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An emerging female management style

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An emerging female management style

Abstract

In 1840 Elizabeth Caty Stanton attended the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England. Although women were members of the society their delegations were not seated on the convention floor. This experience led her along with Lucretia Mott eight years later to organize the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York to remedy the oppression she saw everywhere and to improve the legal status of women.

AN EMERGING FEMALE MANAGEMENT STYLE

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Master of Arts

Mary Jo Souhrada

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In 1840 Elizabeth Caty Stanton attended the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England. Although women were members of the society their delegations were not seated on the convention floor. This experience led her along with Lucretia Mott eight years later to organize the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York to remedy the oppression she saw everywhere and to improve the legal status of women.

It was after the turn of the century before women worked in any great numbers in the once male bastion of the clerical profession. In 1880 four percent of the clerical work force was female; by 1890 it was 21 percent. In 1910 women made up 83 percent of stenographers and typists; by 1920 women were not only 91 percent of stenographers and typists but also 48.8 percent of bookkeepers, cashiers and accountants (Kanter, 1977). As the feminization of the clerical work force unfolded, the feminine attributes of caring for others, and of being agreeable and polite were emphasized above job skills. And, of course, the goal was

marriage not advancement. The move into management did not follow.

Feminist movement legislation in the 1960's and 1970's encouraged the movement of women into management. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, amended by the Equal Opportunity Act of 1972, the Equal Pay Act of 1973 and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1976 all bar discrimination on the basis of sex in employment. Statistics from the National Commission on Working Women indicated the number of working women increased three fold in 35 years--from 18 million in 1950 to over 51 million in 1985. During the 1970's the number of female managers more than doubled from 1,061,000 in 1970 to 2,586,000 in 1979 (Zeitz, 1983). Despite this break through into management in 1983 there was only one percent representation of women at the executive level (Josefowitz, 1983).

Statement of the Problem

While women appeared to make significant progress into management during the 1960's and 1970's several conditions have led to a slowdown

in gains as we entered the 1980's, namely the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment in the state legislature, the growth in prominence of the "political right" and the retrenchment of the feminist leadership to rethink and regroup (Thackray 1979). Pointing out court cases sometimes lasting years with A T & T, General Electric, Bank of America, and Sears, Thackray concludes that the most gains in equal employment for women are made in those organizations which have the most government pressure. "Sadly enough, the smart women executive needs the underlying support of the law to create a libertarian and progressive climate within the corporation." (p. 91).

Women in management were encouraged to overcome their negative childhood socialization and "act like a man" taking on male attributes such as aggression, independence and decision making to make it in the male world (Camden & Witt, 1983, Harragan, 1977, Hennig & Jardin, 1977). Further, the corporation was seen as being a culture of its own with male values of productivity, growth and efficiency. To be

successful women not only were expected to take on male characteristics but also were expected to assimilate to the male oriented cultural system of the corporation (Kanter, 1977).

However, women trying desperately "...to avoid 'throwing like a girl' could be warming up with the wrong team." (Stanek, 1980, p. 47). Management theory has evolved from the scientific model which stressed bureaucracy and division of labor which is alien to a model emphasizing the more feminine characteristics of team work and interpersonal relationships (Astin, and Sherrei, 1980). Additionally women's studies have reinforced and validated female sex roles. Women no longer need to compare themselves with the adult development model based on male development offered by Erickson (1950) and Levinson (1978) but have a model of their own (Gilligan 1982). Women have begun to identify and move with a whole female cultural system which defines mature and caring relationships with self, other and the world (Schaefer, 1981). While achievement may have been the main force motivating women in management in the 1960's and power the main dynamic of the

1970's, the 1980's will see a move toward affiliation, an interpersonal force definitely identified with female sex roles (Stanek, 1980).

The researcher will review the current literature as it relates to female management styles. Such a review suggests a movement from a style of adaptation to the male culture and sex roles, to an identification of the forces of change in the acceptance of a female management style based on female sex roles.

Definitions

"Management Style is defined as a set of behaviors that is indicative of a manager's attitude toward management itself and the supervision of subordinates. The terms management style and leadership style are used synonymously." (Hicks, 1982, p. 10).

"Sex Roles are defined as those psychological characteristics and attitudes that have been traditionally stereotyped as appropriate for males and females. Sex roles are not to be confused with physiological sex but are sociological and psychological counterparts. The term is used to

denote the concept of sexually stereotyped behavior and attitudes." (Hicks, 1982, p. 11).

Review of the Literature

Style of Adaptation

Leadership in our culture has not been favorable to women. Schein (1973) found 300 male middle managers described as possessing aggressive, autocratic characteristics ascribed more to men than women. In a follow up study (1975) of 167 female managers similar results were obtained causing Schein to conclude, "Acceptance of stereotypical male characteristics as a basis for success in management may be necessary for a women seeking to achieve in the current organizational climate." (p. 343). Subordinates were asked to rate male and female managers for task-orientation with focus on initiating structure or relationship-orientation with focus on personal consideration with regard to production levels. Relationship-oriented men were perceived as having higher production emphasis than task-oriented men. Women were perceived as having high production emphasis regardless of orientation. The authors concluded that the women

were unable to use secondary behavior modes indicating adaptive behavior to high production emphasis regardless of orientation (Millard & Smith, 1985, Millard, 1981).

Books such as Games Mother Never Taught You (Harragan, 1977) and The Managerial Women (Henning & Jardin, 1977) let women in on the male mind set and gave women reasonable explanations for inequality. Training programs proliferated with women gearing up to help women become different and equal to de-sexualize the female manager. Women were generally not as well liked (Bradley, 1980) and not as desirable for marriage (Hollender & Shafer, 1981). This causes a double bind handicap to economic equality. "They are damned to lag behind their male counterparts if they act like a women and are also punished if they act like men." (Camden & Witt, 1983, p. 260). Many women felt powerless causing them to overcompensate by adapting authoritarian controlling leadership styles (Kanter, 1977).

Seeing themselves as unable to speak up, having little confidence that the most competent were promoted and defining themselves as only

moderately powerful, (Shockley & Staley, 1980) women need to adapt. Single sex training classes were organized to give women the opportunity to learn the skills they needed in a more supportive atmosphere. Their special training needs revolved around finance, technology, conflict, career counseling and discrimination (Hartnett & Novarra, 1980). The training worked. O'Neill (1986) found that while men still had more information concerning organizational values available to them, there were few differences between the sexes.

Men and women also learned their management skills differently. In a study matching 59 pairs of men/women administrators, Sagaria (1985) found, "...women successfully compensate for their exclusion from informal administrative learning opportunities by drawing upon structured experiences such as serving on institutional committees, graduate school and inservice training." (p.29). Stimpson & Revel (1984) found that while managers tended to model the style of the boss, females modeled to a greater extent. In what was described as a balancing mode it was

found that in situations where the executive was a female, the female manager became more authoritarian and the male manager more democratic.

Forces of Change

As women moved into management in increasing numbers adapting to the life of the corporation and male management styles, new research into women's development and the evolution of management theory and style were beginning to upset the status quo.

Elizabeth Caty Stanton said it clearly, "Put it down in capitol letters: SELF-DEVELOPMENT IS A HIGHER DUTY THAN SELF-SACRIFICE." (Gilligan, 1982, p. 129). Over 100 years later Gilligan (1982) identified a female developmental model based on a mode of caring rather than aggression which moves from identity vs. separation in childhood to intimacy vs. distantiation in young adulthood to relationship vs. achievement in maturity. Starting at opposite ends of the pole females and males move through each stage marked by conflict with the opposite until maturity (individuation) is reached. For women, individuation is based on

compassion for self and others vs. individuation based on justice with individual differences.

Women, socialized to keep or restore adaptive balance, are beginning to see conflict as a natural order if change is a desired objective. Gould (1987) described a conflict model which defined the healthy person as one who questions the status quo and works toward growth and change rather than maintaining a social system which is oppressive. "A realistic understanding of the status quo is particularly important because women are not socialized into an awareness of their status in society as victim." (p. 348). This conflict model is an essential tool as women move away from a life model of adaptation to the male system to an understanding of a female system.

This emerging female system (Schaefer, 1981) operates independently of the male model with a communication of its own and a center of focus on relationships. Within this system power is seen as a limitless commodity. The more it is given away; the more it regenerates and expands. Leadership means to facilitate and empower others.

Another major development toward a more feminine style of management has been the evolution of management theory and style. Astin and Sherrei (1980) identified three major schools of management which have developed since World War II. The first, scientific management, rests on the organization theory of Gulich and Urwick (1937) stressed that a division of labor will result in high efficiency. This model resembled a pyramid. Max Weber (1947) further defined the bureaucracies as run by norms, rules and ranks with the head being the only member not influenced by the rules but reinforcing them. In the 1950's the second major school of management, the humanistic school, building on theories of John Dewey and Kurt Lewin, emphasized the worker rather than the organization. Drucker's (1950) and Herzberg's, Mausner's and Snyderman's (1959) work on motivational factors and Maslow's (1954) work on adults and responsibility led the humanist approach to maintain that efficiency results if employees are satisfied. In the 1960's the structuralist school emerged which takes into account the wants, motives and drives of the

manager along with limited knowledge and capacity of the manager. Etzioni (1964) points out that while both the scientific and humanistic schools would distrust conflict, the structuralists see conflict as inherent and a catalyst for change. Reporting on a five year study involving 49 private colleges and universities Astin and Scherrei (1980) identified five administrative styles arranged on a continuum from the Hierarchical administration with a Bureaucratic president to the Task-oriented administration with the Counselor president. The authors see the emergence of a Humanistic administrative style emphasizing feminine interpersonal skills such as cooperation and support. They describe an Egalitarian presidential style characterized by nonauthoritarian leadership or a Counselor presidential style characterized by informal interactions with others as being the most effective.

Toward a Feminine Leadership Style

Hicks (1982) in a study evaluating the effects of the assimilation of client-centered counseling with management styles found, "Although

the typical manager has been perceived as having masculine characteristics, it is apparent that greater Satisfaction with Supervision exists when the stereotypical feminine behaviors associated with client-centered counseling are employed." (p. 65).

Booth-Butterfield (1984) found that listening and tracking are feminine skills. Men interrupted more and listened less. Women were better at nonverbal cues, maintained more eye contact, decoded better and had an edge in interpersonal understanding. She concluded that women need to learn to listen more carefully to details and men need to listen more carefully to emotional messages. According to Colwill and Sztaba (1986) communication styles reflect power differences. Defining a language of powerlessness as hesitant, apologetic speech designed not to offend or threaten superiors, they point out that the person with the least decision making power in a relationship will most likely use feminine language. Schaeff (1981) identified this language system as the one used when women moving into the male system felt unsafe.

This feminine language (Colwill & Sztaba, 1986) is made up of polite forms, tag questions, qualifiers and disclaimers as opposed to masculine language which makes reference to time, space, quantity, aggression, perception and physical movement. Noting that what women have said and done has been traditionally undervalued, the authors conclude that we know too little about the long term consequences of speech patterns. "The organizational communication of women and men need not be inhibited by their sex roles, because nurturance is consistent with competence, thoughtfulness is consistent with leadership and politeness is consistent with power." (p. 65).

In support of feminine management skills, Berryman-Fink (1985) found that women managers incorporating feminine behaviors of sensitivity, empathy and responsiveness were seen as interpersonally competent. Both male and female managers identified listening, verbal, writing and nonverbal communication as top communication skills of women managers. Training needs were identified for female managers as assertiveness, confidence building and public speaking; for male

managers as listening, verbal skills, nonverbal communication, empathy and sensitivity.

Baird and Bradley (1979) found that females gave more information, were more encouraging of and receptive to subordinates' ideas, perceived as more concerned and attentive and fostered higher levels of morale. In a follow up study (Camden & Witt, 1983) the findings showed that female managers were effective while employing stereotypically feminine characteristics.

Reporting on affective relationships and career success Tsut and Gutek (1984) studied 217 male and 78 female industrial middle managers. While women remained at a lower grade level than men, women managers reported a higher level of job satisfaction, received larger merit increases, had a faster promotion rate and were rated higher by their peers. The authors concluded that women seem to be slightly more effective than men which may be due to the higher level of competency required of women and the extra ordinary effort needed to overcome initial barriers to the executive suite. Tibbitts (1980) found that school children and teachers performed better and

morale was higher in schools headed by women. Tibbets concluded that while teaching has always been a female profession, women in administration have been required to have more experience and better qualifications than men which may account for their better performance.

Bombyk and Chernesky (1985) in an exploration of management effectiveness during a time of crisis identified male and female management styles. The Alpha or male style concerned with a need for certainty and control focused on a hierarchical structure emphasizing clear definitions of power and authority, rewarding individual achievement and compliance with the rules and perceiving problems as technical matters with solutions that can be engineered. The Beta or female style concerned with people, process and relationships relied upon diffused horizontal power establishing interdependent and cooperative relationships, sharing resources, and solving problems through nonrational and nonlinear strategies with special attention to personal needs and feelings of staff members. The authors concluded that during a time of crisis such as the

recent cutbacks the weaknesses of the Alpha system namely controlled power, manipulation and intolerance of chaos may be offset by the strengths of the Beta style of management characterized by fluid power, empowerment and tolerance of chaos.

Conclusion

Through this review of the literature it appears that we have moved into a new stage of development in which both male and female management styles are being recognized as effective means of solving problems. In this paper the researcher has described the style of adaptation to the male system of management by women entering for the first time into management positions, explored forces which have influenced change in this style of adaptation namely new research into women's development and the evolution of management theory and style and identified the emergence of an effective female style of management behavior.

Future studies will further clarify both the shape and effectiveness of this style. As it becomes evident that both feminine and masculine

traits are required to be an effective manager, new training programs will be developed which will train both men and women in both masculine and feminine management styles. The goal of this training will be to train managers to intentionally use the management style which best fits the situation. Care will need to be taken as new employees move into management positions reaping the benefits of these new programs that older female managers who have accepted the male system are not caught in a "blame the victim" syndrome. The fears of male managers also caught up in the male system concerning loss of power, authority, control and identity will need to be addressed.

Finally, as men have been caught up in type A behavior which is detrimental to both the individual and the organization, so women are developing a multidimensional pattern of behavior called Type E (Suojanen, Working, Goldner, Ort and Cribbs, 1987). Being trained since childhood to be a nurturer and caregiver, "She must continually prove to everyone, to herself most of all that she can meet the needs she allows to be imposed on

her, to the point of neglecting her own needs while doing so." (p. 6). The authors warned that as long as society does not keep pace with the changing roles of women, these multidimensional women will become the norm of society. Trying to keep pace with her roles as career woman, wife and mother she is forced into the Type E behavior of being all things to all people and never quite measuring up to her own expectations. It is important for society to recognize this problem and for business along with church, government and family to work toward solutions.

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