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# A Long History of Scholarship

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Marilyn L. Grady  
Barbara Y. LaCost

There is a great resource in *Women's World: A Timeline of Women in History* (1995) by Franck and Brownstone. The book is a chronology of women in history from 35,000 B.C. to 1993. Entries highlight women's accomplishments and "firsts" in politics/law/war, religion/education/everyday life, science/technology/medicine, and arts/literature. The 654 pages of text suggest that we have much to learn about these women pioneers.

A review of the 20<sup>th</sup> century entries alone reminds us that Margaret Mead, in 1949, published *Male and Female*, a study of the social and biological factors that determine gender roles. In 1951, Barbara McClintock first publicly presented her discovery that genetic fragments are transposable, which she recognized as early as the 1930s, long before the structure of DNA was understood. Her report was so ill-received that for decades she would work without publishing. She received a 1983 Nobel Prize for medicine for her work.

A somewhat familiar note of irony is evident in the 1967 entry for British astronomer Jocelyn Bell, then a graduate student at Cambridge University, who discovered pulsating astronomical objects dubbed pulsars: her professor, Antony Hewish, received the 1974 Nobel Prize for physics for the discovery; Bell did not (p. 492).

In 1973 the American Psychological Association established a division focusing on the psychology of women, with its own scholarly journal, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. In 1975, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, an American women's studies scholarly journal, was first published.

The *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership* is an early mark in the 21<sup>st</sup> century timeline and lengthens the chronological chart of women in history. In this issue, Mertz' longitudinal study of scholarship about women is extended, and Byrd-Blake offers perceptions of African American, Hispanic and white females concerning the strategies that enhance career advancement. Rhodes provides profiles of two women community college presidents and the lessons these women offer others considering the role. White, Martin & Johnson examine gender, professional orientation, and student achievement in their study of 100 school principals.

# Women in Line Administration: A Longitudinal Study in One State, 1972-2002

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Norma T. Mertz

*The article presents the results of a study of the movement of women in and into line administrative positions in one state since the passage of Title IX. The movement is presented in terms of position, year and type of district.*

Responding to compelling evidence of gender inequity and a systematic campaign of political pressure to redress these inequities, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681) prohibiting sex discrimination in all aspects of education in institutions receiving federal financial assistance. Although the effect of Title IX on athletics was, and continues to be, the most publicly debated aspect of the legislation, athletics in schools was but one area in which gender discrimination had been noted. At the time Title IX was passed, men had dominated school administration since the Civil War (cf: Feistritz, 1988; Hansot & Tyack, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Ortiz, 1982; Shakeshaft, 1987), and the relative absence of women in the ranks of school administration was at odds with their dominance in the ranks of teachers, the position from which administrators are traditionally drawn. In 1972, women were 88% of the elementary school teachers and 49% of the secondary school teachers; men were 99.9% of the superintendents, 94% of the deputy and associate superintendents, 95% of the assistant superintendents, 98% of the high school principals, 97% of the junior high school principals, and 80% of the elementary school principals (NEA, 1973). And far from gaining a greater foothold, "the percent of women elementary principals," the only line position females held in any numbers, had "sharply declined since 1928" (Fishel & Pottker, 1977, p. 290). In the ensuing years, the question of the extent to which women have made inroads into the male hegemony in school administration has been debated (Cunningham & Hentges, 1984; Edson, 1987; Jones & Montenegro, 1982; McCarthy & Zent, 1981; Mertz, Venditti & McNeely, 1988; Valverde, 1980; WEEA, 1990; Yeahey, Johnston & Adkison, 1986). It is clear that women

## About the Author

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have made progress in advancing into the ranks of administration since the passage of Title IX and equally clear that they have not achieved parity with men (Jones & Montenegro, 1982; McCarthy & Zent, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1994).

The answer to the question would seem to be a simple matter of counting: count the number now; compare it with the number before. However, this rather simple, direct approach is thwarted by the continued absence of reliable, comparative data, and by the theoretical and methodological problems in the ways data have been collected (Jones & Montenegro, 1982; McCarthy & Zent, 1982; Mertz, 1991; Yeakey et al., 1986).

The problems posed by the absence of reliable, comparative data, and the need for longitudinal studies to be able to address the question of whether Title IX was making a difference in administrative gender was the impetus for the study. Data were systematically collected for the 30 year period since the passage of Title IX. The purpose of the study was to determine whether females were being successful in moving into school administration and if progress were being made what was the nature and extent of that progress. As females made progress, the purpose was to determine the nature and extent of that progress.

## The Study

The results of the longitudinal study of women in school administration in a stratified sample of school districts in one state, 1972 to 2002, are presented in this article. Following different types of districts in one state was seen as a way to determine if gains that might occur in one type of district, e.g., large districts with many positions, might be matched by gains in other types of districts. Although easier to identify and access, it is important to consider that while large districts (those with student enrollments of 50,000 or more) serve the largest number of students, those

81 or so school districts represent only 4.7% of the type of school districts in the United States (NCES, 1999); and that other types of districts, particularly ones with fewer than 1,000 students, are the more frequent type (51.6%; 8,737 districts).

Using categories defined by McCarthy and Zent (1981) in their study of women in school administration (urban, suburban, medium-size city, rural), a stratified sample of 20 school districts was identified in a southeastern state. In 1972 the sample was comprised of 2 urban, 6 suburban, 5 medium-size city, and 7 rural school districts. In 1986, a medium-city district in the study on the upper-end in terms of size consolidated with a suburban district not in the study to form an urban district. The action changed the sample composition from which paired data were obtained in subsequent years to 3 urban, 6 suburban, 4 medium-city, and 7 rural districts. From 1987 to 2002 this composition was maintained.

The districts were asked to supply data for 9 line administrative positions (number of positions; gender of position holders): superintendent; deputy/associate superintendent; assistant superintendent; high school principal; high school assistant principal; junior high school/middle school principal; junior high school/middle school assistant principal; elementary school principal; elementary school assistant principal. Line administrative positions were used for the study as the best indicator of the movement of women into positions of authority in a school system.

Data were collected for 1972, 1982, 1986, 1996, and 2002. Title IX was passed in 1972. However, it was three years before implementing regulations were handed down to school districts by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Thus 1972 represented an ideal *a priori* point for considering the effects of Title IX on employment. Data were collected for 1972, 1982 and 1986, in response to the suggestion that while Title IX might have fueled some initial changes, the impetus to advance women had dissipated. No data were collected in 1992. To allow for a 10-year comparison, data were collected in 1986. Since 2002 constituted the 30th year, it seemed an appropriate point for the next, possibly last, data collection point.

Paired data, i.e., data from the same school districts for each time period, were collected, however there were changes in the organization of some of the school districts during the time period introducing variations in the data (e.g., 2 districts changed from a K-12 to a K-6 organization). Data were analyzed for the sample ( $n = 20$ ) and by type of district (urban,

suburban, medium city, rural) to identify change in the representation of females in the 9 line administrative positions, 1972-2002, and from time period to time period, 1972 to 1982, 1982 to 1986, 1986 to 1996, 1996 to 2002.

### Findings

An examination of the aggregated data for the 9 positions revealed that (Table 1) the number of positions increased (641-1248), as did the number and percent of females holding these positions. The number of females more than quintupled (120-642.5) and the percent almost tripled (19%-52%). The number of males holding these positions increased moderately (521-607.5). Given the large increase in females holding these positions, the percent of males holding positions decreased (81% to 49%). This is shown graphically in Figure 1.

As may be seen in Table 2, the increases in females holding positions were notable in each type of district: 5 times more in urban districts; nearly 8 times more in suburban districts; 4 times more in medium-city districts; and 10 times more in rural districts. By 2002 females held 53% of the urban positions, 56% of the suburban positions, 50% of the medium-city positions, and 31% of the rural positions. In sheer number, parity would seem to exist in 3 of the 4 types of districts, and while parity has not been achieved in rural districts, given the comparatively smaller number of administrative positions in such districts, the increases in the number of females holding these positions are notable and the upward trend evident.

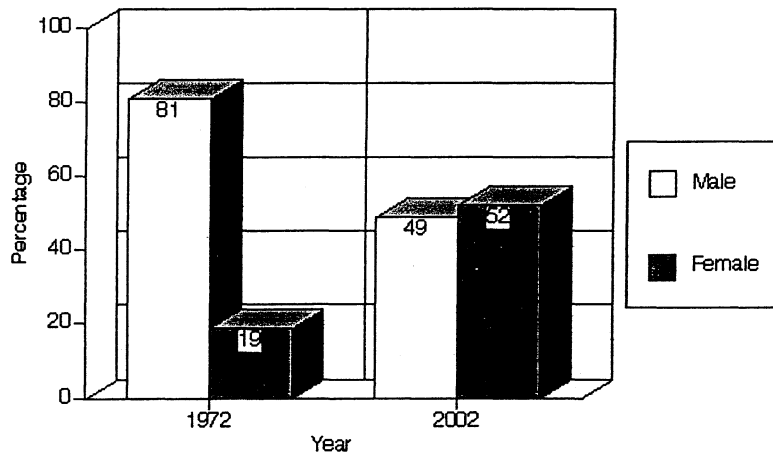
The pattern and trend of change in the number of and positions and in the number and percent of males and females holding the positions by type of district, for all positions and for each position, by data points, and during the time period, may be seen in Table 2, numerically, and in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5, visually. Aggregating the data for all positions, while meaningful, obscures variations by district and position. In terms of types of districts, although there were slightly different patterns in each district in the data intervals, in each district, in most intervals, the number of positions increased, the number and percent of females increased, the number of males increased, and the percent of males decreased, replicating the results of the aggregated composite for the 30 year period.

**Table 1**  
Positions and Number and Percentage of Males and Females Holding Those Positions by Type of System,  
1972 and 2002

**All Positions**

Type of System	1972			2002		
	Total	Male # (%)	Female # (%)	Total	Male # (%)	Female # (%)
Urban	371	292.0 (79)	79.0 (21)	730	343 (47)	389.0 (53)
Suburban	109	91.0 (84)	18.0 (17)	244	107 (44)	137.0 (56)
M-C	93	73.0 (78)	20.0 (22)	167	84 (50)	83.0 (50)
Rural	48	65.0 (96)	3.0 (4)	107	73.5 (69)	33.5 (31)
Total	641	521.0 (81)	119.0 (19)	1248	607.5 (49)	642.5 (51)

**Figure 1**  
Percentage of males and females in line administration, 1972 and 2002



**Table 2**  
Number and Percentage of Males and Females in Line Administration by  
Year and Type of District

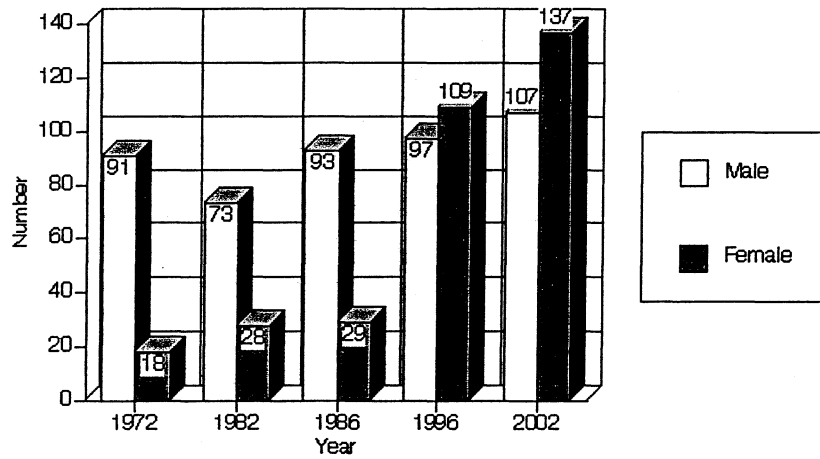
Urban			
Year	Total	Male Number (Percentage)	Female Number (Percentage)
1972	371.0	292.0 (79)	79.0 (21)
1982	471.0	343.0 (73)	128.0 (27)
1986	509.0	324.0 (64)	185.0 (36)
1996	652.0	392.0 (60)	260.0 (40)
2002	730.0	343.0 (47)	389.0 (53)
Suburban			
Year	Total	Male Number (Percentage)	Female Number (Percentage)
1972	109.0	91.0 (83)	18.0 (17)
1982	101.0	73.0 (72)	28.0 (28)
1986	122.0	93.0 (76)	29.0 (24)
1996	206.5	97.5 (47)	109.0 (53)
2002	244.0	107.0 (44)	137.0 (56)
Medium City			
Year	Total	Male Number (Percentage)	Female Number (Percentage)
1972	93.0	73.0 (78)	20.0 (22)
1982	82.0	66.0 (80)	16.0 (20)
1986	97.0	73.0 (75)	24.0 (25)
1996	139.0	87.0 (63)	52.0 (37)
2002	167.0	84.0 (50)	83.0 (50)

Table 2 continues

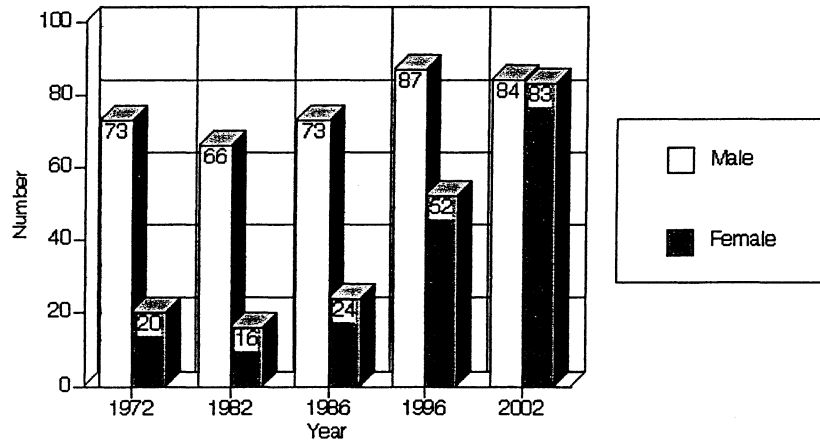


Rural			
Year	Total	Male Number (Percentage)	Female Number (Percentage)
1972	68.0	65.0 (96)	3.0 (4)
1982	65.0	60.0 (92)	5.0 (8)
1986	92.0	75.0 (82)	17.0 (18)
1996	89.0	59.0 (66)	30.0 (34)
2002	107.0	73.5 (69)	33.5 (31)

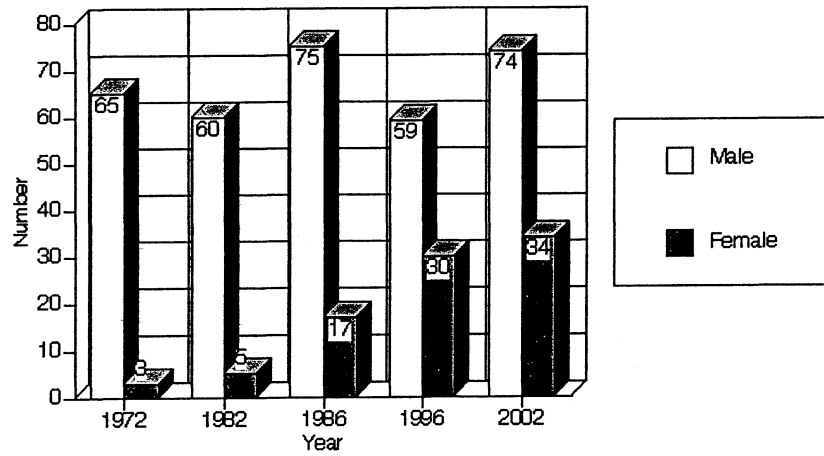
**Figure 2**  
Number of males and females in urban administration



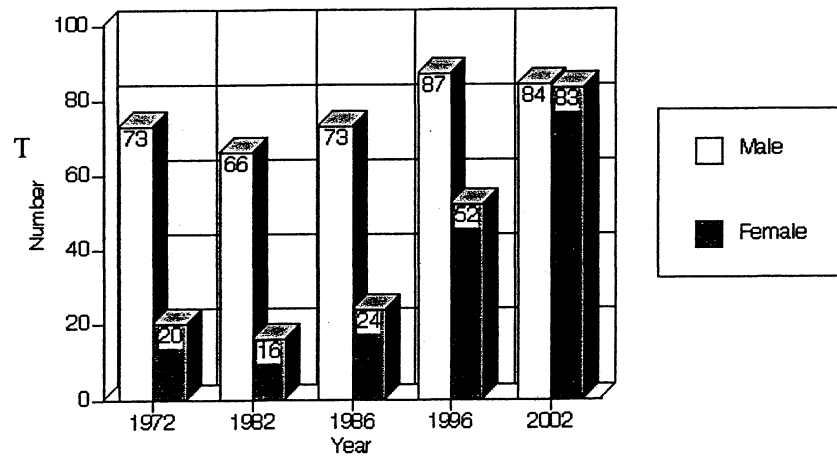
**Figure 3**  
Number of males and females in suburban administration.



**Figure 4**  
Number of males and females in middle-city administration.



**Figure 5**  
Number of males and females in rural administration.



**Women in Line Positions**

When the data are considered by position and by type of district during the 30 year period (Table 3), and in data intervals, although the overall trend is marked by increases in the number of females moving into these positions, the patterns are far more variable.

**Superintendents**

Of all of the positions, that of superintendent has changed least with respect to the advancement of females into the position. Females made modest gains in moving into the ranks of superintendents in the districts studied 1972-2002 (from 1 to 6), with the gains coming largely in medium-city districts (3 of the 4), and rural districts losing the 1 they had in 1972. Although females held 30% of the superintendencies in 2002, the range was from 0% in rural districts to 75% in medium city districts, with urban and suburban districts reporting 33%.

**Deputy/Associate Superintendents**

In 1972, none of the districts studied had a deputy superintendent position. By 2002, there were 14 such positions, and females held 6 of these (43%). However, although the number of positions and the number and percent of females holding those positions increased markedly in urban and suburban districts, with females holding 40% and 50% of the positions (respectively) in 2002, only 1 rural district had the position in 1986 and again in 2002, and it was held by a male, and medium city districts, which had earlier had the positions (held by males), no longer had the position.

**Assistant Superintendents**

The number of assistant superintendent positions increased only slightly 1972-2002 (16-19), however the number and percent of females holding the position increased (1-10; 6% to 53%) in each type of district. Females achieved parity or better with males in 3 of the 4 types of districts (urban, suburban, medium-city), and it should be noted that the position was relatively new to rural districts in the state.

**High School Principals**

The number of high school principal positions increased in every type of district 1972-2002 (76 to 109), as did the number and percent of females holding those positions (0-29; 0% to 27%). In 1972, none of the districts in

**Table 3**  
Number and Percentage of Females by Year, Position and Type of District

Superintendent										
Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	2	0 (0)	2	0 (0)	2	0 (0)	3	1 (33)	3	1 (33)
Suburban	6	0 (0)	6	0 (0)	6	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	6	2 (33)
M-C	5	0 (0)	5	0 (0)	5	0 (0)	4	0 (0)	4	3 (75)
Rural	7	1 (14)	7	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	7	1 (14)	7	0 (0)
Total	20	1 (5)	20	0 (0)	20	0 (0)	20	3 (15)	20	6 (30)

Deputy Superintendent										
Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban		()	3	0 (0)	1	0 (0)	3.0	1 (33)	5	2 (40)
Suburban		()		()	2	0 (0)	1.0	0 (0)		()
M-C		()		()	1	0 (0)		()	1	0 (0)
Rural		()		()	1	0 (0)		()	1	0 (0)
Total		()	3	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	4.5	1 (22)	14	6 (43)

Assistant Superintendent										
Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	7	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	14	3 (21)	9	4 (44)	9	5 (56)
Suburban	1	0 (0)	4	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	8	3 (38)	2	1 (50)
M-C	8	1 (13)	4	0 (0)	8	3 (38)	4	1 (25)	5	3 (60)
Rural		()		()		()	3	1 (33)	3	1 (33)
Total	16	1 (6)	14	1 (7)	28	7 (25)	24	9 (38)	19	10 (53)

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## High School Principal

Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	39	0 (0)	52	4 (8)	47	8 (17)	56	17 (30)	69	22 (32)
Suburban	10	0 (0)	10	0 (0)	11	0 (0)	12	1 (8)	17	3 (18)
M-C	14	0 (0)	8	1 (12)	7	1 (14)	9	2 (22)	11	3 (27)
Rural	11	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	13	0 (0)	9	0 (0)	12	1 (8)
Total	76	0 (0)	77	5 (7)	78	9 (12)	86	20 (23)	109	29 (27)

## High School Assistant Principal

Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	59	5 (8)	110	17 (15)	114	29 (25)	156	42 (27)	14	56.0 (38)
Suburban	6	0 (0)	7	1 (14)	25	5 (20)	41	15 (37)	4	13.0 (29)
M-C	6	0 (0)	6	0 (0)	17	3 (18)	35	8 (23)	4	9.0 (21)
Rural	3	0 (0)	3	0 (0)	13	2 (15)	13	2 (15)	2	6.5 (27)
Total	74	5 (7)	126	18 (14)	169	39 (23)	245	67 (27)	25	84.5 (33)

## Middle School Principal

Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	52	6 (12)	39	9 (23)	62	19 (31)	59	19 (32)	79	32 (41)
Suburban	42	9 (21)	29	11 (38)	19	5 (26)	16	5 (31)	21	8 (38)
M-C	10	0 (0)	10	0 (0)	9	2 (22)	13	2 (15)	16	7 (44)
Rural	22	0 (0)	17	1 (6)	6	1 (17)	6	2 (33)	8	0 (0)
Total	127	15 (12)	95	21 (22)	96	27 (28)	94	28 (30)	124	47 (38)

**Middle Assistant School Principal**

Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	21	5 (24)	37	12 (32)	52	23 (44)	41	7 (17)	98	46 (47)
Suburban	4	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	6	1 (17)	23	13 (57)	27	18 (67)
M-C	8	0 (0)	8	0 (0)	10	1 (10)	16	4 (25)	22	8 (36)
Rural	4	0 (0)	5	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	7	1 (14)	8	5 (63)
Total	37	5 (14)	56	13 (23)	75	25 (33)	87	25 (29)	155	77 (50)

**Elementary School Principal**

Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	190	63 (33)	190	62 (33)	163	66 (40)	234	92 (39)	23	165 (71)
Suburban	26	9 (35)	26	13 (50)	43	15 (35)	53	32 (60)	6	41 (68)
M-C	42	19 (45)	41	15 (37)	39	14 (36)	44	23 (52)	4	34 (72)
Rural	15	2 (13)	18	4 (22)	30	8 (27)	30	13 (43)	3	17 (45)
Total	273	93 (34)	275	94 (34)	275	103 (36)	361	160 (44)	37	257 (68)

**Elementary School Assistant Principal**

Type of System	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban		()		()		()	91	67 (74)	88.0	58 (66)
Suburban	4	0 (0)	5	1 (20)	6	2 (33)	47	39 (83)	58.0	47 (81)
M-C		()		()	1	1 (100)	13	12 (92)	20.0	16 (80)
Rural	6	0 (0)	8	0 (0)	16	6 (38)	14	9 (64)	6.5	3 (46)
Total	10	0 (0)	13	1 (8)	22	9 (41)	165	127 (77)	172.5	124 (72)

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**All Positions**

<b>Type of System</b>	<b>1972</b>		<b>1982</b>		<b>1986</b>		<b>1996</b>		<b>2002</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>F # (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>F # (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>F # (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>F # (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>F # (%)</b>
Urban	371	79 (21)	439	95 (22)	455	148 (33)	652	260 (40)	730	389.0 (53)
Suburban	109	18 (18)	93	27 (29)	125	30 (24)	206	109 (53)	244	137.0 (56)
M-C	93	20 (22)	82	16 (20)	97	25 (26)	139	52 (37)	167	83.0 (50)
Rural	68	3 (4)	68	5 (7)	82	17 (21)	89	30 (34)	107	33.5 (31)
Total	641	119 (19)	682	143 (21)	759	220 (29)	1086	451 (42)	1248	642.5 (51)

the study had a female high school principal. In 2002, while the largest increases in number and percent of females occupying the position had occurred in urban districts (0-22; 0% to 32%), there were modest increases in medium-city (0-3; 0% to 27%), suburban (0-3; 0% to 18%), and rural (0-1; 0% to 8%) districts.

### **High School Assistant Principals**

The number of high school assistant principal positions increased more than threefold (74-259.5), and the number and percent of females holding these positions increased markedly (5-84.5; 7% to 33%) during the 30 years. In 1972, only urban districts had female high school assistant principals. In 2002, while those urban districts experienced the largest growth in the movement of females into the position (5-56; 8% to 37%), growth occurred in every other type of district.

### **Middle School/Junior High School Principals**

The only position in which the number of positions declined 1972-2002 was that of middle/junior high principal, however, the decline was minimal (127-124). The number and percent of females holding the position increased (15-47; 12% to 38%). The increases occurred in 2 of the 4 types of districts, urban (6-32; 12% to 41%) and medium-city (0-7; 0% to 44%). In suburban districts, although there was a decline of 1 position (9-8), the percent of females holding the position increased there (21% to 38%). Rural districts, which occasionally had a female in the position at different points in the 30 years, no longer had female principals in middle/junior high schools in 2002.

### **Middle/Junior High School Assistant Principals**

The number of middle school/junior high school assistant principal positions increased fourfold (37-155), and the number and percent of females holding the position increased (5-77; 14% to 50%), with females approaching parity. In 1972, only urban districts had female middle/junior high school assistant principals, and only 5 (of 21) of those. In 2002, all of the types of districts had female middle/junior high school assistant principals. The increases in female assistants were particularly apparent in suburban (0-18; 0% to 67%) and rural (0-5; 0% to 63%) districts; advances were greatest in urban districts (5-46; 24% to 47%).



**Elementary School Principals**

In 1972, females held 34% of the elementary school principal positions; by 2002 they held 68% of the positions. Although the number of positions had increased during the time period (273-376), the number of females holding the position almost tripled (93-257), and the percent of females doubled (34% to 68%). The large increases in females holding the position appeared in each type of district, and females now predominate in the position in all types of districts save rural, where they are approaching parity.

**Elementary School Assistant Principals**

There were changes in the position of elementary assistant principal 1972-2002. The number of positions increased 17 times (10-172.5). The number of females holding the position increased from 0 to 124, a percent increase of 72%. The increases in positions and in the number and percent of females holding the position occurred in all types of districts. Although the position was relatively rare in 1972 (there were none in urban or medium-city districts), it was ubiquitous in 2002. Their dominance in the position appeared in 3 of the types: urban (66%); suburban (81%); medium-city (80%); and approached parity in rural districts (46%).

**Discussion and Implications**

This study in one state during the 30 years since the passage of Title IX suggests that women are moving into line administrative positions, in every position, in each type of district, albeit more slowly in some positions and in some kinds of districts. As might be expected, the increases have been largest in urban districts, but the increases have occurred in the other types as well. Although many factors may have contributed to this change in the gender demographic of line positions, Title IX would appear to have played a part as well. Without the force of law and the nation-wide training and outreach for school districts funded by the federal government through the sex-desegregation assistance centers, it is just as likely that there would have been little change and that the magnitude of change would have been less. Having said this, and realizing that it may be a matter of viewing whether the glass is half empty or half filled, and accepting that fundamental change takes time, it is 30 years since the passage of Title IX, and one might have expected greater advances in all positions, in all types of districts during the period.

Although the percent of females holding administrative positions overall is at or inching toward parity in all types of districts, the movement of women into specific positions is considerably more varied. Given that there can be only one superintendent per district, and the fact that females have made such modest gains in moving into the position during the 30 years, and those largely in one kind of district, may not be surprising. However, given the turnover in the position, the paucity of females in the position suggests that the superintendency may not only be counter to the trend evident in most other positions, but particularly resistant to the entry of females.

As with the position of superintendent, most school districts have only one deputy or associate superintendent. Interesting questions arise when certain factors are considered, that is the fact that none of the districts even had such a position in 1972, and the notable movement of women into the position in two of the four types of districts (urban and suburban), offset by their disappearance or the disappearance of the position from the two other types of districts (medium-city and suburban). At least for urban and suburban districts, females would seem to be relatively competitive for the position. Although the statistical data do not allow for clear speculation, since this is the position directly under superintendent, is this positioning female position-holders for moving into the superintendency, at least in some kinds of districts? Or is it something else, perhaps the ultimate, impermeable glass ceiling for female aspirants, with just enough leakage into the superintendency to provide an unprovable hypothesis? The key may lie in how many deputy/associate superintendents positions there are and the areas of responsibility female deputy/associate superintendents hold.

As with the position of deputy/associate superintendent, the small increases in the number of females holding the position of assistant superintendent raises similar questions, but their positioning in all types of districts, seems more suggestive of a greater receptivity to females holding that position. Females have achieved parity or better with males in 3 of the 4 types of districts (urban, suburban, medium-city), and the position is still relatively new in rural districts.

The position of high school principal has been seen as particularly resistant to the advancement of females. The modesty of increases in female position-holders 1972 to 2002, might be suggestive of its continued resistance. Nevertheless, the increases in female office holders are real, in all types of districts, and changes in the situation of females in the gateway

position, high school assistant principal, suggest that the trend is likely to continue.

There were increases in the number of female assistant principals in high schools, and female assistants could be found in all types of districts. Although parity has not been achieved in the position, even after 30 years, the trend toward increasing numbers of females in the position is clear. The position has traditionally served as the gateway to the position of high school principal, and it is reasonable to speculate that increases in the number of female assistant principals will translate into increases in the number of females in high school principals in the future.

Increases in the number of females holding the position of middle/junior high school principal combined with dramatic increases in the number of positions and of females holding assistant principal positions in middle/junior high schools, suggest that the middle school has become far more receptive to females since 1972. It is interesting to note that increases in female assistant principals in the position closely match increases in the number of positions, suggesting that females were more likely than males to get the new positions.

That females now dominate the position of elementary school principal in three of the four types of districts studied may not seem surprising given the number of female elementary teachers. Nevertheless, females were only 34% of the elementary school principals in 1972. The advancement of females suggests more than receptivity in the position. It suggests the impact of Title IX. Is it also, making allowances for differences in resistance, a suggestive portend of the potential for change in other positions?

Similarly, the overwhelming increases in the number of elementary assistant principal positions since 1972, and the clear domination of females in those positions, suggest that elementary school positions are particularly, perhaps stereotypically, receptive to the appointment of females. The movement of females into elementary school administration in the last 30 years, and their domination in those positions, suggest the impact of Title IX. The movement may be a portend of the potential for changing the gender demographics of other positions, making allowances for differences in resistance in those positions.

The variations in change among positions, and of receptivity to females in the positions, appears to be following an interesting pattern. A hierarchy of power and influence exists in school organization. Central-office line positions are perceived to have more power and influence than

staff positions. Within central office line positions, superintendents are perceived to have the greatest power and influence, with associate and assistant superintendents having progressively less. Within school-based line positions, the older the age of students served, the greater the power and influence that is perceived to accrue to the position holder that heads the school. Thus high school principals are perceived to be more influential than middle-school principals, and far more influential than elementary school principals. The relationship between central office and school based office holders is a bit more complex and idiosyncratic to the district.

Looking at the data and the pattern of advancement of women into specific positions, female advances appear to follow the line of perceived power and influence. Females have moved into the positions at the lower rungs of the power and influence ladder (elementary principal, assistant principal and middle school assistant principal) in greater numbers in all districts than into other positions, and it is in these positions that women have not merely achieved parity, but dominance in the last 30 years. However, as one moves up the rungs of the ladder, the extent and rate of progress are slower. There are fewer females holding high school principal positions than, for example, middle school principal positions, and in the later position, females are closer to parity than in the former one. Further, as one moves up the rungs of the ladder, there is greater variability in the percent of females holding the position.

At the central office level, which involves a smaller number of positions, while females have moved into each position, and females have achieved overall parity as assistant superintendents, the reality is that advances in urban and suburban districts obscure the relative lack of progress in rural and medium-city districts, and true parity in all districts in these positions may be a distant goal. The position of superintendent, the so-called "top spot," appears to be the slowest, perhaps the most resistant position (to the advancement of females), parity in medium-city districts in this study notwithstanding, and the question of whether or when parity in the position might be achieved or exceeded remains open.

The findings of the study apply solely to one state and to the districts selected at one point in time to represent that state. They can not be said to be predictive of what has happened in other states, but they are, perhaps, suggestive of the pattern of change in other states, with the greatest gains being made in urban districts and the smallest gains in rural districts. Given the results of this study, and of the studies of the patterns of movement in the largest districts, considerable gains for females are anticipated in the

large school districts. Again, however, it is important to note that urban districts are the least frequent type.

### **Concluding Thought**

When the study was begun 30 years ago, we wondered whether and what impact Title IX would have in affecting change in the long-standing hegemony of males in line administrative positions; and after changes became evident, whether the changes would be sustained or transitory and how long it might take for females to hold a large enough number of positions so that they were not “exceptions.” As co-director of the Southeast Sex Desegregation Assistance Center, in the wake of Title IX, the federally-funded agency charged with “helping” school districts throughout the 8-state Southeast understand and comply with Title IX, I was both hopeful and skeptical: hopeful that progress would be made; skeptical about the hope and about the time it would take to make progress. Progress was not inevitable; particularly as attention to Title IX and to its enforcement waned, except perhaps with respect to athletics. The progress that has been made in the state used in the study, in all types of districts, is heartening, as is the portend for continued progress in the future. That it has taken 30 years to get to this point — more than my naive hopefulness anticipated — in no way diminishes that achievement. However, it does beg the question of how long, if ever, it will take for women to fulfill Ella Flagg’s (1905) prophecy that they are “destined to rule the schools of every city” (cited in Hansot & Tyack, 1981).

### **Endnotes**

Note: All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number in the text and tables.

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# **Race, Culture, and Strategies for Success of Female Public School Administrators**

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Marie Byrd-Blake

## **Abstract**

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the differences among African American, Hispanic, and white female public school administrators with respect to their perceptions of successful strategies that led to career advancement. Female public school administrators continue to experience barriers to career advancement. The data revealed that Hispanic females perceived themselves as more successful in utilizing more strategies than African American and white females. Few females reported utilizing the informal mentoring technique of forming "new girl networks."

## **Introduction**

The lack of minorities and females with administrative positions in public school education is supported by research. Sixty-five percent of the public school principalship positions are held by males; females hold 35% and furthermore, only 16% of the public school principals are minorities (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Minority females hold a mere 6.4% of the principalship positions (AASA, 1992). The representation of minority females in the superintendency is dismal; only 12% of the superintendents were women and just 5% were minorities (Futrell, 2002). This approximates the same percentages as those at the beginning of the 20th century.

Strategies are available to women who seek to break the glass ceiling. This article focuses on the use of strategies used by African American, Hispanic, and white females.

## **The Status of Women in Administration**

The number of women exceeds the number of men in school administration graduate programs, in the teaching ranks, but an absence of women in powerful administrative positions in public education persists

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(Morie & Wilson, 1996). The superintendent, assistant superintendent, and high school principal roles are filled by males despite a growing body of research attesting to the outstanding potential of women in all administrative positions (McGrath, 1992). Women are clustered at the supervisory and elementary level positions in district administration, positions typically considered to have *staff* rather than *line* authority (Gupton & Slick, 1995). Further, data reveal that women are receiving 65% of the salary of their male counterparts (Waddell, 1994).

### Hispanic Females in Educational Leadership

The United States Census Bureau (2000) reported that those who identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino represented 12.5% of the total population. Little research exists addressing Hispanic leaders, and even less has been conducted about Hispanic female administrators and their perceived barriers to higher-level administrative positions. In the early 1980s, data collected from Hispanic women indicated that their placement as administrators was relegated to Hispanic elementary schools (Ortiz, 1982). The more current assertion is that only Hispanic administrators can solve the problems at Hispanic schools (Padilla, 1995; Reyes & Valencia, 1995).

Mexican American female principals in the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas described the difficulties of finding balance being both Mexican American and female. The leadership styles of these Hispanic female principals practiced aspects of management not utilized by white males.



Those included collaboration, teamwork, shared decision making, and a tolerance for diversity (Carr, 1995).

In a case study of the career paths, barriers and strategies of six Hispanic female school administrators, Regules (1997) described the Hispanic female staff and line administrators' career paths as moving from an initial position of bilingual teacher, to bilingual resource teacher, and to district administration before becoming an assistant principal. The Hispanic female then was diverted to district responsibilities before advancing to the assistant superintendency.

Ornelas (1991) reported that women, especially Hispanics, were not equally represented in central administrative K-12 positions. A directorship position was the highest position held by any of the participants. Most respondents reported occupying elementary principalships at predominantly minority schools. White women, compared to Hispanic women, expressed a greater satisfaction with the progression of their careers, yet the Hispanic women aspired to higher career goals than did the white women. The Hispanic group, more than the white group, attributed career success to intentional change and credited themselves, more than others, for choosing, planning, and carrying out the change to become administrators.

In higher education, Hispanic women administrators reported five major factors as positively influencing career advancement: education and training, goal setting, networking, knowledge of mainstream systems, and knowledge of the advancement process. Factors hindering advancement included: Hispanic culture family traditions, the stereotypical view of the female as a subordinate, and issues of ethnicity (Gorena, 1996).

### **African American Females in Educational Leadership**

In the decade after the Supreme Court's historic desegregation ruling in 1954, the number of African American principals in the 11 southern border states (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas) actually dropped over 95% (Coursen, 1989). The urban residential segregation policies that emerged relegated African American administrators to mostly African American schools. Of those African American administrators, very few were female.

African American women are still perceived to be the least powerful in society and in most organizations (Howard-Vital & Morgan, 1993). They rarely enjoy positions of power or experience the inner workings of organizations. In the past, males have dominated leadership positions in the

African American community obtained through education or the church. Women did not have such advantage and advancement came only with long work hours with heavy workloads performed in front of scrutinizing eyes (Carter, Pearson & Shavlik, 1988). Gill and Showell (1991) documented sexual and racial barriers that prevented African-American women from obtaining top leadership roles in education. Their respondents reported that politics, friendships, network systems, and other factors outweighed the qualifications of education and experience in determining whether a job/position advancement occurred.

Fontaine and Greenlee (1993) reported that African American women who were the solitary members of a sex and racial group in the workplace believed they had to outperform majority group counterparts. Jones (1993) offered four conditions that African American female administrators face in the workplace. First, they must observe carefully the unknown. They experience social and professional isolation, encounter false assumptions and stereotypes, and finally, they are expected to serve on multiple committees within their division to represent a minority perspective. For African American females, self-validation sometimes may be the only source of acknowledgement received (Phelps, 1995).

### **Strategies Utilized to Overcome Barriers**

Moire and Wilson (1996) list four key factors that may assist women in overcoming the barriers to career advancement in educational administration: (a) have powerful motivation; (b) have successful career-family configurations; (c) have guidance from mentors and spouses; and (c) have the determination, persistence, and tenacity that is required to succeed despite the innumerable deterrents that are imposed.

The need for mentorship or sponsorship has been strongly reinforced in the literature. Berman (1997) reported that mentors can help women's careers by giving their protégées career direction, support, career aspiration, and by assisting with career change. Whitaker and Lane (1990) stated that through mentors, women could receive practical experiences, knowledge about job openings, "inside" information about positions and districts, as well as encouragement and advice. Yet, two issues influence whether women have mentoring relationships in public schools. First, opportunities for women to have mentors are limited by the scarcity of women who occupy appropriate positions in administration. Also, cross mentoring between male mentors and female protégées is frequently of reduced value or importance because of gender role attitudes. Findings by Gupton and Slick (1995) support the

importance of mentoring. They confirmed that the majority of the *highly successful* women educators have had significant numbers of positive role models and supportive mentors in their lives. Moire and Wilson (1996) reported that female superintendents had mentors in multiple areas of their lives that have provided different types of support: professor mentors in doctoral programs, on-the-job principal and superintendent mentors, and spouse mentors. Other strategies for advancement in the field include career plans (Beason, 1992; Clemens, 1990; Edson, 1988; Jones & Montenegro, 1982; Truesdale, 1988; Warren, 1990), participation in professional and community organizations (Bowman, 1987; Truesdale, 1988), networking (Beason, 1992; Blum, 1990), and professional visibility (Edson, 1988).

### **The Glass Ceiling Commission**

Public Law 102-166 of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 enacted The Glass Ceiling Commission for the purpose of conducting studies and preparing recommendations concerning (a) eliminating artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities; and (b) increasing the opportunities and development experiences of women and minorities to foster advancement of women and minorities to management and decision-making positions in business (United States Department of Labor, 1995). The fact-finding commission reported "women and minorities who participated in focus groups, researchers, and government officials, all agree that a glass ceiling exists and that it operates substantially to exclude minorities and women from top levels of management" (USDOL, 1995). The report, in addition to describing the types of artificial barriers that face women and minorities in the business world as societal barriers, internal structural barriers, and governmental barriers, provided strategies used in business to manage change effectively.

Despite the implementation of these strategies by growing numbers of corporate leaders, significant informal and artificial barriers continue to exist at various levels within organizations and are experienced differently by different ethnic and racial groups (USDOL, 1995). Female and minority administrators in the public school system are examples of those who continue to experience barriers when attempting to "climb the career ladder."

### **Description of the Study**

Ten strategies were identified from the literature about women in the workplace that are faced with a "glass ceiling." The strategies included: (a) setting career goals and formulating a plan of action, (b) developing/utilizing

“New Girl Network,” (c) enlisting influential sponsors, (d) seeking advanced training and certification, (e) being assertive in pursuing career goals, (f) becoming professionally visible, (g) improving professional image, (h) attending seminars and administrative training workshops to improve professional and interpersonal skills, (i) learning to cope with multiple roles-wife/mother/professional, and (j) obtaining support from family and/or peers.

Two hundred sixty female administrators in one southern metropolitan school district were surveyed about strategies. The respondents were asked to rate the strategies in terms of successful application according to a three-point Likert Scale with 1 being unsuccessful, 2 being somewhat successful, and 3 being highly successful. A fourth category was provided to indicate that the strategy was never used. A response rate of 59% ( $n = 153$ ) was obtained. The demographic breakdown by race was 32% ( $n = 49$ ) white, 33% ( $n = 50$ ) African American, and 35% ( $n = 54$ ) Hispanic. The same breakdown by leadership positions was 68% ( $n = 104$ ) elementary school principals, 9% ( $n = 14$ ) middle school principals, 2% ( $n = 3$ ) senior high school principals, 9.5% ( $n = 15$ ) directors, 2% ( $n = 3$ ) assistant superintendents, 0.7% ( $n = 1$ ) deputy superintendent, and 9.5% ( $n = 16$ ) other non-school site higher-level administrators.

## Results

The ten strategies were analyzed using a Chi-Square statistic to determine if differences existed among the races in degrees of success. Of the ten strategies, four showed significant differences among the three races for success in career advancement: (a) improving professional image, (b) becoming professionally visible, (c) seeking advanced training, and (d) being assertive in pursuing goals. Table 1 displays the number and percent for each of the strategies.

There was a significant difference among African Americans, Hispanics and white women in the successfulness of the use of the strategy *Improving Professional Image*,  $\chi^2(4, n = 141) = 20.38, p < .001$ . Forty-one (82%) of the Hispanic female administrators indicated it as highly successful, 30 (65%) of the African American female administrators indicated it as highly successful, and 26 (58%) of the White female administrators indicated it as highly successful.

*Becoming Professionally Visible* also showed significant differences by race  $\chi^2(4, n = 144) = 11.26, p = .024$ . Thirty-seven (74%) of the Hispanic female administrators indicated it as a highly successful strategy, 30 (64%)

**Table 1**  
Strategies Showing Significance, by Number and Percent\*, and by Race

	Highly Successful N (%)		Somewhat Successful N (%)		Unsuccessful N (%)	
Improving Professional Image	30	(65.2)	10	(21.7)	6	(13.0)
African-American	41	(82.0)	9	(18.0)	0	(0.0)
Hispanic	26	(57.8)	19	(42.2)	0	(0.0)
White						
Becoming Professionally Visible	30	(63.8)	13	(27.7)	4	(8.5)
African-American	37	(74.0)	13	(26.0)	0	(0.0)
Hispanic	24	(51.1)	22	(46.8)	1	(2.1)
White						
Seeking Advanced Training						
African-American	37	(75.5)	7	(14.3)	5	(10.2)
Hispanic	44	(84.6)	8	(15.4)	0	(0.0)
White	31	(68.9)	13	(28.9)	1	(2.2)
Being Assertive in Pursuing Career Goals	24	(52.2)	16	(34.8)	6	(13.0)
African-American	37	(75.5)	7	(14.3)	5	(10.2)
Hispanic	32	(61.5)	20	(38.5)	0	(0.0)
White	21	(46.7)	22	(48.9)	2	(4.4)

\*Percentage may not equal 100% due to rounding.

of the African American females indicated it as a highly successful strategy, and 24 (51%) of the White females indicated it as a highly successful strategy.

*Seeking Advanced Training* and certification showed significant differences by race as a strategy utilized in accomplishing career goals,  $\chi^2 (4, n = 146) = 10.96, p = .027$ . Of the Hispanic female administrators, 44 (85%) indicated it as highly successful. Thirty-seven (76%) of the African American female administrators and 31 (69%) of the White female administrators indicated it as a highly successful strategy.

The strategy, *Being Assertive in Pursuing Career Goals*, showed significant differences by race,  $\chi^2 (4, n = 143) = 9.81, p = .044$ . Thirty-two (62%) of the Hispanic female administrators indicated it as a highly successful strategy, 24 (52%) of the African American females indicated it as a highly successful strategy, and 21 (47%) of the White females indicated it as a highly successful strategy.

The choice "Never Used" was chosen by 3 to 35 female administrators when answering nine of the ten questions. When responding to the use of the "*New Girl*" Network." Strategy, 76 of the female administrators indicated that they had "Never Used" the strategy.

Table 2 displays the number and percent of each of the three groups of respondents that responded to the remaining six strategies for advancing careers. No statistical differences were found among the groups in terms of the successfulness of the strategies.

## Discussion

Significant differences by race were found in four areas. Hispanic higher-level female administrators were more likely to (a) seek advanced training (84%); (b) become assertive in pursuing career goals (62%); (c) become professionally visible (74%); and (d) improve their professional image (82%). Hispanic female administrators rated themselves more highly successful when utilizing strategies to overcome stated barriers when answering seven of the ten questions on strategies as compared to white female administrators and African American female administrators. Hispanic female administrators in this large metropolitan school district perceived themselves as being successful in achieving what white and African American female administrators are still finding troublesome: assertively utilizing available resources to enhance their careers.

What are the contributing factors to these results? An important demographic statistic reported by the administrators indicated that the Hispanic female administrators showed a significant difference when identifying their place of birth. Of the 50 Hispanic administrators who answered the question, 40 (80%) were born in Cuba and 10 (20%) were born in the United States. The white female administrators and the African American female administrators were all born in the United States.

Perhaps those Hispanic females who responded to the survey had a strong sense of identity with their culture. Researchers have shown that people with a positive self-concept and with high self-esteem will have a strong and favorable ethnic identity (Charleswork, 2000; Samuels, 1977). In fact, Phinney (1990) reported that self-esteem is unquestionably related to ethnic identity. Recent immigrants have been shown to have strong ties to their culture of origin and exhibit less flexibility within the macroculture (Lee, 1997). They learn the language and adapt to practices of the macroculture, yet continue to nurture the cultural customs of the "old

**Table 2**  
Strategies Showing No Significance, by Number and Percent\*,  
and by Race

	Highly Successful N (%)		Somewhat Successful N (%)		Unsuccessful N (%)	
Attending Seminars and Workshops						
African-American	29	(59.2)	15	(30.6)	5	(10.2)
Hispanic	39	(75.0)	13	(25.0)	0	(0.0)
White	25	(54.3)	15	(32.6)	6	(13.1)
Enlisting Influential Sponsors						
African-American	17	(40.5)	18	(42.9)	7	(16.7)
Hispanic	20	(50.0)	21	(50.0)	0	(0.0)
White	16	(50.0)	14	(43.8)	2	(6.3)
Setting Career Goals						
African-American	30	(61.2)	16	(32.7)	3	(6.1)
Hispanic	36	(70.6)	15	(29.4)	0	(0.0)
White	29	(64.4)	16	(35.6)	0	(0.0)
New Girl Network						
African-American	6	(23.1)	11	(42.3)	9	(34.6)
Hispanic	7	(25.0)	18	(64.3)	3	(10.7)
White	6	(27.3)	13	(59.1)	3	(13.6)
Obtaining Support from Family/Peers						
African-American	41	(87.2)	5	(10.6)	1	(2.1)
Hispanic	42	(79.8)	10	(18.9)	1	(1.9)
White	32	(69.6)	13	(28.3)	1	(2.2)
Coping with Multiple Roles						
African-American	27	(69.2)	11	(28.2)	1	(2.6)
Hispanic	36	(75.0)	12	(25.0)	0	(0.0)
White	25	(64.1)	13	(33.3)	1	(2.6)

\*Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

country" (Lee, 1997). The cultural factors that influence individuals are described by Locke (1998) as psychological and behavioral qualities, child-rearing practices, religious practices, family structure, and values and

attitudes. Those factors have a strong influence on the perceptions of the Hispanic females when considering the success of strategies used for career advancement.

Hispanic female administrators did not identify the "New Girl Network" as an indicator of a successful strategy. As stated by Blum (1990), such mentoring and networking could serve to provide support, encouragement, feedback, and insight.

The success perceived by Hispanic female administrators in utilizing strategies to overcome barriers to career advancement should be shared with administrators of other races. The extent of the variations in perception has the potential to allow for greater understanding among females of all races. Regardless of race, all females share common experiences and bonds. These unique experiences, expertise and knowledge can be used to transform the diversity into an advantage and promote strength among and between female public school administrators of all races and ethnicities. Individual and group differences can contribute to the accomplishments of all. Only then can the extensive diversity be transformed into a stronghold.

Questions remain as to how cultural dynamics differ among races. The survey administered was not designed to answer those questions. Therefore, future research recommendations focus on the cultural dynamics of females of various races and ethnicities that contribute to them being able to achieve despite the existence of the glass ceiling. Also of interest is the probable relationship between culture/race and the perception of the existence of barriers in the attempt to advance in public school administration. Understanding differences and strengths will lead to cohesiveness and more females participating in informal and formal "new girl networks." Females must utilize this information as an added strategy to overcome the artificial and informal barriers placed in their paths with a resulting accomplishment of all achieving self-actualization in their careers.

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# Two Profiles of Women Community College Presidents

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Melinda Rhodes

## Introduction

In 1991 a nationwide survey of college presidents conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) indicated that 11% were women, and by 2001 women had captured 27.8%. This significant increase bodes well for women seeking community college presidencies. For any number of reasons—not excluding prestige and competitiveness associated with four-year college and university posts—women have made significant headway at two-year institutions.

According to Oregon State University Professor Rebecca Warner and State University of New York President Lois B. DeFleur (1993), “women presidents are much more likely to be found at two-year schools. While there has been an increase in women’s appointments as CEOs in the last five years, the increase is still most evident in community college settings as compared to large, comprehensive institutions” (p. 4).

In Kansas, women lead 4 of the 25 (16%) American Association of Community College members. In Missouri, the percentage of women holding top posts is 37%. In Nebraska there is one female president of the 9 community colleges presidents. The representation of women in top posts in these Midwest states varies dramatically.

Researchers, especially those interested in promoting the presence of women in administration, have sought to discover what factors or connections among factors might prevent women from attaining these top posts? And, they ask, how women who find themselves in these top posts cope with the continuing challenges of leadership?

Surveys and narratives from women leaders about their experiences makes clear that barriers to attainment of presidencies exist in terms of the market itself, the culture of higher education, the juggling of personal and professional lives, and the distinct methods of leadership that women may bring to administrative posts.

The marketplace for administrators in higher education, especially for presidents, is a mixture of “good news and bad news.” The labor market for

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administrators exhibits the following characteristics: institutionalized policies or rules that affect mobility, access to the right networks, mentoring and sponsorship and patterning of career ladders. Warner and DeFleur (1993) analyzed the job market for administrators from both a supply and a demand perspective to explain the absence of women in the marketplace. On the supply side, the authors argue,

sex segregation in higher education administration would focus on the usual set of human capital factors (amount of education, training, and years of experience), but would also include occupationally specific factors such as the educational area of one's advanced degree and the existence of certain academic experiences such as holding a faculty position (p. 6).

Women lack degrees in prestigious subject areas or have less experience as faculty and faculty chairs.

In another study, Oglesby and Windham (1996) focused on gender-related, career-path characteristics of community college presidents and found that, following the 1960s and 1970s, "opportunities for faculty and administrative positions are fewer," and that those positions were accompanied by tighter budgets and calls for accountability (p. 316). The study analyzed the career-paths of both male and female presidents and suggested a difference in several key areas. The findings contradicted some of the research on women in four-year institutions. The most significant career-path predictors of gender among community college presidents were the following:

1. employment status of the spouse (more likely women presidents had working spouses);
2. elementary-school experience (more likely with women presidents);

3. number of community college positions held (more women held faculty posts first);
  4. years of community college experience (men reported more years of experience);
  5. absence from work of at least 1 week to care for children (seen in women's careers); and
  6. community college presidents (men had more experience in this area).
- (p. 316)

Kubala (1999) relied on a survey of community college presidents from 1995 to 1997 to analyze career-ladder characteristics, job acceptance motivation and initial observations of presidents upon taking office. Seventy-two percent of the respondents emerged from an "academic pipeline." Other routes to the presidency included trusteeship, administrative or student services, institutional development and planning and marketing.

Weisman and Vaughan (2002) indicated improvement in the status of women seeking presidencies. They credited changes in governing boards' commitments to diversity and current presidents greater commitment to "mentoring the underdog and increases in graduate school enrollment as reasons for improvement. Nevertheless, women remained in an "underdog" position. The researchers found the tenure for male presidents to be 8.4 versus 4.7 years for female presidents.

LeBlanc (1993) outlined the barriers to women in higher education administration: self-esteem issues, the need for self-improvement for women administrators who desire promotions, lack of women's exposure to challenges and constituencies outside the academic arena, the challenge of balancing family and careers, the lack of mentors to assist in a rise to the top, lack of available networks of influence, and a remoteness from activities that develop a strong understanding of the mission or vision of the college as a whole (pp. 41-49).

### **The Study**

Perhaps most revealing in the area of women community college presidencies are the narratives of those who hold the leadership positions. As women's presence increases in this arena, the lessons of current leaders become a great asset in providing models for other women aspiring to

these posts. They provide concrete examples, valuable advice, words of caution and processes by which leadership effectiveness might be enhanced.

This study focuses on the narratives of two women leaders, one of whom continues to work as a community college president and another who made the transition from a community college presidency to the directorship of a continuing education division of a large, state research university. The women were first interviewed in 2000 when they discussed their own career characteristics and views of women presidency leadership issues. At that time, one was considering accepting a post leading a northwest community college undergoing drastic changes in mission, goals and target student population. She served as that college's president in 2002.

The women agreed to be interviewed again in 2002, sharing information about the challenges and the details that have defined the evolution of their leadership styles during the past two years. The earlier interviews were conducted by telephone and email. In 2002, one was interviewed by telephone, and the other during a lengthy personal visit. Both women are identified by pseudonyms in this study. Their stories are unique and individual, as much as they are inspirational and educational.

### **The Academic Pipeline**

Like many women in higher education administration, Elizabeth Jones, the president at a midwest community college, has an academic background that reflects diversity of experience and an emphasis in the area of humanities. Jones completed her liberal arts degree in English with a minor concentration in theater and the teaching block. ("The diploma says 'Humanities' and education in a nationally accredited teacher education program, 1965," she explained. "I was certified in secondary English, speech, and maybe some other things.")

Jones immediately went on to earn a master of arts in speech and drama, with an emphasis on direction and dramatic literature and criticism. The graduate degree led her to a community college where she taught and directed student productions for a year. She left to pursue an advanced degree.

"I decided to enter the Ph.D. program while I still had the time and energy," Jones said. She enrolled in a doctoral program in theater and completed all the course work and preliminary examinations and began her dissertation before she accepted a teaching post at a community college.

What followed was a mixture of career, family life and continuing enrollment at the university to complete her dissertation. "A year [after taking the post at the community college], I got married and started a family. I remained enrolled until I finally decided to complete the dissertation about 1988, and two years later I had the degree."

Jones' background was in the academic pipeline. "Traditionally, most senior administrators have come from one of the liberal arts disciplines," Warner and DeFleur (1993) noted. "Fields such as English, chemistry and history are usually well represented, but this is not surprising since these are among the largest academic disciplines. Specialized degrees such as higher education administration or business administration, however, are sometimes disparaged as not providing a sufficiently academic background for administrative roles" (p. 5). Women are more likely to hold degrees in the liberal arts and sciences.

Jones said that a degree in administration would have been a more direct approach to the community college presidency. "If all I wanted was to be a community college president, I would have taken an immediate Ed.D. and taken the straightest line to an administrative post. But I never even wanted to be a community college president until some time after 1990. When I took the [state] job in 1970, my goal was to work there three years, finish the Ph.D., get a faculty position at [a research university], and then become the department head."

Jill Miller, president of a community college, also initially majored in the humanities and worked her way to her current position through an academic appointment. She received a bachelor's and master's degree in speech with an emphasis in public address and rhetoric. Her education specialist degree was in secondary education instruction with an emphasis in English, and her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction.

"I had no administration classes at the graduate level and would have benefited from budget, legal and human resource management information," she explained, adding that the academic field emphasis has its rewards. "I believe gaining the respect of faculty is very important, and knowing a great deal about learning and teaching has helped me. My advice to someone who may want to be an administrator is to get a degree in a subject area such as English, chemistry, etc. Faculty respect these degrees more than administration [or] curriculum, and, in the future, I believe faculty will be more involved in the selection decisions."

### **Family and Career**

The influence of a spouse's job or career is more greatly felt by women administrators than by their male counterparts. The results of Vaughan's (1986) survey of male and female spouses of community college presidents indicated that male spouses have more formal education than female spouses do, that 89% of the male spouses surveyed were employed, and that 67% of the female spouses were employed outside the home. "Even though 67% were employed, 36% listed their primary occupation as homemaker" (cited in Smith & Helms, 1994, p. 13). Vaughan's (1986) evidence indicated very little career conflict between male presidents and female spouses. "There was no overt evidence of career conflict between female presidents and their male spouses . . . but adjustments were required when the wife became a president and the male spouse was also pursuing a professional career" (p. 13). These adjustments often created stress as a result of maintaining commuter marriages or divorce. Although 3% of male community college presidents were single or divorced in 1986, 17% of the women presidents were single and nearly 31% were divorced and had not remarried.

Jones noted that while the community college world had won her over, another factor influencing her decision not to pursue the possibility of a faculty and department head position at a university centered on her husband's career. "My husband's job, which I respected, pretty much meant we had to live in the small town." Jones' subsequent decision to accept the continuing education position in 2001 was linked to her husband's career flexibility and the couple's desire to relocate to the town in which they both attended college.

Miller's husband had exhibited flexibility and support that allowed her to work long hours and take on the challenge. Still, the road has not been a smooth one. The couple carried the burden of separation due to career differences. "Being a community college president requires 60-plus hours [weekly], so there has to be great support," she commented. Between 2000 and 2002, the couple divorced. Miller pointed out the difference she saw between the role of the spouse of a male president and the role of the spouse of a female president. Even the requirement for entertaining in the home was a critical factor in her decision to accept her current post. If that were a requirement for her presidency, she said, she would not have accepted the job. "He was never an asset to my career," Miller said of her former spouse. "He was never a hindrance, but he was never an asset."

Both women also commented on the need to juggle family and career. Miller remembered a woman administrator with whom she worked who would literally fall asleep during meetings because she was so exhausted. "Women can just get so tired," she said.

During her first year at a new presidency, Miller cared for her mother whose health concerns increased significantly. Her husband was unable and unwilling to care for her mother so she juggled the new post and the caretaker position. During the third year of her presidency, Miller lost a foster son to a work-related accident. The visibility of a woman president, she noted, restricts one's ability to grieve and, more recently and post-divorce, to engage in a social life.

### **Previous Occupational Experience**

Past positions held in and outside of academia also contribute to a woman's opportunities to secure a presidency and success during a presidency. "Some research suggests that women are more likely to enter into administrative career paths that are clustered in the nonacademic areas of student affairs or other university services. . . . These career paths are more likely to be dead-end or to be on ladders which have low ceilings. It is the area of academic affairs that appears to have the most streamlined path to the top of the administrative hierarchy and in which women are less frequently found" (Warner & DeFleur, 1993, p. 8). LeBlanc (1993) noted that in order to advance into leadership posts in academia, women must plan "multi-dimensional career paths."

Jones took a rather philosophical approach to an analysis of her prior positions: "Every job I ever had contributes to my performance." According to Jones, the community college she led in 2000 offered her many opportunities for taking on projects, tasks, responsibilities and leadership. Perhaps the diversity of her positions and responsibilities created this perspective.

"The one event that probably helped me have the confidence to proceed was a temporary interval in the presidency position at [another community college], when there was much turmoil," she explained. "For a brief period, I was the ONLY dean-level administrator there and was acting president for a month or so. I recognized then that the job was within my capacity."

Miller said experience as a high school English teacher and debate coach gave her credibility as a teacher/administrator. She also has experience as a community college adjunct instructor and an adjunct



instructor on the university level, teaching speech on the undergraduate level and English and education courses on the graduate level. "These teaching experiences were and are very helpful for I have experience to know how difficult it is to be an excellent teacher," she noted.

She also valued past experience as vice president for instruction at a community college and a post as senior academic officer of a larger college. "I followed a male who had been there over 20 years," she explained. "I was the only female on the top management team; I was the only one who nurtured others. It was a difficult role, but I admired the president who is still there. The faculty and staff union environment was adversarial, and I earned stripes of being 'an administrator.'"

### **Mentorship**

Jones credited a mentoring situation she encountered in college with her success in this job market. A mentor in a humanities field sparked her interest in the discipline and managed to make it personally meaningful to her. "He also showed me how one can maintain normal mental health and still be a consummate artist," she said. "He showed me how to be excellent while keeping both feet and my head (ego) firmly under control. But he did that all by example only. I'm still trying to learn what he taught me."

In addition to this discipline-specific mentor, Jones said she encountered another male mentor who assisted her in learning "the mechanics of administration." Ironically, this mentor at times taught her through negative example, and Jones found herself learning what not to do in certain circumstances. "He encouraged me and supported me as I learned," she explained. "Support is important, but so is teaching."

This same mentor would be mentioned by Jones two years later. As her leadership experience increased, she found that she was called upon to mentor rather than to be mentored. Still, she found it valuable to "pick and choose pieces and parts of what I see as being very effective leadership." She indicated that her own supervisor demonstrates vision and is effective at "making people think they have a lot of influence with him."

Miller experienced a mentor who taught by negative example at times. During her time as senior academic officer, her superior, the president, suggested playing her "cards close to the chest" and refraining from being so "open." "He also told me that the most important thing for a president to remember is to develop a good working relationship with the board. . . . No matter what faculty and/or staff think of the president, it is the board that hires and fires him or her."

Many studies and commentaries on women in higher education administration and mentorship have been published. Hackney and Bock (2000) argued that experiences, such as those described by Jones, mimic an old model of mentorship that often excluded women. In other words, Jones, although finding some support resulting from personal relationships in addition to professional colleagueship, did not encounter a “culture of mentoring.”

We . . . advocate for an academic organization that is characterized by a more inclusive and egalitarian academic culture—a culture where there is room for multiple voices and ways of knowing; where all members are recognized, validated, and appreciated; and where each individual is enriched and energized as a result. (p. 2)

There is a practical explanation for the difficulty women in this field face in finding mentors. “One of the greatest difficulties is the all too human tendency of members of such networks to choose persons most like themselves as protégés and to overlook or actively exclude newcomers who are different,” explained authors Moore and Amey (1988, p. 45). Bower (1993) echoed this observation and added several factors from contemporary research that lead to a general lack of mentorship of women in administrative positions.

1. Mentor relationships in part arise from social learning that is typically male.
2. The “queen bee” phenomena suggests there is often only room for one outstanding woman in an organization and that each other woman must fight her way to the top in much the same way.
3. Potential sexual aspects of a relationship prevent men from mentoring aspiring women. Potential male mentors may fear being misunderstood by peers.
4. The pattern of revocability which indicates that successful men often do not consider women to be serious about careers. (p. 93)

Regardless of the difficulty of finding a mentor, the benefits of a mentor relationship are undeniable. The protégé acquires an ability to see the bigger picture of a college or university, gains access to special or privileged information, learns basics like how to dress and travel and, most important, acquires critical information on how politics are played out on a campus or issues affecting administration on all levels of governance (pp.

96-97). "Probably the most important benefit of the mentor-protégé relationship is its power for career advancement of the protégé. Some mentors are specific and open about their intentions. . . . Other mentors leave the option open" (p. 97).

Miller, at 22 and a recent baccalaureate, was mentored by a woman who was and still is respected in the field of rhetoric and public address. "She taught me how to evaluate the work of others and how to anticipate the actions of others," Miller said. "[She] trusted me, confided in me and helped me become a stronger woman." The two women developed a relationship that allowed them to become like family. In addition to support for Miller's initial efforts at publication, her mentor provided opportunities for Miller to win significant and prestigious awards. The personal benefit from the continuing relationship is "unconditional support." "I learned from her how to mentor others," Miller concluded.

Miller's current mentors can be found in the college's Board of Trustees that she alternately mentors, because she said, the atmosphere is mutually supportive. She finds women models there who exemplify an ability to "press on" and hold an understanding of key issues.

### **Transitions**

Transitioning from a community college to a four-year institution presented Jones with significant challenges. Her post focuses on delivery of instruction through distance education using a combination of technologies—online course management and presentation, videotapes, CD-ROMs, interactive television and instructor rotation from one site to another. The Division of Continuing Education caters to on and off-campus students, but the challenge has been in promoting lifelong learning in the college and increasing student services to the roughly 5,000 students a year, half of whom take courses solely by distance. The division also supports colleges using technology, partners with community colleges in the state, provides training to the military, seeks international partnerships in terms of academic programming and offers its own course management system. She believes in the quality of distance education, notes the absence of strong assessment for traditional classroom learning, and speculates that, should a true "apple to apple" research project be undertaken, distance education would be found more effective.

The transitional challenges for Jones have been cultural. "This sounds like an administrator talking, but one of the things that I've dealt with all my life—and it's even harder here, harder because it's just a bigger and

less mobile institution—is to tell the story of the success of and the need for continuing education more dramatically. The university hasn't learned the importance of this." Although the resources at a research university might be greater, she noted, student services are not necessarily geared to the non-traditional student, and she has less contact with the everyday running of the university.

For Miller, the move from one community college to another brought with it increased budget (about 30%) and the culture of a newly emerging community college. The transition also brought with it potential for growth. During the first year of her presidency, she remembers scheduling an appointment in a neighboring community. "I got in my car and gave myself 45 minutes. I was there in seven minutes." The service area, she noted, was vast. "So the first thing I learned is there are a lot of people here, we should have a lot of students." The recognition of this has led to an increasing enrollment for the last three years. This is the first fall semester that this community college has experienced a decrease in enrollment, and Miller viewed this as an opportunity to expand student services.

### **Leadership and Gender**

As much as mentorship, leadership styles of male and female higher education leaders has been the subject of research and theories about on the relationship between types of leaders and gender. Chliwniak (1997) summarized the literature on women's leadership by saying, "while men are more concerned with systems and rules, women are more concerned with relations and atmosphere" (p. 2). In a survey of literature conducted from 1984 to 1998, Lougheed (2000) found that "even though women and men believe women can be successful leaders, there remains discrimination against women leaders and questions remain whether or not a woman should be selected as a leader" (p. 6).

Jones described her leadership style succinctly: "My natural and preferred style is developmental and inspirational. When necessary, however, and for short periods of time, I can be directive and authoritarian. However, I do not believe that is effective in the long run, and the confrontations that develop make me very uncomfortable." Still, the weaknesses that she identified are sometimes reflective of gender-based leadership differences as opposed to actual weaknesses. "I take responsibility for everything that happens," Jones said, "because I think I

should have prevented bad things from happening, even when that is unrealistic.”

Jones had a tendency to take on technical aspects of administration and teaching that should be delegated. She continued to recognize that quality in 2002, although she also said her leadership has evolved in many ways.

I’ve learned to be more comfortable depending on other people to finish projects, and maybe learned how to have input into that process without actually doing it. And that’s hard to learn. I’ve thought many times, I didn’t used to trust people to do a good job, and maybe it was because they didn’t do a good job. Maybe I was getting pretty bad results. And I don’t know who’s changed.

She also admitted to not listening to bosses or subordinates. “I have plenty of vision,” she noted, “and maybe not enough patience. I love my work because I am mission-driven, but I am easily disappointed and sometimes angered when other people display severe character flaws through unethical and unprofessional behavior.”

Jones noted that expectations of men and women in leadership positions are responsible for the resulting characteristics attributed to either sex. “Because people expect certain differences, we’re forced into those roles if we want to be effective leaders,” she said.

In 2000, Miller described her leadership style as “inspirational, democratic and participatory,” all terms attributed to women’s style of leadership. “My basic nature is of kindness, and I try to make others happy. I work very well with talented people who believe community colleges make a difference in the lives of students wanting each to succeed.”

Her assessment in 2002 focused on her personal “openness,” which she viewed as both an asset and a flaw. “When I was at [state] Community College, I gave the board too much information. I told them about my worries. That was stupid.” Still, she said, this characteristic is unchangeable. “What I bring to the table is a great deal of relationship skills, vision and mission.”

She said that as time has passed, she certainly has learned more in terms of content, but her core remains the same. “If I have to change my style because of my job, then I don’t want the job. People, especially faculty and staff, want an authentic person.”

### **The Politics of Leadership—Faculty, Staff and Trustees**

Harrow (1993) noted that “power and the political process are inextricably linked throughout the literature on leadership” (p. 143). Communication skills, the management of power, and the relationship a community college president has with her board of trustees determines effectiveness of leadership.

Communication as a barrier often arises from perceptions of a male style of communication—authoritarian, assertive—as being more appropriate when it comes to discussion with subordinates. Women are often considered better listeners, better “decoders” of nonverbal expressions and better nonverbal communicators in general. “Women need to be aware of, and even able to, employ either style when the situation demands” (Johnson, 1993, p. 138).

Although Jones did not endorse the concept of inherent barriers to women in higher education, she did “believe that women must be better at everything in order to achieve equal levels of responsibility than men,” adding that “maybe it’s only office politics that we’re not better at, because we are less likely to accept that as a good value to hold.” Another area of higher education politics that Jones found challenging was tenure in the university setting. “I have never in my life understood the culture of tenure,” Jones said. “As a graduate student, nobody ever explained that to me. . . . It’s like being a new immigrant in a new world.”

Miller reported that a change is occurring regarding the politics of community college administration. “I used to believe there were no barriers to women in higher education,” she commented. “Then I began to believe that colleges want strong leaders, and some believe women are too soft. Now I am beginning to believe that colleges are looking for facilitators, not strong authoritative figures. So I am back where I started from several years ago. I believe being a courageous, talented female leader is the best.” During the course of her career, Miller has emphasized the value of unity, “as we all need to speak with one voice and not be seen to be fighting with each other.” Miller said a strong accomplishment in multiple positions “was to show that women are O.K., too, as presidents and as chief academic officers.”

Involvement of faculty in governance is part of communication and politics. Jones noted that

I would like to have a faculty and staff that can and will participate fully and professionally in the internal governance of the college. . . . I would

like to be able to demonstrate that our programs and our student learning are superior. If I could do all these things by myself, I would deserve a Nobel peace prize! If I can accomplish them through other people, I will have done my job and earned my pay.

Miller worked to build trust between administration and faculty. "My biggest challenge at work is to help the VPs and deans lead by being open and caring even though in the past an adversarial relationship existed. Our college is small, and we cannot get enrollment growth and become more student centered until we enjoy a nurturing climate." According to researchers Weisman and Vaughan (1997), the most positive relationships between presidents and boards develops as a result of both parties clearly articulating job duties and expectations of constituencies (Iwanaga, 1998, p. 1). Flexibility in the relationship must exist.

Jones took a realistic approach with her board of trustees. She described it as "pretty good," yet acknowledged the trauma of working with an elected board.

They still resist adopting a 'policy governance' model and, therefore, are occasionally tempted to micro-manage or to react to small amounts of misinformation. But I have kept a lid on most controversies, and they appreciate not being in the negative spotlight. I have also bragged on them and let them share the limelight for the new community services movement.

Jones exhibited the flexibility necessary to work with an elected board, especially a rural board. She concluded working with an appointed board would be better. She has not encountered any great dissension or major conflicts among board members or board members and herself. "But that could change instantly any time," she acknowledged, "and I really fear that. I'm not a very good fighter (I don't enjoy fighting) so I don't know what would happen." Jones inherited the board of her community college following a tempest, so she understood the ramifications of discord.

Community college presidents credit longevity in a position to appointed boards. A former president for 30 years, said [state's] system of appointed local boards that act only as advisory bodies to a state board that is also appointed has been beneficial to his career (Stephens, 1997). Problems with elected boards are not restricted to one gender.

Miller has had the experience of working with both elected and appointed boards of trustees. In 2002 her board was appointed. Miller

recounted that she did not see much difference between the two types. "What matters to me is that the members share my belief in the value of community colleges and that they make good decisions."

She acknowledged that a president's relationship with her board is the most important of all relationships. . . . However, I do not follow good advice regarding this relationship; rather, I work harder in my relationship with the faculty, staff, students and community. . . . Handling dissension is not difficult if you know what the problem is and if you have strong board members who will honestly communicate with the president and other board members. . . . Disagreement is good. I like debate and reason [because] decisions are made on behalf of the institution.

In 2002, Miller had to lead union negotiations with a team of administrators with an institutional history of adversarial relationships. Her leadership, she said, was questioned and she was criticized for being "too nice." She entered into negotiations with focused on three issues: the need of the institution to grow, a student-centered environment and mutual harmony. "The only way you could bring harmony to this institution was to forget the past," she noted. The result was a satisfactory three-year contract and a "healing" of the institution. "That was my proudest accomplishment so far," she concluded.

The presidency also calls for faith:

My biggest challenge is to keep my faith in people who work at community colleges. I truly believe our work is a calling and that we must go to great lengths to help encourage, teach and to create more dignity for many of our students. The mission of a community college calls for people who know how important it is for our students to have successful experiences with us, to want to continue learning.

### **Additional Roles: Institutional Development**

Demands of a community college presidency were not restricted to the issues discussed. Whisnaut (1990) noted "as chief executive officer, everything the president is and does directly reflects upon the institution" (p. 10). Budgetary concerns and increasing regulation presented additional challenges. Glass and Jackson (1998) observed that the directors of community college education dual roles of private fund raiser and development team leader are included in the job descriptions of community



college presidents. In fact they concluded “transformational educational leaders are change-oriented, articulate a vision, and gain a sense of direction as they look to the future to determine the needs of their constituencies” (p. 10).

Jones referred to the conflict between the fundraising role and available resources. “We are not able to pay sufficiently to attract top notch, self-directed, experienced staff,” she noted. “An elected board from a relatively poor farming area is not likely to provide additional money. As a developer, I probably cannot be satisfied to lead an institution that will remain static or even decline.” The funding dilemma—accompanied by the lack of potential sources for funding—represented the only point that Jones expressed pessimism.

The pitfalls in private or public funding mechanisms were balanced by a number of successes experienced during Jones’s tenure. The college exhibited enrollment growth and budget relaxation when other colleges nationwide were experiencing equal or declining enrollment. Capital projects, using cash for funding, were completed. Cash funding at the college level comprised more than 15% of the annual expenditure under her leadership. She committed herself to leadership and involvement in the community, building the support base “through aggressive partnerships and community service activities that had never been done before.” She promoted the college as a comprehensive community college.

Miller concentrated on constituency recruitment as a method of developing the institution she headed in 2002. She viewed hiring strong faculty and administrators both as a personal accomplishment and as a contribution. She was especially proud of hiring exceptional teachers and top quality minority administrators. Writing letters of recommendation for students, encouraging faculty to obtain terminal degrees, providing better pay, and grants for better equipment or program improvements were strategies that Miller used to develop resources. Her 2002 election to the board of directors of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) enhanced her presidential image and furthered her institution’s visibility at the national level.

Miller advocated for the Noel/Levitz survey techniques that allowed students to grade their institutions. Miller encouraged colleges to use the results to improve admissions and financial aid. “To me, since affordability and financial aid are valued highly by students, those services should be shining stars for community colleges.” In 2002, Miller turned her attention

to developmental programming and assistance to students facing academic probation. She established an endowment fund.

### **Towards the Future: Looking Back**

Vaughan and Weisman (1998) found that community college presidents have held their posts for an average of 7.5 years. Jones does not see herself in the role of a community college president forever. "Actually, in 10 years, I hope I have retired from this profession and entered another, at which I will be amazingly successful, at least in my own mind, because then that's all that matters." The measures of success for this woman community college president will not necessarily be related to the college's progress. "The highest compliment I could pay to a teacher, who was a friend of mine, was that our lives are better because he taught us. I want to be remembered as a good mother. And someone who made a difference for the better."

Miller said "I hope people remember me for trying very hard to improve their lives at the community college. I want to be remembered as someone who was absolutely passionate about the role of community colleges."

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# Gender, Professional Orientation, and Student Achievement: Elements of School Culture

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Teresa White, Barbara N. Martin, & Judy A. Johnson

## Abstract

This study explored the relationships between professional orientation (defined as how the principal sees his or her role in the organization) and school culture, the influence of gender on professional orientation, and the relationship between school culture and the academic achievement of students. One hundred principals were surveyed. Two instruments, the Professional Orientation and the *School Culture Survey* were completed. The results were analyzed using linear regression statistics to determine (a) gender and professional orientation effect on the factors of school culture, and (b) if factors of school culture had an effect on student success in the elementary school. Findings of this study suggested that the professional orientation of the principal does appear to have a significant effect on school culture. In addition, professional orientation choices do vary in ways that can be connected to gender. Of the six school culture factors, only learning partnership appears to have any significant effect on student achievement.

## Introduction to the Study

School culture is a widely differentiated, intricate, and enigmatic phenomenon. According to Dalin, Rolff, and Kleekamp (1993), the ethos of one school can be substantially different from that of another school, even though on the surface both have the same professional purpose. Culture is an amazingly complex entity with facets influencing what people do, say and even feel. Chrispeels (1992) suggested that culture is more than just a component of the school, it is the school. Chrispeels also suggested "the elements of culture are aspects that in large measure can be shaped by the principal" (p. 13). Blase and Kirby (1992) contended that the principal performs a strategic role in school culture, one that can transform essentially all facets of school life. Indeed Peterson (1997) purported that the principal is the most powerful determinant of school culture. In investigating the

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professional orientation of the principal, Chauvin and Ellett (1993) found that personal preferences that determine the leadership behaviors shown by principals may be beneficial in describing and explaining administrative behavior and organizational effectiveness. The determination of priorities and personal role discernment on the part of the principal likely influences and interacts with the organization in terms of school culture and ultimately school effectiveness. Schein (1997) asserted that the leader of an organization is the primary source of influence on organizations and that leaders create and manage culture through actions. Dufour (2001) further argued that when principals focus on creating schools environment through their actions in which people are working towards a shared vision, the lives

of students are positively influenced. Bolman and Deal (1997) suggested, "events and processes are more important for what is expressed than what is produced. They form a cultural tapestry . . . to help people find meaning, purpose, and passion" (pp. 216-217). Leithwood and Jantzi (1997) further submitted that these activities communicate and buttress significant cultural norms and values in the school. In this respect, principals are the repositories of the values for the school and their actions, as shapers of culture, will vary from principal to principal as culture varies from school to school.

In studying effective leadership behaviors, Yukl (1994) identified 14 managerial practices derived from research that suggested that these practices bolster leadership efficacy. The practices Yukl identified included: "Planning and Organizing, Problem Solving, Clarifying Roles and Objectives, Informing, Monitoring, Motivating and Inspiring, Consulting, Delegating, Supporting, Developing and Mentoring, Managing Conflict and Team Building, Networking, Recognizing, and Rewarding" (p. 69).

The intensity of focus on some components of the job over other components, as identified by Yukl (1994), impact the culture of the school in differing ways. The professional orientation of the principal determines the prioritization and completion of tasks in an individual manner. Devoting a substantial amount of time and energy to specific aspects may influence the development of a high-success culture for the school. According to Peterson and Deal (1998), as professional choices reflect the values of the principal, they simultaneously articulate the values of the school. As a result these personal choices, about which aspects to concentrate limited principal time and resources, likely have an effect on school culture and, ultimately, student success.

In a study of gender and work orientation, Kanthak (1991) concluded that the professional orientation of the principal is a potent determiner of school culture and that there are gender-related differences in the way men and women orient themselves to their role in the school. Literature has also suggested that gender may influence the professional behaviors the principal utilizes most often. Historically, conventional wisdom has held that in order to be a successful leader, women should adopt effective, masculine leadership styles (Brunner, 1998). Other popular advice to women has suggested a more androgynous, or gender-less approach, to leadership (Shum & Cheng, 1997). In studying successful women school leaders, Brunner (1998) asserted that "Women administrators need to

develop the ability to remain 'feminine' in the ways they communicate and at the same time be heard in a masculinized culture" (p. 27). Shakeshaft (1989) delineated the differences in the ways men and women orient themselves in approaching their professional role. Through extensive study into gender and leadership, Shakeshaft found that although the job responsibilities may be identical, there are significant "differences in the ways they spend their time, in their day-to-day interactions, in the priorities that guide their actions, in the perceptions of them by others, and in the satisfaction they derive from their work" (p. 170). Citing differences in when and how each gender completes similar tasks, Shakeshaft suggested that men and women assign a dissimilar level of significance to specific role requirements. Although both may attend to and complete all of the job responsibilities, some aspects of the work receive more thoroughness in a manner that is gender-related. However, research studies thus far have contributed few detailed pictures of how a culture of student success in the school is influenced by the principal's professional choices or gender.

As previously stated, literature has supported the existence of an integral link between school leadership and culture. The principal does appear to influence the culture through the interactions and processes he or she sets in place and in the interpretations of that conduct by the members of the school community. Literature has also suggested that gender may influence the professional behaviors the principal utilizes most often. These factors of professional orientation and gender may work to impact the culture of the school and the perceptions of the members of the school community. Ultimately, these factors may also influence the effectiveness of the school as measured by student achievement. However since little research exists that examines the relationship between the factors of gender and professional orientation of the principal to the formation and preservation of a school culture of success and because the essence of school culture is operationalized by leadership choices of the principal, further study of the relationship of gender and professional orientation of the elementary principal on an organizational culture of student achievement was needed.

Therefore, this study, using the elementary principal as a unit of analysis, was intended to explore the premise that the gender and professional orientation (defined as how the principal sees his or her role in the organization) of the elementary school principal has an effect on school culture. Three research questions were explored.

1. Does the professional orientation of the principal impact the six school culture factors of professional development, collaborative leadership, teacher collaborative, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership in the elementary school?
2. Does gender change the effect of professional orientation on the six school culture factors of professional development, collaborative leadership, teacher collaborative, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership in the elementary school?
3. Do factors of school culture result in differences in student achievement?

### **Conceptual Organizers**

#### **Culture**

School culture offers a distinct conceptual lens for observing administrative practice and ascertaining its impact on the school. Peterson (1997) suggested that an internal analysis of the organizational and cultural factors that enhance or inhibit the efficacy of leadership efforts for change is essential to practitioner success. Gruenert (1998) asserted that examining distinctive cultural behaviors in the school allows leaders to differentiate between the courses of action and practices that facilitate or hinder performance. Cummingham and Cresso (1993) advised that culture establishes the parameters for how participants respond to each other and expectations of the tasks that are to be accomplished. Schein (1997) contended that leadership and culture are intricately subjoined. It is the understanding of the culture that advances desired change. Schein further argued that leaders shape culture through focusing their attention on the important aspects of the organizational vision that emphasize key values. Gruenert (1998) concurred that factors of the school culture inherently include a common vision for the school, which he described as a unity of purpose, collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration toward school goals, professional development, collegial support among teachers and staff, and a learning partnership between teachers, students, and parents. Numerous researchers therefore have documented that school culture is a complex entity with facets influencing what people do, say and even feel.

Reavis, Vinson and Fox (1999) found that the components of a success culture related to student achievement. A high-success school culture was enabled by the efforts of a strong principal (Leonard & Leonard, 1999). Evidence exists that the professional choices of the school principal play an integral role in culture formation. Peterson and Deal (1998) purported that



principals sculpt a culture of achievement by articulating and reflecting the core values of the school. Leadership's role in carving the ethos of the school is ubiquitous. Acknowledging the elusive nature of the principal's effect on school outcomes, Davis (1998) concluded that principals wield positive influence on outcomes, but he suggested that the extent to which the principal's professional practices influence the development of a positive school culture and student achievement is unclear.

Many principals concentrate on affecting the ways in which its inhabitants live and learn together (Winck, 1995). According to Hudson (1993), this yearning to influence the school's sense of community is a commonly attributed feminine leadership characteristic. Kanthak (1991), however, found that "new guard males" (defined as male principals hired since 1985) exhibited an orientation toward collaboration and community building.

### **Gender**

Gender is an important individual difference variable in leadership that has been largely ignored. Until recently, our knowledge base about educational administration had been derived predominantly from research on male administrators with the role of the principal evolving from a male-defined conceptual base (Mertz & McNeeley, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989). Current research has suggested that significant differences exist in the ways men and women face the job of leadership (Aburdene & Naisbitt 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft & Nowell, 1992). Davia (2000) reported the need to measure the quality of interactions in a school setting and to study different styles and their effects on achievement. As a result, scholars have urged increased empirical focus on the role of gender differences.

Mertz and McNeely (1998) noted that the "increasing presence of women in administration has fueled the debate about whether females and males lead differently, see the situations in which they find themselves differently, and/or think differently about the work and the people with whom they work" (p. 197). Shakeshaft (1989) noted, "research in educational administration is weak both on research on women in organizations and research on the impact of gender on behavior" (p. 326). Gender may influence the professional behaviors the principal utilizes most often. Historically, conventional wisdom has held that in order to be a successful leader, women should adopt effective, masculine leadership styles (Brunner, 1998). Other popular advice to women has suggested a more androgynous or gender-less approach to leadership (Shum & Cheng,

1997). In studying successful women school leaders, Brunner (1998) found that "Women administrators need to develop the ability to remain 'feminine' in the ways they communicate and at the same time be heard in a masculinized culture" (p. 27). Shakeshaft (1989) delineated the differences in the ways men and women orient themselves in approaching their professional role. Through extensive study about gender and leadership, Shakeshaft found that although the job responsibilities may be identical, there are significant "differences in the ways they spend their time, in their day-to-day interactions, in the priorities that guide their actions, in the perceptions of them by others, and in the satisfaction they derive from their work" (p. 170). Citing differences in when and how each gender completes similar tasks, Shakeshaft suggested that men and women assign a dissimilar level of significance to specific role requirements. Dyer-Molnar (1988) purported that women perceive themselves as leaders differently than men, significantly influencing their professional behavior. Suggesting a relationship between the gender aspects of the principal and the culture of the school, Shakeshaft (1989) found that schools led by women tend to be characterized by a different focus than schools led by men. Shakeshaft further suggested that the findings in this limited arena have been supported by current empirical research but indicated a need for further study into the impact of gender on school leadership.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

A stratified random sampling of 100 was selected for participation from the 1,050 elementary school principals in a Midwest state. Schools of the selected principals were located throughout the state, with 25 schools in each of four geographic quadrants. Participants were stratified by gender for each quadrant, resulting in 50 females and 50 males. The response rate was 90% (N = 90) with equal distribution by gender. Ninety-five percent of the participants were Caucasian, 3% were African American, and 2% were Latino. The range of administrative experience for 70% of the participants was more than 10 years; 15% had more than 20 years of experience and 15% under 10 years.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were obtained through the surveys of 100 elementary principals in (year needed here). Participants were surveyed with two

instruments, one addressing *professional orientation* and one addressing *school culture*. The first survey instrument assessed the professional orientation of elementary principals and was adapted from the taxonomy of leadership behaviors related to effectiveness identified by Yukl (1994). A five-point Likert scale was used by principals reporting their leadership in professional orientation in the school.

The instrument was tested for reliability before distribution. Items were grouped into three scales: interpersonal orientation (representing the leadership behaviors of delegating, recognizing, and rewarding), problem solving orientation (representing managing conflict, problem solving, monitoring, networking, and consulting), and subordinate development orientation (representing developing, supporting, and clarifying roles and objectives). The Cronbach's Alpha scores for these three principal components were .815, .728, and .732 respectively.

The second instrument depicted the culture in the elementary school. The School Culture Survey (SCS) instrument, developed by Gruenert (1998), evaluated the school culture in terms of six factors found in the culture: *collaborative leadership*, *teacher collaboration*, *professional development*, *unity of purpose*, *collegial support*, and *learning partnership*. A correlational analysis of the SCS established the validity of the instrument (Gruenert, 1998). Reliability was calculated through the use Cronbach's Alphas for the instrument. The reliability coefficients reported for the six factors were *collaborative leadership* (.910), *teacher collaboration* (.834), *unity of purpose* (.821), *professional development* (.867), *collegial support* (.796), and *learning partnership* (.658). The four school culture factors of most interest to this study had high reliability coefficients, all of which were greater than .800.

### Variables

The variables included in this study were the three areas of focus shown through a principal component analysis to statistically correlate within the 14 professional orientation behaviors: *interpersonal orientation*, *problem solving orientation*, and *subordinate development orientation* (Yukl, 1994), the six factors of school culture as measured by the SCS: *collaborative leadership*, *teacher collaboration*, *professional development*, *collegial support*, *unity of purpose*, and *learning partnership* (Gruenert, 1998) and the four measures of student success: *communication arts*, *mathematics*, *social studies*, and *science* (taken from standardized achievement test results NEED YEAR HERE).

### Data Analysis

The data from participant surveys and aggregated student achievement results for each school were tabulated and analyzed. The data were subjected to different analyses to answer the three research questions. A relationship of the three professional orientation scales to the six school culture factors was determined through bivariate correlation statistical procedures and helped to answer Research Question One. Next the linear regression statistical process was used to determine if gender and professional orientation had an effect on the factors of school culture in exploration of Research Question Two. To explore Question Three, the linear regression process was used to determine if factors of school culture had an effect on student success in the elementary school. All significance was two-tailed.

### Limitations

This inquiry was limited in the scope of coverage by the sample that was chosen. The participants selected were all located in one Midwest state; therefore, some error may have been introduced into the findings due to limited sampling. This descriptive study may give accurate measurements of respondents' perceptions regarding their professional orientation and school culture; however, the descriptions are not necessarily representative of the total school population. In addition the small sample, especially when split by gender, limited the use of some statistical analysis. While the authors indicate only plausible interpretations of the data in the report there may be other explanations for the data that are more accurate, especially due to the limitations as stated.

### Findings

Three research questions were answered in this study. Research Question One asked: *Does the professional orientation of the principal impact the six school culture factors of professional development, collaborative leadership, teacher collaborative, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership in the elementary school?* The initial results of the study indicated a strong relationship of the professional orientation of elementary principal to school culture (See Table 1). The professional orientation choices of the principal, particularly in the area of *problem solving orientation*, significantly correlated with the school culture factors of *professional development* (.442,  $p < .01$ ), *collaborative leadership* (.396,

**Table 1**  
Correlation Table for Professional Orientation Scales and  
School Culture Factors

	<i>Professional Development</i>	<i>Collaborative Leadership</i>	<i>School Culture Factors</i>			
			<i>Teacher Collaboration</i>	<i>Unity of Purpose</i>	<i>Collegial Support</i>	<i>Learning Partnership</i>
<i>Professional Orientation</i>						
Problem solving	.442***	.396**	.384**	.303*	.351*	.206
Interpersonal	.056	.250*	-.024	.024	-.048	-.067
Subordinate Development	.355**	.417**	.282*	.377**	.154	.267*

*Note.* \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*\*\*Correlation significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

$p < .01$ ), *teacher collaboration* (.384,  $p < .01$ ), *collegial support* (.384,  $p < .01$ ) and *unity of purpose* (.303,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, *interpersonal orientation* was found to significantly correlate with *collaborative leadership* (.250,  $p < .05$ ) but not with any of the other five school culture factors. Finally the *subordinate orientation* of the principal was found to significantly correlate with *professional development* (.355,  $p < .01$ ), *collaborative leadership* (.417,  $p < .01$ ), *unity of purpose* (.377,  $p < .01$ ), *teacher collaboration* (.285,  $p < .05$ ), and *learning partnership* (.267,  $p < .05$ ) but not with *collegial support*.

The data were split by gender to determine the answer to Research Question Two: *Does gender change the effect of professional orientation on the six school culture factors of professional development, collaborative leadership, teacher collaborative, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership in the elementary school?* The results are displayed in Table 2. For female principals, the strength of the correlations of the *problem solving orientation* with the school culture factors of *professional development* were (.506,  $p < .05$ ), *collaborative leadership* (.512,  $p < .05$ ), *unity of purpose* (.434,  $p < .05$ ), and *collegial support* (.472,  $p < .05$ ), all higher than for the group as a whole. For the male principals, *problem-solving orientation* significantly correlated with only one of the school culture factors that of *teacher collaboration* (.478,  $p < .05$ ). Although *interpersonal orientation* correlated with the culture factor of *collaborative leadership* when data were analyzed as one group (see Table 1), when split by gender, no significant correlation was found for either female or male principals for *interpersonal orientation* and any of the six school culture factors. Again, when the data were split by gender, the *subordinate orientation* for females significantly correlated only with the factor of *unity of purpose* (.356,  $p < .05$ ). No other correlation was found significant for females. However for males, the *subordinate orientation* significantly correlated with the factors of *professional development* (.425,  $p < .05$ ), *teacher collaboration* (.541,  $p < .05$ ), and *unity of purpose* (.456,  $p < .05$ ). Although subordinate development orientation was expected to highly correlate with professional development for both genders, the correlation was only significant for male principals. The *interpersonal orientation* did not significantly correlate with any of the school culture factors. This finding was true not only for the entire sample but as well as for the data when split by gender (see Table 2).

Research Question Three asked: *Do factors of school culture result in differences in student achievement?* Three analyses were

conducted. The six school culture factors scores and student achievement, as depicted by the state assessment test (MAP) results, were first subjected to a Pearson correlation. The results are displayed in Table 3.

*Learning partnership* was found to be the only school culture factor that significantly correlated with all four measures of student success. The factor of *collegial support* significantly correlated with the student science scores but not with the student scores in the other three content areas. The school culture factors of *professional development*, *collaborative leadership*, *teacher collaboration* and *unity of purpose* did not significantly correlate with any of the four measures of student success (mathematics, communication arts, science, and social studies).

The effect of each of the six school factors on student achievement was then tested using linear regression statistical procedures. In this case, only the school culture factor of *learning partnership* had a significant effect on the areas of mathematics ( $R^2 = .092$ ,  $p < .05$ ), communication arts ( $R^2 = .067$ ,  $p < .05$ ), science ( $R^2 = .62$ ,  $p < .05$ ), or social studies ( $R^2 = .101$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Finally, the combined effect of four of the six school culture factors (*collaborative leadership*, *unity of purpose*, *professional development*, and *teacher collaboration*) on student achievement measures was assessed through the linear regression procedure. No significant effects were found.

### Conclusions and Implications for Practice

How principals see themselves in the organization has a significant influence on that school culture resulting in the conclusion that the priorities a principal establishes and the energy focused on those activities are very important for a positive school culture. How principals see themselves treating their teachers and who is involved in the decision-making process in the school setting can have an important effect on the effectiveness of the professional development of all teachers. The gender of principals does appear to determine how principals spend time in a school setting. Male principals saw themselves as more effective at developing teachers and staff, and female principals saw themselves as better problem solvers and decision makers. If female principals desire to impact organizational culture, they should focus on problem-solving. Male principals should focus on development of subordinates. As Davia (2000)

**Table 2**  
Professional Orientation and School Culture Factors, by Gender

	Professional Development	Collaborative Leadership	Teacher Collaboration	Unity of Purpose	Collegial Support	Learning Partnership
<b>Professional Orientation</b>						
Problem solving						
Females	.506**	.512**	.294	.434**	.472***	.273
Males	.343	.172	.478*	.132	.154	.052
Interpersonal						
Females	-.076	.210	-.121	.022	.043	-.053
Males	.321	.221	.067	.032	-.304	-.218
Subordinate Development						
Females						
Males	.312	.317	.107	.356*	.153	.185
	.425*	.510*	.541**	.456*	.147	.376

*Note.* \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*\*\*Correlation significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3**  
Correlation of School Culture Factors and Student Achievement

Professional Orientation	Professional Development	Collaborative Leadership	Teacher Collaboration	Unity of Purpose	Collegial Support	Learning Partnership
<b>Achievement scores</b>						
Math	.138	.056	.095	.094	.155	.304*
Communication Arts	.134	.032	.084	.113	.236	.259*
Science	.094	.069	.142	.106	.252*	.250*
Social Studies	.196	.130	.171	.168	.216	.318*

*Note.* \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



suggested, the interactions in school settings have an impact on schools, and the gender of the principal appears to affect the types of interactions. This study's data support the concept noted by Mertz and McNeely (1998) that women and men think differently about work and the people with whom they work. Gender does appear to influence the professional behavior that principals use (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Overall, regardless of gender, the more effective principals are at focusing on and solving problems, the greater the chance for them to build and sustain collaborative relationships with teachers and staff. These collaborative relationships ultimately result in teachers working as a unit on the mission of the school. This emphasis on the need for effective problem solving abilities and developing subordinates has significant implications for leadership preparation programs. Reframing leadership preparation programs that allow students to engage in sustained collaborative problem based learning should be a priority for all leadership programs. Additionally, overall the ability of the principal to focus on and solve problems effectively and to develop others professionally appeared to have a greater influence on the school culture than how the other school personnel "liked" or "disliked" the principal. The results appear to support the contention of Leithwood and Jantzi (1997) that principals are the repositories of values of the school and that their actions shape school culture.

Although Leonard and Leonard (1999) found that the principal plays a pivotal role in enacting a school culture of achievement, the results of this study do not clearly substantiate that expectation. Also, while the results of this investigation indicated that problem-solving had an impact on the school culture, those same factors had little impact on student achievement in the school as measured by the Missouri Assessment Program scores. In fact only the school culture factor of learning partnership had a significant effect on student achievement. Although principals play pivotal roles in creating an environment for school success, they cannot do it alone.

In summation, the findings of this study suggest that the professional orientation of the principal does appear to have an overall effect on school culture. Also the gender of the principal does affect the daily decisions made by principals and how they spend their days. Further investigations are warranted to examine more fully the implications of professional orientation and gender on the success of the school as measured by achievement. This linkage has not been clearly established by this investigation.

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# Book Review

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Jean Haar

**LEADERSHIP THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT WAY: TIMELESS STRATEGIES FROM THE FIRST LADY OF COURAGE. Robin Gerber. New York, NY: Portfolio. 317 pages.**

*"Women, whether subtly or vociferously, have always been a tremendous power in the destiny of the world. . . ."*—Eleanor Roosevelt (cited in Gerber, 2003, p. 106).

## Introduction

Eleanor Roosevelt died on November 7, 1962. At that time, I would have been three years old. I grew up knowing nothing more about Eleanor Roosevelt than the fact that she was married to President Franklin Roosevelt. Gerber's (2003) book, *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way: Timeless Strategies from the First Lady of Courage*, changed that for me. The book provides a wealth of information about Eleanor Roosevelt as a woman and as a leader. Jadwiga S. Sebrechts, President of Women's College Coalition, noted, "Whether one reads this book for historic information, for behavior strategies, or for motivation, one will not be disappointed" (Gerber, 2003, p. i).

## Overview

The book is both a biography and an analysis of Eleanor Roosevelt's leadership skills. Each chapter begins with a story about Eleanor Roosevelt's personal and professional experiences. The stories are followed by references to leadership research, examples from contemporary women leaders, and suggests for improving individual leadership skills. Each chapter ends with leadership advice entitled "Eleanor's Way."

Each of the twelve chapters focuses on a leadership lesson. Twelve lessons are described and analyzed: (a) Learn From Your Past; (b) Find Mentors and Advisers; (c) Mothering: Training for Leadership; (d) Learning the Hard Way; (e) Find Your Leadership Passion; (f) Your Leadership Your Way; (g) Give Voice to Your Leadership; (h) Face Criticism with Courage; (i) Keep Your Focus; (j) Contacts, Networks, and Connections; (k) Embrace

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Risk; and (l) Never Stop Learning. The chapter subheadings provide guidance through the lessons. The bulleted list of advice at the end of each chapter is a synthesis of the material. The book concludes with an Epilogue, Notes, and Resources.

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The strength of the book comes from the artfulness with which Gerber intertwines the components of Roosevelt's life with leadership research and leadership lessons. Gerber transitions from specific events in Eleanor Roosevelt's life to quotes from scholars such as John Gardner, Peter Senge, James Kouzes and Barry Posner, Margaret Wheatley, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Helen Astin and Sally Helgesen. The leadership lessons are embedded in the stories of Eleanor Roosevelt, and Gerber skillfully. Gerber shaped the book around the chronology of Eleanor Roosevelt's life.

**Eleanor Roosevelt**

“If there are essential threads that can be pulled from Eleanor’s story of leadership, they are her adherence to her values, her keen assessment of people’s needs, and her ability to motivate those around her to take responsibility and work for change” (Gerber, p. xxix). These threads are unraveled as the story of Eleanor Roosevelt’s life is told. Gerber begins with Eleanor Roosevelt’s solemn childhood, orphaned at age 10, and moves through the stages and events of her life including her appointment to the first U.S. delegation to the United Nations at the age of 61. Gerber concludes the book by describing the extensive travel Eleanor Roosevelt completed during her later years—travels designed to further the humanitarian causes close to her heart. The Epilogue acknowledges her death and legacy.

**Leadership**

Bolman and Deal (1995) contended that, “Leading with soul requires giving gifts from the heart that breathe spirit and passion into your life and organization’ (p. 12). Leading with soul depicts Eleanor Roosevelt’s life. James MacGregor Burns described Eleanor Roosevelt as a true leader (Gerber, 2003):

She exemplified the qualities of leadership that scholars have identified as crucial. First of all, she responded to people’s fundamental wants and needs—especially those who are disadvantaged. Second, because she was innovative and creative in her ideas about how we can improve not only our own lives but also those around us. Third, because she knew that to fight for grand but controversial principles meant that inevitably one comes into conflict with others, and she never shrank from a grand fight for principle. But above all . . . she was an outstanding leader because of her ethical standards and her values: She believed in ethical conduct both in public and private life and she believed in the great principles that have guided America from the start (summed up in the glowing words of the Declaration of Independence, “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” and its commitment to equality) (pp. v-vi).

Throughout the book, Gerber provides stories, quotes, and examples that demonstrate Eleanor Roosevelt’s leadership skills and her ability to

teach by example. Many of the practical leadership lessons are familiar to those who have studied leadership. For instance, Gerber uses the following quote from John Gardner, author of *On Leadership*: "In leadership at its finest, the leader symbolizes the best in the community, the best in its traditions, values, and purposes" (p. 19). Burns stated: "The transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (p. 189).

The concepts of transformational and moral leadership (Fullan, 2001; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1992) are also presented in the text. Gerber (2003) examines "the values, tactics, and beliefs that enabled Eleanor Roosevelt to bring about transformational change" (p. xxiii) in herself and in the world. In chapter nine, "Keep Your Focus," Gerber summarizes, "Eleanor emerged in wartime as a transforming leader and moral agent, undeterred by setbacks" (p. 190). "For Eleanor, building leadership in others was at the heart of lasting change" (p. 194).

### **Characteristics of Women Leaders**

"[S]erving others is a basic principle around which women's lives are organized; it is far from such for men" (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 136). Wachs Book (2000) noted that collaboration and fostering relationships, characteristics of women leaders that were once ridiculed, are now viewed as advantages. Eleanor Roosevelt's commitment to serving others as well as her focus on collaboration and relationships are evident. Eleanor Roosevelt possessed a number of characteristics associated with women leaders (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Helgeson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1995). Gerber (2003) comments, "Eleanor faced a test similar to women leaders. Each new context, each new challenge presents the same question: How can I act on my leadership vision in a way that feels authentic to my leadership instincts?" (p. 110).

Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) attributed characteristics such as trust, compassion, empowerment, and understanding to women leaders. Astin and Leland (1991) used such words as inventive, creative, and risk-taking. Eleanor Roosevelt displayed these characteristics. In Chapter eleven, "Embrace Risk," Eleanor Roosevelt comments, "What matters now, as always, is not what we can't do: it is what we can and must do" (p. 228). In chapter five, "Find Your Leadership passion," she states, "Work is easier to carry if your heart is involved" (p. 84).

## Conclusion

Inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt's *Women's Home Companion* column, "I Want You to Write to Me," Gerber concludes with a request similar to one Eleanor Roosevelt had in her first column:

If this book has inspired your thinking about leadership and life, as I hope it has, I would like to hear from you. What is your *leadership way*? What are the best leadership lessons you know, and the stories behind them? In the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt, perhaps we can help each other.  
(p. 317)

Gerber achieves her goal of writing a book that combines history and leadership advice while also catering to women's appreciation for narrative. She notes, "We [women] talk to each other about all aspects of our lives, weaving the knowledge into an elaborate pattern of relationships that crosses the boundaries of family and work" (p. x). Gerber's work offers women an inspiring road map to heroic living and a model for personal achievement. The reader can experience the same type of transformation Gerber experienced: "Writing this book changed me . . . Eleanor led me to reflect on my leadership, focus on my passion, and get 'fired up' about acting on it" (p. xii).

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