

NETWORKING — Why You Need to Know People Who Know People

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Networking works.

The opportunity to contribute to this book arose when the editor contacted a colleague of ours who was able to connect her to us. The editor used her network to advance her plans. Part of our preparation for writing this chapter was to send out requests for anecdotes about networking to use to illustrate the points we wanted to make. Nobody contacted us to say that they had had a bad experience networking or that they regretted networking. No-one told us that they had not benefited from having a network or that it was impossible to develop one. We have not been able to find any article in the literature that suggests that networking is ever detrimental to a career. So why doesn't everyone network?

What is a network?

You may be networking without consciously knowing you are doing so. If you are an active member of a community — you are networking. If you co-operate and participate in neighborhood activities — you are networking. If you take someone's class when they have to be out of town and they return the favor — you are networking. If you are working to develop a list of people you can call on in an emergency and be called upon in turn — you are networking.

One way to think about a network is that it is a group of people who are connected in some way and who trade. Much of the time what is being exchanged is ideas and information. You can think of everyone you know as being part of a giant network or of yourself as a hub connecting to several different networks governing different aspects of your life. Networking implies communications that flow to you and from you. The balance in communication flow will fluctuate — as you progress in your career you may respond more frequently to the needs of others or find that you are expanding your network in some areas to meet new needs while maintaining existing links. Generally speaking, the more people you know the more chances you will have to benefit from your network. Your chances will improve even more if your network is made up of people with a broad range of interests. You will not be in contact with everyone in your network at all times and not everyone in your network will be helpful in dealing with any one situation you find yourself in.

If you just want to know how to network more effectively — this chapter will help you and you can skip directly to the section on *Mentoring versus Networking*. If you do not think that you should have to network, that you do not need to network, or that networking is an inappropriate way to behave — read on!

Why career skills are good.

Suggestions to people that they need to network are sometimes met with resistance. A common response from is that it is wrong to be nice to influential people in the expectation they will provide assistance in getting ahead. Another frequent response is that networking should not be necessary and that people should be able to advance on their own merits. First, networking is not about only being pleasant to the people you think will matter. You certainly should not go out of your way to be unpleasant so you can bask in a feeling of moral superiority. Second, being promoted on merit requires that your merits are known. One thing networking with more experienced people will teach you is that it is usually a mistake not to discuss your hopes and expectations. The deeper issue here though is the fact that some people resist the idea that they need to work at their career. *The isolation that women in physics tend to have automatically limits their networks. I have found that it is difficult to get my undergraduate students to see the benefits of meeting, networking, sharing their experiences, listening to the experiences of other women in physics. They do not see it as worth their time. It tends to be something in hindsight that we wish we had.* (Kristi R. G. Henderson, *University of Puget Sound*.)

Gail Evans in her book *Play like a Man, Win like a Woman*¹ argues that for women, or indeed anyone, to succeed in an organization they need to understand how the organization works, what are the rules that govern the organization, and how to play the game by those rules. Do not get us wrong — We are not saying that these are the right rules or that these should always be the rules — just that to change them you need to at least know them. Let's acknowledge that we are working within an imperfect system and that life is not always fair. One way to change things over the long term is to increase the number of subversive insiders — people who can work inside the system but who do not accept it as perfect. You can worry about being co-opted by a system that you do not endorse but realize that choosing against participation is rarely the most effective strategy. We think that one of the goals that need to be achieved to improve the working environment for everyone is an unobtrusive mobilization of people with a broader perspective and understanding of the issues into positions where they can act on their ideals. Having said that, you need to decide for yourself how to respond to the environment you are currently in but if you are reading this then the assumption is you prefer to be pro-active².

While the suggestion that you should treat your career as a game to be won has its merits we would caution you that your career is not a game; it's an important part of your real life. You should expect it to take effort to get everything out of your career that you can. Do not assume that career skills are carried by a gene that you are either born with or without. Career skills can be learnt. If you practice them enough you can make using them seem effortless to an observer so do not assume that someone whose skills you admire is not working hard to polish those skills whenever they can.

The concern that learning and using career skills and the understanding they give you of an organization to your advantage is somehow unethical or manipulative is common enough that it is worth more probing. We suspect that attitudes to career advancement strategies obey a gender pattern³ — that is, that women are more likely to worry about how appropriate it is to make part of their job advancing their career than men do but we have not seen any detailed studies done on this subject. However, again, we would like to stress the importance of reaching a position of influence if you want to shape an organization. Is it wrong to be effective at persuading people around to your view point? Is it wrong to use your skills to make things better for everyone? There are many books that have been published on leadership — one that gets to the heart of these issues about how ethical it is to be a leader is *Political Savvy*⁴ by Joel R. DeLuca. This book makes an interesting distinction between doing what is best only for yourself and doing what is best for the whole. The former is Machiavellian, the latter is leadership. You also want to avoid the mistake of always putting the organization first and never taking your interests into account, martyrs do not get their rewards on earth. If the best idea always won and the best person always got the job we would live in a very different world — until then our advice is to learn how to improve the chances in favor of getting what you want and what you want for society.

You may agree that it is ok to work on your career and that networking would help you but still not be networking. If you think that you cannot network because it is an admission of weakness to ask for or accept help rather than doing it all by yourself you are wrong. The fact that scientists and engineers are trained to be independent and to be problem solvers is probably at least partly responsible for this attitude since it seems to encourage the feeling that you should not be in a position if you cannot handle it on your own. It may help to remember that you will not get any credit for re-inventing the wheel. You should also focus on the fact that there is a big difference between asking for advice and asking someone to do all the work. An effective network is a lever that will increase what you can achieve not take away from it.

You may be worried that participating in a network will require something from you in return for what you get. That's correct — networks do involve interactions rather than a one way flow of favors. However, do not assume that you will be unwilling or unable to give when asked — and if it is something you feel uncomfortable about providing you can always say no.

There are several excellent guides that women in the sciences and engineering should read that cover a broad range of skills that will make you effective at what you do⁵, and several sources of good information directed specifically towards faculty members⁶ at institutions where research is important. However,

whatever the details of the position you are in (or seeking) you will find that networking is one of the more important tools that you will need and should be using.

Mentoring versus Networking

Mentors are important — especially in the early stages of your career when your thesis advisor will often take this role on. Traditionally mentors are people who have a lot more experience and influence than you do. You will often think of them as people who are likely to have your best interests at heart. In fact, your mentor may well be the first member of your network who will give support your career and provide advice on what you should do. However, research indicates that in male dominated fields the predominant style of mentoring tends to be a better match to male interaction styles⁷. This style tends to be focused on providing specific information or advice on technical issues and the usual goal is for the protege to establish their independence. Indeed, some authors have discussed the heroic mentorship⁸ as one that ultimately leaves the protege alone to slay the dragon.

Other models of mentoring are discussed in the literature. Collective mentoring makes the guidance of any junior members of an organization the responsibility of all of the senior members of that organization. This it takes a village approach is clearly a good idea in principle but one that is rarely found operating in practice. Multiple mentoring encourages people to find several people with disparate skills to act as their mentors. Packard⁹ talks about assembling a diverse group of mentors into a composite mentor. This approach has the advantage of encouraging people to think about their specific needs for mentoring and to look for people who can provide advice on those specific needs. Like having a network, building a composite mentor will connect you to a group of people.

So, what is the difference between having a network and having a composite mentor? Mentorship always implies a teacher to student relationship. Some people have the knowledge. Some people want to learn it. Networking communication is more of a two-way street — information flows both ways — sometimes you will benefit from it, sometimes you will be helping someone else. While there are many similarities with multiple mentorship, networking is much less hierarchical in structure. Networking also encompasses much more casual contacts. As an effective networker you will be part of a wider support structure and getting advice from a broader range of people. You will be the one who has to decide what advice to take and will have to learn how to pick and choose between conflicting suggestions.

Why network?

Several studies indicate that being able to access advice helps women advance their careers¹⁰. Indeed, you can think of your network as supplying you with social resources that help you achieve what you want. Your position will affect your natural access which will in turn affect what you can do. Often the research indicates that networks have an impact beyond the education and skills possessed by an individual.¹¹ In the words of one of the respondents to our request for anecdotes — *I do think networking is invaluable. When I have had a strong network, my career has progressed much more smoothly. I have felt that I had more information to base my moves on, and I felt more confident in my choices and situations. There is still a lot of jobs and other opportunities (like serving on a grant review panel) that are found through networks, especially post doc positions that are not always advertised. I do think it often ends up that women are less connected to a wide range of people and therefore have a more limited network. I also think many women are not aggressive enough about forming and building networks, mostly because I do not think we realize how invaluable they can be. I am finding it to be particularly important to have a wide network as I now try to shift out of an academic physics position into medical physics.* (Kristi R. G. Henderson, University of Puget Sound).

Networks can help you get information faster about jobs that are available. Instead of searching for specific policy information on the web you may find that you can get the information more easily by asking people in your network. More importantly, if you have an effective network you can find out information that may not otherwise be available — such as if a certain individual would make a good supervisor or if a particular location would be an enjoyable place to spend time. How good your network is therefore will directly effect how easy you find it to attain your goals.

Networks also help you stay socially involved and integrated into day to day activities. This sometimes seems like a waste of time. Why spend even a few minutes talking to someone when a deadline is fast approaching? It is often easier to make time for things that are clearly and directly related to your career than it is to make time for anything that seems to be optional. Especially in the early years of establishing your reputation you are probably putting in long hours working and are feeling the stress of the need to get results. This is particularly likely to occur if you are working in North America. However, taking a few minutes to exchange pleasantries with someone can provide an important opportunity to step back a bit from what you are doing and think about it. Maybe the person you are talking to will suggest something important you had not thought of. Often just talking about what you are doing can help you to clarify your thoughts. You certainly do not want to isolate yourself and risk wasting your efforts on something that has already been done. Short breaks will help you to avoid burn out.

Sometimes what you want from a network is not suggestions as to what you can or should do but just support and/or validation. We have all been in situations where the intelligent response is not the one that would be the most emotionally satisfying. How do you deal with someone influential and probably well meaning who has just told you not to worry about getting tenure because as one of the rare women in your department they would never turn you down? How do you deal with students who have never come to class but complain that by failing them you are ruining their future? Politely, then go let of your irritation by venting to a trusted member of your network.

Finally, an interesting study came out recently about people who thought they were lucky and people who thought they were not;¹² it argues that luck is more a matter of being open to opportunities than random fortune. Networks help provide opportunities.

Working at building your own network

When you were growing up your family and friends were your network. At college you belonged to study groups¹³. So how do you network? How did you form a study group? Any contact you have can potentially lead to a networking opportunity from working with a student to being open to meeting with someone else who is interested in networking. *Once I got some funding from a non-profit that had made too much money one year and had a vision for developing online databases to support and change their business model. They were referred to me by a student with whom I had become friends. He (the student) was a racquet ball partner of the person with the purse. We had two years of funding for three students and learned a great deal about GIS systems and how to integrate them with databases. This showed a certain level of expertise in our student group, and thus made us eligible for several practical research projects with Geosciences and the university transportation center. This has generated much more funding in the form of student support on multidisciplinary projects over time.*

Once someone who had been a manager in federally funded lab in the DC area arrived in my state to follow his wife here. He wanted to network with my department, but everyone ignored him (probably because he had graduated from this institution). I took him up on his offer, and nothing really followed from our own collaboration, (we did not get the funding) but he introduced me to deans, and other departments and researchers at the university as well as representatives from industry and the state economic development groups. I was amazed at how he would just knock on the door, schedule a meeting and get to know these folks. It really opened my eyes! We did a presentation with a group of these folks for a small conference in state on technology transfer. We wrote a proposal to start a small collaboratory on campus that would facilitate IT work among many partners from different colleges and departments. Since then, folks on campus see me as someone who will collaborate, and I have been included on many proposals, and asked to lead others. I am now flush with funding. If I had to trace back to how this all happened, I would say it was meeting this male person who was trying very hard to make his own networks in the state. I am happy that he swept me up onto this network, and showed me how one is formed, even though I don't seem him all that much anymore. (Joan Peckham joan@cs.uri.edu).

Networks can even be built from connections that may have lapsed for some period of time. *About 7 years after I graduated from college, my first-year roommate and I had long since lost touch. She was a relatively new grad student at the UW-Madison, and walking down a hallway one day noticed my name on a set of mailboxes -- she hadn't known I was in town or on campus. She emailed me and we got together*

for coffee and found that, among other things, we got along much better than we had a decade earlier. As we talked, she mentioned that she (an artist) was about to leave her paying-the-bills editing job in engineering and was hoping to find a replacement for herself. I was completing my PhD and looking for work, so I met with her supervisor, even though I had little interest in technical editing. As it turned out, her supervisor had a passion for engineering ethics (the topic of my dissertation) and offered to pay for me to teach a course on the subject the next semester. He couldn't pay me 100%-time and knew I needed more work to help support my family, so unbeknownst to me, he phoned a colleague and urged her to accept my application for a research position in engineering, which I had recently submitted. This was nearly 8 years ago, and through a combination of hard work and continued networking, I am now assistant dean in that very college of engineering. Thank goodness for both serendipity and networking. (Sarah Pfatfeicher).

As these stories show, networks can be built both from casual or accidental contacts and from deliberate ones. Casual contacts often provide unanticipated opportunities to take your career in new directions. If you want to advance your current career you may want to pay special attention to making specific contacts with people in your field or related fields.

If you want to develop a specific career network then join the professional organizations for your discipline. Attend departmental colloquia and seminars. Volunteer to give talks at neighboring institutions. Consider joining or attending meetings that are related to your work but not specifically in your area. Go to conferences (see next section). Serve on review panels.

If you want a broader network then pay attention to what is going on around you. Are there articles in the paper about someone who you would like to know? Do you have the time and interest to get involved in any volunteer organizations? What about joining your alumni association? Do you talk to the person next to you on a plane? Are you someone that people want to talk to?

You will find that it helps to think ahead about how to describe yourself in a few sentences when you meet people. What is the most important thing you want people to know about you and remember? Try to make the description one that makes people feel comfortable speaking to you. Tailor your remarks to the audience. What could you say about your work that would make someone ask a follow up question? Do you have a hobby that someone else might share and that could form a basis for discussion? You want people to think you are pleasant but avoid trying to be humorous unless you know that the humor will be well received. What other people find to be funny often depends on their culture and life experiences — you generally need to know people well to know how they will respond.

You do not even need to be introduced to someone to add them to your network — you can introduce yourself. This is harder for some people to do than others, but you don't have to make direct contact. You can use email, ordinary mail, or even ask a third party to introduce you. Until recently email was a fairly effective way of contacting people. Nowadays, the proliferation of SPAM is making this method much less effective. You should avoid sending attachments (append text to the bottom of email rather than attach a CV for example) and make sure your subject line minimizes the chance the mail will be deleted before it is opened. Try to summarize your message in the heading — for example, *want info on your studies of tectonic plates in pacific* will stand a much better chance than *Hi*. It may be more effective nowadays to send a written note, especially if your request is not urgent, with your email contact information provided for the response.

Email or ordinary mail contacts are more likely to be successful if they make a small request rather than a large one and if you do not waste the recipient's time with unnecessary details. Have you ever had to listen to a long message on your answering machine just to get to the number to use to return the call? Don't bury your request in a long rambling message. Make it clear who you are, what you want and why you think the person you are contacting may be able to help. It ought to go without saying that you should avoid spelling or grammatical errors because some readers will judge you by your ability to write. Do make it clear that you realize that your request is an imposition and say you will understand if the person cannot respond. Know that there is a fine line between repeating a request in case someone did not get it or may have forgotten to respond and pestering someone. Do not expect an immediate response but it can help to indicate a timeline — for example, *It would be most useful to get your response by the end of next week*.

Networking works and its success depends on location, location, location. If you are not in the right place to make the contacts you need you need to figure out how to get there. Are you going to conferences? Can you take a summer research internship at the place you would ultimately like to work? Has anyone else from your institution gone there who you could contact for help.

When you are working on your career network its easy to concentrate on more senior people but do not ignore your more junior colleagues or students. First, this is just a good thing to do — wouldn t you have appreciated someone if they introduced you to their network? Second, you may find that getting a reputation for helping others can help you attract people to work with you.

Finally, you do not have to be friends with everyone in your network but you do need to be able to work with them. You are looking for people with overlapping interests and concerns, not someone to hang out with all the time.

Networking at Conferences.

Conference networking can begin on the way to the meeting. Introduce yourself to people that you see waiting in the airport lounge reading the materials sent by the conference organizers. Maybe you can sit next to them on the plane or share transportation to the meeting. Consider staying at the conference hotel or one of the main hotels rather than looking for the cheapest accommodation you can find — that way you are more likely to mingle with other conference attendees. Wear your name badge and introduce yourself — consider having business cards made. Make sure that you attend conference social events — riding in a bus or sitting at a dinner table will provide you with lots of opportunities to meet people. If you are a local or have special knowledge of the area offer to help out as a local guide. Do not force a contact however, if someone does not respond to your overtures do not force the issue — find someone more congenial. Try to avoid only mixing with people you know. If you are in a group and see someone who seems to be isolated welcome them into the group. Go to the talks that interest you (and the ones that are drawing a large crowd), ask questions and approach the speaker afterwards with follow up questions. If you are junior, consider becoming a session secretary, helping to organize a session will give you a chance to meet with the speakers. One of the authors once worked as a conference secretary and rode in a taxi back to the airport with a Nobel prize winner who regaled her with what he had learnt during his career. She didn t even have to ask for his advice.

Complications to overcome

All of the suggestions of how to network involve time and energy. If you are working the typical double shift of career and family that many women are, your response might be to think that your life is already too busy to add networking to the list of required activities. This is a real problem but if you are trying to solve it on your own you may not know of some key resources you can draw on. Maybe you need to lower your standards for housekeeping? Or get more help from your partner? While it is tempting in this situation to reserve your energy for only the absolute necessities you should occasionally make time to make sure that something essential did not accidentally drop from the list. At least decide that you will come back to networking in the future.

If you tend to be introverted you will probably find that networking drains you of energy while your extroverted colleague seems to thrive on making friends with the crowd. While your tendency may be to stay in your room and enjoy room service at conferences you need to remember that part of the justification for conferences is that they allow informal contacts to be made between people with related interests. Promise yourself a reward for after the meeting to encourage your full participation. Similarly do not avoid all chances to socialize with colleagues. Realize that it gets easier with practice.

What do you do if someone mis-interprets your desire to network with a desire for a different sort of relationship? You want to approach networking with colleagues the way you would any other professional encounter — by making it clear that this is a working relationship not a social one. One way to minimize the chances of this happening is to have a large network rather than to spend too much time with any one individual. You want to make sure that you make it very clear that you do not welcome any attempts to make more of a relationship than you are comfortable with.

How effective are your networks?

How do you know if you are doing a good job of networking? We suspect that you will know intuitively how well you are doing but if not then¹⁴ Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a promising new area of organizational sociology (Haveman 2000) that basically measures the number and strength of network ties as well as the distance between them. These measures can then be transformed into measures of power, control, influence, prestige, isolation, segregation, stability, and solidarity, among others. How can you do this crudely for yourself? One easy way to do it is to make a list of key activities in your life and then under these headings list who you would contact for help or advice if you needed assistance. If you want a slightly better measure you can assign a rating to each person concerning how well you know them and how helpful they would likely be. If you have several names in each category then you are doing fine.

Accessing remote networks or newsgroups.

Perhaps because people are beginning to realize the importance of networking, perhaps because of the increased ease of keeping in contact electronically, it is now possible to subscribe to several on-line networks tailored towards women in science and engineering including the International Network of Women Engineers and Scientists (INWES)¹⁵. INWES was set up following The UNESCO World Science conference held in Budapest in 1999 in response to a resolution encouraging the development of a global network of women engineers and scientists. At the time of writing (Jan 2004) INWES is still in the early stages of planning but the intention is to have events in various regions that will foster networking in addition to the current tri-annual conference series. A web portal (major web site) is planned to host Chat groups, information on women in science and engineering (WISE) issues, etc. Look out for their newsletter.

There are several sites focusing on women in academia. Despite the fact they are aimed primarily at women in the US the web sites of the National Initiative for Women in Higher Education¹⁶, On Campus with Women¹⁷, and the American Association of University Professors¹⁸ are worth a look. It is also worth checking to see if any of the professional societies you are a member of support networks or newsgroups for women. Many do — and if they don't you can ask them to set one up. You should also check to see if your organization is a member of MentorNet which is set up to provide opportunities for external e-mentoring and is planning to add the option for junior faculty interested in being matched with tenured faculty mentors in 2004-05¹⁹.

While remote networks are great for providing access to people with specific areas of expertise it is important not to allow them to substitute completely for local networks that allow direct social contacts. Different types of contacts will supply different needs.

What not to do

Do not define membership of your network too narrowly. While you do want members of your network of the same gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity as you are, you do not want everyone in your network to be the same. It is especially important in the sciences and engineering to realize that male colleagues can be important allies and equally committed to the goal of helping more women to succeed as female colleagues may be. Male faculty may be able to take more time to help you precisely because not enough women are taking advantage of them as a resource unlike the much rarer female faculty. You should also realize that women faculty in fields different from your own are still likely to have experiences in common with you. You are looking for people you can establish a rapport with, not an identical twin.

When I was at Boston University, I founded a program for high-school girls called the Pathways Program (www.bu.edu/lernet/pathways). Many women from all areas of science & engineering at BU, from undergraduates to full professors work together each year to put on this program. It brings 400 high-school girls & teachers to BU over a 2-day period, and involves over 100 volunteers each year, from inside and outside BU. Over time, the women who worked on Pathways got to know one another and formed an informal mentoring network. More senior people offered advice about grants and preparing tenure documents to more junior people -- even giving the more junior people copies of old grants or tenure documents to look at, to "show them what a successful one looks like". Students would give tours or come do demonstrations side by side with their professors and have a good time talking about science together. I

was both mentor and mentee in this network and benefited greatly. This was an unusual network in that it crossed disciplines (because there are so few women in any given science department). One of my mentors was a biologist; I mentored a chemist and several engineers in my turn, as well as a physicist. (Elizabeth Simmons Michigan State)

Do not spend too much time worrying if you are making enough contacts or the right kind of contacts. Do not fret too much over people who do not respond to your networking requests — unless a lot of people are declining. Most people are willing to help so if you are finding the reverse then there is a problem. In this case you need to re-think your approach. Are you trying to contact the wrong people (someone at too high a level, someone who looks stressed whenever you see them, someone who you know is rude to everyone)? Is your attitude the problem? Do you tend to interrupt people and expect them to pay immediate attention to you?

You may need to find someone who you know will be absolutely honest with you and give you some frank advice about your networking technique. When you find someone who will tell you what you are doing wrong and/or offer concrete suggestions as to what to do differently — treasure that person! One of the authors once prepared for a job talk by giving her presentation to several people all but one of whom gave flattering and encouraging comments. Fortunately the final person she tried the talk out on pointed out several major defects including the fact her slides could not be read from the second row .

Networking Etiquette

Thank the people who help you. Be willing to help others. Do not take too much of anyone's time. Reciprocate (see the Norm of Reciprocity). Respect people's boundaries. Remember what you should have learnt in kindergarten.

Building networks at your institution

One thing that you can do is to encourage the organizations you are part of to help support you by facilitating networking with colleagues. This can be as simple as providing the contact numbers of other women working in the same business to being more active and hosting gatherings. *We have created a group of women faculty in science and engineering that we call the Network here at UM. We developed a mailing list of every woman tenure track faculty in the science and engineering and invited them to a series of dinners, social events, and lectures about topics pertinent to career development such as mentoring and work and family conflict. This has been a huge success and the women have benefited from meeting each other and have forged relationships beyond departments. UM is a large decentralized university so building a framework for women to connect with one another has proved a key ingredient of our ADVANCE project . (Robin Stephenson, Program Manager, NSF Advance Project, UM)* One real advantage of institutional support for networking that is rarely discussed is that the more general encouragement of networking there is, the easier it becomes to approach people to network with.

Networking Theory

You may just be interested in how to network and be willing just to try our suggestions. However, while much of what we have said comes from our personal experiences you may be reassured to know that in many cases the research backs us up. When we could not find research to justify our positions it was not that the research conflicted but that we could not find any relevant studies. The next several sections cover some of the more interesting research as well as some of our more speculative thoughts on how networks work. Knowing some more of the background may help you become a more effective networker since often you may need to see the patterns to understand behaviors.

The Norm of Reciprocity

This is a very important concept in social exchange . As described in the classic paper by Alvin Gouldner²⁰ it basically means that when someone does something for you, you are under obligation to reciprocate in kind (with something worth about the same amount or of equal value). It is critical that this is an unwritten, assumed, taken for granted, norm rather than an explicit or expressed rule. If you either get explicit (e.g., at the end of a nice dinner party say something about inviting your hosts back to repay them) or if you reciprocate inappropriately (e.g., give someone a new car after they have invited you to dinner), you have broken the norm of reciprocity. Different societies and different enclaves within societies have

different subtle variations on **(1)** the extent to which you can be obvious about reciprocating; **(2)** the time delay between receiving and reciprocating; **(3)** what's an appropriate good or service to reciprocate with. You need to keep in mind while you are networking that this should not be only about you.

Is it harder for women to network?

There is no evidence of this. The gender pattern for social contacts really works in favor of women, since women tend to be more skilled at making social contacts and are usually willing to put more effort into their relationships, both of which assist in building an effective network. Research does show that men's and women's personal networks differ in composition²¹, with the women's including more family members than the men's, and the men's tending to include more of coworkers. However, the same research shows that these gender differences arise partly from the fact the average man and the average woman tend to differ in their roles and hence in their position in the social structure. These differences in position (LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION) lead to differences in the opportunities for making ties and also lead to constraints on personal ties. The re-assuring news here is that when the variables related to employment, family and age are controlled for gender difference disappears or are reduced. Some gender differences do remain: women have larger number, higher % and greater diversity of kin ties compared to men in similar social structural positions.

Do I really have to network?

One of the more interesting studies²² of networking is one that does not show that networking provides a significant advantage. Requena studied the situation in Spain and says that this lack of importance is due to rigid bureaucratization of Spanish employment. This is important to note because it suggests that if you can get the information you need without being in a network then there is less critical need to network. While we believe that networking helps so does transparency about the process. This suggests that if advancement in your field of employment is highly regulated you may not be handicapped by not networking (unless you decide to change fields). Currently though, you are more likely to be in a situation where you are dealing with unspoken rules than not. Possible exceptions to this include government work where the bureaucracy may work in women's favor — and may explain the relatively high concentration of influential, powerful women in government work.

The times could be changing

Some authors are now beginning to argue that women should be at more of an advantage in today's workplace²³ precisely because they tend to be more skilled at communication and at building relationships. What is holding women back is the fact that they are not exploiting their assets as effectively as they could — partly because of a reluctance to interpret their relationships as assets. There seems to be a gender pattern at work here that disadvantages those who hold to it. Women believe that expertise matters more than connections but this belief not supported by the research²⁴ If women cannot or do not want to play the social exchange game, they miss out on being part of the trust network in any given society or organization. This increases the likelihood that women will feel like outsiders.

Social exchange usually builds up slowly, establishing **trust** over a period of time. The longer you have between exchanges, the more trust there has to be because you have to know that the other person will eventually pay back and they have to know that you will. This trust that exists is unspoken, never explicit. Note that industrial societies increasingly have less trust built in than non-industrial societies because there is usually no wait period between receiving and paying back--e.g, when you buy something you have to pay for it right away or promise to pay at the time. Women may come later to the career networks than their male counterparts and have a less continuous connection to them — all of which can make them somewhat harder to use effectively.

Also, women are likely to be using their networks in different ways for different things than men do. While sweeping generalizations never apply to everyone it is well established that women are more often looking for support and collaboration rather than challenges and competition.²⁵ Women are more likely to be concerned about balancing work-life issues and frequently have to juggle multiple conflicting demands upon their time. Many junior women in academia are interested in discussing the timing of having a family. Sometimes women just want to know that their experiences are not unique.

There are deeper differences however — women do not just seek out different information they tend to be less strategic in their networking use. Symbolic interactionism (a subfield within sociological social psychology) discusses how since women have a different view of how the world works they interact with it differently. This field focuses on how women use their alternative perspectives in everyday life, examines how social order is negotiated thru interaction, and studies how those not in power express agency. Women tend to view society in process rather structural terms, and view institutions as product of interactions over time.²⁶

Reflecting the above findings, network analyses focused on people in elite positions and looking at informal communications still show men are more integrated than women in informal elite networks. They also show that women elites come from more privileged social origins than elite men perhaps reflecting the value again of position in the social structure. Women in formal positions of power remain outsiders on the inside because²⁷ they are not part of the **male culture**. Men share common understandings of the rules, styles of competing, and bartering, that the women generally don't get exposed to. Even when women do learn these rules they may find that the rules may not work the same way for them²⁸. All of which emphasizes the importance for women to become more pro-active about their networking now.

Why you should network

If we have not managed to convince you that networking is good and the networking is possible by now maybe we never will — but we cannot resist one last try to convert you to our point of view. Networking is something you can do for yourself and where you are free to select your level of participation. Feel free to start small. Think of one problem you could use advice on and make your goal that of adding one person to your contact list who you could ask for that advice. If you do not feel comfortable asking anyone for advice then your goal is to get to know one person well enough that you do feel comfortable talking to them. If even this seems too much to ask then you really need to reach out for help. Perhaps the most important thing that that networks can provide is awareness that others feel the same way that you do — networks can and should be catalysts for change.

¹ Gail Evans *Play Like A Man, Win Like A Women*, What men know about success that women need to learn Broadway Books, New York, 2000 ISBN 0-7679-0463-X

² Pro-active doesn't mean always active against real or perceived wrongs. We would like to encourage you also to be strategic and use your network to help you to decide what battles to fight when.

³ We will use the phrase *gender pattern* in this article to highlight any behavior that one gender is more prone to than the other. Gender patterns are not destiny — not everyone of a particular gender will show a particular behavior. Even if you do follow the patterns for your gender you can learn how to break out of them if needed. This concept is related to that of *Gender Schemas* which describe the assumptions we tend to make about how people of a certain gender will behave — See *Why so slow*, Virginia Valian

⁴ Joel R. DeLuca, *Political Savvy — Systematic Approaches to Leadership behind the Scenes* EBG, ISBN 0-9667636-0-2

⁵ For example, *At the Helm, a laboratory navigator* By Kathy Barker, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2002 and *Becoming a Leaders — A Handbook for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology*, by F. Mary Williams and Carolyn J. Emerson, NSERC/Petro-Canada and WISE (<http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/WISE>), 2002

⁶ *The Effective, Efficient professor, Teaching Scholarship and Service* by Phillip C. Wankat, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 2002 seems to be especially well liked by scientists and engineers.

⁷ *Gender-Informed mentoring Strategies for Women Engineering Scholars: On establishing a Caring Community*. Naomi C. Chesler, Mark A. Chesler, *Journal of Engineering Education* January 2002

⁸ T. Broome, *The Heroic Mentorship*, *Science Communication*, vol 17, no.4, 1996, pp. 398-429.

⁹ B. Packard A Composite Mentor Intervention for women in Science, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, QC, 1999.

¹⁰ Who succeeds in Science? The gender dimension, Gerhard Sonnert with Gerald Holton, Rutgers University Press, 1995 isbn 0-8135-2220-x

¹¹ Nan Lin. Social Networks and Status Attainment. Annual Review of Sociology, August 1999, vol. 25. pp 467-487

¹² The Luck Factor: Changing your Luck, Changing your life: The four Essential Principles Richard Wiseman, Mirimax Books, 2003

¹³ If you are reading this while still at college — great! If you are not a member of study groups you are missing out. Even if you find the material you are studying easy at present this is unlikely to always be the case and you want to establish good study habits for then, now.. Besides — explaining things to others will help you understand things even better.

¹⁴ We would like to thank Robyn Marschke for her help with this section.

¹⁵ See <http://www.carleton.ca/cwse-on/inwes/about/about.htm>

¹⁶ www.campuswomenlead.org

¹⁷ www.aacu.org/ocww

¹⁸ <http://www.aaup.org/Issues/WomeninHE>

¹⁹ www.MentorNet.net

²⁰ To Gouldner paper

²¹ Gwen Moore. Structural Determinants of Men's and Women's Personal Networks. Amer Soc Review, 1990, vol. 55, October 726-735.

²² Requena reference

²³ For example, Saly Helgesen thriving in 24/7: Six strategies for Taming the New World of Work

²⁴ Nan Lin. Ibid

²⁵ C. Gilligan In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's development, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1982

²⁶ Lynn Safarik. Feminist Transformation in Higher Education: Discipline, Structure, and Institution. The Review of Higher Education. Summer 2003, Volume 26, No.4, pp. 419-445.

²⁷ Gwen Moore. Women in Elite Positions: Insiders or Outsiders? Sociological Forum, 1988, Volume 3, No. 4. Pages 566-585.

²⁸ In the company of women — Pat Heim explores how women need to adopt the rules that work for men to be effective.