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Feminists at Work:

Collaborative Relationships Among Women Faculty

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Abstract

This article describes an interpretive study of 26 feminist women faculty who collaborate with another woman or women in research and/or scholarly writing. The findings indicate that collaboration is a salient practice among feminist scholars. Collaborative practices reflect distinctive pedagogical, instrumental, professional, and intimate patterns that are philosophically congruent with feminism

Since the first women's studies program was formally approved at San Diego State University in 1970 (**Musil, 1992**), women's studies programs have rapidly developed and become a part of higher education institutions, particularly at research universities. Women associated with these programs are developing successful careers and conducting significant research. Building meaningful careers in research institutions often means that faculty members must successfully manage conflicts that develop between their commitments and the prevailing norms of their discipline or professional field. Because of women's minority status, however, the professional

relationships and friendships that a woman faculty member forms with other **[End Page 79]** academic women on her campus or elsewhere may be of particular importance in helping her to construct an identity as a legitimate scholar, develop effective research strategies, and overcome feelings of isolation (**Jensen, 1982; Kaufman, 1978**). Moreover, these relationships may provide the instrumental and emotional support that many women either need or desire to pursue their particular scholarly interests in competitive research institutions.

To work in collaboration with other scholars with whom they share a gender consciousness as well as research interests arguably offers a variety of professional and personal advantages to women who share feminist values and political commitments. Collaborative scholarship, however, is not universally valued in the academy. As a feminist sociologist and frequent collaborator, **Mary Frank Fox (1985)** noted:

Freedom and independence are certainly strong precepts in science and scholarship . . . and scholarship tends to attract the “solitary mind.” Yet the solitary dispositions and independent norms of science and scholarship are contravened by the communalism of the work. . . . The communalism and exchange of research engenders cooperation and interdependence. . . . We need to know much more about the way in which collegiality operates.

(p. 271)

Nor is collaboration well explicated in the scholarly literature. Studies of faculty collaboration, particularly studies employing qualitative methods, are rare (**Austin & Baldwin, 1991**) and little is known about the social relationships that develop among women faculty who work collaboratively in the competitive and individualistic culture of American research universities. The purpose of this study was to describe collaborative relationships among women faculty members as they reflect the interrelationships among feminism, collaboration, and scholarship—specifically, the relationships that develop among feminist women who collaborate in their scholarship.

Women, the Academy, and Collaboration

Academic Women’s Status

Although women have held faculty positions in American colleges and universities since the nineteenth century, they were rarely the focus of social science research until the mid-sixties when **Jessie Bernard (1964)** presented an argument for bringing more women into higher education to address the shortage of qualified instructional faculty. By the late 1960s, however, faculty women in the social sciences were focusing attention on doctoral-trained women and were comparing their academic careers with those of men along such dimensions as field, marital status, children, productivity, income, and other professional and personal characteristics. **Simon, Clark, and Galway (1967, p. 236)** found that the differences between men and women's academic careers were both relatively small and decreasing **[End Page 80]** but that women faculty felt they had failed to gain full acceptance in the academic "club."

Other studies of faculty women documented the under-representation of women in specific institutions and fields and began to explore career pattern variations (**Bayer & Astin, 1975; Graham, 1970, 1978; Lewin & Duchan, 1971; Tidball, 1976**). Particularly after the passage of affirmative action legislation, scholars of higher education carefully scrutinized the careers, status, and productivity of women faculty members and tried to explain the continuing evidence of discrimination against women despite their gains on a number of traditional productivity measures (**Astin, 1978**). **Kaufman (1978)**, looking at structural, rather than psychological barriers, explored collegial-friend relationships and concluded that women's exclusion from male networks isolated them from important informal contacts, leaving them at a professional disadvantage.

Subsequent research on academic women acknowledged women's disadvantage (**Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Fox, 1984**) and frequent isolation in an institutional culture long dominated by men. **Menges and Exum (1983)** argued that women and minority faculty progressed more slowly through the academic ranks because of the distinctive problems that they faced in negotiating peer review processes that favor the scholarship and career patterns associated with white males. **Langland and Gove (1981)** observed that women's studies programs had begun to alter faculty scholarship but had yet to substantially influence the traditional curriculum; they noted that women's studies remained the voice of the outsider in academe.

Without minimizing the obstacles that academic women continued to face in their struggles to succeed as “women-of-knowledge,” **Simeone (1987)** contended that the situation for women had improved, citing as evidence

the growing prominence of women’s studies and feminist scholarship, the expansion of women’s scholarly and professional networks for communication and support, the increasing numbers of women faculty at research institutions, the implementation of anti-discrimination laws, and the increasing publication rates for women.

(p. 75)

Although many scholars agreed with Simeone’s argument, research in the 1990s has continued to provide insights into women’s isolation and exclusion from informal male networks and positions of power (**Moore & Sagaria, 1991**), while others have theorized that connected and caring relationships characterize women in general (**Ashton-Jones & Thomas, 1991; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Noddings, 1986**). For example, after **Moore and Sagaria (1991)** documented the under-representation of academic women in positions of power in leading research universities and editorial boards, they then argued the need to rethink graduate education and junior faculty experiences, reshaping them from periods of individualistic challenge and **[End Page 81]** competition to times of mutual investment in talent development, generativity, and collaboration. They urged an examination of feminist scholars’ working relationships to garner possible evidence about whether the practices of feminist scholars reflect feminist theory and advocacy.

Women’s Friendships, Values, and Culture

The values and relationships that have long been associated with women in Western culture—nurturance, reciprocity, intimacy, mutuality, and care and concern for others—appear repeatedly both implicitly and explicitly in the literature on collaboration. **Appley and Winder (1977)** developed a theory of collaboration that evoked themes of caring, commitment, and consciousness (or reflexivity) that tend to be characteristics of feminist inquiry. They conceptualized collaboration as a relational value system that provides an alternative to competition and hierarchy and identified three characteristics:

(1) individuals in a group share mutual aspirations and a common conceptual framework; (2) the interactions among individuals are characterized by “justice as fairness”; (3) these aspirations and conceptualizations are characterized by each individual’s consciousness of her or his motives toward the other; by caring or concern for the other; and by commitment to work with the other over time provided that this commitment is a matter of choice.

(p. 281)

Historical inquiry into the lives of 18th- and 19th-century American women—particularly white, middle-class women—supports this contemporary construct of women’s collaboration, documenting and providing further insights into the ties between feminism and collaboration. Drawing upon diaries, letters, and personal records, feminist historians have demonstrated the importance and significance of women’s associations with other women. Writing before Appley and Winder, **Smith-Rosenberg (1975)** described American society as characterized by a rigid gender-role differentiation that led to the development of supportive networks of women within a “women’s sphere.” These networks in the family and in the larger society grew out of women’s mutual affection and shared experience and provided an important sense of continuity within a rapidly changing society. **Cott (1977)** asserted that women’s friendships were particularly attractive because they represented peer relationships: “Female friendships assumed a new value in women’s lives in this era because relations between equals—‘peer relationships’—were superseding hierarchical relationships as the desired norms of human interaction” (p. 187). She further suggested that women’s reliance on each other “embodied a new kind of group consciousness, one which could develop into a political consciousness” (p. 194). **[End Page 82]**

Freedman (1979) identified linkages between the 19th-century culture of white, native-born, middle-class women and feminist politics. She argued that the rise of women’s societies and organizations, or “female institution building,” although not necessarily representing a political strategy, nevertheless provided those women with resources integral to the emergence of feminist politics. Freedman further suggested that the integrationist strategies which replaced separatism after the success of the suffrage movement may explain the erosion of the women’s culture and the decline of feminism after 1920. Applying her theses to women in universities, she observed:

The success of the first generation of female academics did not survive past the 1920s, not only because of men's resistance, but, as **Rosalind Rosenberg [1979]** has explained, "Success isolated women from their culture and placed them in an alien and often hostile community." Many academics who cut off their ties to other women lost the old feminine supports but had no other supports to replace them.

(p. 522)

Freedman concluded from the history of women's institution building—with contemporary women's studies departments serving as just one notable example—that women must draw on the cultural resources that emanate from a separate and distinct women's culture while continuing to examine that culture critically.

Rosenberg's (1979) research into the feminization of the curriculum at the University of Chicago at the turn of the century revealed the extent of women's gains and losses as a result of their integration into male-dominated universities. "The triumph of higher education in America had a major impact on feminism," she asserted.

The ideological change fostered by work in the social sciences freed women from the restrictions imposed by old prejudices about female inferiority, but at the same time undermined the sense of support women had enjoyed as members of a distinctive and self-consciously separate community. Having won a place within higher education, women suffered the strain of no longer feeling secure in the old, separate world of womanhood and maternal nurture, without being fully accepted or feeling comfortable within the new world of professionalism and science.

(p. 338)

Irish scholar **O'Connor's (1992)** critical review of the research into women's friendships extended the work of Cott, Freedman, Rosenberg, and Smith-Rosenberg. O'Connor concluded that women's friendships have been overlooked and frequently trivialized as an area of research. Further, she argued that friendship is a culturally constructed form of relationship. It varies according to historical and cultural influences, affects the individual's identity and well-being, and plays an important part in reflecting and reinforcing class position and marital status. **[End Page 83]**

Collaboration and Coauthorship in Academic Scholarship

Research on collaboration has focused primarily on coauthorship. Male scientists who dominated “big science” provided scholarly interest in coauthorship and teamwork that appeared in the social science literature in the decades after World War II (**Eaton, 1951; Hagstrom, 1964, 1965**). By the 1970s and 1980s, however, such studies included women as subjects; their authorship and public acknowledgment of their contributions increased. **Chubin (1974)** and **Mackie (1976)** found that women as well as men published a significant amount of collaborative research, although women who published collaboratively tended to receive first-author recognition less often than men. **Wilkie and Allen (1975)** found that two women were much more likely to collaborate equally than two men or a man and a women. **Fox and Faver’s (1984)** research on the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration among social scientists indicated that, while collaborative scholars benefit from opportunities to join resources and alleviate academic isolation, possible disadvantages include time required for negotiation, financial costs, and personal investments necessary to maintain the relationship.

When studying styles of collaborative scholarship among male academic chemists, **Bayer and Smart (1991)** found that, over time, the proportion of single-authored and dual-authored papers declined and the proportion of published team research papers increased. By mid-career, more than half of a typical scholar’s published papers were multi-authored. Analyzing authorship patterns in sociology journals, **Ward and Grant (1991)** found coauthorship more common than single authorship for both women and men, although women coauthored more frequently than men. They also found that both women and men scholars writing on gender coauthored more frequently than scholars writing on other topics; rates of coauthorship were lower in national mainstream journals than in other sources; and women were less likely to occupy the dominant-author position in mainstream journal articles than elsewhere.

In a 1992 interpretive study, Baldwin and Austin analyzed the language that participants used to describe long-term collaborative partnerships. Finding that faculty members in the field of higher education used a variety of metaphors to describe their collaborative relationships, they concluded that “[a] good collaborative relationship has many of the qualities of a good marriage, a successful creative alliance, or a winning sports team” (p. 8). Taken together, the scholarship on

faculty women's status, feminist perspectives on women's friendships and culture, and academic collaboration suggests that collaboration among feminist scholars may have an impact on both their work and their identity. **[End Page 84]**

Methodology

To examine the social relationships that develop among feminist women who collaborate in their research, we chose an interpretive research design with interviews. The approach was well suited to retrieve the meanings that individual and groups of scholars construct from their experiences as collaborators while maintaining a feminist grounding in the lived experiences of women (**Fonow & Cook, 1991**). Thus, this study differs from the majority of social science studies of collaboration that typically have used bibliometric or survey methods and have often focused on citation counts and name-ordering patterns. (For examples, see **Hagstom, 1965; Smart & Bayer, 1986; Ward & Grant, 1991**.)

We developed, piloted, and refined an interview protocol containing 35 open-ended questions. It was organized into four categories covering (a) the culture of the research university, (b) collaboration, (c) the evolving scholar, and (d) feminism. This study is derived from parts of three categories—collaboration, the evolving scholar, and feminism. The other category, the research community's culture, lay beyond the focus of paper. The pilot study consisted of individual and group interviews at a public research university in the Midwest with faculty women who identified themselves as feminists.

In the actual data collection and analysis phase, we audio tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed the interviews, which varied in length from 45 minutes to over two hours. We also collected curricula vitae and other written documents, including published journal articles, conference papers, and manuscripts in progress, later using them for limited triangulation purposes.

We coded and thematically analyzed data based on **Strauss and Corbin's (1990)** open coding process, developing categories based on both inductive and deductive processes. For example, in considering the occurrence of collaborative research, we considered antecedent conditions, specific properties, context, intervening conditions, and strategies that scholars used to manage and respond to collaboration in relationship to the context and consequences. By organizing the coded bits of data around each specific collaborative event, we were able to see new

themes. The identification of these themes led to the refinement of the research questions which then became the basis for a higher level coding scheme. Rereading and recoding each transcript with the major themes clearly in mind resulted in making visible linkages that had been too embedded in the narratives to be noticed earlier. The quotations we have chosen to include in this article are those that best illustrate a particular finding.

We used a purposeful, criterion-based sampling technique (**Patton, 1990**) to identify participants for the study, selecting women who met the following [**End Page 85**] criteria: (a) They were employed as a full-time tenured or tenure-accruing faculty member at one of two Carnegie classification Research I universities; (b) They held a core, joint, or adjunct appointment ¹ in a department of women's studies; and (c) they had collaborated with another woman on a research project, a scholarly paper or article, or a creative arts project.

Early in the spring of 1993, we contacted women's studies departments at two Research I universities. From a list of faculty names, we then contacted women by mail. Twenty-nine women returned response letters indicating that they had collaborated with another woman and were interested in participating in the study. The 26 women in the final sample represented 18 different academic departments and fields in the social sciences, humanities, and professional schools. Thus, they are similar in disciplinary or professional field to women's studies faculty in most research institutions (**Rosser, 1986**). Six participants were assistant professors, eleven were associate professors and nine were full professors. There are fewer assistant professors represented in the sample than in the national distribution of women faculty in research universities. This finding might seem surprising, but faculty participants repeatedly reported that they were advised not to collaborate as junior faculty. An additional explanation is that women may delay their affiliation with women's studies programs until after receiving tenure if the women's studies unit is not their tenure-accruing unit.

Three of the participants were women of color and 23 were white, although two of the white participants identified themselves as having other ethnic backgrounds or national heritages. Fourteen of the women described themselves as currently having life partners; 12 were married, eight said they were currently single or divorced, and

three identified themselves as lesbians. The women had a total of 14 children and/or stepchildren. Participants ranged in age from their mid-thirties to their late sixties and had earned their highest degree between 1955 and 1990.

Findings

Collaborative scholarship was an ongoing process for most feminist faculty. At the time of the study, the majority of feminist scholars both had been and were collaborating in their scholarship with a variety of individuals, including friends and colleagues, students and advisors, and partners or spouses. Some majority women had designed studies and coauthored publications only with other white American women; others had worked closely with women of color and women of other nationalities and ethnicities and **[End Page 86]** with men as well as women. Similarly, some women of color had collaborated only with other women of color while others had collaborated with minority and majority men and women. Some participants had worked almost entirely in collaborative research relationships; others had formally collaborated only once on a publication or paper. Also, the rank of the participant appeared to have little bearing on when an individual collaborated or on the nature of the collaboration. The one exception was that fewer assistant professors than associate and full professors collaborated. Again, the reason was that most participants perceived collaboration as a liability to establishing their reputations as scholars.

Among the various collaborative practices, four distinctive collaborative relationships emerged in the study: pedagogical, instrumental, professional, and intimate. “Pedagogical” collaborations exhibited a concern for professional nurturance and growth by a more experienced individual who worked with a less experienced individual. “Instrumental” relationships were formed for a specific work output. “Professional” collaborations were characterized by a shared research agenda, multiple collaborative projects, and a longer term collegial relationship. “Intimate” collaborations were characterized by an emotional and intellectual closeness, shared understandings, and an ease of communication.

Although we present these relationships as four separate types, in practice they are both fluid and discrete. Some collaborative relationships can be easily categorized. As other collaborative relationships evolve, they may subtly change from one type of relationship to another. Still other relationships do not easily lend themselves to being described as any particular type. Moreover, participants who

frequently collaborated may have been involved in one relationship that was pedagogical, another that was more instrumental, and a third that was intimate. Although no one pattern predominated, the pedagogical pattern involving a senior and junior colleague in a teaching-learning relationship was the most common of the four patterns and was the most likely to evolve into a different type of relationship over time.

Pedagogical Collaboration: Nurturance

For faculty in this study, nurturing the development of others was an important aspect of their feminism and of their perception of the scholarly role. A majority of the participants agreed that working closely with another scholar on a shared intellectual project was an important way to foster growth and learning. Thus, collaboration as a form of teaching or mentoring was described often and by a majority of the participants. Faculty who collaborated with students and senior faculty who collaborated with their junior and usually younger, less-experienced colleagues practiced this form of collaboration. **[End Page 87]**

Collaboration in Associate Professor Phyllis Brown's² social sciences department is a value the departmental faculty share and represents the most commonly found collaboration in mainstream academia. She observed much student/faculty collaboration of that kind. "A lot of it centers around busy faculty with lots of ideas. Students are interested in some of these same things." Including students in research that leads to jointly authored papers was viewed as a way "of getting research out in a place with not very many resources—a better way than paying students just to collect data." Brown hinted, however, at some ambivalence about collaborating with students and admitted that she chose her collaborators carefully. "I collaborate mostly with female students. . . . I view collaboration with students as a mutual thing." She added: "Part of my feminism was trying to get into the system, so that, for example, I can choose what doctoral students' committees I'll be on—and they tend to be heavily women, or men who[m] I valued. . . . I'll put my energy into helping minority students who are weak and some women who are weak. I can't help all of the weak students."

Being part of a student/faculty research group not only added to Dr. Lisa Gamble's feelings of professional competence but helped her develop close friendships with other women scholars. An associate professor in a professional field, she explained: "You still feel a real close bond with those people—socially and emotionally as well

as professionally—knowing that those are your colleagues who[m] you can go to when you need help.” As a faculty member, however, she had serious concerns about the possible exploitation of students. Like most of the other participants in the study, Gamble did not agree that faculty should coauthor a student’s research “unless the faculty member really writes or contributes something significant.” She admitted that her opinion was not the dominant one in her department and described it as “an ethical issue without a right answer.”

Dr. Marian Thomas’s experience as a new assistant professor working with a graduate student demonstrated that faculty, too, can be vulnerable in student/faculty research. Thomas recounted an unhappy experience with a graduate assistant who became interested in data she was collecting for Marian’s research. Unaware of the ethics of the situation, the student took Thomas’s data and worked on the topic with another faculty member. Despite the experience, Marian welcomed the opportunity to work with students who are interested in her area. Having lacked female mentors and collaborative opportunities as a student, she was aware of just how important and advantageous they could be. She credited her collaborative research experience with a senior colleague for her growth as a feminist and as a scholar. **[End Page 88]**

Dr. Jill Hastings, a social sciences assistant professor, described her feminism as motivating her to help other women recognize their choices and “not get locked into certain ideas of how you’re supposed to do things.” She described herself as committed to empowering her students and recalled the importance of her own collaboration with a competent female scholar whom she could emulate. “Collaborating with her allowed me to feel more valued,” she explained, and she wanted to function in that same capacity with students. “Even though I’ve done a lot of research, I still think of myself primarily as a teacher,” and teaching is one way she expressed her feminism.

Professor Nancy Connor, a full professor in a professional field who was beginning to talk about retirement, had few opportunities to direct doctoral dissertations and to write with students because of her particular research specialty. Nevertheless, she was committed to helping women and young scholars. She observed:

If you can pair some experience with inexperience, it really helps to serve in a mentoring way to that person coming along. I'd like to see a lot more of that—particularly young scholars now. The tenure mill is tough—they're scrambling for six years. If they can get some help, it's useful to them. On the other side of that, sometimes young scholars are a real shot in the arm for somebody like me.

Sharing Connor's commitment to younger scholars, Dr. Edith Ross, also a professor in a professional field, described her own feminist stance toward collaboration:

Collaboration is working in a fashion where everybody has input, that everybody's empowered to have equal input. . . . If I'm a senior now, a senior person in my field, and I'm working with more junior women . . . we're listed equally. I may have contributed more because of my experience, but I don't want to get into that issue. Others mentored me. Now I will mentor others.

Instrumental Collaboration: Pragmatism

Instrumental collaboration encompasses relationships that were formed to accomplish a specific objective or to work on a single project. Scholars came together in instrumental collaborations for primarily practical reasons, such as needing someone with a particular skill or resource to complement their own research expertise. Another reason for engaging in an instrumental collaboration was desiring the experience of working on a particular project, investigating a topic of special interest, or working with a particular person. Some collaborations with students and new faculty were more pragmatic than pedagogical even though learning was a benefit. As Professor Betty Line in a professional school recalled: **[End Page 89]**

Politically it was very important to collaborate when I was young, because I needed the strength of the senior people. They needed my abilities, but they had years and status. So there are times early in my career where I was the worker and they were the name and we used each other mutually.

An associate professor in a professional field, Patricia Carter described her reason for collaborating on a survey with a colleague at another institution as their mutual need to publish. “She had the expertise in the area and we were friends—she was in the same kind of situation I was—in terms of publications.” Pat described how they “carved it in half” after completing the survey with each approaching the data from a different point of view. They published two coauthored articles.

A social scientist, Dr. Ellen Frank commented that she had “coauthors all over the place” and suggested that instrumental relationships can be motivated by a need to generate research. Frank, an associate professor, admitted that few people worked together in her field 15 years ago but that it has become increasingly common as the field becomes more like the natural sciences. She described herself as having been drawn increasingly into collaborative work over time. “It’s very nice. You can keep a lot of balls in the air at one time.” She admitted, however, that collaboration requires compromise and a willingness to give up some control: “Sometimes the paper doesn’t look exactly like the way you would have written it.”

Joining with other researchers to generate articles—to increase one’s efficiency and productivity—was more frequently seen in the social sciences than in other fields represented in this study. However, women in the humanities also collaborated for pragmatic reasons, often joining forces to coedit a journal or anthology or to take on a larger project than one could do alone. Much like Frank’s description of collaboration as a division of labor, collaborators in the humanities also divided up the work in ways that were perceived as efficient, reflecting their particular strengths and interests. For example, Dr. Marjorie Baker, a professor in the humanities, described how she and her collaborating partner prepared a commemorative volume. “I worked mostly with the publisher . . . and when there were problems with contributors, it was [her] turn to get on their case. She oversaw the final preparation of the copy editing.” They both wrote essays for the volume and collaborated on the introduction. Assistant Professor Suzanne Smith described her collaboration similarly:

It appeared that we had the perfect combination of all the resources to get the project going. . . . It was something that needed to be done, and we thought we could do it. . . . Together we had enough need, enough resources, enough opportunity to think the project into existence.

Professional Partnership Collaboration: Shared Agendas

Less common than other types of collaborative relationships, professional partnerships were characterized by shared research agendas and long-term relationships that often lasted several years and through many research and writing projects. The relationships that developed between professional collaborators were cordial and friendly, but they lacked the intensity that characterized intimate collaborations. Dr. Nina Caruso, an assistant professor in a social science discipline, was currently involved in a large, sponsored, multi-year project that was, or had the potential to become, a professional collaboration. She typically had several research projects and collaborative relationships going at one time, some pedagogical and others intimate. However, Caruso's relationships occasionally had characteristics of the long-term professional relationships that lead to multiple publications over several years. Caruso described herself as a "private" person who separated her personal life from her professional life. Discussing her relationships with her colleagues, she explained:

Most of my collaborators are friends of mine. . . . Basically [the relationships] evolved as friendships after the research part. And we socialize. But we usually socialize [in a way] that is removed from the actual work that we're doing. There is a distinction between what's social and what's work.

Dr. Taylor Woodrow, whose activities best illustrate professional partnership collaboration, had several long-term relationships over the course of her scholarly career. A social sciences professor, she portrayed her relationships as friendly "but never to the point that it [being friendly] dominates." Describing her current research partnership, she explained:

I'd say we're good collegial friends. . . . We go to professional meetings together, room together to save money . . . and the families are friendly. . . . There is a difference between a good collegial friend and a good friend. There is always a little reserve with a collegial friend that you're not going to have with a personal friend.

Her current professional collaboration was “a long-term successful one with grants, papers, a book, and presentations.” The relationship had begun more than six years before the study:

We sort of plunged in—we sort of knew each other a little bit socially, both women, both in the department, both at about the same career stage. We had very similar methodological interests and complementary substantive interests. That turned out to be a very good basis for collaboration. But I didn’t really know her. We sort of ignored that.

[End Page 91]

Woodrow’s involvement in long-term research relationships provided a view of collaboration that was missing in the stories of many of the participants. She talked about how her experiences as a doctoral student helped her in “laying the foundation for the first major collaborative relationship that I did have as a professional” and how she learned to put differences aside and maintain a positive relationship:

You have to be a little bit easy-going in these relationships . . . or they’ll dissolve. . . . It’s not exactly like a marriage, but everybody has to give more than 50%. . . . You do have to understand the ebb and flow. If you’re terribly picky or you’re terribly demanding in your collaborative relationship, they will not work.

Intimate Collaboration: Intellectual and Emotional Closeness

Special personal and professional relationships were formed by women in this study who shared their ideas and their scholarly lives with very close friends, life partners, and other family members. Also included in this category are close collaborative relationships that developed between women scholars who shared the same racial or ethnic identity, other than that of the dominant Anglo group, and expressed that shared identity in their work. Associate Professor Maggie Grant’s current relationship with her friend, colleague, and collaborator is unlike any professional relationship Maggie had ever had. A solitary person who was happy to be at home alone with a book, she laughed at how her collaborator kept her connected—“forever dragging

me around.” A real plus in their collaboration, she believes, is their ease in communication: “We’ve got this code. We can say two or three words and she’ll know what I’m talking about. We agree on most things.”

Others involved in intimate collaborations also reported the importance of shared understandings. Professor Lori Boothe struggled to explain the process of writing with her life partner and laughed, “It’s really funny. It seems like this utterly natural division of labor. . . . We don’t even have to talk about it.” For Dr. Karen Bell, an associate professor in the humanities, and Nina Caruso, those easy relationships came in their collaborations with other women of color. Caruso also laughed when explaining, “I think some of the things that you’d have to explain to an Anglo woman you don’t necessarily have to explain. But also I think how we view the world and how we view certain things. It’s also shaped by that.” Bell wondered, “I don’t know whether it’s because [she] is my friend and we have the same aspirations, the same rhythms—we were like Frick and Frack. We laugh about that so much now.” More seriously, she continued, “We are two people who are dedicated to teaching. . . . We are highly politicized, very conscious of our racial and gender positioning in mainstream academia at this point in the century.” **[End Page 92]**

Associate Professor Sally Miller agreed that communication with her collaborator, a female sibling, was easy, describing how they understand each other’s looks and moods. Collaboration with a close relative, however, meant that they occasionally have to deal with feelings of jealousy, competition, and resentment. Miller described a relationship that was both permanent and changing:

We always used to have each other read our papers that we’d done singly and critique each other. And there was a time when she stopped giving hers to me. And then I stopped too. But now she’s started up again, and I don’t know what prompted that or what prompted the stopping. I think there was an awareness of something going on and some kind of resentment. I don’t know.

“Sharing” is a key word in the stories that feminist women told about their “intimate” collaborations. Jill Hastings pointed out that the perception of collegiality was a reason many of them were attracted to the academy in the first place. As Maggie Grant, Nina Caruso, and Karen Bell illustrate, they often shared a way of talking, a network of friends, membership in a particular culture, and other aspects of their personal and professional lives. Occasionally, they shared homes and

families. Sally Miller collaborated with students, former students, and most frequently with her sister. Lori Boothe and Phyllis Brown collaborated with their life partners. Collaborating with a loved one added another dimension to an already complex and emotionally intimate relationship. Lori explained, “We’re partners as well as collaborators, so this is a small part of the whole piece of our relationship. . . . I suppose in a way it makes us even closer.”

The Interaction of Feminism, Collaboration, and Scholarship

Faculty women who are committed to feminism, scholarship, and collaboration reveal in their words that their commitments intersect in diverse and powerful ways. A dominant theme flowing through the feminist faculty narratives is the importance of personal values. Participants repeatedly expressed the desire to integrate such feminist values as nurturance, mutuality, cooperation, and reciprocity into their scholarship and to select topics and methods that reflect their commitments to other women, their communities and to equality and social justice. Although women in this study rarely used the word *values* in their stories, they repeatedly used value-laden words such as *equal*, *empowering*, *democratic*, *sharing*, and *trusting*, to describe both their relationships and the culture they desire to create. Lori Boothe, a full professor in the humanities, observed that collaboration seems like a very feminist mode of work. Edith Ross, a full professor in a professional field, described working with a jealous and controlling faculty member as “the opposite of collaboration. It’s a very hierarchical notion.” **[End Page 93]**

Many women in the study believed that collaboration, like their relationships, can and should model feminist values. They strove for relationships that empowered women and other groups that had been excluded or undervalued. They worked to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and support. Equality and democracy are central values in feminist relationships and were concepts that recurred in the participants’ stories. Myra Kramer, an associate professor of color in the social sciences saw collaboration as reflecting both feminist and Afrocentric values. Karen Bell, an associate professor of color in the humanities, firmly believed that collaboration was a way “for women to do differently in the academy . . . to really make our voices heard.” Sally Miller, a white associate professor in the social sciences concurred:

I think working together in a collaborative, cooperative, non-competitive way is one way in which feminism can be modeled to the world. . . . It seems to me that kind of a commitment is very different than what we see in normal departments and normal scholarship where the mode is very much “attack another position in order to make your position look good.” This whole collaboration notion suggests there is another way.

Agreeing with Sally Miller, Pat Carter, a white associate professor in a professional school, views the dominant academic culture as pushing people “not only to go against their values but to exploit others.” She describes the connection between her values and collaboration, “The values I usually end up advocating have to do with teamwork, cooperation, understanding, mutual respect—so collaboration fits right in [with] all that.” In short, working closely with a feminist collaborator can give a scholar the courage to proclaim her own feminism in an environment that is hostile to feminist politics, scholarship, and pedagogy.

Discussion

This study indicates that collaboration is a common practice among feminist scholars. The participants in this study typically sought membership in a supportive community. They experienced a lack of close relationships with other women as a professional and sometimes personal disadvantage. Thus, they chose to counter that disadvantage in their work with professionally productive relationships with women. This study documents four patterns of collaborative relationships. Three of the patterns—pedagogical, instrumental, and professional—manifested forms and features somewhat similar to those observed by other researchers. For example, **Wilkie and Allen (1975)** identified three forms of academic teams as complementary, supplementary, and coequal. Later, **Smart and Bayer (1986)** modified **Hagstrom’s (1964)** traditional partnership types into complementary, supplementary, **[End Page 94]** and master-apprentice. Although the participants in this study also collaborated in ways that could be labeled with some of these same terms, most of them recognized and rejected the power and authority structure implied in these forms, especially master-apprentice and supplementary. Therefore, we chose to give them names that described the purpose or essence of the collaborative relationship rather than its authority structure.

This study, furthermore, differs from antecedent scholarship on academic teams, coauthorship, and collaboration by identifying intimate collaboration as a fourth relationship pattern, one which heretofore has been invisible and or undocumented in published work. Intimate collaboration is characterized by an intellectual and emotional closeness between partners. Not surprisingly, the affective qualities enmeshed in academic research relationships have not been captured by traditional quantitative research methods. Moreover, the majority of studies of collaboration and coauthorship in university scholarship have been conducted by and focused exclusively on academic men (see, for example, **Bayer & Smart, 1991**). In explicating collaboration and coauthorship about men there has been no mention of intimacy as a quality of those relationships. In contrast, as feminist scholars have written about qualitative aspects of women's research relationships, they have suggested that some women derive great satisfaction from social relationships and that they approach research as a communal endeavor (**Ward & Grant, 1991**). Also, because feminist methodology considers reflexivity a valued source of knowledge (**Cook & Fonow, 1986**), intimate collaboration could further enhance self-reflection.

In the present research, some feminist scholars' stories about close personal scholarly relationships with women describe intellectual intimacy as an integrated construct that defies extricating one dimension from the other. Consequently, the interview data do not lead to the conclusion that women's academic careers are less important than their personal relationships, a patriarchal stereotype with which professional women in all fields have been burdened. In fact, findings from this study regarding the friendships that women faculty form with their collaborators in professional, pedagogical, and instrumental relationships suggested diversity. Some women preferred to maintain a professional distance from their academic colleagues, even those with whom they socialized. They described their professional lives as separate from their personal lives. Others preferred to combine work and close friendships. It is significant to note that no participant, however, felt that she compromised her work to maintain a friendship. At the same time, several feminists indicated that they chose not to collaborate with other women if they felt that professional involvement would harm their personal relationship.

It is not surprising that disciplinary norms determined likely forms of collaborative scholarship. Women in the humanities were likely to coauthor **[End Page 95]** or coedit books while women in professional fields were more likely to collaborate on research projects and journal publications. However, even within a particular

discipline or field, colleagues valued collaboration differently. For example, in an area of the humanities one feminist faculty member's coauthored book was well received and rewarded while in another area of the humanities a feminist faculty member's coauthored book was dismissed by her colleagues. In all fields, participants consistently described their desire to function as democratic, equal partners rather than as hierarchical team leaders, thus lending support to **Wilkie and Allen's (1975)** finding that women prefer to collaborate with other women as equals. Even in pedagogical teams consisting of junior and senior faculty or students and professors, women in this study resisted the implications of hierarchy and authority implicit in the masculine "master/apprentice" relationship. Instrumental teams consisting of specialists who might be viewed as "supplementary" collaborators were also described as operating according to a democratic model. Sensitive to relationships of power and exploitation, women faculty in this study attempted to establish relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and support.

As feminist women who were building careers in research universities where the vast majority of tenured faculty are white men, the enactment of their commitments to feminism and scholarship demanded both emotional and intellectual resources. Despite the fact that some women faculty either lacked the opportunity or chose not to collaborate formally until later in their careers, the participants in this study found that collaboration with other women was a powerful way to create and to share their ideas and their intra-institutional and extra-institutional resources. Far from viewing their collaborations with other women as disadvantageous, most women in this study preferred them and considered them advantageous, thus further corroborating academic feminists' valuing and seeking membership in a supportive community (**Reinharz, 1984**). In reality, the faculty in this study experience a lack of close relationships with other women scholars as a professional disadvantage, and they are committed to countering that disadvantage in their work with other women.

Implications

This study contributes to knowledge about the relationships and friendships that help to support and define academic careers and contribute to productive scholarly lives. At the same time, it focuses only on women's studies faculty in research universities. Although we made efforts to maximize diversity in rank, discipline, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other demographic characteristics, the study does not purport to describe all faculty women or all women's studies faculty.

Further studies are needed [**End Page 96**] to consider (a) women who work in other types of colleges and universities where research opportunities and expectations are limited; (b) women in the natural sciences or professional schools, such as engineering and medicine, where collaborative research is the norm; (c) women faculty who are not affiliated with women's studies programs; (d) women who work in administrative positions; and (e) collaborating faculty women whose careers have been unfulfilling or unsuccessful and who have left the research university environment. Also, the small number of women of color, lesbian scholars who chose to discuss their sexual orientation, and the absence of individuals with physical disabilities in this study precluded the possibility of explicating how "characteristics" associated with isolation influence collaboration. An understanding of feminism, scholarship, and collaboration would be enhanced by hearing the stories of women faculty in these important groups.

We interviewed participants individually and privately rather than as collaborating pairs or teams. Discussing collaboration with groups of women might provide a view of relationships and socially constructed identities that is missing in this study.

The quality of a publication is an important factor in evaluating faculty scholarship, whether it is produced individually or collaboratively. The design of this study precluded considering the quality of scholarship. Thoughtful inquiry into the relationship between individually and collaboratively generated scholarship and quality is necessary.

Conversations with women who collaborate successfully suggest that in-depth studies are also needed to explore other common types of collaboration, with student/faculty research partnerships being a particularly rich area for study. Similarly, other collaborations that display power and status differences, such as those involving women and men, junior and senior faculty, and African American and white faculty, deserve scholarly attention. These collaborative relationships raise questions about how the partners manage their differences and how these perceived differences both advance and inhibit meaningful scholarship and satisfying relationships.

This study is an attempt to describe and understand some of the intersections of scholarship, feminism, and collaboration in the lives of a selected group of women faculty. Clearly there is need for additional investigation if these relationships are to be well understood and generalizations are to be made. The caveats in this study

should not, however, obfuscate the finding that feminist scholars' cultural knowledge and values are woven together with their feminism, scholarship, and collaboration. To seek to understand feminist scholars' friendships and other social relationships and to capture the meanings those women make of their lives is to acknowledge their struggles and achievements and to further illuminate the dynamics of integrating one's life and one's scholarship as a model for others. **[End Page 97]**

Cynthia Sullivan Dickens

Cynthia Sullivan Dickens, who died in January 1997 of cancer, was an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Mississippi State University at Starkville where she taught courses in higher education and student affairs. She earlier served in a variety of administrative leadership positions, including Vice President for Students Affairs at Northern Kentucky University. She began research on women's scholarly collaboration while earning a Ph.D. in higher education at The Ohio State University.

Mary Ann D. Sagaria

Mary Ann Danowitz Sagaria is an Associate Professor in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership and a faculty associate in the Department of Women's Studies at The Ohio State University. Much of her published scholarship has been collaborative and is in the areas of leadership, administrative careers, and diversity and inclusivity in higher education.

Footnotes

1. This criterion was used to identify feminist faculty members. Research universities selected as sites of the study had a formal process of reviewing a scholar's research and course content for coherence with the feminist ideology and goals of the women's studies program.

2. All participants' names used in this paper are pseudonyms. References to their specific institutions, schools, departments, and fields, other than women's studies, have been omitted to protect the identities of the individual participants.

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Appendix. Interview Guide Questions

1. Collaboration

- Have you been encouraged by your colleagues to work collaboratively? How?
- How do you define collaboration? (What does the word “collaboration” mean to you?) Is this the way it is defined in your discipline? Do you agree with that definition?
- How does your department/college encourage or discourage collaborative scholarly work?
- Have you ever been told not to collaborate or coauthor a paper?
- Have you ever been told not to collaborate with other women? With other feminists?
- Have there been times in your career when collaboration seemed more attractive than other times?
- Were you given opportunities to collaborate when you were a student?
- Do you ever collaborate with your students now?
- Have you had a collaborative research partnership which has been particularly meaningful in your development as a scholar? Would you tell me about it?
- How did you happen to become collaborating partner(s)?
- How do (did) you make decisions regarding who does what?
- Did problems come up during your collaboration? How were they resolved?
- Did you publish the results of the study? Was the paper coauthored and collaboratively written?
- How did you handle issues of authorship?
- Have you ever experienced any feelings of competition when you are involved in a collaborative project? How did you manage those impulses?
- What words would you use to describe your involvement in a collaborative project? (Fun?)
- What are the benefits of collaborative scholarship from your experience? The disadvantages? Trade-offs?
- Will you continue to do collaborative research and writing? (Why or why not?)

2. The Evolving Scholar

- Have you changed as a result of your collaboration? Describe that change. (Probes: Do you feel more competent? More self-confident?)

- Has the type of research and writing you do changed as a result of your collaboration?
- Has your relationship with your partner(s) changed during the course of this research project?
- Describe how the relationship has developed.
- Have your relationships with other women faculty been strengthened by working together collaboratively? In what ways?

3. Feminism

- What does being a feminist mean to you? Has this meaning changed for you over the years?
- In what ways do you see your scholarship as having a political motive or purpose?
- How does your scholarship relate to your feminism?
- How does collaboration relate to your feminism?

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Footnotes

Additional Information

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