making them less sensitive and less rapidly responsive to change".

To respond to external and internal changes, organizations are beginning to become more dynamic and self-renewing. Rather than the relatively rigid, tightly organized bureaucratic design; we are presently experiencing the development of a new system of temporary "project Team" groupings, initially called "adhocracies" by Toffler³. As early as the late 1960's, project-oriented work forces consisting of over 11,000 individuals were developed for short-term (five years or less) lifetimes.

Under the impact of new technology and social change, vertical hierarchies must be broken down and the traditional horizontal delineations, the boundaries between specialities, must also be collapsed. Disciplines must interrelate to solve the new problems with which we are confronted.

New design paradigms.

Most business and organization professors are teaching the hierarchical pyramid charts as an "historical" model, one that was based on an outdated industrial age organization in which management was the "brain" and employees were the "brawn". Under this model, supervisors gave the work orders and the workers did what they were told. The assumption was that laborers were not as important as managers in the company. Much of the difficulty found in implementing VE in many organizations was due to this model with its underlying assumptions. Not only was it difficult to develop communication across specialization lines, but the vertical layering provided significant impediments to team interaction.

Two new models of modern organization have emerged since we have entered the age of information and service. The inverted pyramid has front-line workers in touch with customers at the top, personnel supporting the front-line employees in the middle, and management at the bottom. In this model, the role of management is conceived as "obstacle remover"...doing whatever is needed to help the front-line be more productive and assuring that the customer needs will always come first. In organizations striving to operate in this manner, employees are empowered to make decisions autonomously or interdependently with other personnel.

The second more modern model, the flattened pyramid, looks more like the traditional structure but with significantly fewer layers. It is also spread out with the idea of promoting information flow. While the executives are still at the top, management in the middle and employees at the bottom; all members of the organization are encouraged to interact and work together through simplified reporting relationships and improved communication systems. This approach has been implemented extensively; many firms are reducing management levels, "delaying" to increase overall productivity. In the last 20 years, over half of the Fortune 500 companies have reduced one or more levels. In the automotive industry (perhaps among the most "Taylorist" companies historically), as many as five layers have been eliminated. Perhaps even more important than the change in the organization charts themselves is the change in underlying assumptions regarding the employees. In the newer models, the view is that employees want to work, are sufficiently intelligent to make good decisions, and are able to behave responsibly without constant monitoring by management. This strong value on involvement is

beginning to revolutionize the way we work on a day-to-day basis. For those who practice in the value disciplines, these changes are particularly the basis we have worked for across time and should significantly redound to our benefit. However, either of the modern models require major changes in management practice and without the necessary understandings and attributes, "old style" managers lead to "old style" outcomes, no matter what the company "model" looks like.

Changes in the workforce

As the nature of work, technology and the design of the organizations are changing, the nature of the people who do the work is changing too. Newer entrants to the workforce want to be "lead" rather than "managed". Most of the young people want to work more autonomously than their predecessors, and they do not respond very well to authoritarian management styles. New members of the workforce want to be treated as an equal part of a team and to use the skills and abilities developed in their previous education. They expect to work in jobs that provide more than simply a good work environment and decent wages. They are more concerned with job satisfaction, involvement and quality of life--both personal and professional--than any other group of previous workers.

The demographics of the new workforce are also changing dramatically. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, we are experiencing the biggest shift in workforce composition since the end of the second World War. Traditionally, the top corporate executives have been drawn from the population of white, non-Hispanic males. By the year 2000, however, this population will comprise only about 9 percent of new workers. Women will comprise approximately two-thirds of the new entrants, with minority males and immigrants making up the rest. As *Fortune*⁴ Magazine reported, "Most of the new hires will be women or African-American, Hispanic and Asian men. Companies that can't learn to attract the best from these groups will face a shrinking pool of desirable employees."

The change in the composition of the workforce can not only help create good work environments, but can increase the companies' profitability as well. George Harvey, Chief Executive of Pitney-Bowes, said in *Time*⁵ Magazine that "It doesn't make sense to cut yourself off from half of the talented people in this world. If we're known as a good place to work,

more good people will want to work here. That will make us more competitive, which means more sales and higher stock prices". While some leading edge companies do see growing diversity as a way of improving recruitment, marketing and product and customer service efforts; the present state of women in the workplace does not reflect such views.

Gender-related differences in the workplace.

Although women comprise approximately half of the U.S. workforce, only three percent of senior management positions are held by women in all Fortune 1000 companies. Additionally, women hold only 15-20 percent of middle management roles. The scarcity of women managers has been attributed to sex-role differences between potential managers, historical and social factors and natural barriers within the hierarchy itself.

Historically, our society--like most others--operated on the belief that males were the "natural leaders". The male was considered the preferred societal work-role agent, while women were "best suited" for home care responsibilities. Although exceptions were made for such unusual conditions as warfare or loss of one's spouse, the presence of many women in the workforce was viewed as a less than desirable condition. The preponderance of males in societal workroles allowed maintenance of the belief that women should not perform such functions. Although such stereotypical differences in psychological functioning are actually "cultural myths" with no basis in fact, selective perception allows such myths to persist.

Unquestionably there are obvious physical differences between males and females. As adults, males are typically heavier, taller and more muscular than females; while adult females are hardier in the sense of having longer life expectancies and less susceptibility to disease. However, evidence regarding psychological functioning is much less clear than such anatomical data.

After reviewing over 1500 studies, Maccoby and Jacklin⁶ concluded that only four of the common conceptions of sex-role differences are supportable. These include greater verbal ability for females than for males, greater visual/spacial and arithmetic reasoning for males, and greater physical and verbal aggression in male behavior than in female behavior. In 1987, Charlesworth and Dzur⁷ made one addition to Maccoby's list. They demonstrated that girls were consistently more apt to use cooperation and

negotiation in settling disputes or when trying to achieve group goals than boys were. Many other researchers have verified the accuracy of those differences, as well as the conclusion that most other perceptions of difference were not supportable in terms of any inherent nature.

Selective perception as a mechanism for maintaining such inaccurate myths has been demonstrated in numerous studies. In one such experiment, college students were asked to watch a videotape of a nine-month old child at play and then to interpret the reactions of the child. Half the subjects were told the child was a female ("Dana") and half were told the child was male ("David"). The presumed sex of the child clearly affected the interpretations of the observed behavior. Strong reactions to a jack-in-the-box toy popping open were labeled "anger" when the child was David, and "fear" in the case of Dana. Such differences in perceptions continue to occur throughout the life span.

Sex-role stereotypes tend to be global, described in vague terms, and difficult to study objectively. Nonetheless, they are widely generalized across a wide range of situations and are remarkably consistent in the thinking of members throughout our society. People govern their own behavior based on such concepts as well as judge and react to others in such stereotypic terms. As socially defined, "masculinity" and "femininity" are significantly different. Behaviors that are considered typically feminine include such qualities as nurturance, compassion, cooperativeness, sensitivity, gentleness, empathy and interdependence. Collectively, such traits are referred to a "expressive". Male sex-role traits, referred to as "instrumental", include characteristics as autonomy, initiative, competitiveness, dominance, instrumentalism and independence.

Traditionally, such male-instrumental characteristics have been viewed as components of the "right" management pattern. Leaders were seen as task directors who needed to "be in charge" and "stand up on their own". Frequently, the ability to influence has been equated with coercive types of power. This fit the socialization rules and culture that men were socialized by. Men learn to compete to win, they learn to follow a leader and not to ask questions (as in football where there is a coach, a team leader, and players who support the goal of the team winning). The "sport" male culture tended to be driven by competition, hierarchy and status.

Conversely, women learned from their cultural socialization to compete, but to be fair. They learned to share leadership and ask questions. Their culture is based on fairness, even power distribution and collaboration.

Changing patterns of women's management behavior

Given the climate in which they had to operate, it is not surprising that many of the women that initially attained management positions adopted "one of the boys" approaches. Disowning their expressive behaviors, these women tried to emulate their male counterparts. The "she-males" created in this way worked diligently to demonstrate that they could be just as competitive, forceful and ambitious as the "other guys". Feminist authors such as Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer attempted to minimize differences between men and women to achieve equality of opportunity. Unfortunately, the outcome in the arena of power politics was an emphasis on how women could be resocialized to compete on a basis equal to the men. Workshops on "the assertive woman" and "women and success" purported to provide the learnings women had "missed" while they were growing up. The orientation of such approaches, to correct women's deficits, has negative consequences for women themselves and for the organizations in which they work. The very characteristics that are considered unimportant and/or in need of modification are precisely those necessary to meet the needs of our changing workforces. Expressive skills are required for responsiveness to the human needs of community, affiliation and involvement.

A more moderate position that emerged about the same time focused on the notion of androgyny in which traits of both genders were amalgamated. While this "best of both worlds" notion seemed to represent a way out of the "Patton or Pollyanna" dilemma, there has been a backlash against the androgynous ideal as being "intrinsically sexist". The attributes of the androgynous personality that are correlated with self-esteem and adjustment are the masculine components. Since it focuses on psychological transformation as a way to provide needed social change, this approach also seems to ignore the need for change in organizational responses to women.

More recently, feminists have begun to emphasize the value of women's ways of thinking, feeling and doing. Instead of calling for imitation of male

characteristics, the contemporary feminist approach celebrates the female difference. In *Toward a New Psychology of Women*⁸, Jean Baker Miller suggests that the male-led society:

delegated to women not humanities "lowest needs" but its "highest necessities"--that is, the intense, emotionally connected cooperation and creativity necessary for human life and growth...Because women have filled in these essentials, they have developed a foundation of extremely valuable psychological qualities.

Some of the qualities Miller refers to are those specifically called for by contemporary management theorists. In organizations where group problem-solving approaches are emphasized, women's greater tendency to collaborate is much more appropriate than "masculine" styles emphasizing competition. Similarly, women's higher value for connectedness and concern for others can be a real asset in large complex organizations presently dealing with increasing levels of apathy, unrest and lack of community among employees.

A number of studies (e.g. Asplund,⁹ suggest that women's view of power is significantly different from men's. While the masculine power issues revolve about domination and the ability to control others, women describe power more in the sense of a liberating force or the ability to transform present realities. The more communal qualities of women lead them to view power as a tool to be used for public purposes rather than personal ambition. This kind of orientation could foster important changes in organizations away from the current hierarchical, control oriented bureaucratic design to a more open, diffuse structure.

Women in Value Management

The appropriateness of expressive qualities for management roles is not a new idea. Contrary to the conventional belief that there is one best kind of leadership (typically assumed to be the male-instrumental type), numerous researchers have provided compelling evidence that effective leadership is contingent upon several factors--including the nature of the task, the nature of the group and the position power of the leader. Further, Fred Fiedler demonstrated that "relationship-motivated" leaders perform better than "task-motivated" leaders in many situations. The leadership type Fiedler defines as "relationship-motivated" largely reflects female-

expressive characteristics. Situations in which this style was shown to be superior include those common to VE activity. Often in VE; the task is unstructured (i.e. creative), the group members are not familiar with one another (or at least do not have a salient identity as members of the same unit), and the position power of the leader within the organization is not extremely dominant. This characterizes just one of the situation designs that "fit" women's expressive characteristics better than traditional masculine approaches. Even in those phases of the VE job plan which are convergent (e.g. analysis), Fiedler's¹⁰ data indicate that relationship-motivated leaders are generally superior.

Some of the most common difficulties encountered by VE teams include development of team identity, development of effective communication skills among team members, and maintenance of motivation during difficult problem-solving activities. These issues are some of those in which women's leadership patterns are especially appropriate. Task-directed approaches are less effective in developing the kinds of trust and relatedness that it takes to free group members to create optimum outcomes.

The Need for Change

No matter how good the "fit" between women's leadership styles and the positions themselves, vertical mobility within the organizations will not be easy for women interested in performing management functions. All the years of "honest wrong beliefs" regarding leadership skill differences between man and women continue to inhibit such change. Nonetheless, there are a number of good signs. In many firms, the diversity of management is increasing. For example, at Colgate-Palmolive, 25 percent of managers are women, up from 9 percent in 1986. Pitney-Bowes had no top female executives in 1980, but by 1990, women represented 17 percent of the corporate officers.¹¹ The numbers of MBA and other advanced degrees awarded to women is increasing significantly. The style of leadership most frequently, but not exclusively, practiced by women is viewed broadly as an important development in industrial management. This style, characterized by talking more with employees, sharing information, and keeping the door open to be accessible is being taught in most management programs. However, if such changes are to continue and expand, the norms of our organizations must be changed to accommodate women's skills and abilities. Part of this will be accomplished as the organizations themselves evolve in ways compelled by changes in

the marketplace, technology, and the workforce. But we cannot assume that such changes will provide sufficient impetus--direct, intentional intervention is still necessary.

Additionally, women themselves must change in ways that will provide for greater access to management roles. This does not mean to abdicate their roles as women; but rather to celebrate their female expressive abilities and to help others recognize the value of such approaches. Asplund (1992) found significant gender differences in the ways managers described their roles. Women tended to describe their jobs as a list of tasks to be performed, while men tended to identify ways that their position related to the overall organization. It is necessary for women to learn to take a more global view of the relationship of their function and to increase their visibility within the larger context. The same researcher also found major differences in the extent to which men and women in management receive support and mentoring from senior managers. Women's skills and organizational savvy have frequently had to be developed without much support.

Conclusions

It is clear that significant changes in workforce, workplace, and the nature of work accomplished have occurred and will continue to occur at ever-increasing rates. It is also clear that to maintain our position in the world economy, our society must effectively use its resources--especially its human resources. Due to their socialization and values, women are especially comfortable in the newer flatter organization structures which allow for greater flexibility. When researching the management and leadership styles of some of the top U.S. female executives, Sally Helgesen¹² coined the term "web of inclusion" which has become accepted practice within our more progressive organizations. The web of inclusion emphasizes accessibility and equality by placing the leader at the center, rather than at the top, of the operation. Ms. Helgesen reported:

"...the women I studied had built profoundly integrated and organic organizations, in which the focus was on nurturing good relationships; in which the niceties of hierarchical rank and distinction played little part; and in which lines of communication were multiple, open and diffuse.

I noted that the women tended to put themselves at the center of their organizations rather than at the top...they labored constantly to include people in their decision-making, which had the effect of undermining the boundaries so characteristic of mainstream organizations with their strict job descriptions, categorization of people according to rank, and restrictions on the flow of information."

Operating in such a web of inclusion is precisely the way many of our most effective value managers have been working for years...this is not a new idea in VE. What is new, is the inclusion of new workforce members to management. Women should be recruited and supported to join VE organizations, and to provide their own style of leadership to the activity. Increasing the numbers of women in VE would not only redound to the field itself and the organizations in which it is practiced. Such roles would also serve the needs of women as they struggle to overcome a history of obstacles to organizational vertical mobility, since the cross-sectional and relatively global nature of VE activity can provide needed visibility and contact within their organizations.

REFERENCES

1. Likert, R. & Whistler, T.L., Management in the 1980's, *Harvard Business Review*, 11: 58.
2. Toffler, A. (1970), *Future Shock*, , New York, Random House, p. 141.
3. Toffler, Op, cit.
4. *Fortune Magazine*, April 28, 1988.
5. *TIME Magazine*, special issue "Women, the Road Ahead" Fall, 1990 9.25.
6. Macoby, E. & Jacklin, C. (1980), "Sex Differences in Agression, a rejoinder and reprise", *Child Development*, 51, 964-980.
7. Charlesworth, W. R. and Dzur, c (1987) "Gender comparisons of preschooler's behavior and resource allocation in group problem solving", *Child Development*, 58, 191.200.

8. Baker-Miller, Jean (1987) *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, 2nd Ed., Boston, Beacon Press, p. 112.
9. Asplund, Gisele (1992). **Women Managers: Changing Organizational Cultures**. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
10. Fiedler, Fred (1967). *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness*, New York, John Wiley and Son.
11. Data re: "Women in Management", from U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1990.
12. Helgesen, S. (1995). *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership*. New York: Doubleday.