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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes barriers that work to keep women in traditional positions within the work world and at the lower levels of organizational hierarchies within educational administration. Three general categories of barriers are outlined. In personal barriers, the first category, personality characteristics, background influences, and socialization patterns function to inhibit women's progress in educational administration. The second category, interpersonal barriers, characterizes the interactions between aspiring women and the dominant power groups (which tend to be white and male). The major types of interpersonal barriers are sex role stereotyping and intergroup polarization. These barriers function to perpetuate myths and biases about women's abilities and group women together in such a way that all women suffer from the failures of a few. Organizational/structural barriers (the third category) occur in many aspects of an agency's functions: recruitment, selection, placement, evaluation, giving rewards, use of power and authority, and other norms and expectations. If educational and occupational equity are to be achieved, it is imperative that barriers be removed. Some strategies for combating these barriers are consciousness raising, career planning, management training, information sharing, mentoring, networking, and retraining. A list of further readings on the subject is provided. (MD)

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BARRIERS TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: SOURCES AND REMEDIES

Prepared for

The Women's Leadership Project

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by

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WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROJECT

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Introduction

The participation of women in the labor force has been increasing steadily. But most women are employed at the lower levels of organizational hierarchies. We still see only a few women in executive board rooms. Men continue to be the predominant group to occupy positions of power in medicine, in law, and in business and industry. The field of educational administration is no exception in this regard. In this field as in others, women tend to be concentrated in the lower and middle echelons. When women do occupy a higher-level managerial position, it is often a position with little power, few resources, and an unclear pattern for upward mobility.

Since women are not inherently less capable than men, external factors must be examined to explain the low representation of women in positions of power. If we can understand the influences that block the progress of women in educational administration careers, we can begin to devise strategies to overcome these influences. This paper summarizes various barriers discussed in the literature that have kept women in traditional subservient roles. It is organized into five major parts. The first section discusses the broad categories of barriers that have been found to exist in organizational settings. The second, third, and fourth sections discuss each category of barriers with respect to women in educational administration. The final section suggests various strategies that can be used to overcome

these barriers.

It should be noted that although the emphasis in this paper is on women in educational administration, most of the statements are also applicable to women in other administrative settings, e.g., business administration and hospital administration.

Categories of Barriers

Much discussion has focused on the reasons for the current inequities for women who work outside the home. In general, this discussion has suggested three sets of factors that may constrain the progress of women up the career ladder. These are:

- personal barriers
- interpersonal barriers; and
- organizational/structural barriers.

Personal Barriers. These are specific to the women aspiring to positions of educational administration. Personal factors encompass personality characteristics, background influences, and socialization patterns that typify many women, and that serve to block their career advancement. These are barriers that each woman brings with herself to the work setting.

Interpersonal Barriers. These barriers characterize the interactions between aspiring women and dominant power groups in educational administration. Sex role stereotypes about the abilities of women, their motivations, and their commitment to their careers are examples of interpersonal barriers that keep women "in their place." Interpersonal barriers result from the interplay between women and their organizational environments, and can occur among peers and across hierarchical levels.

Organizational/Structural Barriers. These barriers are inherent in employing institutions. Organizations are often designed in ways that help to preserve the status quo. Structures are created, either inadvertently or knowingly, that ensure the continued participation of the dominant group, i.e., white males, and that restrict entry and advancement of deviant groups, e.g., women and minorities. Structural barriers encompass such factors as the recruitment and selection strategies and the reward systems of an organization. They include both the formal and the informal aspects of organizational functioning.

In short, barriers arise from characteristics of women, from characteristics of institutions, and from interactions between the two. In addition, of course, men are currently just more powerful as a group than women are. The discrepencies in relative power exacerbate existing barriers, and increase difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

Personal Barriers

We mentioned earlier that personal barriers are things that women bring to the work setting. At least two types of personal barriers have been discussed in the past. These are:

- o personality factors; and
- o background and socialization factors.

Personality Factors

Many personality factors combine to preserve women's subordinate roles. Primary among these are self-concept and perceptions of one's own ability, as well as aspiration levels.

It is well documented that, as a group, women tend to have lower

self-concepts than men do. Women are not as confident of their abilities as men are, and tend to attribute many of their previous successes to external factors (such as luck). Men, on the other hand, are likely to attribute their successes to their own ability and ingenuity. Much of this research has been reviewed by Nieva and Gutek. Because of their lower self-concept, women are not as willing to volunteer for challenging and "new" tasks as men are. Women often tend to lag behind, where men can make the advances necessary for career development.

Perhaps partly as a function of their lower self-concepts, women also tend to have lower aspiration levels than men do. Where a male aspires to be a physician, a female aspires to be a nurse; where a male aspires to be an executive, a female aspires to be a secretary; where a male aspires to be a superintendent, a female aspires to be a school teacher. It is not that there is anything wrong with being a nurse, a secretary, or a school teacher. Rather, it is that if women aspired to a wide range of occupational classifications instead of to a few low-power, low-paying positions, their representation in all levels of the organizational hierarchy may increase.

Background and Socialization Factors

Two major barriers are also relevant here. The first has to do with the sex-role socialization that a female receives from her early childhood, and the second with the kinds of experiences that she acquires in her progress through her career.

Most people agree that the sex-role socialization of females is quite different from that of males. Boys are socialized to be aggressive, competitive, and achievement-oriented--qualities that stand them in good stead in their careers. But girls are often socialized to be passive, noncompe-

titive, and nurturant. These qualities keep women from seeking positions of power. They also help men in the preservation of a status quo through their continued advancement up the organizational ladder. Since sex-role socialization has its impact through years of conditioning, its effects are particularly insidious and difficult to counteract.

Women also have different experiences than men do. Particularly germane to our discussion are work-related experiences. Within the field of education, women tend to have more instructional experience than men. Women also tend to have experience in support functions more than in managerial functions. Furthermore, women's experiences in the job market (and their frequent failures in seeking advancement into administrative positions) often limit their willingness to continue to seek these positions. Realistically, they do not want to court further failure. All these factors indicate that many women do not have the "right" experience to advance in educational administration; those who do can be forced by repeated failures to limit their ambitions.

Because of socialization patterns and work-related experiences, many women do not have the psychological or academic preparation that they need for leadership in educational administration. The problem is compounded by the lack of occupational role models for women aspiring to be administrators. It is difficult for women to make objective career choices as a consequence, so that their career paths tend to be less directed and less straightforward than those of men.

Summary

Personal barriers of many kinds inhibit women's progress in educational administration. Personality factors include self-concept and aspiration levels. Background and socialization factors, particularly sex-role

socialization and work-related experiences, further restrict women's potential to advance in leadership roles.

Interpersonal Barriers

Interpersonal barriers result from the dynamic interplay between a woman and her environment. These barriers arise because, for them to get ahead in educational administration, women must interact with men (who occupy most positions of power), and who also bring to the work setting their own personal and social biases. Two major types of interpersonal barriers can be specified. These are:

- sex-role stereotyping; and
- inter-group polarization.

Sex-Role Stereotyping

Many myths abound about women with respect to work. There are myths about the abilities of women, about their commitment to careers, and about their potential effectiveness in leadership roles. Biases about the "proper" roles for women are also rampant. These myths and biases are very potent obstacles to women's advancement.

With respect to abilities, it is sometimes argued that women do not have the requisite skills and personality to be effective leaders. They are supposed to be incapable of handling management, too emotional to cope with situations rationally, and too weak to make tough decisions. But at least six research studies of women in leadership roles have shown that women behave similarly to men in the same circumstances. Women are task-oriented and can initiate and lead others' activities when required to do so. Little actual data can be garnered to support the idea of differential

ability among men and women.

There are also many myths about women's commitment to work and to careers. It is argued that women work for "pin money," that they quit work when they get married, that they take excessive amounts of sick leave, that they follow their husbands around, and that they always put their families before their careers. These statements probably do apply to some women. But statistics gathered by the U. S. Department of Labor and other organizations show these statements to be, at best, "half-truths" that are often fatal for women's career ambitions. Crowley and her colleagues, and Mertz and her colleagues, among others, have attempted to show how empirical data contradict most myths prevailing in the society about women and work. Evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, decision-makers continue to operate on the basis of their own stereotypic assumptions about women's commitment to work, either because they are unaware of the evidence, or because they choose not to give it credence.

Many myths also question the effectiveness of women as administrative leaders. It is argued that men do not want women as supervisors. It is also argued that some women also do not want to work for women. Again, research summarized by Nieva and Gutek has shown that when men or women work under female supervisors, they hold the same types of attitudes toward their supervisor as they do when they work under male supervisors. An NEA study showed that male teachers who had female administrators were more favorable about female principals than those who had not. In other words, it is not that people cannot work under female supervision. Rather, it is that myths about these attitudes keep women from reaching supervisory positions, and particularly positions that require supervision over male subordinates.

There are also biases about the proper role of women in work settings. It is suggested that because women are nurturant, they do better in instructional than in administrative settings. It is also argued that women's "femininity" conflicts with the masculine demands of leadership positions. Many research studies show that, when women behave in "masculine" ways, they are viewed unfavorably by their supervisors, subordinates, and colleagues. These types of biases are often shared by both men and women. They arise from many years of conditioning, and they will take a long time to dispel. There is little evidence to show any changes in these beliefs on a large scale.

Overall, evidence suggests that myths, biases and sex-role stereotypes continue to flourish despite contradictory evidence.

Inter-Group Polarization

When different groups of people are unfamiliar with each other, they tend to polarize variations among themselves. This means that differences between groups are exaggerated, and differences between individuals within the group are minimized. In other words, a person's individuality is ignored in the focus on the group label. Many women have suffered as a consequence of this interpersonal barrier. Instead of being treated as individuals with particular skills, abilities, and experiences, they are treated as "women" who are like all other "women."

Polarization occurs, not because men know only a few women, but because they know very few women in managerial and leadership capacities. It is particularly devastating because it brings into play all the prejudices and stereotypes that an individual may hold. The woman who failed in a managerial capacity is then held up as an example of what happens if women deviate from their proper place in society.

Summary

With respect to interpersonal barriers, two sets of influences are relevant. Sex-role stereotyping, and myths and biases about women's abilities, commitment, roles, and effectiveness constitute one major obstacle. Another is inter-group polarization, which results in all women suffering from the mistakes and failures of a few.

Organizational/Structural Barriers

Organizational/structural barriers reside in the institutional systems of educational administration. They are found in the policies and procedures of organizations, and in the formal and informal systems of the organization. Organizational/structural barriers to the advancement of women in educational administration can be found in many aspects of organization functioning, including:

- o recruitment systems;
- o selection systems;
- o placement systems;
- o evaluation systems;
- o reward systems;
- o communication systems;
- o power and authority systems; and
- o other norms and expectations.

Recruitment Systems

In order for a woman to apply for a higher-level job in educational administration, she has to know about the opening first. Many conscious or unconscious strategies can keep information about relevant jobs away from

women until it is too late. For instance, information about new jobs is often spread through the "old boy network" long before it is officially advertised. The problem is compounded if the position is closed only a few days after it is advertised. This makes it extremely unlikely that qualified women can hear about advancement opportunities in sufficient time to assemble a good application package. Other recruitment strategies, such as restricted advertising and advertising only locally, have also been used in the past. These strategies ensure, deliberately or inadvertently, that the male-intensive structure of upper-level managerial position persists over time.

Selection Systems

This is a place where many overt and covert sex biases can flourish. Selection biases can operate in at least two places--in the qualifications and requirements set forth for higher-level jobs, and in the actual interview process. Many administrative positions specify qualifications that have little bearing on job performance. For higher-level administrative positions, it is common to specify several years of administrative experience, a requirement that many women are unable to meet because of their different career paths. But many years of experience are often not necessary for future job effectiveness. To the extent that irrelevant job experience is required of the successful candidates, women are likely to suffer. A similar argument can also be made about requirements for advanced degrees. These types of requirements mean that most female applicants do not survive the first round of selection decisions.

A woman who does manage to reach the interview stage is often confronted with other problems. Interviewers will ask women questions they would never ask men. For instance, it is common to ask women what they

will do if their husbands move out of town, how they expect to handle child care, etc. These questions show doubts in the interviewers' minds about the career commitment that women have, whereas the career commitment of men is taken for granted. At this stage of the selection process, interviewers also sometimes ask women why they want such a "terrible" job; men are not subjected to this type of question.

Women are also invited to interview occasionally as tokens, so that interviewers can show their pursuit of affirmative action goals. When the time comes to make a selection decision, however, chances are that a man will win out over a woman.

Placement Systems

When women are hired into educational administration positions, they are sometimes placed in low-power positions that have no clear path for upward mobility. Women are more often in support than in line positions, for instance. This placement strategy has at least two effects: it truncates the probability that women can have a normal career progression to positions of power and authority in educational administration; it also makes it less likely that the woman will be "visible" to her male peers. Visibility is desirable because it permits those in power to recognize and reward (e.g., in the form of promotions and advancement) the competence of promising subordinates. Since they are not visible, however, women tend not to receive these rewards as often.

Evaluation Systems

Most performance evaluation systems are based on very global criteria. Individuals are rated on such broad items as "quality of output" and "dependability." These dimensions require evaluators to make high levels of inference about subordinates. Nieva and Gutek reviewed several studies,

starting with the landmark study of Goldberg, that show a pro-male bias when global dimensions are used in evaluation. When specific, objective behavioral criteria are identified for evaluation purposes, this pro-male bias disappears and no strong gender differences can be noticed. Many authors have suggested that, in the absence of specific and concrete information about a particular situation, evaluators resort to using stereotypes about the group to which an individual belongs to make their judgments. Since it is commonly believed (quite inaccurately, it should be noted) that men are more competent than women, the "acturial prejudice" against women causes them to be rated lower given identical circumstances. When specific behavioral dimensions are used in evaluation (e.g., actual number of products completed), however, it is not necessary to make inferences based on stereotypes. Women are treated equitably under these circumstances. In other words, the use of broad qualities rather than specific behaviors in evaluation works to the disadvantage of women.

Reward Systems

Pay is, of course, a reward that most of us seek from our work. Pay raises and promotions are usually based (at least in theory) on some combination of two criteria: merit and seniority. We have already seen that, because of the use of global evaluation dimensions, women are unfavorably affected in terms of merit. Furthermore, because of the relatively late entry of women in the work force, and because women more often than men must take time off from work to care for children, women often suffer on the seniority criterion. In short, women lose out on both criteria on which pay raises and promotions are based. In addition, as was noted earlier, women tend to be concentrated in staff, support positions. These positions are usually less valued in organizational settings and have lower

salaries associated with them as a result.

Other rewards people seek from work are recognition and intrinsic satisfaction. Because of their lower visibility, women are less likely to be recognized by their superiors. They are less likely to be nominated for committee work, for on-the-job training, for retooling, for conferences and workshops than men. These are "perks" from the job; they are also critical to advancement in educational administration and to ultimate attainments. Also, because they are frequently placed in low-power, dead-end positions, the opportunities for intrinsic satisfaction from the job are lower among women.

Overall, women tend to have lower levels of a variety of rewards. Rewards are often equated with status and power. Their lower levels of rewards reinforce the idea that women are less valued organizational employees who need not be advanced up the career ladder. In this way, the vicious cycle of low value, low rewards, and limited advancement continues.

Communication Systems

Communication systems are among the most powerful mechanisms that retard women's advancement into higher managerial positions. Both the formal and the informal aspects of communication systems are relevant in this regard.

The formal communication systems of an organization often follow specified lines of authority. To the extent that women are not in line positions, their postions in formal communication networks is tenuous. Thus, they either do not receive relevant information from above, or they receive information much later than do men. They are not as privy to the managerial ins and outs as their male counterparts are.

More damaging, however, are the informal communication networks, both

within an organization and across organizations. Women are usually not part of the "old boy network" in an institution. They are not invited to play golf, get a drink, or go to a health spa. Much valuable information (job openings, office politics, etc.) gets shared in these informal settings. Because they are not members of this informal network, women are often left out.

The old boy network operates across organizations as well. When higher-level openings occur, people are likely to recommend their proteges, their students, and their friends. Men have networks that span the country; women tend not to. Moreover, men are usually in positions where they can make these recommendations. Because of the nature of their networks, men are more likely to recommend other men rather than women for positions of power.

In many ways, information is power within a system. Deprived of valuable information because of their formal and informal roles in the organization, women are often powerless members. Their lack of power is instrumental in perpetuating their lower status.

Power and Authority Systems

Most educational administration agencies (at both the local and the state levels) operate in an environment of uncertainty because of changes in political, legislative, and economic conditions. When the external environment is uncertain, internal predictability is often sought. For this reason, people in positions of power within an educational agency are likely to seek stability within the organization. Predictability is often sought by establishing homogeneity. Consequently, senior-level people surround themselves with others who are similar. In most cases, this means that white males predominate in the upper and middle echelons of the

agency.

The sex ratio at the upper levels of the agency also perpetuate barriers against the advancement of women. There are simply more men than women in middle and upper managerial ranks. The sex ratio makes it easier to pick a male, simply because there are more males available to pick from. In addition, because white males are the predominant coalition in an agency, it is easier for them to obtain and retain organizational power.

Other Norms and Expectations

Many other norms and expectations also preserve the relative power balance between males and females. A common organizational phenomenon in the executive and managerial ranks is the "two-person career" discussed by Papanek. Administrators hold the jobs, but their spouses are expected to perform many social duties that are critical to the administrators. Spouses are expected to host social functions, to make compromises in their own lives, and generally to further the two-person career. It takes both members of a couple to fulfill all the expectations of the administrator's role. The two-person career is common in business and industry, in the military, in the medical field, as well as in educational administration. When the man is the administrator, the two-person career is usually easier to manage since women have been socialized to fill support roles and provide their husbands the kinds of services necessary for career advancement. When a woman is the administrator, however, she is often expected to be both people in the two-person career. Predictably, this creates overload and jeopardizes the probability of success.

Another societal norm that is evident in educational administration agencies is that of treating women like "ladies" who must, for example, constantly be complimented about their appearance. Gestures such as making

references to clothing and hairstyle, opening doors, helping with coats, etc., are designed to perpetuate the perception that women must be taken care of by men. These gestures put women "in their place" as helpless and dependent, and detract from the perception that women are co-equal peers and professionals. The influence of this norm is subtle; it is also quite effective in maintaining the balance of power between men and women.

The performance of one incompetent woman is sometimes held up as an example of the potential failure of all women. Inter-group polarization was discussed earlier as a barrier. What is relevant here is the use of tokens to justify and support one's own biases. In this way, it is easy to deny any woman advancement because one woman failed to perform effectively.

It is often noted that a woman must do twice as well as a man in order to get half the credit. Whether or not this is an exaggeration, it <u>is</u> usually the case that a woman must work harder and be better to be recognized as competent. Evidence of this point is summarized by Nieva and Gutek. Men's abilities are taken for granted, whereas a woman must prove hers. The requirement that women work harder is particularly difficult when she is also expected to fulfill the extra-organizational duties of a two-person career.

Often norms and expectations that damage women's advancement can also be detailed. Most of us have encountered these at some point in our careers. Because these norms and expectations are seldom formal organizational policies, their effects are particularly difficult to counteract.

<u>Summary</u>

Organizational barriers occur in many aspects of an agency's functioning. Powerholders can keep women from hearing about the right jobs; they can weed women out at the application or interview stage; they can

place women in dead-end jobs; they can evaluate women according to stereotypic generalizations rather than performance specifics; they can give women lower rewards and status; they can manipulate who has access to needed information; by their sheer numbers, they can ensure that power is retained by men; they can also use various norms and expectations to keep women in lower organizational echelons. Because many of these mechanisms operate at the subconscious rather than the conscious level, their effects are insidious and difficult to fight.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

If educational and occupational equity is to be achieved, it is imperative that these impediments be removed. Many strategies for overcoming barriers have already been advocated in the literature. Some of these strategies are described below. For reasons of consistency, these strategies are also classified into three groups: those that can be used to overcome personal barriers, those that can be used to overcome interpersonal barriers, and those that can be used to overcome structural/organizational barriers.

Personal Strategies

These strategies can be used by women to alter their own self-concept, skills, attitudes, and behaviors.

One of the most commonly-advocated personal strategies is consciousness raising. This strategy can take a variety of forms. Consciousness raising can focus on improving one's self-concept, for instance. It is quite useful to recognize that your own shortcomings may be different qualitatively from those of others (and particularly those of men), but are not

necessarily any more damaging. Women are often unwilling to apply for jobs for which they lack the "right experience" where a man would not hesitate at all. This does not mean that one should hold unrealistic ideas about what one can do; it means merely that one must have confidence in one's own ability to succeed in different, untried areas.

Consciousness raising can also be helpful in that it sensitizes us to pick up on sexist cues and to act accordingly.

A second personal strategy is that of career planning. Women often progress through their careers in a series of apparantly random movements, whereas men are more likely to evidence directed behavior. If we can sit down and analyze where we want to be in the next several years, and what the necessary action steps are to get there, we may have taken a significant stride toward getting there.

Management training can also be useful in overcoming personal barriers. Management training encompasses many things. It includes training in assertiveness, in leadership, in budget planning and execution, and it includes training in teamwork. It is often noted that women are socialized to work alone and to do most of the work. If we can learn to work with other people, if we can learn to delegate some of the work, if we can concentrate on planning and management rather than on execution (and let our subordinates handle the execution), then we will be well equipped to tackle administrative jobs.

A fourth personal strategy focuses on impression management. We can control, to a large extent, the impressions other people hold of us. If we are perceived as being competent and confident, and as having initiative and drive, we can be much more effective than if we are not. Impression management can take many forms. It can mean "blowing our own horns," and

making sure that other people know of our achievements. It can mean handling sexist remarks and situations with ease and with humor. It can mean fixing our own cars. The point is that impression management means that we must act in ways that project the kind of image we want to project.

Some combination of these strategies may be quite instrumental in overcoming personal barriers to women's advancement.

Interpersonal Strategies

These strategies can be used to dispel myths about women in administrative positions, to demonstrate that women can be competent professionals and to emphasize diversity among women.

One interpersonal strategy is that of information sharing. As noted above, many myths abound about women and work. These myths have generally been disproved in research efforts. Sharing the results of this research may be a first step toward diffusing stereotypic attitudes about women. Statistics refuting many myths are available from the U. S. Department of Labor. Articles have also appeared in the popular press. This information must be shared with both males and females if stereotypes and biases are ever to be removed.

Another strategy is to demonstrate competence in one's own job. Whether we like it or not, women in senior administrative positions are considered representative of all women. If we continue to be effective in our jobs, it is possible that we will eventually be accepted as peers and professionals and we will not need to prove ourselves every time. It should be emphasized here that women must work with men as well as with other women if interpersonal barriers are to be destroyed. Only if men can see women fare well in supervisory, subordinate and peer positions will they start affording collegial respect to women. In short, a competent

female can serve as a "model" for both men and women.

We must also learn to handle situations where sex biases are obvious. For instance, chauvinistic remarks and sexist jokes are often made in male-only settings. This does not necessarily change if a few women are present in the group. Most of us have encountered these situations, and all of us must learn to deal with them. The critical problem here is discouraging the recurrence of these behaviors while at the same time appearing nondefensive and in control. A sense of humor is important. It is also important to determine when our responses will have some impact and when they will not, and act accordingly.

With the use of these strategies, and with increasing numbers of women in higher-level positions, it is possible that inter-group polarization will also reduce in scope.

Organizational/Structural Strategies

Many strategies have also been suggested for overcoming structural barriers in educational administration agencies. Power-holders in an agency can do much to remove barriers. Some past works have been devoted to detailing how organizations themselves can reduce the existence of sexism internally. These organizational actions are not the focus here. Rather, our focus is on strategies that women can use to overcome structural barriers.

The most commonly advocated strategy is that of mentoring. It is generally agreed that a frequent way for men to succeed is to pick a sponsor or a mentor who shows them the ropes, who advocates their cause when necessary, and who through "apprenticeship" and other means, grooms and prepares the protege for advancement. Women have tended not to have mentors, partly because few women are available to serve as mentors, and partly because

women tend to be more naive about the realities of organizational politics. Mentoring can be a useful strategy for women in two ways. First, aspiring women can try to pick mentors who will sponsor them. Any mentor at all, male or female, is better than no mentor. The mentor must, of course, have power and connections necessary for the protege's career advancement. Second, women who <u>are</u> in senior administrative positions can try to be mentors for aspiring women and men. The reasons women must serve as mentors for other women are obvious. The reason women must serve as mentors for men is to dispel stereotypes about women's administrative competence and to highlight the existence of differences across women. Men mentored by women may be more likely later in their careers to sponsor women than are men mentored by men.

A related strategy is that of <u>networking</u> and information sharing. Linking up with other women in similar positions both within the agency and across agencies can be useful in many ways. It can provide a support group of people who have had similar experiences. It can be an information exchange mechanism whereby advancement opportunities are shared. It can also provide a vehicle for publicizing successful strategies for overcoming barriers. Perhaps the most important function that a network serves is that it provides an informal framework to overcome some of the communication barriers in organizations.

If one is to succeed, one must also <u>increase visibility</u> within and outside the agency. Visibility can be increased through committee work and through special assignments. It can be increased through active work in professional organizations. It can be increased through publishing articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers. It can be increased by seizing upon any and every opportunity to showcase one's talents and abili-

ties. Visibility is important because, if one is well-known and well-respected, one is harder to ignore and sidestep when advancement opportunities present themselves.

Retraining in anticipation of future needs can also be useful. Too often, we function in a reactive mode. We handle problems that arise, but we do not predict future concerns and prevent rather than solve problems. But if, as a group, women can determine what needs will be critical ten years from now, and if we can prepare themselves to meet these needs, then we will be forearmed. If women acquire this anticipatory training and men do not, then the organizational elite may have no choice but to promote women.

Other strategies include learning to delegate work, emphasizing specific behavioral rather than global trait performance evaluations, familiarizing oneself with affirmative action and equal opportunity laws and using these if necessary, and working with men and women at both formal and informal levels.

With the simultaneous use of personal, interpersonal, and structural/organizational strategies, it is possible that educational equity for women will eventually be achieved.

Conclusion

Many problems and pitfalls face women who aspire to be senior educational administrators. Barriers occur at the personal, interpersonal, and structural/organizational levels. We have discussed many of the barriers that the relevant literature has addressed and the strategies that may be used to overcome these barriers. But without careful attention to the

specific barriers present in a particular agency, and without matching strategies to these barriers, our task is incomplete. Women can be equitably represented at the highest levels only with much hard work and extra effort.

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