



Women Are Still Missing Persons in Administrative and Supervisory Jobs

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Leadership studies indicate that women rank significantly ahead of men as democratic principals; yet women's role in educational leadership has actually decreased since World War II.

FOR background, suppose we take an informal survey. Question one. How many women school superintendents are you able to name? Men school superintendents? How many women high school principals do you know personally? Men high school principals? How many women deans of schools of education can you count on your right hand? Men deans?

Do you find it difficult to come up with lists of comparable length when the breakdown is male-female?

Let's go to another simple survey in attitudes. Why do you think there are so few women superintendents, high school principals, and deans of schools of education?

- Women don't want the responsibility. (Or it is *assumed* women don't want the responsibility?)

- Women can't handle the job. (Or it is *assumed* women can't handle the job?)

- Women are too emotional. (Or it is *assumed* women are too emotional?)

Ever since the end of World War II, women's role in educational leadership has been tapering. Assisted by the G. I. Bill, thousands of young men after the war left service to enter college, where a large number majored in education. After graduation, they began teaching in the public schools and in many cases were quickly promoted into administrative positions where the salary was higher. Many school districts seemed to adopt an unwritten policy that whenever a woman retired from an administrative or supervisory position she would be replaced by a man.

Twenty years later, the results are predictable. A 1971 selected study by Evelyn Carlson of 30 states and 14 large city school systems confirmed that women educators in the United States have few options open to them above the level of classroom teaching. In 1971 only 11 percent of the school principals were women, 6 percent of the county superintendents, 2 percent of the associate superintendents, and none of the large city

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systems surveyed had either a woman superintendent or a woman deputy superintendent.¹

Surprisingly, women educators fared much better generally in the earlier part of the 20th century. That was the era of Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, 1910 National Education Association President, and Chicago Superintendent of Schools from 1901 to 1915. Susan M. Dorsey, Los Angeles Superintendent for nine years, served from 1920 to 1929. Those were the times also that helped produce Dr. M. Carey Thomas, President of Bryn Mawr College, and Dr. Alice Hamilton, first woman appointed to the Harvard Medical School faculty in 1919.²

Figures concerning the status of women in education in 1973 tell the statistical story; but they do not tell the human story, which is even more distressing.

Scientific data on the *operation* and *incidence* of job discrimination against women in the field of education are extremely difficult to obtain. School boards and college trustees do not put up signs saying "no women need apply" even when this is the unstated policy of their organizations.

Some women themselves are unaware that their ambitions are being blunted and redirected, and many other women are reluctant to discuss the infuriating and demeaning encounters they have had with job discrimination.

Women Who Strive

Those of us who explore and write about discrimination practices or who are active in women's rights organizations frequently hear accounts of confidential experiences which are gradually providing a base for exploding the myths usually given to justify the absence of women in high administrative and supervisory positions. The following stories from the files of sociologist Alice Rossi, a veteran campaigner for women's rights, are typical.

¹ *Where Are the Women Superintendents?* Arlington, Virginia: National Council of Administrative Women in Education, 1973.

² *Wanted: More Women in Educational Leadership.* Arlington, Virginia: National Council of Administrative Women in Education, 1965.

- For years I have had to fight to retain my interest in aeronautics. My high school teacher thought I was crazy to even think of going into aeronautical engineering. My mother said I'd never find a man willing to marry a woman who likes to "tinker with motors," as she put it. My professors say I won't get a job in industry and should switch to another engineering specialty.

- My first day in graduate school I was greeted with the comment of an economics professor: "Women have no place in economics." He refused to mark the papers of the women students. We protested to the department, but they upheld the prerogative of the faculty. The man in question was a visiting professor and they didn't want to "impose on him"! Never mind the effect on the women students!

- I never wanted to teach grade school children, which I am doing now. But I found so much prejudice and resentment against me in my first job in an architectural firm, where the men refused to take me seriously, that I couldn't take it. I left and switched to teaching art. At least I feel welcome in a school.

- I had the experience last year of seeing a job I had filled for two years upgraded when it was filled by a man, at double the salary I was paid for the same work. College trained women are lumped with the secretarial and clerical staff, while college trained men are seen as potential executives. A few years of this and everybody is behaving according to what is expected of them, not what they are capable of.

- I've learned a lot of hard lessons since I left college. A woman must be competent in her present position, but she must not aspire to a higher one. If it is offered to her, she must show surprise and gratitude. If she shows ambition, the competition and general disdain toward women executives will cost her social acceptance. For a single woman, that social acceptance is important. I used to aim much higher than I do now, but I have learned the game, and try to accept the level at which women seem to be kept, without feeling too bitter about it all.³

What this woman does not realize is that she is caught in the "damned if you do

³ Alice S. Rossi. "Job Discrimination and What Women Can Do About It." *Atlantic* 225 (3): 99-102; March 1970.

and damned if you don't" vice typical of the situation of many women in professional fields. If they are vital and assertive, they are rejected as "aggressive bitches out to castrate men." If they are quiet and unassuming, they are rejected as "unlikely to amount to much." Women who try to ease their acceptance by male colleagues in a masculine profession with sweetness-and-light talk may be kept on in the particular low-status niche they occupy, but then find that they are rejected for promotion because they lack drive and ambition.

The pattern that emerges is that women who strive to achieve are systematically discouraged from reaching for their highest human potential. Growing numbers of women in education, as in other fields, are becoming increasingly aware that the employment options open to females are extremely limited and that if you happen to be born female you have little control over your professional life. The American dream is perceived as having a "for men only" sign hovering over it. Personal observations by many women further seem to suggest that hard work and dedication by men educators result in promotions, recognition, and dollars. For women, the reward is more often a certificate for faithful service.

Universal education in the United States has produced men and women who are, in general, similarly trained and inspired. A woman educator feels the same urge as a man to create, to achieve, to surpass; she subscribes to his values, admires his risks, embraces his goals. How natural that she is finding the tight shoe of restricted professional opportunities painful to her mind, her self-esteem, and her sense of justice!

The Public Welfare

The injustice to individuals inherent in discrimination against women as educational leaders makes way for only one other factor of greater importance: *Sex bias in educational institutions no longer serves the best interest of the public welfare.*

Competent leadership is essential for

any organization. In the coming years, if education does not begin using the untapped leadership abilities of its women, it seems that the result will be predictable. At a time when good and perhaps great leadership is needed in education, the pool of leadership development must be expanded to include women or we must all learn to live with the mediocrity which is certain to result from a restricted source of leadership talent.

Already, shortages of capable school executives are becoming critical in some parts of the United States. According to the National Planning Association, in 1974 there will be a shortage of 1.2 million professional managers, a group which includes principals, directors, and school superintendents. Over 20 million persons are being added to the labor force during the next 15 years. At the same time, people in the typical management age group (30-55) are in short supply because of the low birth rate during the Depression.

Even as sources of leadership diminish, the pattern of overlooking women as a rich reservoir of executive talent is so firmly set in the minds of most employers that significant research studies revealing the success of women in responsible jobs are largely ignored. Several such studies were conducted during the 1950's and 1960's.

Studies of Leadership

In 1955, a group of researchers in Florida, believing that the type of leadership exhibited by a principal was an important determinant of his success, studied this facet of the principal's behavior. They defined three types of leadership for this study: (a) *democratic leadership*, which is the most desirable, involves the group in policy-making decisions, allows for individual or group creativity and initiative, demonstrates respect for the dignity of the individual or the group, and fosters two-way communication between the leader and the group; (b) *authoritarian leadership*, which is less desirable, assigns the responsibility of decision making to the status leader or his inner circle and tends to reach its objectives by the use of pressure;

and (c) *laissez-faire leadership*, the least desirable, which is characterized by failure to take action or the shirking of responsibility. The researchers developed certain test situations. They believed that the way a principal reacted to these situations would reveal the type of leadership usually employed in his or her work. An astonishing finding in this study of men and women administrators was that, in their reactions to the test situation, *the women ranked significantly ahead of the men* as democratic principals.⁴

A similar study, also conducted in Florida, was reported the following year. It involved a large number of test situations and included the schools, teachers, students, parents, and communities in which the principal worked. The researchers in this study were nearly all male. They were surprised by their findings and, believing they had made a mistake, carefully rechecked their work. No mistake. *Women operated democratically more often than men.*⁵

In another instance, an extensive research project studying the principals' effectiveness was conducted on a nationwide basis by John K. Hemphill, Daniel E. Griffiths, and Norman Frederiksen.⁶ This study—which involved 232 principals, 137 of whom were men—substantiated the findings of the Florida Leadership Studies. The authors stated in *Administrative Performance and Personality* that there probably is no reason to prefer men over women as principals. The researchers further stated that if such attributes as working with teachers and outsiders; being concerned with objectives of teaching, pupil participation, and the evaluation of learning; and the ability to gain positive reactions from teachers and superiors are important, then women should probably be

favored since the women in their study possessed these attributes to a significantly greater degree than did the men.

In the late sixties, Helen M. Morsink went to the secondary school level for a comparative study of the leader behavior of men and women principals. Supporting the findings of the earlier studies, Dr. Morsink stated:

... if appropriate behavior for a secondary school principal is defined as one who more often: speaks and acts as representative of the group; is persuasive in argument; emphasizes production; maintains cordial relations with superiors, has influence over them, and is striving for higher status, the findings favor women as secondary school principals. . . . there is nothing to suggest any valid reasons in terms of leadership behavior for not employing women as secondary school principals.⁷

In view of the widening professional separatism—women in lower-level jobs, and men in administrative and supervisory positions—which has developed within the educational community, what can be done about it? What can men and women of goodwill do to eliminate the outmoded attitudes which limit the potential of women and handicap educational institutions in leadership development?

Briefly, for educators interested in staying ahead, there are three lines of action which rate high in reassessing attitudes contributing to discrimination:

1. Examine the research findings and current literature on sexism in education. Read some of the books which inspired women to reexamine their lives and role in society, books such as *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan and *Born Female* by Caroline Bird.

2. If a woman, join one of the women's organizations or caucuses which are supporting an improved status for women. The National Education Association has formed a women's caucus, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development recently appointed a working group to study the education of women, and the National Council of Administrative Women

⁴ Kimball Wiles and Hulda Gross Grobman. "Principals as Leaders." *Nation's Schools* 56: 75; October 1955.

⁵ Hulda Grobman and Vynce A. Hines. "What Makes a Good Principal?" *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals* 40: 5-16; November 1956.

⁶ John K. Hemphill, Daniel E. Griffiths, and Norman Frederiksen. *Administrative Performance and Personality*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1962.

⁷ Helen M. Morsink. "The Leader Behavior of Men and Women Secondary School Principals." Ph.D. thesis, Central Michigan University, 1968.

in Education is producing literature on the upgrading of women educators.

If you are a man, talk with women involved in the women's movement. Ask about the issues, the concerns, what they see as solutions. Add your own ideas.

3. In your own bailiwick of influence, begin to seek out and recognize women educators with executive talent. Both men and women can begin creating a climate for acceptance of women moving into management teams.

Sometimes, unfortunately, long-held attitudes are too firmly set to change. In those cases, there is one other action now available to women which is proving extremely effective in modifying discriminatory behavior and is not dependent upon an employer's personal views. Congress, pressured by women's groups and a handful of enlightened men, is gradually voting legal tools in the form of federal legislation. One valuable tool, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which as of March 1972 covers teachers and public employees at all levels below the federal, can now assist women educators who feel the better stance is to *loosen* the pinching shoe of discrimination rather than "adjust" and risk personal damage.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Executive Order 11246 prohibit discrimination, with a possible penalty of cancellation of federal contracts or funding. Executive Order 11247 goes so far as to require an affirmative action program with goals and timetables to assure better utilization of women in high level positions. Many employers complain that affirmative action is unrealistic and weakens an organization. But most women's groups find the complaint unacceptable. They remind the complainants, as Wilma Scott Heide, President of the National Organization for Women, pointed out at the 1973 national conference: "White males have had an affirmative action program for 200 years."

Discrimination against women is a consistent pattern in the field of education, even in 1973. In 1970, Stanley McFarland testified for the National Education Association at the U.S. Senate Hearings on the Equal Rights Amendment. To paraphrase, he said, ". . . research shows no valid reason for the decrease in the number of women in administrative and supervisory positions—except the attitude of the education community." □

On the Positive Side . . .

BARBARA SIZEMORE, featured on our cover, is the new superintendent of schools for Washington, D.C. Her appointment last August by the D.C. Board of Education was the result of a months-long selection process, which included scores of candidates and culminated in a public all-day interview with each of the finalists (all men except the winner).

Mrs. Sizemore comes to the job with 26 years' experience as a professional educator. In addition to more than 20 years as a teacher and school principal, she headed a major school decentralization effort in Chicago.

As chief administrator of the 214-school system in Washington, Mrs.

Sizemore has indicated that the teaching/learning situation is her main interest; she wants the classroom to become the setting for an "explosive learning situation for excluded youth." She believes everything about the system can be decentralized except its direction, "which must be left to the Superintendent."

Washington's new superintendent doesn't view her selection as a victory for women's liberation, since women have held that position in other cities. She noted, however, that sex discrimination is faced by any woman applying for such a post, and stressed: "More women have to apply—we're certainly going to be discriminated against because of our sex; but if we don't apply, they'll think we don't want the job."

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