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ABSTRACT

Women professors in educational administration have moved from near obscurity to relative visibility in the last 15 years. The process by which they obtained their positions and their perceptions of the process are the subjects of this descriptive survey research. Specifically, the study attempted to identify factors perceived by women professors as important for obtaining their first positions as professors of educational administration. Questionnaires were sent to an initial sample of 273 female professors in educational administration and higher education with an overall return rate of 46 percent. Women reported that the factors for attaining their positions, in order of importance, were: (1) brokering; (2) being "known quantities"; and (3) their own qualifications. The findings indicate that male advisors acting as brokers were instrumental in obtaining positions, and that mentoring was perceived as a less important factor. A majority of respondents identified publications as important in securing overall positions, which raises the issue of doctoral programs' effectiveness in preparing students for professional academia. The findings cannot be generalized to all female professors' experiences, but provide an exploratory base for further study. (17 references) (LMI)

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GETTING TO BE A PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION:  
A STUDY OF HOW FEMALES "GOT" THE JOB

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Getting to be a Professor of Educational Administration:  
A Study of How Females "Got" the Job

Since the 1950's, when educational administration programs can be said to have become an "accepted field of graduate education," (McCarthy, 1987, 2) professors of educational administration have characteristically been male. Indeed, as noted by McCarthy (1987), when compared to faculty across the disciplines, educational administration faculty are more, rather than less male-dominated. In the first comprehensive study of professors of educational administration, Campbell and Newell (1973) found that only 2% of the professors were female. Perhaps because females constituted such a small percent of the total, the authors did not use gender as a variable in looking at other aspects of the educational administration professoriate (e.g., salary, years in position, doctoral degree major). Upon assuming the presidency of UCEA (University Council for Educational Administration), Mary McCarthy proposed, and with others, undertook (1986), a comprehensive reexamination of the educational administration professoriate, replicating and extending the investigation of Campbell and Newell fourteen years earlier. McCarthy, et al (1988) reported a dramatic increase in the percentage of female professors, from the 2% of 1972, to 12% in 1986, and indicated that 29% of the female professors could be characterized as "new hires," i.e., they had five or fewer years in the professoriate.

In a discipline in which "the typical education administration professor (is) . . . white, married . . . male . . . and has held tenure for more than ten years" (McCarthy, 1987, 3), and where past barriers to the entrance and advancement of females have been well documented (Bernard, 1964; Epstein, 1970; Finkelstein, 1984; Gappa and Uehling, 1979; Kritek, 1984; Menges and Exum, 1983; Nieva and Gutek, 1980; Robbins and Kahn, 1985; Sandler, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1987; Tolbert, 1986) it is pertinent, not to say intriguing, to ask, "Who are these female professors of educational administration who have recently joined the ranks? What positions do they hold? How did they get the positions they now hold?"

Some information about female professors of educational administration is already available, in particular, information about who they are. The study by McCarthy, et al. (1988) provided a good deal of basic descriptive information about both male and female professors, including age, marital status, parental occupation, category of institutional affiliation, area of concentration, rank, tenure, salary, and educational background. As compared to male professors of educational administration, female professors were reported to be ten years younger, on average, to be more than twice as likely to be unmarried, and almost four times as likely to be found among the untenured as the tenured faculty. The ranks of professor, associate professor and assistant professor were found to be filled by males and females in inverse proportion. Males held 95.6% of full professorships, 82.5% of associate professorships,

and 62% of assistant professorships, as compared to females who 38% of the assistant professorships, 17.5% of the associate professorships, and 4.4% of the full professorships. Using data generated by that study, Pounder (1989) found that gender was a factor in the salary differential between male (higher) and female (lower) professors, even when differences in years of experience were factored in. On average, female professors earned \$3000 less than their male counterparts. Further, 80% of female assistant professors earned less than \$30,000, but only 47% of male assistant professors earned less than \$30,000.

Short, Twale and Walden (1989) added to the base of knowledge in their study of female professors of educational administration (K-12). While asking some of the same questions as McCarthy, et al. (1988), they also asked about the professor's preparation, the time it took to secure a full-time academic position, and the number of professors in the department. They reported that 56% of female professors were tenured, and 48% were the sole female faculty member in their department. In response to the question of how they had heard about the position, 37% marked "announcement," 35% "recruited," and 18% "sponsored." The authors asked for no clarification of the question and, without comment, presented the information in a table.

Beyond the data provided by these studies, valuable as it is in illuminating who the females are who hold faculty positions in educational administration, given past barriers to their participation and their recent, and as reported, sudden

ascendancy in the field, there is a need to learn more about how they got their position as professors of educational administration and how female professors of educational administration moved from near obscurity in 1973 to relative visibility in 1988.

#### PURPOSE

The intent of the study was to learn more about how female professors of educational administration got their positions and how they see the process of getting such positions.

Specifically, the questions guiding the study included:

- (1) What factors do female professors perceive were important in getting their first faculty positions in educational administration?
- (2) What factors do they perceive as important to securing positions as professors of educational administration?

#### PROCEDURES

Detailed questionnaires were sent to 273 female professors (190 in educational administration; 83 in higher education). Ten questionnaires came back marked moved, not at the university, or deceased; 3 in higher education and 7 in educational administration. The female professors were identified by Short, Twale and Walden (1989) for their study. The researchers generously shared their lists of female professors and facilitated this study by supplying ready-to-use address labels. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to supply

information about their current and past positions and their educational background. Further, they were asked to respond to a series of directed (check all those that apply; double check the most influential; rate the importance of) and open-ended questions (describe) about how they gained their current position and how they would go about securing a future position. Items for directed questions were culled from the literature about getting a faculty position with special emphasis on strategies women might use.

Differences in reported numbers of female professors of educational administration raised questions for us in terms of the responses received and, therefore, the degree to which female professors were accessed. Short, Twale and Walden, who supplied us with 273 names, the 190 K-12 professors they used in their study, and 83 higher education names, were at some variance with McCarthy, et al., who reported 196 female professors over all, 169 K-12 and 27 higher education. It is entirely possible that there were changes in number in the year separating the studies, but the disparity in the numbers of higher education female faculty, in particular (83 versus 27) raises questions about the likelihood of such an explanation. Without making excuses for the poor return rate in this study, the abysmal return rate of female higher education professors raised questions about their actual numbers.

Only 121 questionnaires were returned after two mailings for an

overall return rate of 46%. Fifty-five percent (100) of female K-12 administration professors returned the questionnaire, but only 26% (21) of higher education professors returned it. Nothing appeared to distinguish respondents from non-respondents, in terms of rank, kind of institution or departmental affiliation. Given the descriptive nature of the study, the number of respondents provided adequate data for the purposes of the study, however, the return rate made the authors highly cautious about drawing implications from the data.

Data were analyzed in terms of the questions asked on the form. Where the data lent themselves to counting and tallying, e.g., which of the itemized strategies do you perceive contributed to getting your first position, the data were aggregated and simple, quantitative methods of analysis were used. Those findings are presented in numbers and percentages. Where the questions asked yielded narrative answers, e.g., explain how you got your first university position, data were analyzed inductively to identify patterns which might emerge. The patterns identified were compared with the tabulated data for consistency and complementarity.

#### FINDINGS

Of the 121 respondents, 23 could not accurately be termed current educational administration faculty. They were full-time university administrators, retired or emeritus faculty, or professors housed in such departments but not teaching



educational administration. The respondents represented all ranks: 24% were professors, 30% were associate professors, 39% were assistant professors, 5% were adjuncts, and 2% were other. Seventy percent of the respondents were new hires, i.e., they had five years or less in the educational administration professorship. Forty-nine percent were tenured; 45% were untenured; and 6% were in non-tenurable positions. In terms of the experiential background the respondents brought to the professorship, 54% came with experience in K-12 administration, 16% with experience in K-12 administration and college teaching, 24% with experience in college or university administration, and 6% had no administrative or college teaching experience. (The categories were mutually exclusive.)

#### How They Got Their First Position in Educational Administration

When the data were analyzed in terms of the narratives provided and the items checked as important to getting the position, three major patterns for getting the first position appeared to emerge: (1) they were brokered into the position, (2) they were "known quantities" in the institution, and (3) they got the position "on their own." Brokering was far and away the most commonly identified method of gaining the first position. Sixty-two percent of the respondents cited brokering as the most important factor in securing the position. Fifty-four percent were brokered by their major professor or another person (a) into the same institution (9%) or (b) into another institution (45%). The remaining 8% were solicited by an outside institution as a

result of brokering by someone in the field who knew their work. Brokering is a process by which known, credible persons in the field may seek out, make contact for, recommend and sanction, and vigorously support the candidacy of less experienced, less well-known persons with the intent of helping them find and secure a position.

Twelve percent perceived that they had gotten their positions as a result of other positions they had held in the institution, i.e., as graduate assistants (3%) or as adjuncts (9%). Their positions in the institution afforded them some degree of visibility. They were "known quantities" when faculty positions opened. There is some overlap between this category, known quantity, and the prior one, brokering, as 9 of the respondents who listed brokering as the primary means of securing their positions were brokered within the same institution. Thus in a real sense, they were "known quantities" as well.

The third category, "on their own" (26%), encompassed two very different perceptions. Fourteen percent perceived that they had gotten the position largely as a result of their own efforts. None identified brokering as a factor. Two percent made presentations at national conferences and were solicited as a result of those presentations. An additional 3% made contacts at national conferences related to job openings. Both of these approaches resulted in getting the jobs. Nine percent applied for advertised positions and believed they had gotten them

because they possessed the appropriate expertise and credentials. In contrast, 12% perceived that while they had gotten the position on their own, the most important factors in getting the position had more to do with luck and circumstance than strategy. Although timing and an available position played a part, each cited different factors and individual circumstances. This "group" included a person who was updating her placement file at the undergraduate institution she attended and was offered a position at that institution then and there; another moved with her husband who had gotten a job at the university, and she found one also; a third indicated she got the job because she was black and female and the only black professor in the area and field had left the institution.

The three categories that emerged from the data do not represent the entirety of the responses, nor are the categories mutually exclusive. All of the respondents may have believed, for example, that the efforts they undertook, whatever they were, were factors in getting the job. Nevertheless, in assessing the importance of various factors they credited other factors as being more important.

#### Factors Important To Getting Educational Administration Positions

The respondents were asked to rate the importance (1. very important; 2. somewhat important; 3. relatively unimportant) of various factors in securing a position as a professor of educational administration. This was a general question, one

with reference to other females and to any job, not necessarily the first one. Various factors were identified (15) and space was provided for the identification and rating of other factors. Every item listed was selected as very important by at least 10 respondents. A list of the factors cited as most important, ranked by the percentage of respondents selecting that factor appears in Table 1. Among the factors which were perceived as most important by at least 50% of the respondents were, in rank order: good interview, fit with the institution, area of expertise (match between candidate and departmental need), publications, credentials, persons who provide confidential feedback, and reports from former and present colleagues.

Only 3 respondents added "other" factors and none rated its importance. One said you needed to be the editor of a journal; another that you had to have a real good sense of yourself; a third that you should have a plan for what you will contribute to the institution. Another respondent indicated that you had to "cover all of the bases thoroughly," in the space for other, but since she had marked every item as 1, most important, it seemed more an explanation than an additional factor.

A list of the factors cited as relatively unimportant, ranked by the percentage of respondents selecting that factor appears in Table 2. Unlike those selected as most important, there was at least one factor not identified as relatively unimportant, the interview, and few factors were selected by a large percentage of

Table I  
Factors Seen as Very Important  
in Job Securement

Factor	Percentage of Respondents Listing This Factor
Interview	86
'Fit" with Institution	76
Area of Expertise	64
Publication Record	56
Credentials	53
Persons Contacted for Confidential Feedback	52
Reports from Colleagues	50
References	42
Institution Granting Degree	38
Previous Administrative Experience	38
Composition of Search Committee	27
Teaching Credentials	27
Affirmative Action	23
Having a Mentor	20
Type of Degree	10

Table II  
Factors Seen as Relatively Unimportant  
in Job Securement

Factor	Percentage of Respondents Listing This Factor
Type of Degree	65
Having a Mentor	49
Teaching Credentials	31
Affirmative Action	26
Previous Administrative Experience	15
Composition of Search Committee	14
Institution Granting Degree	13
Credentials	7
Persons Contacted for Confidential Feedback	7
Publication Record	7
Area of Expertise	6
References	4
Reports from Colleagues	3
'Fit' with Institution	1

respondents. Only one factor, kind of degree, was selected by more than 50% of the respondents, and only three other factors were selected by more than 15% of the respondents. These were, in descending rank order, mentoring, teaching competency, and affirmative action.

#### DISCUSSION

The study looked at what factors female professors of educational administration perceived to be important in gaining their first position and in getting such positions generally. It was posited that such information would help to identify how they, as a group, had moved from relative obscurity in 1972 to clear visibility in 1986, and how they "saw" the process of landing a position. Further, it was hoped that the results would provide clues for helping other females "see" how to successfully secure positions.

The results of the study are limited to those who responded to the questionnaire, and cannot be said to speak to the experience and perception of all female professors. Nevertheless, the results do speak to the respondents' experience and perceptions and do suggest clues and questions worthy of further study.

Brokering was perceived by a majority of respondents to be a major factor in securing their first position. Given the frequency and strength of this perception among respondents, and conventional wisdom that jobs are secured through the network of

knowns, it may be relevant for would-be professors (students) to be in/put themselves in a position to be brokered, for professors of such prospects to give careful attention to brokering their students, and for researchers to examine the place of brokering in securing positions, for males as well as females.

Ninety-five percent of the respondents had a male major professor. A majority of the respondents who cited brokering (62% of those studied) listed their major professor as the primary broker. The rest did not specify the broker, but it may have been the major professor. Since males dominate the professoriate in educational administration, and especially the senior ranks, it is not surprising that the majority of brokered respondents were brokered by males. It is interesting to speculate whether the brokering that is perceived to have occurred linked female candidates into the so-called "old boys network," the traditional world of knowns in the discipline, which might help to explain how females rose from relative obscurity to visibility in fourteen years. It is certainly worthy of further investigation.

In view of the large percentage of respondents who identified brokering as important in their success in getting a position, it is interesting to consider the relatively large percentage that cited mentoring as an unimportant factor in securing a position. Respondents clearly distinguished mentoring from brokering. They perceived that brokering had been important; and mentoring



considerably less important. In recent years, women have been advised to get a mentor if they want to be successful in securing positions in male-dominated fields. Research shows that it is much harder for females to "get a mentor" (Mertz, Welch and Henderson, 19 ). The results of this study suggest that mentoring may not be critical to success in securing a position; that brokering may serve just as well as mentoring. And brokering requires far less of the broker than does mentoring of the mentor. It is surely a thought worth further study.

A majority of respondents saw publications as important to securing positions. In an earlier study of doctoral students' perceptions of their programs, Mertz and McNeely (1989) found that their major criticism centered on a lack of research emphasis in the department and in their programs. They asserted they were neither encouraged to publish, nor assisted in publishing while working on their degrees. In concert, these findings raise questions for us in the professoriate: How important are publications to success in securing a position? If they are as important as both the respondents see and the grapevine in the field suggests, are we insuring that our students do the things perceived to enhance their success in securing a position?

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