

Nina Boyd Krebs

The psychologist urges women to avoid becoming "male clones" at work, and instead to let their feminine qualities revitalize the world of business.—by Sigrid Bathen

Nina Boyd Krebs, Ed.D., graduated from college in her native Arizona in 1960, starting out as a high school English teacher. "I overheard somebody say, 'Is that little girl with the ponytail a teacher?' So I wore high heels every day." To Krebs, this event and others like it underscored the need for women to understand that they are competent and legitimate members of the work force. With that goal in mind, she wrote the book *Changing Woman Changing Work*, which was first published in 1993, then released in paperback last month.

A psychotherapist in private practice in Sacramento since 1976, wife of a psychologist and mother of two grown daughters, Krebs, 56, provides psychotherapy to individuals and lectures widely on stress management and women at work. In coming years, she plans to focus on public speaking and workshops in order to have more time for writing.

The thesis of your book is that women in a "man's world" of work are prevented from exercising their essentially "feminine" powers. How?

After the women's movement, we entered the work world en masse, and the way we were to get along was by acting like men and, in some cases, doing it even better than they do. . . . In order to do that, we needed to be tough, smart, competent and competitive—all of which are great qualities, but they aren't particularly feminine qualities. We abandoned our inner selves in order to survive. In the mid to late 1980s, I began to understand what damage we were doing to ourselves. In my private practice as well as in my consulting work, I was beginning to see women who had it all—and were miserable.

What do you mean by "the power of the feminine"?

In our culture, the feminine is not respected, in the business world or in the culture at large. The feminine in

our culture is described as "sugar and spice and everything nice" or as "fatal attraction." I'm talking about a universal life force—the feminine—which is equally wonderful and important. In our culture, we're way out of balance. The masculine way is the "right" way. In order to get along in any position of power or authority, a woman tends to unconsciously behave in masculine ways.

Explain the book's title.

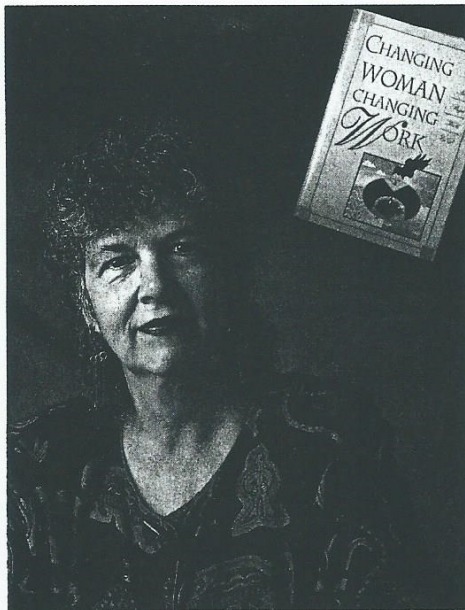
Changing Woman is the creatrix or the main deity of the Navajo people. The title is a double entendre because it has the symbolism of Changing Woman—this feminine energy that is respected among the Navajo people—and the idea of bringing the feminine into the workplace.

There is a strong Native American influence in the book . . .

Because I grew up in northern Arizona, I was deeply influenced by Native American culture. For a lot of indigenous peoples, the feminine is regarded differently and women have much different roles than in our culture. They are the leaders. And names are handed down through the matrilineal side.

How does the workplace benefit from feminine power?

When women can be women rather than man clones, we bring our strengths—the capacity for relationships and compromise; inclusiveness, which generates creativity; the capacity to look at the impact of our behavior eight generations from now, not just short-term goals. We don't have as much impact on the workplace as we could because we try to fit in and either work in support of masculine systems or work like men, and perpetuate that whole military, hierarchical organizational process. . . . Bringing feminine qualities to the work world, I think, has the potential for revitalizing American business. □



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