From Where I Sit*
Transformational Leadership as "Reframing"

Susan Gotsch

When asked to write about women as transformational leaders, my first thought was, "Well, we're just doing our jobs." Perhaps we were departmental chairs or directors of programs and showed some administrative talent. No doubt we had visions for our institutions, wanted to make a difference, and had ideas about needed changes. But most importantly, we learned how to bring about institutional change. I firmly believe that transformational leaders must mentor the next generation--and so it is in that spirit that I offer my perspectives, from where I sit.

I would argue that there are three central principles to transformational leadership that are especially important for women, all of which tie back to the important lessons that the practice of "reframing" can teach. First, as transformational leaders we must develop the ability and agility to think from different perspectives, whether gendered, racial/ethnic, Myers-Briggs type, or ways of framing issues and solutions. In doing that, it is especially important to know and understand your audience. Second, we must always try to keep in mind the goals for our leadership even while dealing with day-to-day business. Finally, we must remember that as women with some power, we still work in institutions that are increasingly influenced by corporate male perspectives. Let me provide examples of these three principles.

But first, let me situate my own leadership style. I had already been a dean for a while when I attended a session led by Joseph P. Zolner, Director of the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. For me the event was magical. Not only did I recognize others and myself in his descriptions, but the approaches he described had been at the core, albeit in different language, of my many years of teaching classical social theory. On Zolner's recommendation, I read *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal (Jossey-Bass, 1997), who laid out four major perspectives--structural, political, symbolic, and social psychological. All four had been central to my disciplinary education.

One of Bolman and Deal's most important insights is that "it can be enormously liberating for managers to realize there is always more than one way to respond to any organizational problem or dilemma. Managers are imprisoned only to the extent that their palette of ideas is impoverished." Like the impact our Myers-Briggs type may have on our work life, so each of us may have a preferred way of framing the issue, trying to solve the problem, or marshalling

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resources for change. While staying true to our principles, we need to be flexible in our approaches--especially as we think about audience.

Audience

Many good administrators refer to their management style as "management by walking around." What better way to get to know your internal audience and encourage communication! It allows you to interact with faculty in their settings, to chat informally and comfortably about an idea, to accomplish the "precinct work" that is essential for change, and perhaps to substitute a lengthy meeting with a quick chat. But for other audiences such as boards of trustees, which value efficiency and formality, you will need a totally different approach. The ability to know your audience, what they value, and how you will frame interactions are essential to transformational leadership.

Big Picture

Keeping your vision in focus is a second important element of leadership--or as one of my wise mentors said, "Don't let the urgent overpower the important." The daily roller-coaster ride of administrative work--details and crises--constantly demands our attention. You can try to internalize visionary goals so thoroughly that they become the fabric of your everyday activities, but this approach has obvious political and psychic costs. Or you can develop specific strategies to "keep your eyes on the prize." If you are a compulsive list-maker, put a list of your "big-picture" goals where you see it each time you look up from your work. You can use it as a point of reference as you set your priorities for the day; it can inspire you as you work on a tedious policy that will contribute to the goals; and it can serve as a measure of how your daily or weekly accomplishments have furthered these goals.

For example, if you are trying to transform your institution to one that is more family--and woman--friendly, think about how policy-development, searches, salary administration, and the like can contribute to this goal. Do your faculty personnel policies encourage shared positions for partners, allow a two-year "stop the clock" timetable without penalty for tenure candidates, and provide for partial leaves? Are there gender inequities in salary, especially those disguised as disciplinary differences? Do you get involved in each search to be sure the interview pool is diverse? Do you allow your staff flexibility in work schedules? And it goes without saying that as you communicate the issues, you should frame how each benefits men and women, as well as the institution as a whole. Reading the recent article "Job Sharing on the Tenure Track," I was thrilled to see that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* covered a policy of shared positions that I had worked on (as the unnamed college "official"). Work on policies can be transformative!

The Glass Ceiling

My final observation is that, in spite of women's transformational leadership, we still live and work within a masculine, corporate environment. Women account for less than a quarter of chief academic officers, most of them at liberal arts colleges. The higher a woman rises in positional rank, the more isolated from other women she becomes. At meetings, she is often the only woman or one of a few women. The rules, formal and informal, often reflect a dynamic in direct opposition to her own. And, as Judith Glazer-Raymo notes in *Shattering the Myths: Women in Academe* (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), "Boards of trustees enjoy a pivotal role in selecting presidents of colleges and universities. The relationship between the president and the board is critical to institutional harmony and financial well being, and composition is therefore central to the status of women administrators as well as women faculty." My personal experience illustrates this. Along the way in my administrative career, I found myself in an environment that challenged me as a woman leader in ways I had never experienced before. It was the classic dilemma of having to balance the softer, nurturing side of my leadership with the masculine frames of structure, position, and power. In the end, I found that I had nurtured and led faculty and staff in ways that were at odds with the corporate mentality of the institution's leadership, especially the Board of Trustees. While that collision of different expectations of leadership was irreconcilable, I fortunately landed in an institution where community, collaboration, and participation are core values across the institution.

What Do Working Women Want?

Susan Esty

Women, like men, work because it is an economic necessity. Yet our experiences of work are different. This paper examines some of the major differences in employment between men and women and suggests some steps that would improve not only the economic aspects of the work experience, but also the quality of the experience.

While women have labored domestically and agriculturally over the centuries in the West, their entrance into the paid industrial workforce is fairly recent. At the turn of the century women comprised only 18% of the total paid workforce in the United States. Today 99% of women work outside the home for some part of their life and currently they comprise about 44% of the paid workforce while, at the same time, they are responsible for 100% of human birth. Sixty three per cent of women work 40 hours or more per week and 68% of married working mothers work 40 hours or more per week outside of the home. Only 7% of all women work less than twenty hours and thirty % work between 20 and 39 hours. Has this increased participation meant major economic strides for women? Unfortunately, the entrance of women into various occupational groups has often meant the equivalent of "There goes the neighborhood!"

When Dickens created Bob Cratchet and Ebenezeer Scrooge, only men held clerical positions and clerical employment was viewed as a rung on the career ladder that led to management. Women's entrance into the workforce and advancements in technology changed this dramatically. Today women fill 96.3% of all secretarial and administrative support positions. Yet as women came to dominate these occupations, compensation relative to male-dominated jobs dropped and career ladders were sawed off abruptly. Eventually, "secretarial pools" became workforce ghettos. Even so, data from 1995 indicates that the few men who held these positions were paid an average of 28% more than women.

As with clerical work, men once dominated teaching. And once again, as women increasingly came to dominate the field, the relative compensation levels of teaching in comparison to male-dominated fields decreased. Today women hold 98% of teaching positions in early education, 80% of elementary and middle school teaching positions, and only 53% of secondary teaching positions. A wage difference on average of about 60% exists between early childhood educators and secondary school educators; while an 11% difference exists between elementary/middle school teachers and secondary education teachers. Disparities in compensation continue in large part based upon which sex dominates the field of employment.

What has caused this occupational segregation by gender? It is likely to be a combination of forces. As recently as 1973, classified employment ads frequently separated positions into male and female categories. Certain jobs were clearly defined as more appropriate to women. Yet women also play a role

in accepting the jobs which society has said is appropriate for them. In spite of greater access to education and opportunity, women have continued to dominate certain fields.

The occupations dominated by women as documented by the US Department of Labor include the following: nurses, health aides, cashiers, bookkeeping and accounting clerks, clerical and administrative assistants, maids and housekeepers, receptionists, waiters and waitresses, and teaching, K-8. Step back and consider, are these jobs which should be lower paid than male dominated industrial and maintenance jobs?

Studies which became popular in the 1980s found that when female dominated job classifications were compared with male dominated ones in areas such as skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions, female dominated jobs were regularly under compensated relative to the male dominated ones. This problem, commonly referred to as pay equity, goes beyond equal pay for equal work, which is based on two individuals performing the same job functions. Pay equity is the concept that occupations of similar levels of skill, effort and responsibility should be similarly compensated.

Progress has taken place in improving pay equity in gender dominated occupations, but there is much room for further improvement. In the 1980's women earned only fifty-nine cents to a man's dollar. By 2002, the figure had improved to seventy-six cents to a man's dollar. The consequences of this disparity are huge for men and women nationally, as families loose 200 billion dollars in income annually because of the wage gap.

The combination of being under compensated from a pay equity standpoint, and dominating the lowest paid occupations, means that women are particularly affected by the minimum wage standard. In fact, the single most direct way to reduce poverty in the United States would be to increase the minimum wage.

What other issues do working women face? An AFL-CIO survey, *Ask a Working Woman Survey 2002,* reveals that working women consider health care, pensions-social security, affirmative action, equal pay and discrimination as their priorities. The issue of "respect on the job" is also one of the highest priorities for working women with 80% ranking it a high priority and 47% ranking it the highest. The survey indicates that issues directly linked to respect are affirmative action for women, equal pay for women, anti-discrimination, and fairness for part time workers in that order.

New research is exploring the issue of integration of work and personal life as a path to gender equity and respect. Is it a surprise that childcare and conflicts relating to childcare are consistently of more concern for women than men? In the *Working Women Survey: 2000,* 87% of mothers ranked child care issues among the top three legislative priorities; while only 76% of fathers put it in the top three. A recent study shows that on average twice as many women than men experienced conflicts between work and childcare that led to absenteeism, tardiness, or a change in hours. When restricted to children under eighteen, the

numbers increase for both men and women, but are again significantly higher for women.

Men and women in management and professional positions are beginning to share issues involved in what has been commonly referred to as "burn out." These issues are long work hours, and the sacrifice of personal interests, health, and time spent with family to workplace priorities.

In *Beyond Work-Family Balance*, published by Jossey Bass in 2002, authors Rappaport, Bailyn, et.al. suggest that competence in the work place is defined by anachronistic "assumptions and images of idealized masculinity." Characteristic of this, is individualism, aggression, authoritarianism, competition and heroic action, a set of characteristics that many men now hold as equally un-viable for them as for women and based upon antiquated theories of male psychology that vested all worth in paid employment. On the other hand, feminist values suggest inclusiveness and cooperation as an alternative to the outdated, male -identified definitions of competence.

Quality of life is a subjective judgment and studies do not exist that unequivocally identify the salient issues involved in coming to terms with this issue. However, experience suggests that gender is frequently at play in work related experiences that involve confidence, stress, blame, isolation, and internalized negativity. While men must experience the same emotional matrix, women often seem to be victims of their experience and men conquerors of it. This could be attributed to the workplace equivalent of "men are from Mars and women from Venus," but it is also somewhat inevitable for the majority of women who are from the lower paid jobs classifications.

So, what is to be done? The typical approach is to encourage women to individually seek to improve themselves through education and self promotion. These efforts have some merit. However, to achieve significant change, attitudes, and perceptions must help shape a new reality. Women who feel victimized and/or stressed out attribute these emotions to a combination of economic, social and psychological forces and all these issues must be addressed to truly change the work environment.

These changes are best accomplished through collective action large and small. Collective action brings changes on many levels. In the "consciousness raising" women's groups of the 1970s women discovered that issues they thought were personal were, in fact, shared by many other women like them. Sessions allowed women to identify sources outside themselves that were the cause of economic and personal angst. "CR" groups helped to create a foundation for future action.

Similarly, women, who are coming to dominate the labor movement of the 21st century, are fighting for the issues identified in the working women's survey by the AFL-CIO. Efforts to achieve better child care, pay equity, and career ladders have helped women not only achieve these goals, but also to improve their self confidence and image they carry of themselves as actors on the employment stage.

Does an individual need to join a consciousness raising group on the one hand, or a union on the other, in order to change the environment and one's self? As a union employee, I am a firm believer in unionization as a method to seek change. But a range of options are available. For example, if a group of employees has a specific issue in the workplace, they can decide to meet, formulate the issue and then as a group request meetings with management to resolve the problem. Enlightened managers know that responding to such requests is likely to improve the workplace and productivity.

Organizing in groups is a proven method of getting results. In joining together, women have found that not only are specific results achieved, but also they are relieved of some degree of isolation, self-blame, and internalized negativity. Therefore, empowering women not only holds the promise of a specific economic result, but also the promise of improved quality of life.

The effort to advance a common agenda for improved conditions of employment, in the form of improved salaries, more flexible schedules, better benefits, is not easy. However, it is necessary if real change is to occur. How it is done depends on circumstances, inclination and sensibilities.

As individuals, we all face personal and workplace problems in our lives. How we face them determines not only the specific result of our action, but how we feel about ourselves. Even in the most adverse circumstances, if we can look in the mirror and acknowledge that we have tried to act on a problem, there is a greater feeling of self respect, even after the very first step is taken. When a bond is created with others in the course of taking action, that feeling is more positive yet. While there are a variety of means to begin collective action, and a range of degrees of effectiveness, the key is to start with an evaluation of immediate issues, and reaching out to others for solutions.

Major changes to our world happen because groups of people get together and act. Why not be part of change and part of the solution to problems confronting working women?

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