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## ABSTRACT

Many women in educational leadership positions experience negative treatment from female teachers and female superintendents. This phenomenon is known as horizontal violence, "the curious behavior of members of oppressed groups who often lash out at their peers in response to oppression instead of attacking their oppressors." This paper explores the nature, origin, and effects of horizontal violence, including the dismissive, negative, demeaning, or hostile behavior of some women toward others who have assumed leadership roles in education. It also explores the effects of this phenomenon on female students within schools led by female administrators. Based on a review of the literature, the paper suggests that females in education must be aware of horizontal violence and not let it deceive them or coerce them into practicing it and damaging each other and female students. The first step in changing this behavior is to change awareness, to bring the issue into the open. The paper concludes with a list of nine steps that might prove to be catalysts in this change effort. The steps include more research into horizontal violence, more discussion of equity issues, and more cooperation among women. (Contains 21 references.) (WFA)

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**CUTTING DOWN THE TALL POPPIES: HORIZONTAL VIOLENCE**  
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# CUTTING DOWN THE TALL POPPIES: HORIZONTAL VIOLENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

Professional women in Australia have an interesting term for what happens to talented and outspoken females who rise quickly in their fields. They call it the "tall poppy syndrome" because a poppy that grows higher than the rest often gets its head lopped off (Polley, 1996). Such a phenomenon also occurs with women who achieve success in the field of educational administration, "the blue flammers," who rise quickly through the ranks but are often not supported and even sabotaged by other women who work with them. This phenomenon, however, also appears to occur with many females in educational leadership positions in the United States who experience a spectrum of types of negative treatment from female teachers to female superintendents that can be defined as "horizontal violence"—a term used here to describe the harm that some women do to others in the educational workplace.

An illustration of a non-supportive female, a Texas superintendent, was described by Skrla and Benestante (1998) who were spurned and summarily ignored by a female superintendent when they tried to give her the literature of the Texas Council of Women School Executives at the annual superintendents conference. As these authors describe the event:

The three women sitting in the women administrators organization's booth in the convention hall . . . noticed the name tag on the woman approaching them read 'superintendent' . . . 'Are you a member of our organization?' one . . . called out. The woman did not answer; instead, she greeted a male superintendent standing nearby, who wrapped his arm around her and pronounced, 'Here is one of MY women.' The woman superintendent smiled and returned the hug. The women in the booth tried again, saying . . . 'You should pick up some of our literature; we'd love to have you join us.' The woman superintendent looked at the women in the booth, but she made no move to take any of the organization's literature, nor did she reply. After exchanging small talk with the male superintendent for a few more minutes, she moved off down the aisle of the exhibit hall. (p. 57)

Based on their experience, the authors wrote a chapter, "Being Terminally Female: Denial of Sexism is not Protection on its Effects" in the 1998 TCWSE monograph, entitled *Females as School Executives: Realizing the Vision*.

### Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to explore the nature, origin and effects of the concept of horizontal violence, including the dismissive, negative, demeaning, or hostile behavior of some women toward others who have assumed leadership roles in education. Although this phenomenon exists outside of the field of education, this paper will focus only on horizontal violence as it applies to females in educational leadership and its effects upon their behavior and the schools and districts they lead. A secondary purpose for the paper is to explore the effects of this phenomenon on female students within the schools that female administrators lead.

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## HORIZONTAL VIOLENCE

The origin of the term "horizontal violence" is credited to Paulo Friere (1970), a champion of the poor and disenfranchised in South America, who explored the effects of oppression on minorities in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Within his work, he proposed the use of "horizontal violence" as a term to indicate the curious behavior of members of oppressed groups who often lash out at their peers in response to oppression instead of attacking their oppressors. Using Friere's concept of horizontal violence, minorities and other oppressed groups (women who live in a male-dominated society) rage internally because of their lack of power but take out their anger and violence on their oppressed peers (other women). According to Friere, the causal factor for this behavior is the powerlessness and impotence of the oppressed because they would be severely punished if they attacked the powerful individuals who actually control their lives (men).

Having seen the usefulness of this new concept in working those with little or no power themselves, Friere (1970) warned those who were trying to free themselves from oppression of the hidden danger that they will become 'sub-oppressors.' (An example of a sub-oppressor in literature would be George Orwell's book, *Animal Farm*, in which the pigs began to make slaves out of the other farm animals even though they had all worked together to kill the farmer—their original oppressor.) These sub-oppressors, according to Friere, identify with those that oppress them because the "oppressed find in their oppressors their 'model of humanhood'" (p. 30 -31). Within this context, he explained that the oppressed have the following characteristics that lead them to punish others like themselves: (a) they are reluctant or unwilling to resist the oppressors, (b) have low self-esteem, (c) are self-deprecating, and (d) fear autonomy and responsibilities because of fear of retaliation or sanctions from the oppressors. Under these conditions, Friere indicates that the rage of the oppressed reaches such levels that they attack their "kin" in order to reduce the pain of feeling powerless and devalued. In this paper, the term "horizontal violence" (a type of psychological displacement) will be applied to the instances of female school administrators who lash out at other females rather than vent their internal anger toward the men who in effect have, in effect, been their oppressors in American culture.

In this author's search on the Internet relating to horizontal violence, the first site listed related to this phenomenon came from research in the nursing profession. This predominantly female field has already identified Friere's conceptualization as a descriptor for the female-on-female "violence" between nurses in the workplace and is using that knowledge to reduce the incidences of female-to-female harassment. In the nursing profession, Friere's theory would apply to nurses because doctors and specialists are those who hold the power and the authority in the medical field, while nurses lack power and authority, are poorly paid, and are subordinate to doctors in all situations. Given their lack of power and input, nurses would typify an oppressed group as defined by Friere. According to the information on this web site, instances of horizontal violence included back stabbing and sabotage among nurses that were so frequent that they began seek causal factors and solutions to their problems. This research regarding the cause of such behavior led them to find and then to apply Friere's "horizontal violence" to a critical issue in their profession. Their position statement on horizontal violence reveals the types of behaviors that this nursing association categorizes as horizontal violence.

Horizontal violence is harmful behavior, via attitudes, words and other behaviors that are directed to us by another colleague. Horizontal violence controls, humiliates, denigrates or injures the dignity of another. Horizontal violence indicates a lack of mutual respect and value for the worth of the individual and denies another's fundamental human rights. (Blanton, Lybecker, & Spring, p. 1)

This author first heard the concept of horizontal violence from a female Methodist minister who spoke to a class entitled Women and Careers in Education at Texas Woman's University. This course was designed to meet specific needs and problems of female school administrators, and we invited many successful females to share their "personal and career journeys" with us. The visitor to class that day had been recently ordained as a Methodist minister and was recommended by one of the graduate student in the class to speak to us about an issue on the careers of female administrators in public education. In her presentation she discussed female-to-female harassment of women toward other women, especially successful women, and related the concept of horizontal violence to this behavior. Her seminary training had included the study of the sociological concept of horizontal violence with regard to working successfully with minorities, including women. This newly ordained minister of a mixed race congregation told us how this idea also applied to women and how they often treated each other with disdain and disrespect. After she finished her presentation, the class bubbled over with questions for her.

During the spirited discussion that followed, all of the female graduate students were able to describe instances in their lives and careers that could be classified under this new concept. These in-service and aspiring administrators then freely shared their own personal stories that involved not only non-supportive behavior from their female peers and their staffs but outright sabotage from female secretaries, colleagues, bosses, and "friends." They also gave parallel metaphors for horizontal violence—crabs in the bucket who try to pull back the crabs trying to escape, iron maidens who essentially wage war on their female assistants, or women who take credit for the work of others. This author, who was teaching the class, related a connection to this type of behavior to a scene in the movie, "Unsinkable Molly Brown," in which the priest explained the rude behavior of the hostess of a dinner party for the "Denver 400" (members of high society) who wouldn't let Molly "crash" an exclusive dinner party by telling Molly that these new society women, the nouveau riche, didn't want her to attend exclusive party because her "rough edges" reminded them that they were only one generation away from the "woodpile" themselves.

#### Horizontal Violence in Educational Administration

Most women in educational administration have had barriers, both internal and external, that made their obtaining their administrative positions more difficult than for men who became administrators. In 1996, Schmuck found that 70% of female school administrators reported obstacles to their careers simply because they were women, and 74% of these reported having negative role models—half of whom were women. Fifty-seven percent said they were not part of a network of professional support, and only 17% of their respondents indicated that they did not need or want such support. After completing her research, Schmuck described a "thread of anti-feminism" that ran through the stories of the women in her study and concluded that some of these anti-feminist women in her research appeared to deny their femaleness, caring solely about themselves and their own careers.

Educational administration certainly held some surprises for women beginning their careers in administration that were unexpected and puzzling; as an example, Gupton and Slick (1996) discovered an "unexpected wrinkle" in a female high school principal's new job regarding other women when she indicated that:

I expected some of the faculty women to like me, and maybe even enjoy having a woman in leadership. . . . What a shock it was to find no loyalty and little support. . . many of the teachers were . . . not inclined to accept leadership from a woman. And the women teachers were less inclined (p. 5).

Gupton and Slick (1996) indicated that female administrators new to their jobs expected varying types of resistance to their leadership from men but appeared blindsided by the antagonistic behavior of the other women toward them. Benton (1980) reported a related phenomenon and named it the "queen bee" syndrome--one that adds insult to injury in the plight of the women administrators who seek support systems from within their own ranks. This author describes the "queen bee" as a woman in a position of authority who works at keeping other women out of leadership positions in education in order to protect her 'queenly' status. Supporting the relationship of the "queen bee" to the concept of horizontal violence, the conclusions of Ginn (1989) indicated that this "queen bee" phenomenon was about power, noting that there was not enough to go around for many women who were excluded from any power at the time. She also indicated that the concept of shared power seemed difficult to grasp for those not usually included in the "power loop" and resulted in this counterproductive attitude among many underrepresented female administrators. Ginn's conclusions parallel those posited by Friere concerning the lack of power as an underlying cause for horizontal violence.

In Ginn's research, a female aspirant describes her view of the doubly painful blow when an established female fails to encourage female aspirants by stating, "My experience with female administrators has not been positive. . . . From what I see, it's every woman for herself. The men help each other a lot more than the women do" (Edson, 1988, p. 76). She also notes, paradoxically, that many women in education often find themselves drawing up battle lines instead of forming alliances. Edson also indicates that a "decided concern" (but not a prevailing one) among many of her respondents was the failure of female educators to support other female administrative applicants. The results of her study noted that, in spite of many women who are very supportive of other women within her study, female aspirants were still concerned with the jealousy, competition, and lack of support shown them by other female educators. Because of these "worst detractors," a serious distrust of women in the field was reported. As one female educator noted:

I'm concerned about the harm that successful women do to other women in this district. The men are supportive; the women are jealous and sabotaging. Now that a few women have made it to higher levels, they seem to relish the opportunity to 'do in' other women. At least the men who were in power before were more innocent about it. (Edson, 1988, p. 249).

In a related vein, Shakeshaft (1995) in her Foreword to *Women Leading in Education* stated that the complexities in female-to-female interactions in educational administration have not yet been made clear. She reports that when she travels around the country and speaks with female administrative groups, a common theme that has emerged from her audiences is the belief that women are their own worst enemies.

Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, the view that it is other women who keep women from advancing remains strong. Therefore, we need to examine why



we cling to a 'blame the woman' explanation, while ignoring or discarding what we know about female to female support systems and helping strategies. (Shakeshaft in Dunlap and Schmuck, 1995, xiii)

Shakeshaft's concern, acknowledging that "some" female were antagonistic toward their peers, could be explained by Matthews' research (1995) concerning the views of equity that female administrators held regarding other female administrators. In this study Matthews categorized four distinct points of view of female administrators regarding their "peers." From the responses to interviews with female superintendents, assistant superintendents, high school principals, and assistant principals in her sample, she developed four categorizations of differing "views" these respondents had of other women in administration. The categories that emerged from her subjects' responses were: (a) "activists" whose concern was gender equity and active support of women into educational administration; (b) "advocates" who supported women, belonged to female advocacy organizations, and believed that women bring unique strengths to school administration; (c) "isolates" who detached themselves from equity issues and didn't believe that sex discrimination existed, wasn't worth worrying about, or wasn't even a problem; (d) and "individualists" who believed that the individual, female or male, took precedence over the group and didn't believe in supporting or promoting women or taking action to correct the sexual imbalance in school leadership.

Using Matthews' categories, one would see that the first two categories, "activists" and "advocates," have positive and supportive points of view with respect to other women in educational administration, while "isolates" and "individualists" hold views that would result in diminishing the value of other female administrators, feeling detached from them, and believing that they were unworthy of their help. This conclusion would certainly support the horizontal violence concept but also could explain the paradox of why certain women in educational leadership are supportive of their female colleagues while others are non supportive.

In relation to horizontal violence, these two categories of non-supportive women deserve a closer look. Matthews (1995) states that the "isolates" identified in her study appeared to be detached from issues of sex equity, were treated as tokens in their workplaces, and took pride in being the "only woman" (a queen bee characteristic) and having the opportunity to speak from "the woman's point of view." As two isolates in her study stated:

I am not one to really push the women's thing and I guess it's because I have always felt I could do whatever I wanted, it didn't make any difference, and I just assumed that everyone else could, too. I just haven't had the time and the energy to fight for other women or for their opportunities either. (Matthews, 1995, p. 259)

I'm not a real strong women's lib person. I guess I feel like if you've got the credential and you've got the experience and can project that you can get a job. And if you're not confident, then you shouldn't get it. (Matthews, 1995, p. 259)

In contrast to the individuals Matthews classified as "isolates," the "individualists" appeared to be more concerned with the attributes of individuals, male and female, and not with the cause of sex equity in school administration. The responses of individualists, however, revealed a theme running through many of their comments--the fear of alienating men; although as this author noted, they have, in reality, alienated themselves from other women. The voice of an individualist below clearly reveals her point of view:

I have a lot of good feelings about the way I came into where I am. It makes me feel good in many ways that someone else kept saying, 'You have the capabilities, you have the features that we want, you have the things that we need. (Matthews, 1995, p. 259)

Another individualist tells an even more revealing story about her views of other women:

I was into my master's program for a year, the second year it became the "in" thing for women to get into administration. All of a sudden, book, there were all these women. And I know the guys used to protect me and said, 'You were here first. They're just jumping onto the bandwagon.' There were so many of them that just didn't belong. They haven't got the patience for it; they haven't got the personality; they haven't got the guts. Some of the gals were in there just because they were women. (Matthews, 1995, pp. 259-260)

Then she states her clearly superior attributes that make her "right" for the job:

I am kind of a unique woman in that I have never let the 'different sex' stop me. I have always teased: I could out-drink, out-smoke, and out-swear any of the guys I needed or had to. And I find it a compliment that they consider me one of the guys—I am one of the guys. (Matthews, 1995, p. 260)

Matthews' typologies of females in educational administration (1995) provide an explanation for instances of horizontal violence between female school administrators if one studies the characteristics of these "isolates" and "individualists" to identify their motives for anti-female behavior. It appears that Isolates obtained their positions with a high degree of district support (the highest of the four groups) and deny having experienced any type of gender discrimination themselves. They are treated as tokens (not as individuals), are oblivious to any discrimination in their work area, and have no "vocabulary" or conceptual frame within which to categorize instances of discrimination as such. Men, however, have recruited the individualists into school administration, and they have a real fear of alienating these men (their former and present "mentors"). When viewing other women coming into school leadership positions, they see them as a threat (especially those who want to "rock the boat" when they enter the established male system). Their perceptions are based solely on the male point of view, and these individuals see men as the "source of authority." The individualists who have been mentored into the system by men often remain "wards" of their mentors and become and remain permanent proteges with no individual power without their men. Because they were favored by men and continue to have their support (but at a high cost), these women can't understand why other women say that they have experienced some type of discrimination when trying to enter the field.

The profiles of isolates and individualists indicate that women with the characteristics and points of view that Matthews (1995) indicates that these female administrators alienate themselves from other women, internalize the male voice as the external voice of authority, deny the frustrations and experiences of other women who enter the field; however, in doing so they devalue their own identities and discount their own unique experiences as women. According to Matthews, the individualists have "learned to see the world through the 'male prism'" and proposes that the entire history of female scholarship and research is explained by women who saw their own



experiences through "male eyes," to the extent that they distance themselves from other women.

Matthews' insightful conclusions indicate that women do speak in different voices, and she provides explanations for their behavior, noting that career patterns and sources of support may be two of the reasons why some women in administration view sex equity issues quite differently. She sees activists and advocates as agents for change and strong supporters of other women who believe that women bring unique strengths to their schools and districts. In opposition to these typologies, isolates enjoy being the "token female" and the special attention they enjoy in this role, while individualists resent the women who advocate for gender equity and are highly opposed to separate advocacy organizations for female administrators. Supporting Matthews' "individualists" categorization, Schmuck and Schubert (1995) indicate that some female principals must often decide whether or not to join women's group but view this move as possible "political suicide," while they note that others take a more sanguine view and enjoy the support and advice they receive after they become members. They, however, are afraid to splinter off from men (who hold the power) noting that they also need to work with "the men." As these authors note, "Politically, and personally, women administrators are torn between being segregated into a culture of women and being integrated into a culture of men (p. 282).

Bell (1995), supports this cultural dilemma, noting that women in school administration are in the unusual position of having "one foot in each camp"--being "members of a majority" (women in education) as well as members of "the few" (women school leaders). She also indicates that their positions as females in educational leadership places them on the "fringes" of groups of teachers and administrators, implying that they don't belong to either or to both. As a result of her work, Bell concludes that experiences of females in school administration "encompass both authority and influence as leaders, and isolation as women in a male-dominated occupation" (p. 289).

Kanter (1977) believes that the effectiveness of women leaders is a response to opportunities and to favorable positions in the power structure and that both men and women are able to exercise their authority more effectively when they have power behind it (1997). From these related research studies, it appears that the "hidden agenda" underlying horizontal violence between female administrators is that of power—when female leaders realize that they have little or no power except that given to them by men, they try to appear powerful by "lording it over" other females (perhaps subconsciously).

Funk (2000) summarizes the feelings of female administrators, isolates and individualists, who want to remain the "Queen Bees" or have adopted the mannerisms, values, and issues of the male administrators and thereby perpetuate horizontal violence as:

- I'm in the spotlight as the only female administrator! I don't want to share. I want this job so I will tell lies about my female competition to get it. These jobs are so scarce so I will do whatever I have to do to undermine other applicants.
- I am fearful that if I act feminine in my administrative role that they won't accept me!
- I think successful women get ahead by sleeping their way to the top.
- They certainly didn't earn their promotions.

- Who does she think she is—putting me on a growth plan. None of the male principals ever did this. She’s just out to get me!
- She seems so competent! I feel unworthy and incompetent!
- I made it without extra help! Why in the world would I help her?
- I don’t want to have anything to do with the professional associations for female administrators. As a female superintendent, it would be the “kiss of death” with my male colleagues. Without their support, I have no power!
- I can’t promote gender equity for girls in my high school! They’d fire me! After all this is Texas (substitute the name of your state here as appropriate)! (Funk, 2000, p. 246)

### Dissociation from Female Identity

Disassociation and denial of female certain administrators regarding their own personal histories of sex discrimination lead to another source of horizontal violence. In her article entitled “The Denial of Personal Discrimination,” Crosby (1984) speaks to the antifeminist attitudes among some women that have perplexed researchers in the field of women in educational administration, indicating that women who deny ever having experienced gender bias and discrimination are in denial regarding instances of their own experiences and, as a result, dissociate themselves from other women. Giving support to Crosby’s work, Schmuck (1996) describes women who deny any discrimination against them, see themselves as “exceptions to the rule,” argue that they are not like other women, and state vehemently that they have never been victims of sex discrimination.

As they dissociate themselves from their female identity, they remain self-oriented and tend not to identify with other women but rather with those who are the gatekeepers of the profession. They often do not provide support for girls or women and ignore issues of gender equity. Rather than offering a different voice, they perpetuate the status quo (Schmuck, 1996, p. ix)

The dissociation between non-supportive females, isolates and individualists, has consequences for both experienced but non-supportive female school administrators, and those entering the profession or not advancing in relation to their talents and skills. The women administrators who align themselves with men and are not supportive of other women (and female students) pay a high price for women the benefits that they receive from males and do not share with other females--the loss of their “voices,” and the inability to be themselves. Matthews (1995) poses the question, “What is the price of being co-opted by men?” Smith (1975) responds:

We have difficulty in asserting authority for ourselves. We have difficulty in grasping authority for women’s voices and for what women have to say. We are thus deprived of the essential basis for developing among ourselves the discourse out of which symbolic structures, concepts, images, and knowledges might develop which would be adequate to our experience and to deviating forms of organization and action relevant to our situation and interests. In participating in the world of ideas as object rather than as subject we have come to take for granted that our thinking is to be authorized by an external source of authority. (p. 365).

The “price” paid by women is also described by Matthews (1995):

The very thing that these women are striving to achieve—‘working and making the right impression and not being any different than anybody else’—point to the very thing that is lost: Their unique experiences as women, and the values and beliefs that accompany that experience. (p. 262)

### Horizontal Violence and Gender Inequity

Non-supportive female administrators} often do not provide support for girls or women and ignore issues of gender equity. Rather than offering a different voice, they perpetuate the status quo. (Schmuck, 1996, p. ix)

Given the female-on-female horizontal violence that continues to exist for women in educational administration, this author saw in statements such as the quote above an almost hidden or at least unspoken area of female-to-female horizontal violence: the lack of support from female administrators, particularly principals, in making sorely needed changes in the academic, social, and cultural barriers that exist for female students in today’s schools. Questions that arise include: Do the effects of horizontal violence affect the attention that female principals give to equity policies and practices in schools? Are schools with female principals still “failing in fairness” to girls and young women in their schools? Are aspiring female administrators learning about gender inequities in their preparation programs and making the necessary changes to level the playing field for girls—and open their lives to opportunities yet unavailable to many girls in schools today? Are boys still being called upon more often, given more critical feedback, given cues to questions, and provided with more praise in the nation’s schools (and universities)? What are the necessary changes that need to be made in curriculum, delivery systems, counseling practices, leadership role availability, etc. that would make a paradigm shift in the lives and self-worth of girls and young women in schools (and universities).

In response to such questions, Schmuck and Shubert (1995) designed a research study to test Adkison’s prediction (1982) that women who have personally experienced institutional discrimination would be more sensitive to bias and stronger advocates for change, better shape local and practice toward greater sex equity for employees and students. These researchers wanted to determine whether or not the women who had become school administrators since 1982 had become equity advocates and active proponents of shaping local school board policy and practices toward greater sex equity for students. These researchers chose 19 female principals in three states (an admittedly small sample) to determine their attitudes toward gender equity in their schools. The results of their research indicated that female administrators had made few if any changes in their schools regarding gender equity for their female students. In their sample.

Schmuck and Schmuck found that none of the female principals, when asked to describe an important policy or practice for which they were responsible, gave an example of gender equity and only four of the nineteen principals addressed any continuing and concerted school-wide efforts to address either student sex or race inequities. The majority of these principals also reported that they had experienced no discrimination as a female seeking the principalship. Although some reported some

“differential treatment” on the basis of sex, they failed to label this behavior as discrimination. Two of the nineteen women gave examples of sex discrimination, but neither of them gave a strong response or no evidence of promoting gender equity in their schools.

As Schmuck and Shubert (1995) speak to their surprising research results, they looked at the twenty years of “progress” that was expected from the fact that there are more female administrators today in the nation’s schools than two decades ago and stated . . . changing the gender representation of principals will not, alone, change equity practices in schools” (p. 285). These researchers concluded on the basis of their sample that these female principals appeared to adopt the prevailing norms of the male administrative culture of schools that ignores issues of equity and do not translate their own personal experiences into administrative action to ensure that gender equity exists for their students or their employers. Noting that these principals appear to disassociate from their own individual experiences or feel that their experiences are simply idiosyncratic, Schmuck and Schubert conclude that these female administrators “fail to comprehend the more fundamental concept of how gender serves as a segregating factor in the culture of educational institutions (p. 285). The following conclusion made by this research team should give all female principals pause when considering the ramifications of their general findings. Although we applaud continuing efforts to reach gender equity in administration and believe women have successfully demonstrated their administrative competence, we cannot presume because a woman is in charge, challenges to inequity will be made. We must continue to educate female and male educators about inequality through the universities and professional associations. Women’s professional associations, especially, have taken too narrow a view; they should provide a more comprehensive and critical view of how our schools perpetuate inequality. (Schmuck & Schubert, 1995, p. 285)

#### Summary and Recommendations

The “curse” of horizontal violence is still a hidden issue for females in educational leadership with as it is with other minorities who are members of oppressed groups and lack sufficient power because of their lack of genuine status. If it is difficult for some women to believe that women in school leadership are members of an oppressed group (“being terminally female”), this reality of the phenomenon of female-to-female horizontal violence should give some credence to the true status of women in educational organizations. Using the concept of horizontal violence does provide an explanation of why research indicates that many female educational leaders “dissociate” to some degree in order to survive in often tenuous positions with school districts where men are still the “providers of the power” and that some female administrators who “have arrived” feel that the problem of gender discrimination in the field of education has already been solved and doesn’t merit any more attention. Perhaps women in educational administration won’t be rid of this destructive behavior until equity for females in all aspects of their lives is achieved. They must, however, be aware of the phenomenon of horizontal violence and not let it deceive or coerce them to practice this “dark art” and damage each other and the girls and young women in the schools. The first step to change is awareness—knowing that horizontal violence between females in educational exists, is harmful, and stalls the progress needed to allow women and girls to be the best they can be. Bringing this behavior out in the open, teaching about it in the professional programs for female and male administrators, spreading word to in-service female administrators who could provide

needed support to their female peers, and making changes in schools that will promote and eventually achieve gender equity for our students.

Feminine principles are entering the public realm because we can no longer afford to restrict them to the private domestic sphere, nor allow a public culture obsessed with Warrior values to control human destiny. (Helgesen, 1990, p. 255.)

Steps that might prove to be catalysts in this much needed change effort include:

- More research is needed regarding the phenomenon of horizontal violence and its negative impact on female administrators and female school students.
- Preparation programs for educational administrators should include knowledge, skills, and appreciation for equity issues within our public and private schools.
- In-service and aspiring female principals should educate themselves in specifics regarding the most critical inequities in their schools and learning or developing strategies that will provide girls and young women (and boys and young men) that promote equality through the total school program.
- In-service female administrators at all levels should show the courage and strength necessary to take the risks to “make a difference” in challenging the status quo and making sure that schools become places of acceptance for girls and young women.
- Female principals should foster the implementation of staff development programs that are designed to allow teachers to utilize strategies targeted for girls as well as boys, using the research on how brains are “sexually wired” for different learning styles and strategies.
- Women and girls should be aware of the existence of horizontal violence and begin to work together to first understand this phenomenon, the psychological reasons behind this female-to-female discrimination, and the powerful messages that such behavior has on others. Continuing this practice will continue to slow the progress of women as equal member of our society.
- Women in administration should strive to enrich their schools and workplaces with qualities of female leadership that enrich schooling: Collaboration, Caring, Courage, Intuition, and Vision (Regan, 1995) rather than utilize the methods of male administrators.
- Females in administration should become aware of and acknowledge sexism and discrimination and strive to eliminate it; they should also work together to change the existing cultures in education by drawing on their female strengths (Skrla & Benestante, 1998).
- Female administrators must find the courage to be supportive of other female school executives and aspiring administrators in order to share, empower, and give support—even at the risk of alienating the “old boys club.”



- Female superintendents who belong to professional associations for female school executives should speak to their peers regarding the importance of their joining these associations, noting the message it gives to other females in administration who are working hard to support one another.

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