

# So How Different is my Work from Colleagues in Other Disciplines?

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Academic Chairpersons Conference

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# Plan for this Session

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- Explain Biglan Model and Purpose of Study
- Discuss Results of Quantitative Study
- Share Experiences in Finding Common Ground

# The Biglan Model of Disciplinary Classifications

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One model of  
distinguishing academic  
disciplines



# The Biglan (1973) Model

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- Biglan (1973) study
  - 222 faculty judges across two institutions
  - 36 academic areas
  - Multidimensional scaling
  
- Dimensions of disciplinary classifications
  - Structure (hard vs. soft)
  - Application (pure vs. applied)
  - Life Orientation (life vs. nonlife)

# Examples of Biglan Classifications

Application	Hard		Soft	
	Nonlife	Life	Nonlife	Life
Pure	Astronomy Chemistry Geology Math Physics	Botany Entomology Microbiology Physiology Zoology	English German History Philosophy Russian Communications	Anthropology Political Science Psychology Sociology
Applied	Ceramic Engineering Civil Engineering Computer Science Mechanical Engineering	Agronomy Dairy Science Horticulture Agricultural Economics	Accounting Finance Economics	Educational Administration Secondary Education Special Education Vocational Education

# Biglan's (1973) Findings (faculty)



- Differences by Structure
  - “Hard” > “Soft” in social connectedness
  - “Hard” > “Soft” in emphasis on research/publications

# Biglan's (1973) Findings (faculty)

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- Differences by Application
  - “Applied” > “Pure” in social connectedness
  - “Applied” > “Pure” in solving real-world problems

# Biglan's (1973) Findings (faculty)



- Differences by Life Orientation
  - “Life” < “Nonlife” in commitment to teaching
  - “Life” > “Nonlife” in commitment to educating graduate students for research



# Smart and Elton's (1975) Study

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Applying the Biglan model to comparing goals of academic departments

# Smart and Elton's (1975) Study

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- 1,198 chairs from 32 institutions
- Chair ratings of 11 departmental goals
- Key findings:
  - Hard > soft in facilitating faculty/student research
  - Soft > hard in developing collaborative climate

# Smart and Elton's (1975) Study

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## □ Key findings:

- Pure > applied in faculty/student research development
- Applied > pure in faculty/student vocational development

# Smart and Elton's (1975) Study

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## □ Key findings:

- Life > nonlife in developing new knowledge
- Nonlife > life in fostering vocational development of students

# The Current Study:

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A Few Details...

# The Purpose of the Study

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- ❑ Follow-up to Smart and Elton (1975)
- ❑ Identify underlying dimensions of 20 administrative responsibilities
- ❑ Compare chair ratings of importance of administrative responsibilities
- ❑ Compare faculty ratings of chair's performance of administrative responsibilities

# Methods

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- Archival data from The IDEA Center
- 644 chairs from 61 institutions completed *Chair Information Form*
- 14,479 faculty completed *Faculty Survey* (75.9% response rate)
- Inclusion criteria:
  - At least 8 faculty respondents
  - Only one entry per chair
  - Faculty responded to at least 50% of items

# Breakdown of Departments

Life-Orientation/Application		Discipline Structure		Total
		Hard	Soft	
Life	Pure	19	35	54
	Applied	94	92	186
	Total	113	127	240
Non-life	Pure	31	58	89
	Applied	46	78	124
	Total	77	136	213



# Factor Analysis of 20 Administrative Responsibilities

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- PC with varimax rotation yielded 4 factors:
  - Personnel Management & Development
    - 6 items ( $\alpha = .80$ )
  - Developing Positive Climate
    - 4 items ( $\alpha = .84$ )
  - Academic Support/Program Leadership
    - 5 items ( $\alpha = .76$ )
  - Building Image
    - 2 items ( $\alpha = .84$ )

# Personnel Management and Development

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- ❑ Stimulates research and scholarly activity
- ❑ Guides development of procedures for assessing faculty
- ❑ Facilitates obtaining grants and contracts
- ❑ Recognizes and rewards faculty for their contributions to dept.
- ❑ Takes the lead in recruiting promising faculty
- ❑ Guides development of sound organizational plan

# Developing Positive Climate

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- ❑ Develops collegiality/cooperation among faculty
- ❑ Establishes trust between self and faculty
- ❑ Fosters development of faculty talents or interests
- ❑ Stimulates/rejuvenates faculty vitality/enthusiasm

# Administrative Support/Program Leadership

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- ❑ Attends to essential administrative details
- ❑ Communicates expectations of campus administration
- ❑ Guides curriculum development
- ❑ Fosters good teaching in the department
- ❑ Acquaints new faculty with department procedures

# Building Image

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- Improves department image with off-campus constituencies
- Improves department image within campus community

# Statistical Analyses

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- MANOVA on chair ratings of importance
  - Univariate ANOVA follow-ups
- MANOVA on faculty ratings of performance
  - Univariate ANOVA follow-ups

# Results: Chair Ratings of Importance

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- No significant two- or three-way interactions
- Main effect for life-orientation
  - Personnel Management & Development
    - Life-oriented (e.g., botany, psychology) > nonlife-oriented (e.g., geology, accounting)
  - Developing Positive Climate
    - Life-oriented > nonlife-oriented

# Results: Chair Ratings of Importance

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- Main effect for structure
  - Personnel Management & Development
    - Hard (e.g., chemistry, agronomy) > Soft (e.g., English, special education)



# Results: Faculty Ratings of Performance

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- No significant two- or three-way interactions
- No significant main effects

## Similarities with Smart & Elton (1975)

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- Chairs from life-oriented departments place more importance on research and faculty development than do non-life oriented
- Chairs from life-oriented departments place more importance on supporting faculty talents and interests than do non-life oriented

# SUMMARY

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- More similarities than differences in importance of administrative responsibilities
- Faculty ratings of the chair's performance are similar across departmental classifications
- The IDEA Department Chair system is generalizable across disciplines
- Chairs have much in common with their colleagues in other departments

# Discussion

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- Departmental goals are more similar than 35 years ago. Why?
- What are your experiences in finding common ground with colleagues in other departments?