

AN EVOLVING THIRD MODEL

Introduction

The goal of this paper is to describe how the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, two colleges in central Minnesota, are jointly attempting to develop a new model for the equitable education of women and men. The attempt here is to articulate the potential of two cooperative single sex colleges which have an almost completely joint curriculum, but maintain separate institutions, claiming unique identities. Hopefully this model will provide principles that can be adapted to improve the learning climate in traditional coeducational institutions.

Historically the two models available for higher education in the United States have been the single sex institution and the coeducational institution. This paper proposes a third, or a new model. Model Three seems to have the potential of integrating some of the best aspects of the two existing models.

Description of the Cooperating Colleges

The College of Saint Benedict founded in 1913 and enrolling 1,720 undergraduate women and Saint John's University founded in 1857 and enrolling 1,770 undergraduate men, are private liberal arts institutions sponsored by Benedictine women and men respectively. They are located approximately eighty miles northwest of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. For a quarter of a century, these two colleges have had an organic, developing community of interests and purposes. Formal cooperation began in the late 1950's when a grant from the Hill Family Foundation supported the Tri-College Program which included the two colleges and Saint Cloud State University in a variety of cooperative projects.

Late in the 1960's, Saint Benedict's and Saint John's considered a merger but rejected it, responding to a strong concern on both campuses that the colleges' distinctive and complementary strengths might be diminished or lost in merger. They proposed instead that the schools build on over half a century of co-existence to shape a model of bilateral cooperation which, in its current reality, is unique in American higher education.

Cooperation has increased efficiency and effectiveness by pooling resources; has avoided unnecessary duplication of facilities, programs and personnel; and has provided more options for students of both colleges than either college could offer alone. In cooperation, these institutions have provided additional and more intense opportunities for student growth.

Cooperation may be more likely to succeed at these two institutions because of similarity in mission and in special characteristics. The special marks of these two colleges are the following: 1) the impact of the Benedictine tradition, presence, and sponsorship; 2) the high percentage of students, faculty, and staff who live on the campuses (living and learning together binds them in a vital and supportive community experience); and 3) the commitment to

liberal arts rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In many ways, these two academic communities reflect the distinctive and supportive aspects and traditions of the Benedictine religious communities with which they share an environment.

Development of Two Current Models of Higher Education

Higher education traditionally was associated with the educational and professional preparation of men. When the first American colleges were established early in the 17th century they were open only to men. This male single sex model was the accepted form of higher education throughout the world. For the first two hundred years of higher education in the United States only males had access to colleges and universities. Early in the 1800's the concern for women's education resulted in the establishment of female seminaries which emphasized a finishing school education. In 1821 the Troy Seminary was created. Oberlin, in 1833, was the first men's college to admit female students, but these students were taught in a separate Ladies Department.¹ The fact that so few colleges admitted women prior to the Civil War spurred the founding of women's colleges. Mount Holyoke Seminary, the forerunner of modern day Mount Holyoke, was founded in 1837. It was followed in 1867 by Vassar and in rapid succession by Smith, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, Barnard and Radcliffe.²

While Oberlin was the first example of coeducation in this country, beginning with the land grant colleges in the West, colleges and universities began to open their doors to women, first on the college level and then on the graduate level as well. More recently, many of the major private institutions of higher education, originally male, have become coeducational. Presently most of higher education is coeducational. The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University's (hereafter referred to as CSB/SJU) joint venture is, however, an example of a higher education arrangement which is neither totally single sex nor completely coeducational.

During the past twenty-five years several men's and women's single sex institutions located in close proximity began cooperative programs--Brown and Pembroke, Haverford and Bryn Mawr, Columbia and Barnard, etc.--enhancing the resources they could offer to students. These efforts resulted in men and women students being educated together in the same classes. These provisions for joint classes, however, resulted in learning environments that still differed significantly from the coeducational model. Women students, for example, had the opportunity of having:

- 1) A home campus that was founded for the education of women.
- 2) A home campus faculty dedicated to the education of women.
- 3) Leadership opportunities on their campuses provided by having their own student government, student newspapers, campus committees, etc.

Some rather typical patterns emerged in these cross sex/cooperative ventures. The balancing acts between the men's and women's institutions became tenuous at best, and quite a number of these efforts gradually reverted to one or another of the original models of single sex or coeducation:

- 1) Some men's single sex institutions moved to the second model or a coeducational status. This greatly reduced the likelihood of a continuing cooperative program with the women's college since the two were now in competition for the same students.
- 2) The women's colleges in these instances had a choice of several directions:
 - a. Some merged with the men's institutions to form one single coeducational institution.
 - b. Some became coeducational institutions on their own.
 - c. Some maintained their single sex identity.

CSB/SJU--A New Model?

The continued joint cooperative venture at CSB/SJU has resulted in a direction that cannot be characterized as either single sex education or coeducation. Instead this venture appears to have the potential for the development of a new model which I choose to call, Model Three. The major effort of this part of my paper is to attempt an articulation of this new model. Such an articulation could serve several important purposes:

- 1) It would make it more possible for those of us involved in the venture to stand back and together reflect on our experiences.
- 2) If the outlines of a model are indeed emerging, it could help provide direction and intentional movement for the future of this venture.
- 3) It would provide the impetus for us to work together at clarifying the dynamics and the characteristics of the model.
- 4) It would provide a framework within which we could more easily locate and describe the transitional stages we are presently experiencing.
- 5) It would give us the opportunity to ask others in the higher education community to help us critique our venture, and to advise us.

- 6) It would provide the opportunity for further exploration of the types of learning experiences available and appropriate for both men and women.
- 7) It would help us to decide whether some principles derived from this venture can be of use to others in achieving the equitable education of women and men.

Joint Venture Described

In the CSB/SJU cooperative venture, two single sex colleges have almost totally combined their academic programs while maintaining unique institutional identities.

COOPERATIVE ASPECTS

1. One joint curriculum offering majors open to students from either campus.
2. One general education program being designed jointly by the two faculties.
3. One registrar and one recordkeeping system.
4. Twelve of the twenty major departments are now joint departments.
5. Joint management of all library resources.

SEPARATE ASPECTS

1. Each institution grants its own degrees.
2. Each institution maintains its own faculty and administration.
3. Each institution maintains its own residential campus.
4. Each institution has its own student government and its own student newspaper.
5. Each institution maintains its own financial responsibilities.

The joint venture of these two colleges is producing some very encouraging signs. What seems to be emerging is a dynamic context capable of generating a new educational environment. This new environment is one that supports the equitable education of women and men. The dynamism referred to here is a healthy creative tension. It is characterized by the existence of two faculties

side by side, each with a long history of educational commitment to the particular sex they have traditionally educated. It is the maintenance of a balance between these tensions that provides the potential for developing the best kind of educational environment for both men and women. The combined curricular program provides the opportunity for the men and women at these two schools to learn together. The context for development and continuation of the dynamic is the promise these two schools make to each other to continue together as equal partners.

Model Three and Coeducation

This model, which features equal partners in a dialogue, has some basic advantages in relation to the coeducational model. Traditionally in coeducation the perspectives of women have not been accorded equal balance. A tone was already set when women entered into the all-male preserve of higher education. At the time women were allowed entry into the system, it was assumed that the educational environment would prove both as acceptable and effective for women as it was for the men who had formed it and been formed by it. Women, however, were a minority who found themselves absorbed into a system that continued to be adjusted to men and dominated by them. As a result of this minority status, women's role in coeducation continued to be a subordinate one rather than an equal one.

It is in regard to the issue of equity that the real advantage of Model Three becomes apparent. The key to the potential in the CSB/SJU situation is that male and female perspectives are balanced by being institutionalized. As a result, the equality of the participants in the dialogue can be more easily affirmed. In coeducation at most institutions today women continue to have a subordinate role.

It is my assumption in this paper that single sex women's colleges will need to remain on the scene only as long as there are deficits for women in coeducation. Inherent in this entire presentation is the belief and hope that eventually coeducation will become the setting for the equitable education of women and men. Churgin puts it more cogently in his claim that, "Women's institutions, then, are the necessary medicinal remedy for a sick society and may expire only when our twentieth century society becomes a truly natural society not by man's decree but by nature's law."³

Characteristice of Model Three

What would be the characteristics of an educational environment in which there is sufficient equality in the dialogue between men and women? In other words, when neither sex is seen as subordinate, what will be the implications for educational programs and co-curricular life? Charts 1 and 2 indicate some of these characteristics.

CHART 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS UNDER MODEL THREE

CURRICULUM	FACULTY	ADMINISTRATION
<p><u>Nonsexist Curriculum</u></p> <p>Provides a curriculum that reflects the perspectives of both men and women. Thus scholarly disciplines will include women's past and women's interests as integral elements.</p> <p><u>Men and Women Learning Together</u></p> <p>Men and Women are learning together in mixed classes, but in an environment that provides the most supportive conditions. (An environment equally beneficial for women and men.)</p> <p><u>Choices of Majors</u></p> <p>Women and men have access to and feel free to choose majors which in the past may have been considered more appropriate for one or the other sex.</p>	<p><u>Composition of Faculty</u></p> <p>Students will have both male and female role models available. The faculty is balanced with a nearly equal number of faculty who have historically devoted themselves to the education of one or the other sex.</p> <p><u>Role Models</u></p> <p>Both sexes are likely to find role models and mentors of their own sex.</p> <p><u>Teaching Styles</u></p> <p>Faculty is seeking to find the balance or synthesis between men and women's preferred style of learning. Appears to point to the most mature approach for both men and women.</p> <p><u>Tenure</u></p> <p>Composite faculty tends to have a nearly equal number of faculty who have historically devoted themselves to the education of one or the other sex.</p>	<p><u>Staffing and Role Models</u></p> <p>Both men and women are strong role models in the administrative and staff positions.</p> <p><u>Trustees</u></p> <p>Two sets of Trustees with a joint committee made up of men and women representing the issues that enhance the possibilities of men and women learning together.</p> <p><u>Educational Mission</u></p> <p>Joint mission that articulates a shared commitment to the best education possible for both men and women.</p>

CHART 2

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT LIFE IN MODEL THREE

Aspects of Student Life	Model Three
Leadership Patterns	Makes provision for the two sexes to have equal leadership opportunities.
Sports Programming	Each campus continues to support the sports programs of the sex served by by campus.
Career Planning	Career choice opportunities that reflect the options open to both men and women. Programs that help women maintain high career aspirations.
Residential Patterns	Residential provisions continue to offer support to the particular sex served by the campus.
Student Sex Role Attitudes and Behaviors	Both institutions deal with the equally destructive effects of stereotypical femininity and stereotypical masculinity.
Aspirations for Grad School	The support that encourage both men and women to aspire and persevere in grad school is equally available.
Grade Average	Women are sufficiently recognized and supported to maintain equally high grade averages with men.

Transitions

The characteristics of Model Three as listed in Charts 1 and 2 certainly are not conditions that CSB/SJU have already reached. Instead they could form the ideals which these two institutions hope to continue moving toward. Once such ideals have been articulated and accepted, it will be more possible to assess current transitional activities.

What follows is a listing of some of the transitional activities that have taken place or are currently taking place with some assessment of each activity in the light of the proposed ideals.

A. Trustees

In the summer of 1982 the two Boards of Trustees endorsed a long-term commitment to cooperation as single sex colleges. The Boards charged the Presidents to implement further academic and administrative cooperation. The action of the two Boards supplies the pledge which is needed to indicate that the two partners will continue in their efforts at a balanced dialogue.

B. Joint Core Curriculum

Although all the major programs have been coeducational and coordinate for years, during the last decade our colleges, consistent with our commitment to autonomy, planned separate curricula for their basic college requirements. While striving toward virtually identical goals and guided by essentially identical missions, the two schools developed quite different general education curricula. The College of Saint Benedict chose to follow an outcomes-based program designed to articulate rigorous common standards for student learning in the core liberal arts. Saint John's University developed a limited distribution model program for its core liberal arts working from a faculty consensus that all students need exposure to the traditional modes of inquiry in all areas of the liberal arts.

Our separate development of core programs, even though moving toward the same objectives, resulted in new challenges to our cooperative venture. The differing programs suggested a separateness, even a competitiveness, about our essential goals. With the help of the Northwest Area Foundation we have begun a three year project to design a common core program. The project to create a common, more rigorous core curriculum has widespread support among both faculties, administrative bodies and governing boards. It is viewed as an unusual opportunity to strengthen our academic endeavor by designing a curriculum that builds upon successful aspects of the current separate programs.

C. Joint Academic Administration

The Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and the two Academic Deans form an administrative team. They meet weekly for several hours; they frequently serve on joint committees. This team plans for both the present and the future aspects of the academic enterprise. They receive and work with the suggested agenda items for the Chairs' joint meetings. They plan staffing together, decide which college will do the hiring of a particular position, and involve themselves in the interviewing and selection of all new faculty. The two Academic Deans have each taken complete charge of a particular program for both institutions. The SJU Academic Dean is the Director of the January Term. The Academic Dean at CSB is the Director of a Joint International Studies Program which places over 300 CSB/SJU students overseas yearly.

This joint academic administrative team has done a great deal to alleviate the kinds of duplication that might occur in having joint academic departments reporting to two administrations.

D. Women's Concerns

The joining of efforts of the two campuses in support of increased attention to women's perspectives has been particularly helpful. It has resulted in a number of projects that directly support equitable education for women on both campuses. Some of the women faculty members of the SJU campus obtained a Bush Grant to raise and explore the issue of the role, place, and value of women as colleagues and as students at a Catholic, Benedictine, men's college.

In addition several joint efforts include:

1. Joint informational meetings on issues related to sexual harassment.
2. A Women's Interest group spanning both campuses.
3. An annual Women's Week sponsored by and including events on both campuses.
4. A joint Committee on Incorporation of Women's Perspectives into the Curriculum (CIWCP) which is working to promote and help implement the incorporation of women's contributions, needs, outlooks, and learning styles into the CSB/SJU curriculum.

5. The Task Force on Gender Bias, a joint committee evaluating the outside-of-classroom environment for women and men.
6. Frequent meetings of student development personnel from both campuses to discuss issues and plan joint student events.

E. Learning Environment Concerns

These two colleges have involved themselves with a FIPSE Project called Education for Women's Development (co-directed by Mary Field Belenky of the Vermont Parent Programs, Blyth Clinchy of Wellesley College, Nancy Goldberger of Simon's Rock of Bard College and Jill Mattuck Tarule of Goddard College.) In this study learning styles are described through a series of bi-model dimensions. One dimension, for example, is the competitive or collaborative dimension. A beginning hypothesis of the project was that one mode of learning tends to predominate in women and that conventional educational practices tend to favor the other mode. The difference is often seen as a deficit for women and thus many women come to believe they cannot think or learn as well as men. For such women traditional coeducation can inhibit the development of self esteem, the sense of competence, and the sense of direction and control. Further discussions of this project on our campuses as well as other campuses indicate that there may indeed be preferred learning styles, but that they are not necessarily gender connected. (Women may, however, be more socialized toward one mode.) There are indications that in quite a number of men there also exists a preference for the mode of learning here ascribed to women. Thus some men are claiming that conventional education practices can be just as inhibiting for them and that the change called for should be seen as needed by and benefiting both sexes.

The same type of realization is beginning to occur in campus discussions of the document, The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women, (from Project on the Status and Education of Women of the Association of American Colleges). Faculty members on both campuses received copies of this publication. In the formal and informal discussions of this document, the possibility of a chilly climate for women was acknowledged. Numbers of men students, however, claimed that they also frequently find the classroom climate personally inhibiting.

While the challenge for these two colleges is first to concern ourselves with equal access and equal benefits for women, it is becoming apparent that efforts are needed to assess whether the learning environment needs to be changed in order to be more supportive of persons in general.

Next Steps

After listing some of the aspects of the transitional phase it is appropriate to consider the next steps. The first task will be to ask more persons both inside and outside the institution to reflect on the model as described here.

Modifications and additions will certainly be part of such a review. If there is sufficient acceptance of the implications of this model, faculty and staff will be asked to help flesh out the model and to suggest in what areas we might request grant support to obtain help in moving toward the ideals of the model.

Some faculty members believe it would be beneficial to have more precise information on the climate of learning that presently exists on the two campuses. They see a need for some specific research projects to help them understand the differences (or similarities) that now exist in the classroom. They believe that asking students to describe their perceptions of these differences would be enlightening. Such a survey might identify whether the differences are related to the gender of the instructor, the general "culture" of the campus, or the nature of the subject matter. Student reactions to existing single sex classes might also be interesting to compare.

There are many areas in which changes will need to take place as part of our effort to continue moving toward an equitable learning environment for women and men. Such transformative change can only come about if both of our institutions work together to address consciously the need for contemporary education to socialize men and women to transcend sex roles rather than perpetuate subordinate roles.⁴

Applicability in Other Institutions

A final question concerns the applicability of Model Three for other institutions of higher education. Obviously not many institutions of higher education could or would imitate the exact situation of these two colleges. If, however, the dynamism of Model Three has been correctly identified, it is possible that coeducational institutions might use this concept to assess the power base of women on their own campuses. They could search out ways to bring the dialogue into an equal balance. The listed characteristics of the model might serve as ideals that would be sufficiently desirable to motivate renewed efforts for equitable education. It is hoped that other institutions will at the least take an interest in helping us at CSB/SJU explore and make the best use of the potential in our situation.

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NOTES

¹Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 311.

²Gerda Lerner, The Female Experience: An American Documentary (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing Co., 1977), p. 205.

³Jonah R. Churgin, The New Woman and the Old Academe: Sexism and Higher Education (Roslyn Heights, New York: Libra Publisher, Inc., 1978), p. 96.

⁴Letter received from Ms Rita Weathersby, October 31, 1982.