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# First Women

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Marilyn L. Grady  
Barbara Y. LaCost

References to Native or Indian populations as First Nations people are evident as you travel throughout Canada or examine the writings of Canadian authors. The term, First Nations people, also appears in reports of demographic or census data about Native Americans in the United States.

Perhaps those who write about women leaders should frame their works by referring to First Women. Certainly much of the writing about women and their leadership is groundbreaking. We are at the beginning stages of writing about women in leadership and women who are “firsts” in many of their accomplishments.

For the February 26, 2005, edition of *A Prairie Home Companion*, Garrison Keillor was broadcasting from the College of St. Catherine in Minneapolis-St. Paul. The 100th anniversary of the College, 1905-2005, was mentioned repeatedly throughout the program. In his remarks about the history of the College, Keillor noted, the College was the product of the efforts of the religious sisters who he referred to as the first feminist women. These sisters were “First Women” to have careers and travel. The College of St. Catherine is a visible legacy of the works of these “First Women.”

The manuscripts in this issue of the *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership* reflect the accomplishments of other First Women. Harmer introduces Mary Seacole, a black woman leader. Wynn reports on Leadership-Skilled Women Teachers Who Choose the Classroom over Administration. Arthur and Salsberry provide a blueprint for Mentoring Women Principals. Marchese reflects on the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of the principalship. Giesler provides a book review of Young and Skrla's *Reconsidering Feminist Research in Educational Leadership*.

A new column in this issue is about writing. “First Things First,” focuses on selecting a topic for writing. There are many First Women whose stories should be told. We hope you'll choose to write one!

Proposals for presentations at the *19th Annual Women in Educational Leadership Conference* are being accepted! The conference will be October 9-10, 2005, in Lincoln, Nebraska. For information about the conference or proposal guidelines contact Marilyn Grady at [mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)

# Women in History

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## Mary Seacole

Bonnie Harmer

Born in Jamaica in 1805, Mary Seacole (nee Grant), was the daughter of a Black Creole boarding house owner and a Scottish Army officer. Like many Creole doctress women, Mary was taught African herbal medicine arts from her mother. In addition to understanding traditional herbal medicine, she gleaned an understanding of Western medicine from the British military physicians who were stationed on the island colony. Mother Seacole, as she was affectionately called, garnered an outstanding reputation as a compassionate nurse and a competent doctress as she cared for sick and injured British officers and their families (Seacole, 1988).

Widowed by age 40, Seacole's longing for adventure and her entrepreneurial character prompted her to embark on numerous journeys to England and throughout the Caribbean. Carrying jars of homemade West Indian preserves and delicacies to sell en route, and equipped with her medicine chest to treat the ailing, she continually battled social prejudices, thieves, and harsh travel conditions (Seacole, 1988).

Seacole, in her autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857), described the wretched conditions in which she found herself in Panama during 1850. She characterized it as an uncivilized, frontier land where lawless travelers traversed to and from the California gold fields, ill prepared to fend off the bandits and tropical diseases. The cholera epidemic that engulfed the region killed thousands; and Seacole became lauded for her expertise in treating victims. She conducted an autopsy to learn more about cholera and taught disease prevention and treatment to those living in squalor (Seacole, 1988).

Recognizing her leadership and expertise, Seacole was invited to assume the supervision of Nursing Services at the Kingston headquarters of the British Army upon her return to Jamaica in 1853 (Anionwu, 2004). The same year, the British military was deployed to Turkey to battle Russian troops in the Crimean War. Reading reports of the tremendous number of deaths due to cholera and dysentery, Seacole was certain she could be of service. Using her own funds, she crossed the Atlantic to offer her assistance.

Seacole's requests to join the campaign in Crimea were refused by British officials on four separate occasions; including once by the young,

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novice nurse who had been appointed to head the nursing services in Crimea—Florence Nightingale (Anionwu, 2004; Seacole, 1988). Undaunted by the lack of support from the British authorities, Mary Seacole, 50 years of age, traveled alone to the front lines in Turkey where she was reunited with many of the men she had known in Jamaica. Several miles from the front, she built the “British Hotel” to provide meals and medical care to those who sought her services.

Risking her life, Mary Seacole ventured onto the battlefield, caring for wounded and dying soldiers. Testimonials of Seacole’s heroism and her engaging personality, which were often published in the *London Times* newspaper, warmed the hearts of British readers, and guaranteed her popularity when she returned to London. But, despite the accolades, when the war ended in 1856, Seacole returned to England bankrupt. Encouraged by her friends and a British public that was enthralled with her story; she was persuaded to write her autobiography (which was published in 1857). Proceeds from the best-selling book assisted her to repay her debts and live comfortably in London. Mary Seacole became an advocate for the needs of war widows and orphans, a masseuse to the Princess of Wales, and she maintained popularity with the British public until her death in 1881 (Anionwu, 2004; Watters, 2004).

Despite the recognition bestowed upon Seacole during her lifetime, her name and her story faded with the years into obscurity until being rediscovered in the 1980s (Iveson, 1983; Watson, 1984). Her autobiography was reprinted in 1988, allowing new generations to read her words, and to recognize Mary Seacole’s contributions as a courageous, independent woman leader who overcame tremendous barriers in her quest to serve others.

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# Leadership-Skilled Women Teachers Who Choose the Classroom over Administration: Career Choice or Career Constraint?

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Susan R. Wynn

Some indicators point to a potential shortage of school administrators. The principalship has grown more complex due to increased accountability and escalating social complexities. This qualitative study sought to understand why leadership-skilled women teachers choose to remain in the classroom rather than seek administrative positions. Despite some gains, women are over-represented in the teaching force and under-represented as school administrators.

Twelve women were interviewed regarding their choice to remain in the classroom, their perceptions of the principalship, and the barriers for women who might be interested in school administration. Two presentations of the data are given, with the first addressing explicit reasons and the second using a postmodern feminist framework.

## Introduction

Is there a shortage of school administrators? Or is there a shortage of *qualified* school administrators? Regardless of where one stands on this issue, the possible, the pending, or the immediate principal shortage is a hotly contested controversy that has many policymakers wondering if there is a dearth of qualified school leaders. The role of the principal has received increased attention, as stakeholders acknowledge the importance of the person responsible for implementing initiatives generated by school reform.

As the principalship has garnered growing consideration, numerous research studies have been conducted to explore why teachers aspire to school administrative positions. However, few studies have looked at the issue conversely: why do qualified teachers decline entry into school

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administration? By examining why leadership-skilled teachers say “no” to school administration, there emerges the possibility to question some of the enduring assumptions about the field.

One way to examine this issue is to explore the gendered nature of education. The fact remains that women still dominate the teaching profession; indeed, they constitute 73% of the teaching force (Education Vital Signs, 1998). This high percentage, however, is not reflected in the numbers of school-level administrators. Recent figures indicate that women hold 44% of all public school principalships (Gates, Ringel, & Santibanez, 2003). Although this percentage is certainly higher than in years past, it is not comparable to the number of women teaching in classrooms. Perhaps even more disturbing, this figure masks the fact that there is greater representation of women in the elementary principalship although men retain the majority of the secondary principalships. At the high school level, women held only 21.3% of principalships (Gates et al., 2003). This discrepancy is noteworthy because the elementary principalship is not considered as prestigious as the secondary principalship, especially as it relates to career advancement (Ortiz, 1982).

The study addressed the following question: Why do leadership-skilled women teachers choose to remain in the classroom rather than seek administrative positions? The participants’ perceptions of the principalship also emerged, as well as their postulations regarding barriers for women who consider entry into school administration. The focus was on the discourse of teachers who have resisted the “tap on the shoulder” that indicates someone in power thinks a teacher should contemplate seeking an administrative position (Marshall & Kasten, 1994, p. 6). The women in this study demonstrated, to some degree, that they have the potential to be successful school administrators but for various reasons have resisted career advancement. Two presentations of the findings are offered. The first

explores the more explicit reasons the participants shared for choosing to remain in the classroom. The second presentation of the data utilizes a postmodern feminist framework to explore some of the more complex reasons they gave. The following literature review gives an overview of the possible principal shortage, examines the role of teacher efficacy, and considers the leadership style of women in the principalship.

### **The Principal Shortage?**

There is much debate over whether or not school districts are experiencing difficulty filling vacant principalships. A recent RAND study claimed that the candidate pool for school administrative positions is relatively stable, having experienced neither an increase nor a decrease in recent years (Gates et al., 2003). Indeed the researchers of this study reported that according to the latest National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), there has been "remarkable stability in the characteristics of school administrators and that any changes that did occur were not consistent with a national labor market in crisis" (p. 21). The study conceded, however, that although there is not a current shortage of qualified school administrators, there are areas for concern. Several indicators do point more strongly to a shortage of administrators, a shortage many states are already experiencing. *Education Week* reported that out of 403 randomly selected districts, more than 50% indicate a shortage of candidates for principalships (Olson, 1999). These shortages were reported in urban, rural, and suburban districts and were true for elementary, middle, and high schools. A study conducted by Educational Research Service (ERS) under the auspices of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) reported that two out of every three principals surveyed indicated a concern over whether or not school districts could attract high-quality leaders (Education Vital Signs, 1998). Exacerbating the situation is the fact that retirement is imminent for 40% of elementary, middle, and high school principals, according to U.S. Department of Labor Statistics (Klempen & Richetti, 2001).

McAdams (1998) reported that superintendents, as well as search consultants, assert that the candidate pool for principals is about half of what it was 10 to 15 years ago. Fewer people, including teachers holding administrative certification, are applying for positions. The reasons for this phenomena range from higher teacher salaries to more two-income households. However, the requirements of the profession also impact potential candidates' decision to go into school administration. Carr (2003)

explained, “That stellar teachers aren’t jumping at the chance to break into administration isn’t surprising—the incentives just aren’t there for tackling what many view as being among the nation’s most demanding and thankless jobs” (p. 18).

The mounting expectations of the principal to be an instructional leader and an efficient manager are unrealistic and counterproductive, and growing awareness of this difficult dichotomy has led some critics to question the role of the principal, as well as the assumptions about this position. Hurley (2001) noted, “It’s time we stopped insisting that principals be superleaders and supermanagers” (p. 1). Boris-Schacter and Langer (2002) added, “We should stop wringing our hands and start actively modifying the principals’ working conditions and questioning the field’s enduring assumptions if we are to encourage new models and new practitioners” (p. 5).

### **Teacher Efficacy**

According to Black (2001), 30% of beginning teachers leave the classroom within three years. Nine percent of new teachers do not even make it through their first year. Clearly, teachers leave the classroom for a myriad of reasons, but they also have motivation for remaining in the profession. Hailed as one of the most important social psychological factors affecting teachers’ work (Smylie, 1990), teacher efficacy may help to explain why teachers remain in the classroom.

The concept of teacher efficacy is based upon cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1986). He defined self-efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). Borrowing from Bandura’s theory, educational researchers have sought ways to understand efficacy as it relates to the teaching profession. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) reconceptualized Bandura’s self-efficacy theory into two dimensions, general teaching efficacy (GTE) and personal teaching efficacy (PTE). General teaching efficacy can be loosely defined as what an individual teacher thinks teachers can accomplish collectively while personal teaching efficacy refers to what an individual teacher believes he or she can do.

Many studies validate Hipp’s (1996) assertion that “teachers have different attitudes about their competence that become apparent in their professional behavior and, in turn, affect the performance of their students” (p. 6). Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) examined relationships between personal teaching efficacy and aspects of a healthy school climate. Healthy school climate indicators included institutional integrity, principal influence, consideration, resource support, morale, and academic emphasis. In this



study of 179 teachers, they found that two aspects of organizational life, principal influence and academic emphasis, predicted personal teaching efficacy. If these two aspects of organizational life were perceived to be present, then teachers tended to have higher personal teaching efficacy scores.

A meta-analysis of teacher efficacy based on research published in primary studies through December 1998 yielded 89 primary studies that addressed teacher efficacy (Shahid & Thompson, 2001). The authors reported that female teachers tended to have higher personal and general teaching efficacy in comparison to male teachers. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) found that educational level was a personal variable that predicted personal teaching efficacy. They concluded that teachers who went on to graduate schools were more likely to have a greater sense of personal teaching efficacy.

The meta-analysis conducted by Shahid and Thompson (2001) also revealed that many studies indicated that the use of instructional strategies such as centers, cooperative learning, and interdisciplinary studies were strongly correlated to high teacher efficacy. The authors noted that "shared decision making and being part of a coaching network are strong predictors of high teacher efficacy" (p. 8).

### **Women and the Principalship**

Historically, women were teachers and men were principals. Blount (1998) argued that the principalship was a position created for men so they could oversee the work of the women teachers they supervised. The rise and fall of the numbers of women in school administration and the accompanying cultural, social, political, and economical contexts have been well-documented (Blount, 1998; Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989). Barriers, constraints, socialization, sex roles and sex-role stereotypes are all themes that have emerged in the last thirty years of research in women and school administration (Banks, 1995).

A more recent research interest has included studies of women's leadership. The conceptualizations of leadership that undergird the administrative field are from a historically male perspective, and the study of women as leaders is a relatively new undertaking. In focusing on women principals' leadership style, some studies have revealed differences in comparison to men. Before noting these differences, however, it is important to express caution. To say that all women lead differently from men is to run the risk of over-generalizing, as well as essentializing women. Grogan (1999) stated that we must operate "on the understanding that there is no one set of

experiences that can be labeled as women's experiences, and that women may be as different as they are alike" (p. 523). Shakeshaft, Nowell, and Perry (1991), however, also pointed out that sex is a biological determination and in and of itself has little effect, but ". . . the way we are treated from birth onward, because we are either female or male, does help to determine how we both see and navigate the world" (p. 258).

There are various ways that women school administrators differ in comparison to men administrators. Shakeshaft (1995) explained that one difference in style is attributable to language, stating that women administrators use language that can be characterized as "power with" versus "power over" (p. 12). This difference for women plays out in many different arenas, including teacher relationships, instruction, community and evaluation. Ozga and Walker (1995) supported this point by stating that women principals exhibit more effective communication skills and foster a sense of community in their schools.

McGrath (1992) noted that women in school administrative positions generally have had more years in the classroom; therefore, they are in possession of more "expert" information. He concluded that women are indeed valuable assets to school districts. Fullan (1997) lauded the increase of more women in the role of the principalship.

Women, more than men, tend to negotiate conflict in ways that try to preserve relationships, to value relationships in and of themselves as part of their commitment to care, and be socialized in a way that prepares them better to work in collaborative organizations. (p. 16)

At a time when the principalship has become increasingly contentious, women have made gains in assuming this position, especially when one considers that the percentage of women school administrators was actually lower in the 1980s than it was in 1905 (Shakeshaft, 1999). The more conventional job description of the principalship required the ability to manage: manage the budget, personnel, discipline, and facilities. In addition to these more traditional responsibilities, principals must now also be collaborators, community-builders, and entrepreneurs. They must also be "instructional leaders steeped in curriculum, instruction, and assessment who can coach, teach, develop and distribute leadership to those in their charge" in order to move schools toward continuous improvement (Sparks, 2002, p. 7-2). Teachers, including the ones who participated in this study, may not be eager to assume these roles. Indeed, Cusick (2003) asserted, "The pool of principal candidates is shrinking because fewer teachers—who represent the vast majority of principal candidates—are willing to take on the job" (p. 44).

### **Conceptual Framework: Postmodern Feminism**

The combination of two perspectives, postmodernism and feminism, promoted an examination of the institutional and social contexts in which women teachers with leadership abilities operate. Fraser and Nicholson (1990) acknowledged that there are some problematic issues when coupling postmodernism and feminism. However, they also noted that although these two perspectives are in some ways antithetical, the merging of the two incorporates the strengths of each while eradicating the weaknesses of both. In regard to their respective strengths, the two perspectives have shared purpose and value in that both have sought to develop new ways to think about social criticism, ways that do not fall back on traditional philosophical foundations (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990).

Most commonly associated with postmodernity, Lyotard asserted that there is no "grand narrative," or universalizing philosophy. Sim (2001) explained, "Lyotard's objective is to demolish the authority wielded by grand narrative, which he takes to be repressive of individual creativity" (p. 9). The grand narratives must be rejected because they are authoritarian but really have no authority. Narratives should be open to reinterpretation based upon changing times and changing societal issues. There should be no "impregnable theory that holds over time and whose authority should never be questioned" (Sim, 2001, p. 8). In the place of grand narratives, Lyotard advocated "little narratives" that are defined as deliberate and particular groupings that search for ways to counter explicit social ills (Sim, 2001).

Fraser and Nicholson (1990) suggested starting with the nature of the social object one wishes to criticize. In this case, the object is the subordination of women to and by men. In doing so, a postmodern feminism would abstain from the analysis of grand causes of women's oppression and concentrate instead on its historically and culturally specific expressions. In short, postmodern feminism is non-universalistic, pragmatic, and diverse. Rather than being universalist, it is instead comparative; instead of utilizing one method or category, it uses many, depending upon the specific task; and finally, instead of essentializing women, it recognizes the diverse experiences and differences of women (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990).

Substantiating the view of Fraser and Nicholson (1990), Flynn (2002) stated, "Postmodern feminists criticize modernist tendencies to universalize, to focus on the individual divorced from social context, and to ignore the ways in which local situations affect interpretive processes" (p. 44). Blount (1994) asserted that a postmodern feminism is able to break free of the limitations of essentialism. She identified two essentialist narratives that have served previously to constrain feminism. One included the theory that men

and women have essential dissimilarities due to biological differences. The other one claimed that women are different from men, in that women have essential positive feminine qualities, like caring and compassion.

This type of framework allowed for exploring the complex and varied reasons teachers offered for remaining in the classroom. Additionally, with the use of the theoretical constructs discussed in the next section, this framework provided for an exploration of a deeper understanding of women teachers' perceptions of school administration and the principalship.

### **Theoretical Constructs**

Four constructs were of central importance for this research study: language and discourse, subjectivity, power, and common sense assumptions. These constructs are more commonly associated with poststructuralism as explicated by Weedon (1997) and Capper (1992) and applied by Grogan (1996) in her study of women who aspire to the superintendency. However, it is important to note Stone's (in press) point about poststructuralism, which is, "There is no poststructuralism" (p. 1). Instead of a "unified theory or tradition" there is "a set of shared concepts" (p. 6). It is more appropriate to locate these constructs in postmodern feminist theory. The following section provides a brief explanation of each of the constructs.

#### **Language and Discourse**

According to Weedon (1997), language must be understood as existing within the context of historical discourses and also in terms of competing discourses. Language and discursive practices reveal various conceptions of femininity and masculinity through which people live their lives. Related to language is the concept of *discourse*, primarily developed in the work of Foucault. Scott (1988) defined discourse by first stating what it is not—it is not a language. Instead, a discourse is "a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs" (p. 35). Capper (1992) suggested considering the following questions: "To what extent are particular values and interests served, and which ones are silenced? What discourses are named and which are silenced" (p. 200)?

#### **Subjectivity**

Subjectivity places doubt on the stability and innateness of identity. Weedon (1997) noted that subjectivity is "not genetically determined, but socially produced" (p. 21). Grogan (1996) added, ". . . subjectivity is a changing process and often involves conflicting versions of the self made available as one grows older, moves in different circles, and even as the institutional

discourses themselves change over time” (p. 36). The idea of subjectivity allows us to understand how we are constituted by our position in a discourse (Grogan, 1996). With subjectivity, there is no one fixed identity. In fact, subjectivity “allows for the exploration of the shifting, contradictory, incomplete, and competing interpretations of personal identity” (Capper, 1992, p. 21).

### **Power**

Power, a most complicated construct, is thought of as located in the institution rather than in the individual (Grogan, 1996). Borrowing from Foucault’s notion of power, power is relational. In other words, the issue of power is not power over in superordinate/subordinate sense. Grogan (1996) noted that through alliances that are formed by groups sharing similar thoughts, they are able to marginalize those who have different views. Capper (1992) suggested comparing dissensus and resistance to consensus.

### **Common Sense Assumptions**

Common sense assumptions are knowledge statements that are accepted unquestionably because that is the way things are perceived to be. As Weedon (1997) noted, however, “Common sense knowledge is not a monolithic, fixed body of knowledge” (p. 75). As she reminded us, the power of common sense lies in its claim to be “natural, obvious and therefore true” (p. 75). It is important to examine the common sense assumptions that permeate and often mold one’s life experiences.

## **Methods**

Qualitative research was the most appropriate approach for giving voice to the women in this study. Qualitative researchers look for “answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8). This qualitative research study sought to understand the following: Why do leadership-skilled women teachers choose to remain in the classroom rather than seek administrative positions? Two sub-questions emerged: (a) How do leadership-skilled women teachers perceive the principalship role? (b) What barriers related to school administration do leadership-skilled women teachers identify? Postmodern feminism served as the underpinning for the analysis of the data.

I focused the research study on one school district in North Carolina. Located in the central part of the state, this district enrolls 31,000 students in schools that vary tremendously based upon their locations. The district

consists of 44 schools that serve students who are ethnically, culturally, and socio-economically diverse.

In the tradition of qualitative research, purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) was used to select teachers who varied in regard to level of school (elementary, middle, secondary, high), location of school (rural, urban, suburban) and years of teaching experience.

Principals of ten schools were asked to recommend two or three women teachers who, in their opinion, demonstrated leadership in the school and had the capacity for school administration. For each recommended teacher, principals completed two forms. The first form asked principals to identify the following for each teacher: the assumption of additional school-related duties, participation in decision-making, and the provision of instructional leadership. Principals also completed a Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (Northouse, 2001). The LBDQ was designed to measure two major types of leadership behavior, task orientation and relationship behavior. Task orientation refers to the degree to which the person helps to establish structure that aids in role definition and identification of expectations. Relationship behavior refers to the degree to which the person engages in interpersonal actions that help to build positive relations. Consisting of 20 statements to which the principal replied how often the recommended teacher engaged in the described behavior, the questionnaire provided a profile of leadership style.

Through this process a pool of 21 candidates was created. The selected teachers were mailed a letter explaining the study, an informed consent form, the LBDQ, and a sample of the interview questions. Using maximum variation sampling, the researcher selected and interviewed 12 participants who had been identified as possessing leadership skills suitable for administration and varied across school grade level, location of school, and years of experience. Pseudonyms were used. The leadership survey scores (both the principal's assessment of the teacher and the teacher's own self-assessment) also were used as a tool to ascertain the final participants.

Interviewees were asked to share their thoughts and feelings regarding their own roles as teachers and teacher leaders, their perception of the principalship, and their reasons for choosing to remain in the classroom rather than positioning themselves for school administrative roles. The teachers were interviewed face-to-face in their school settings for approximately one and a half hours. The interviews were semi-structured, tape-recorded and later transcribed for purposes of analysis. A reflective journal and extensive field notes documenting body language, facial expressions, gestures and other non-verbal cues were kept throughout the process.

The conceptual framework, the sites, and the sample helped to focus the data analysis. Following complete immersion in the data and reflection on the conceptual framework, themes and categories emerged, that were supported with thick description including quotations and details. The data were triangulated and verified by using multiple data collection methods: the in-depth interviews, the interview log, document analysis, field notes, leadership survey scores, and reflective journal.

## **Findings**

### **Explicit Reasons**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the reasons why leadership-skilled women teachers choose to remain in the classroom rather than position themselves for school administrative positions. A primary reason for their decision to remain in the classroom was related to their strong sense of personal teaching efficacy, as well as the teacher leadership they exercised at their respective schools. Additionally, as they discussed the job responsibilities of the principal, it became clear that in comparison to this position, they preferred their own as classroom teacher.

### **Making a Difference: Teacher Efficacy**

Several of the participants felt a special calling had brought them to teaching, speaking of destiny, fate, and “heart-felt decisions.” Some expressed that they “were born to teach” and spoke of their parents and grandparents being educators, which had influenced them as they made career choices. Regardless of whether they had always wanted to be a teacher or whether they entered the profession after trying another field, they were all passionate about their students and felt that they made a positive difference.

This passion for their students was closely tied to personal teaching efficacy. A former elementary school teacher who was in the process of transitioning to the middle school stated, “If you are asking me what keeps me in the classroom, I really and truly have to say seeing the students succeed. Success is not necessarily passing, because I’ve had students that have been retained. But to know that they made progress academically, socially. Just seeing that, that really does a lot for me.” Another affirmed that it was an “inner reward” that she wasn’t sure how to explain, but it was related to planning an elaborate lesson and having the students succeed in accomplishing what she had designed for them. High school veteran Kim Dorsey referred to teaching as “probably the most natural thing I’ve ever tried to do. You wear so many hats in life. Being in the classroom and being a teacher is a hat that just fits.” Another high school teacher, Rhonda Waters,

commented, "I can actually say that I love my job. People all around me say, 'Yes, you really love your job.' I look forward to coming to work every morning." In essence these participants expressed a fundamental concern for the welfare of children and derived their job satisfaction from feeling they had made a difference in the lives of children.

These teachers demonstrated an acceptance of responsibility for student outcomes rather than to factors beyond their control, a key element of teacher efficacy. Several of the teachers spoke of the fact that they had greater success than their colleagues with some of the more challenging students, whether it be in their academic instruction or in their classroom management. Celie Chaps said, "My affinity is toward the under-achieving, behavior problem child that you can just see so much intelligence in, and getting them to get on track." Lana Adders commented,

I care about my students . . . I want to work hard at trying to figure out how I can teach them best what they're learning. I have four different classes now, and I teach each class differently because I feel like their needs are different. I really work hard at that. I don't just teach the same thing every class. I want to learn new strategies.

Lana's statements revealed her belief that her students' academic success was directly related to her ability to teach; thus, she sought numerous ways to refine her teaching practices.

### **Making a Difference: Teacher Leadership**

Similarly, the participants stated that they made a difference in the lives of adults and derived satisfaction from their exercise of teacher leadership. Without exception, all of the participants were extremely busy with school obligations outside of their regular teaching duties and put in a tremendous amount of time, often coming in early and leaving late. With the exception of one participant, they expressed satisfaction that their colleagues viewed them as leaders, thus indicating they might have been less likely to choose school administration as a career choice.

Of significance was the fact that all of the participants were actively engaged in several areas of school-wide decision making. Eight of the 12 women mentioned their participation on the site-based decision-making team of their school. With the exception of the least experienced participants, many of them were either on the site-based decision-making team or had previously served on site-based teams.

Eleven of the participants also alluded to their mentoring of other teachers, both formally and informally. In this context, mentoring served as a reason to remain in teaching. With the exception of one, all the participants



were certified mentors who had undergone district-level training, and many also provided mentoring in their roles as chairs of departments or teams.

A middle school veteran, Patricia Cabby, who was not mentoring formally at the time, expressed that she would basically help out any teacher who needed assistance. "I don't necessarily have to be assigned a mentee, but I'll work with any teacher that's new, (give) any advice, anything that I can do to help them." Another high school teacher, Rhonda Waters, expressed her willingness to help new teachers.

A lot of the younger teachers do come to me, which I find surprising. Not realizing that I have all this experience now, for a long time I saw myself still in that mentee role as opposed to a mentor. The younger teachers, the beginning teachers, and even when they have questions, people come to me. . . .

It appeared her experiences and years had contributed to her formation as a mentor, as she moved from being a beginning new teacher to an experienced veteran.

### **Teachers' Perspective on the Principalship**

Without exception and perhaps unsurprisingly, the participants in this study viewed the principalship as a position fraught with difficulty, stress, and problems. Their perception of the principal's role also contributed to their reasons for choosing to remain in the classroom rather than considering school administration as a career choice. They reported that school administration entailed problems: problems working with adults and problems navigating through politics. Working with adults was viewed as one of the primary reasons they would not consider entering the pipeline for school administration. In many instances they compared working with adults to working with children.

The thing with me is that I really don't like working with adults. I do because I have to. They (teachers) do the same things that you tell your students not to do. It's so hard . . . an adult's mind is already formed. They're not going to change . . . For a child, the mind is still conforming, so they're pretty much going to conform in one way or the other at some point. (Katie Mills)

. . . I have a real hard time with people who are supposedly professionals and know what the job is that they're supposed to do and won't do it. I don't feel like it is my job to treat them as children. Elementary school teachers are a whole lot like elementary school children. I just really lose patience with that, and I am the type of person that I don't want to offend anyone or be disrespectful and nasty. (Celie Chaps)

I can't stand negativity, and I find there are a lot of adults who are very negative . . . I dislike being around people who don't want to be here and hate their job. It's hard to work with somebody like that. They complain all the time. I know a lot of adults do that. A kid has an excuse, and an adult really doesn't. I can see a principal hearing so much . . . and it's just one problem after another. (Lana Adders)

These teachers viewed the principal as having to work with adults who were often negative and unprofessional. Working with children seemed preferable to tolerating the actions and attitudes of adults.

Several of the teachers also observed the political nature of the principalship and their perception was that principals often had to make decisions based upon the politics of an issue. They viewed this as another major disincentive for moving into school administration because they did not see themselves enjoying the role. Some feared that the political nature of the principalship would cause them to make decisions that were not student-centered. Teresa Vrack commented,

. . . I wouldn't want to be that political, worried about pleasing the parents and all the pressures that come. To have to be political and to worry about all the attacks, I think that would be my biggest reluctance about going into school administration. I think I'd be really frustrated by that and if I didn't feel like I was doing what I thought was best for the kids, I'd be really frustrated.

This participant's perception was that principals must be "political," which negatively impacts students.

Related to their observations about the politics of the principalship were the participants' perceptions about parents. A high school teacher, Kim Dorsey, expressed her concern that people in school leadership roles were losing their power because of demanding parents. She expressed her frustration with the fact that, in her opinion, parents have too much power, which often leads to parents dictating policies and programs. She also commented on the need for principals to "back" their teachers, especially in instances where the parent and student were clearly wrong. In her mind, there should be no question of whether the principal would support her or not.

Choosing the classroom over a career in school administration was a decision the participants had all made, despite the fact they were perceived to be well qualified and to possess the potential to be successful school administrators. The next section uses a postmodern feminist framework to explore the somewhat more complex reasons, both external and internal, that factored into their decision.

## Using a Postmodern Feminist Framework

The previous section shared some of the explicit reasons that the teachers gave for choosing the classroom over pursuing a career in school administration, despite the fact that they possessed, in many regards, the necessary qualities to pursue a position in school administration. This section applies a postmodern feminist framework with the four constructs of language, subjectivity, power, and common sense assumptions.

### Language and Discourse

The discursive fields of the participants in this study were primarily that of education and for many, family, partnering, and motherhood. These two discursive fields were, for the most part, compatible for the participants in this study, whereas the discourse of school administration was not.

The language some of the participants reflected their perceptions of the role of principal, a role they more often than not viewed as one filled by a man. Dora Cobb, a high school teacher, revealed that during the course of her 30 years in education, she had always worked for male principals. As she considered the under-representation of women in the administrative ranks, she commented that perhaps men felt “this lack of satisfaction” and that “there’s a hole that’s not being met in the classroom,” a feeling that could be met by being “in control of the school,” which will lead to feelings of satisfaction. She handed it over to men.

Maybe the women just don’t need that, and that may be from society, the man of the house type thing, the father is the one who has the final word. Let the principals and the assistant principals be the father.

She also noted, however, that administrators could not do the job without the teachers, “like there’s Dad, but he couldn’t get supper and we were starving.” Her comparison of school administration to the father, to the male, reveals her belief that men administer and women teach; however, her statement reveals that this is not, perhaps, a negative circumstance because women teachers are doing the real work in the classroom. By outward appearances, women follow the rules and mind the boundaries, but when the classroom door closes, they are doing the important work of educating children, regardless of male-established rules and boundaries. Her analogy of the principal to the father is both fascinating and troubling, since this comparison reveals this participant’s belief that women are still viewed in a subservient role, earning less money and held in less regard than the “father,” even

though women are doing the real work. In a patriarchal society, the father is the one in control, who sets the limits, and establishes the boundaries.

Kim Dorsey reported that little had changed in regard to stereotypical gender roles. She thought that men were much more aggressive about pursuing administrative positions, even when they had only four or five years of teaching experience. "Very few females are ever going to be seen doing that. Someone has to plant the seed." However, she did not feel that this was the case for men.

. . . I think for a lot of male administrators, that's when they start. That's why they climb up the ladder and become principals of high schools. Year ten of the principalship, they've done the elementary, they've done the middle school, they've done it all.

She thought school administration was more likely to be a profession for men, AND teaching was a profession for women. "I would put it in the lines that doctors are male and nurses are female. It's the same. Bosses are male; secretaries are female. I don't know where that chain breaks; I don't know how it breaks."

### **Subjectivity**

As noted previously, subjectivity is socially produced and is a changing process. As these teachers tried to imagine themselves in the role of the principal, they had difficulty conceptualizing a position that removed them from the classroom. A point made by Grogan (2000) is relevant. She noted, "Teaching encourages relationship building; administration recommends keeping distance" (p. 128). This fact was apparent in the comments that many participants made as they projected their feelings about moving into school administration. Kim Dorsey thought that she might consider school administration if she didn't have to give up the classroom, "because that's the most positive contact you can have with kids." Likewise, Teresa Vrack said she would want to teach at least one class if she were ever a principal.

Rhonda Waters said that she would consider school administration if she could still teach a couple of classes, noting that this would be the ideal situation. Patricia Cabby stated, "If I could be a principal, I would have to be in the classroom. I would probably aggravate the teachers because I would be in the room helping with the students. I'm more hands-on with the children." Patricia shared that she had been a summer school administrator, though she felt it gave her a better perspective of what school administrators actually do, the experience solidified her belief that the classroom was the place for her.

In comparing male and female principals, Kim Dorsey made an interesting comment that shows the interaction of language, subjectivity, and power.

You can get a lot of things done with a male principal that I think are tougher sometimes to get done with a female principal . . . One of the things that I have learned is that you can either use your femininity to stop something from happening or you can use it to make something happen. I think a lot of times we (women) shoot ourselves in the foot by using it to make something not happen.

She later elaborated that it was important to “remember that in society we still play male and female roles.” She gave the example of “being sweet and kind” and “letting them (male principals) come up with the idea themselves and planting the seed” for getting something done. She added,

It’s not that you’re playing stupid; you’re letting them be in control. If we don’t do that, we don’t get what we want sometimes . . . I hate to say it, but if you stroke an ego, they’re going to perform for you.

She contrasted this with a previous female principal, stating that you didn’t have to “play the gender role” because this principal was a “straight shooter.” Her narrative revealed that her interactions with a male principal differed from her interactions with a female principal; however, she has still traditionally positioned herself in her relationships with male principals.

The relationship between subjectivity and discourse is closely intertwined because discourse shapes subjectivity. The participants in this study indicated that their subjectivity was constructed around the discourse of teaching and for the most part, they had difficulty imagining themselves in roles that removed them from teaching and students. The consideration of gendered subject positions is especially important for this particular study in light of the fact that the respondents were all women teachers, and teaching was definitely a part of their own gendered subjectivity.

### **Power**

Power, according to Foucault, is everywhere, organizing discourses and serving a number of purposes, often concurrently (Williams, 1999). As mentioned previously, the concept of power is complex and contentious. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, points of resistance are discussed, for a postmodern perspective implies resistance as other voices are included (Grogan, 2000).

All the participants in this study acknowledged that the principalship is a position of power; however, many of the teachers have found ways to temper this power. Particularly noticeable in the discourses of women high school teachers working for male principals were localized points of resistance to the school administrative discourse. It was important for Kim Dorsey to point out that she didn't think she was "beneath" the principal. She elaborated, "I think you need both parts to make a school work. I don't think that being a classroom teacher is necessarily less than anyone else." She added that individuals "enable somebody to either look down on you or judge you by what your profession is. I'm happier in the classroom than I would be as an administrator, so I choose to stay in the classroom." In this case, Kim has tried consciously to place herself outside of the hierarchical nature of school administration.

Lana Adders shared a similar sentiment. She did not view herself as subordinate to the principal, again viewing this person as male. "I may be subordinate to him on the books and on the ladder, but I think that any principal that is worth his weight in cotton or anything knows that you are only as strong as your faculty."

High school teacher Dora Cobb had a rather subversive point of resistance in regard to the male-dominated principalship.

From my point of view, if the good teachers stay in the classroom and the not-so-good teachers are the ones who leave the classroom, then I can almost have a bias the other way and say the males who are in administration might not have been cutting it as teachers, whereas the females who are in the classroom may be very successful and feel satisfied.

She said that she got the "pluses and the minuses" by working with the students, and she could "still have a finger in the pie of the running of the school" through weekly meetings with the principal. In her opinion, this was much more preferable than having to be the one "to take all the phone calls." Her statement revealed a possible point of resistance as she explained that the effective ("good") teachers are really the ones who experience job satisfaction in comparison to the principal.

The issue of salary was not a point of resistance for the participants. Although the majority of these teachers mentioned they were not motivated by money, they did lament the fact that their salaries were incomparable to other fields.

When I graduated, I'd have done it for free, I was so ready to get in a classroom. I look at my brother-in-law, who used to work for the Pic n Pay shoes home office, and he was in charge of teaching people how to sell

shoes and was making twice as much money as I was and benefits. I said, "This is our future I am teaching, and you're just teaching somebody how to sell pairs of cheap shoes that you just have to go get the box off the shelf." (Celie Chaps)

Celie added that teaching was respected but "respected on the level that you would respect a minister or whatever, but you know those people aren't in it to make money."

Katie Mills drew a distinction between men and women related to money, noting that women appear to be "happy" with the salary and don't mind the fact that they are not well compensated. Similarly, Kim Dorsey said, "I know that we don't get paid what we're worth, but I live just fine." Patricia Cabby summed it up:

I wish I made a little more money, but money is not everything. You have to love what you do. If I were making \$100,000 and didn't like what I was doing, it wouldn't be worth it to me. I love what I do.

Participants expressed their awareness of the discrepancy in pay for a teacher in comparison to a principal. It became clear that they often attributed this discrepancy to the male gender, a common sense assumption:

For one thing, males have always traditionally gotten paid more than us. They're supposed be the breadwinners. I don't see too many males trying to have a family on a teacher's salary. (Patricia Cabby)

I think one of the reasons why men leave the classroom is money. If you have a family, it's certainly more enticing. Even though the hours may shift and may not be as wonderful at the high school level, certainly for an administrator, I think there's significant, if not just pay raise, potential to move on from there. (Kim Dorsey)

Kim realized that the high school principalship, predominantly filled by men, offered greater financial rewards, as well as more potential for career advancement. Implicitly, her common sense assumption was, however, that women are not motivated by the desire to earn more money. In this discussion of financial compensation, no mention of equity was made. The participants did not question the fairness of men earning more money than women, nor did they raise the question of why teachers made less money than administrators.

### **Common Sense Assumptions**

The interaction of language, power, and subjectivity leads to common sense assumptions about the way the world operates—the way things are perceived

to be by individuals. Common sense knowledge relies on human nature “to guarantee its version of reality” (Weedon, 1997, p. 74). The most commonly repeated common sense truism noted by the majority of these participants was the belief (sometimes attributed to society) that women are nurturers by nature. In this sense, personal style was ascribed to what were perceived to be innate qualities of women. This led many participants to the point that women were perhaps better suited for working with children because of their possession of nurturing, caring qualities, while men were more “business-like,” more “driven,” more “logical,” making them more suited for school administrative roles, especially at the middle and high school level. This nurturing also related to two barriers they identified for women who might consider school administration.

A recurring comment made by the respondents referred to women as nurturers. Although they did not say that men were incapable of being nurturers, they did note that “society” attributed more nurturing qualities to women and viewed education as women’s work. Thus, teaching evolved into a position for women.

I think the bottom line is raising children is women’s work. It’s accepted in society traditionally, always. Therefore, it’s not as important; therefore, you’re not paid as much; therefore, it’s not valued as much. There are a lot of ramifications from that. Until we sort of look at raising the young as being very important for everybody to do, I don’t think it’s going to change. I think ideally it needs to change because you not only look at college, high school, middle school, and elementary, you look at day care. In day care the conditions are abysmal. It’s for the same sort of reasons. (Dottie Holt)

... there may be women like me who say, ‘I’m more nurturing than men. I don’t want to be the bad guy so I’m not going into administration because I don’t want to be the wicked witch of the East. I’m going to stay here in my classroom and give them hugs, wipe their noses, pat them on the shoulder and send them out.’ (Dora Cobb)

Maybe people don’t take women as seriously because they’re not as business-like, because women seem to be more nurturing. That’s why more women are teachers, I believe. (Lana Adders)

“Women’s work” and “wicked witch of the East” are in contrast to men who “have the power and control” and are perceived to be “business-like.” Participants in this study underscored their belief that, at least in the eyes of society, teaching is a more acceptable profession for women, while school administration is more suitable for men. Related to this belief was the participants’ conjecture about more women serving in elementary principalships than in secondary principalships.



. . . I think women are naturally more nurturing, and for the elementary kids, a woman's disciplinary style works better with elementary school kids, or they perceive it as working better with elementary school kids. (Teresa Vrack)

I think men might have the persona more of getting the respect of the people, whereas in elementary, it's more nurturing and a more mother-like role. (Barbara Fitz)

Again the idea of being nurturing, I'm sure an elementary school principal gets to stand in the hallway or at the bus line and smile at the kids and take their hands. . . . (Dora Cobb)

In light of their assertions about societal expectations regarding women as nurturers, it appears that these beliefs influenced them when they considered the possibility of moving into school administration.

Related to their role of nurturers, the majority of the participants indicated that women have more family responsibilities in comparison to men, who were perceived to be unfettered by the conflicting demands of motherhood, partnering, and home life. Nine of the 12 participants were married and/or had children, thus focus on a family was present. Those who commented about family said that it served as a deterrent for women who might consider school administration as a profession.

A middle school veteran, Patricia Cabby, acknowledged that the primary care of her child fell upon her shoulders; thus, she did not consider school administration as a viable career option for her. She said, "If you're an administrator and have a family, it's probably more difficult for a female to be out on a limb as a principal than it is for a male because women are the ones who usually take care of the children. Right now I have a sixth-grader. Could I be at school all the time if I were an administrator and not give my daughter the time that she needs?"

Dora Cobb alluded to the extra-curricular events that principals must also attend and the impact that this could have on a family.

I think one of the reasons is if you have women such as I who had young children. Mine are now grown. At the time they were young, I couldn't have put in the hours for administration. I could not have come here for all the plays, the games, and everything else that happens after school because my family was important.

Some of the participants shared their assumption that men were more suited to dealing with student discipline, thus serving as another barrier for women who might consider school administration. Katie Mills, an elementary teacher who had just taken a position at a middle school, said that

due to inherent qualities of males and females, males were better equipped to address the discipline issues because they were less emotional.

I think more males, as far as discipline goes, feel they can handle it simply because of the fact that they don't wear their hearts on their shoulders. With most females, of course, the job is a little more stressful for them because that's what they do. They feel each and every student's pain. They get more involved. Not to say that male principals don't get involved, but on a different level. They're more logical, I guess.

Patricia Cabby reported,

As far as high school, I don't think they feel that females can handle discipline issues at a high school. Say two big boys who are 6'2" get in a fight, and they weigh 200 pounds. They don't think that a female can handle that.

She conceded, however, "A male might not be able to handle it either."

Jan Moore suggested that women were "afraid" to take high school principalships due to the fact that teenagers have become much more challenging. She referred to "the belligerent kid who is probably going to be lucky if he lives to be 30. A kid like that had just as soon shoot you as do what you want them to do . . . I think fear is a factor." This was a fear she attributed to women only, even though men face the same challenging teenagers as women. These same teenagers were also the ones Jan dealt with everyday in her classroom; however, she apparently drew a distinction between women teachers and women administrators.

Teresa Vrack, a seventh-grade teacher who taught at a secondary school (grades 6 through 12), observed that the discipline problems were not as severe at the elementary school level and that high school discipline would be "intimidating" for women administrators. High school teacher Dora Cobb suggested that women would not want to be perceived as disciplinarians, especially as they moved from elementary schools to middle and high school. "If a woman doesn't want that role of the ogre, she's not going to choose the high school level." It is interesting to note that in her comment, she implied that men do not take offense to being known as an ogre, but women would sacrifice career advancement to avoid being considered a monster.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

The interviews with 12 women teachers revealed that their decisions to remain in the classroom were a complex mixture of both choice and

constraint. Based upon strong feelings of teacher efficacy, their decisions can be viewed as a choice. Similarly, they derived satisfaction in their roles as teacher leaders, perhaps contributing to their choices to remain in the classroom. They also viewed the principal's role as one fraught with stressors, thus reinforcing their decision to remain in the classroom.

In utilizing a postmodern feminist framework, the more subtle reasons were also presented. Fraser and Nicholson (1990) asserted that a primary aim of feminist theory is social criticism. As this type of framework suggests, gender is a major focus and the purpose is to explore ways to alter the existing power relations between women and men in society (Weedon, 1997). Although the participants, for the most part, rejected the stereotypical belief that women were not suitable candidates for school administrative positions, they often made comments about cultural expectations for appropriately feminine behavior. The participants associated women with the role of teacher and nurturer, and they, in turn, nurtured their students and colleagues. They did not associate nurturing with school administration, nor did they view this role as compatible with their own identities.

These participants shared their perspectives on what it meant to be a woman teacher with leadership skill working in a predominantly male-dominated administrative arena. They had thought about school administration and their understanding of the discourse of school administration and its associated power was apparent. Their points of resistance ranged from almost unconscious to subversive. What they often struggled with was their own position within this discourse and the opportunities it made available and the constraints it placed upon them.

The women in this study noted the multi-faceted role of the principal and realized that it was a complex position due to the varying demands made by different stakeholders. The respondents indicated they valued (as they considered school leadership) principals who facilitated, a leadership quality more often attributed to women. Evident was a strong preference for what Shakeshaft (1995) termed "power with" as opposed to "power over." One participant reported that it was important that every person's role be perceived as different, but equally important. The term these participants used most frequently for their preference of a principal's leadership style was *collaborative*, meaning that the principal sought and valued the input of the teachers. In their opinion, the principal should be viewed as a member of a team.

There will continue to be a need for highly qualified principals who are grounded in curriculum and instruction. Women, such as the ones who participated in this study, have the potential to be qualified school administrators. School administration was structured from the beginning as a

“manly” profession, and research on school administration historically has reflected this androcentric bias (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989). As Blount (1994) noted, many feminists have argued that “studies of leadership behavior have presented problems for women in general because the scientific, positivistic underpinnings of such works are inherently gender biased” (p. 51). Thus, the discourse of school administration remains male-dominated, despite some gains that have been made by looking at the leadership styles that women bring to the profession. Although not attributable to the male-dominated discourse of educational administration, this fact, along with societal expectations, contributed to these participants’ reasons for saying “no” to school administration.

What are some ways to challenge the current discourse of school administration? Further examination of the topic of women’s leadership is needed. This does not mean the presence of more women in school administrative positions will automatically challenge the current discourse. It does mean, however, that further study of the characteristics more commonly associated with women—collaboration, care, facilitation—is a topic for further exploration.

Another possibility, and one that would perhaps encourage women such as the ones who participated in this study to consider school administration, is to further explore mentoring possibilities. Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000) made a strong case for the possibility of mentoring to transform educational leadership. They noted that the accounts of women’s mentoring “. . . do not show only status quo reproduction of existing social mores and norms, but of women’s resistance and proactive shaping of new agendas for our nation’s schools.” Furthermore, they stated, “Women are located in a position to know and understand the system, and to defy and change it” (p. 27). The women in this study demonstrated extensive understanding of the system, especially in their own positions as teacher leaders and mentors to their colleagues. If they were willing to engage in a formal mentoring relationship, then they may have the opportunity to challenge their own assumptions about school administration and their decision to remain in the classroom.

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) (2000) published a report from the Task Force on the Principalship in an effort to raise the public’s awareness about the problems facing educational leadership. The Task Force highlighted two important points: the top priority of the principalship must be “leadership for learning” and the principalship as it is currently configured fails to meet the first priority (p. 1). As a result, the Task Force urged school systems to “reinvent the principalship” so that the needs of schools can be met. “School systems should recognize that one person cannot provide

effective leadership for student learning while tending to the thousand tasks traditionally heaped on principals” (IEL, 2000, p. 13).

Another possibility for challenging the existing discourse and for recruiting leadership-skilled women teachers to school administration would be to restructure the job responsibilities, duties and expectations of the principal. Though there are various conceptualizations for this, one possibility is the co-principalship, currently practiced only in localized and isolated circumstances. This option has the potential to effect change in the way the role of the principal is configured. In arrangements such as this, two qualified administrators share the principalship. Either all the responsibilities are evenly divided, or there are two principals, one for instruction and one for management (Boris-Schacter & Langer, 2002). It is this latter configuration of co-principalship that would perhaps hold the greatest promise for attracting qualified women teachers to consider upward career movement. As principals of instruction, leadership-skilled women teachers could maintain their connection to students and the classroom and focus on impacting instruction. A postmodern feminist perspective questions both why things are the way they are, as well as whose interest is being served by the way things are (Grogan, 2000). It would be useful to examine why the role of the principal continues to be perceived as a position solely for one person, given the increased demands being placed on principals.

Blount (1998) noted that for power to be distributed more equally, the ones who have the lion’s share must be willing to give some of it away. The redistribution of power

does not happen in a vacuum, however, but instead occurs when groups with relatively little power organize and force the matter, when law or public policy requires an open process of power negotiation, or when positions of power become so unpalatable that persons privileged with choice regard them as undesirable. (p. 166)

It is this third option that holds the most promise for change at this point. One could argue that it is already happening to some degree, especially in urban districts where it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill vacant principalships and superintendencies (Stover, 2002). The options of restructuring the principalship and offering formal mentoring opportunities might encourage qualified women teachers to consider this role and in the process, help to alleviate the possible, pending, or immediate administrative shortage. It is impossible to ignore the fact that with the very real teacher shortage that many locales are experiencing, encouraging women such as the ones who participated in this study to leave the classroom for school administration is almost paradoxical. However, in hearing the voices of

leadership-skilled women teachers who choose to remain in the classroom, their critiques may suggest ways for both the fields of teaching and administration to profit.

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# Mentoring Women Principals

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Cheryl Arthur  
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This review of the literature focuses first on the common reasons for the need for mentoring (professional development, changing roles, principal shortage, under representation of women, and barriers) and continues with a definition and description of mentoring. Finally, the current status of mentoring is summarized followed by a discussion of the implications for research.

In *Rock'N'Roll High School Forever* [movie], notwithstanding improvements in students' academic achievements, the school board is dissatisfied with student discipline. It conveys this message to the principal: "You're too soft for this job. You may know how to teach but you don't know how to discipline. We're going to find someone who does!" The board appoints a female vice-principal, Dr. Vader, who literally possesses an iron fist, wears a grey, Gestapo-like uniform, and encases the school in an electrified fence (Thomas, 1998, p. 96).

For those who have long argued that women are under-represented in the principalship, perhaps the school board's promotion of the female vice-principal signals the beginning of an era where entry, promotion, and retention of females in school administration can be expected. Others may see the movie's portrayal of the new female principal as disappointing in that women must exhibit "iron fisted" leadership styles, characteristics associated more with males, to be successful in administration.

So what is the current status of female school principals? Certainly, women have the dispositions and the credentials for administrative leadership. School districts require leaders who facilitate collaboration and build consensus for student achievement in a dynamic environment of change. This style of leadership reflects the interpersonal skills and concern for people that women principals consistently exhibit (Spencer & Kochan, 2000). Additionally, women principals have more years of teaching experience and tend to have higher academic credentials (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Kerrins, Johnstone, & Cushing, 2001).

Women continue to be under-represented in the principalship. Potentially, the issue of the under-representation of women rests in career immobility. Women may not see the principalship, as it currently exists in



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many parts of the world, as a position whose benefits outweigh the risks involved (e.g., family relationships, location, and health) (National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP] & Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory [NIREL], 2003).

The industrial model of school leadership, theoretically, has ended: leadership is not power. Rather, leadership is about serving others and supporting those within the community . . . Leadership through the eyes of women is very different from the old paradigm of efficiency, technology, and the bottom line . . . Women are finding that in order to survive the many roles in which they live, they need to nurture the environments in which they work. (Steele, 2002, p. 190)

Conceivably, potential women administrators do not see the principalship as a position from which they can facilitate change to nurture a better learning environment. If gender equity in school leadership is ever going to be achieved, educators need to consider strategies to address the immobility that confines potential women administrators to their classrooms as teachers. One strategy, mentoring, surfaces in *Coloring Outside the Lines*.

Mentors can greatly shape women's growth and potential in school leadership. As we have seen, it is not enough for women to be trying to "prove themselves" and "work harder" than anyone else. As their mentors can show, women also have to learn the rules and then bend them to their advantage, to be smart and have political savvy [in order] to change the face of educational leadership. (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000, p. 125)

## **Why Do We Need to Mentor Principals?**

The literature reveals five themes associated with the need to mentor principals. In particular, female principals benefit from mentoring because it can address the needs for professional development, increase understanding of the changing role of the principal, provide new administrators to decrease the perceived shortage of principals, increase the number of women in administration, and remove some of the barriers for women in the principalship.

### ***Professional Development***

Several studies highlight the need for professional development of principals. Effective principals positively influence student achievement (NAESP & NIREL, 2003). Principals who feel competent and supported exhibit behaviors of effective principals (i.e., they remain at their principalships and encourage others into administration). To hire and retain principals, especially women and minorities, professional development for building administrators requires a strategic plan that includes the following elements:

1. A focus on effective practice that validates teaching and learning as the focus of schooling
2. Hands-on and on-the job training to encourage principals to be teachers of teachers
3. Access to resources that includes research on best practices and the impact of technology in schools
4. Time for reflection
5. Networking with others outside the school building or district, including professional conferences and mentoring. (Hopkins, Lambrecht, & Moss, 1998; McKay, 2001; Maryland State Department of Education, 2000; National Staff Development Council [NSDC], 2000; Tirozzi, 2001; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998)

### ***The Changing Role of the Principalship***

Professional development for principals acquires greater urgency as the role of the school principal significantly changes. The changing role of the principal exposes several common threads: (a) issues of increased teacher and parental expectations for individualized problem solving (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001); (b) role change from building manager to instructional

leader, requiring a skilled change agent in addition to supervision and curricular expertise (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; DuFour, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Hall & Hord, 2001; Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998); (c) increased diversity in faculty and student learning needs (DuFour, 2003); and (d) mandated legislative and educational reforms (Cline & Necochea, 1997; Copeland, 2001; Maryland State Department of Education, 2000; Peterson & Kelley, 2001; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998).

International views of the role of the principalship are consistent with trends in role changes in the United States (U.S.). Although cultures and governments differ, the issues are similar worldwide for female administrators: under-representation in the field of school administration, lack of mentors, and the changing role of the principalship.

Although American principals face accountability for student achievement, outside the U.S., principals face the frequently concurrent issues of increased local management of schools; increased tension between management and school leaders; increased accountability for fiscal responsibility; and school choice (Whitaker, 2003). Perhaps other countries differ from the U.S. only in their failure to focus on increased student achievement in the competing issues they encounter. Regardless of the country, the similarity of the issues for principals suggests that research can be relevant for all women who seek positions in educational administration.

The importance of well-planned, continuous professional development for principals, particularly women, may reside in effective mentoring. A strong network of mentors and well-planned professional development appear to be critical for helping principals adapt to their changing roles in the educational process. The career path of mentored principals suggests that mentoring is especially critical for women and minorities. Mentored females appear to have a more direct route to the principalship, regardless of the gender of their mentors or whether the mentoring was formal or informal (Clark, Caffarella, & Ingram, 1999; Luebkekmann & Clemens, 1995; U.S. Department of Labor, 1992; Ward & Hyle, 1999).

Whether the principal experiences mentoring or not, superintendents and school boards expect superhero-like qualities from building administrators. This view reflects the changing role of the principal, highlights the perceived shortage of candidates applying for positions, and supports the need for mentoring principals once they are hired. The myth of the super-principal, "someone who is everything to everyone," suggests that districts provide support through mentoring, "to help principals deal affirmatively with high expectations" for performance (Copeland, 2001, pp. 6-7). Tirozzi (2001), in an article on the artistry of leadership, noted that with the changing demands

of 21st century school leadership, just under half of the school districts surveyed by Educational Research Service (ERS) reported formal mentoring programs for new principals (p. 5). Similarly, Peterson and Kelley (2001) suggested making careful decisions during hiring. In other words, not expecting to hire a super-hero and providing significant professional development are keys for attracting and retaining principals. Their recommendations for urban, suburban, and rural districts include a mentoring component for professional development.

### ***Perceived Shortage of Principal Candidates***

It is difficult to report on the changing role of the principal without establishing a connection to the perceived shortage of principals. “[Principals] are expected to work actively to transform, restructure, and redefine schools while they hold organizational positions [that are] historically and traditionally committed to resisting change and maintaining stability” (Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998, p. 10). Although the reason for a shortage seems clear, “it’s the job, stupid” said Cushing, Kerrins, and Johnstone (2003, p. 28), statistics highlight the perceived shortage of principal candidates versus the actual number of certified candidates. Superintendents and school districts reveal an almost desperate need for principal candidates. However, the following points clarify the “shortage” situation:

1. The length of time typically spent serving as an assistant principal, before assuming a principalship, has changed from five to seven years to perhaps as little as six months (NAESP & NIREL, 2003, p. 7).
2. In a California study of recently certified administrators, 62% were neither serving as administrators nor seeking such positions: less than 1% said (geographic) mobility affected their job seeking. Forty-six percent of respondents reported that increased satisfaction in their current positions discouraged them from applying for a principalship when consideration was given to the time, stress, lack of support and salary involved (Adams, 1999, p. 9).
3. Women, 70% of the teaching force, now hold 35% of the principalships, nation-wide. African-Americans occupy only 11%. In contrast, white males, represent only 25% of the teaching force, are the least credentialed educators, and they occupy 50% of the

- principalships and more than 80% of superintendent and district office positions (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001, p. 28).
4. A California study found that between 1997 and 1999, the number of *new* administrative certifications was sufficient to fill 65% of the current principal positions (not vacancies, but actual positions) and the number of re-issued or renewed credentials was enough to fill almost 90% of the principal positions in the state (Kerrins et al., 2001, p. 2).
  5. Rural districts experience great challenges in attracting principal candidates. The difference between teacher and principal salaries is smaller in rural districts than in non-rural: rural administrators make about one-third less than their non-rural counterparts (Howley & Pendarvis, 2002, p. 2).

Perhaps the meaning of the terms “certified” and “qualified,” in referring to principal candidates, requires clarification, or at least, consensus. When the university/state department of education grants administrator certification, the implication is that the principal is qualified based on successful completion of certification requirements. When superintendents and school boards refuse to consider female and minority candidates as qualified for the principalship, although candidates hold the same certifications, these school districts essentially, reject university and state department claims regarding administrator preparation. This situation reflects an enormous disconnect that deprives schools of a large, untapped pool of qualified, competent, and motivated principals.

### ***Under-representation of Women in the Principalship***

The perceived shortage of qualified candidates appears to coincide with the under-representation of women and minorities in the principalship. Statistics from the United States Department of Education (USDE) for 1999-2000 stated that women and minorities occupy the greatest numbers of principalships when the student minority enrollment is 30% or more and when those principalships are in central city schools with a total enrollment of 500-749 students (U.S.D.E. & National Center for Education Statistics 2004).

There are more than adequate numbers of certified candidates. These candidates include women and minorities, under-represented in administrative positions and who face barriers in hiring and staying in

principalships (Hammond, Muffs, & Sciascia, 2001; Howley & Pendarvis, 2002; Tallerico, 1999; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001).

When asked to rank order five reasons given for the under-representation of women in administration, the statement, "insufficient role modeling, networking and mentoring among women," was ranked first or second by 70% of study participants, and first, second or third by 89% of the participants (Gupton & Slick, 1996, p. 68).

### ***Barriers to Women in the Principalship***

The barriers to women entering and staying in the principalship are varied, however there does seem to be agreement that barriers exist for women in administration both in the U.S. and internationally (Berman, 1998; Clark et al., 1999; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Gupton & Del Rosario, 1998; Hudson & Rea, 1996; Orem, 2002; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998; Shepard, 1998; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001). For example, an international study of women administrators (China, Commonwealth of Dominica, Cyprus, Gambia, Greece, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, and Zambia) found women in these countries did not experience:

*uniform* "glass ceilings" or "glass walls" . . . [barriers] were not consistent across societies and cultures, nor were they homogenous within each society or culture. The barriers experienced by the women . . . [were] by specific cultural and religious belief and values, as well as socio-economic and political factors. (Cubillo & Brown, 2003, p. 8)

Amid all the confirmation of barriers and inhibitors to women seeking administrative positions, Smith, Smith, Cooley, and Shen (2000) gave a fair summary of the under-representation of women and minorities. When men are hired for the principalship, they are expected to grow into the role and culture of administration; women are hired with the expectation that they already excel in all facets of the position.

Glass (2000), in a study for the American Association of School Administrators, addressed the barriers to women in administration by noting that more than 50% of graduate students in educational administration programs are female. Women received doctorates at about the same rate as men, but only 10% of the female doctoral candidates earned leadership credentials, in other words, 90% of female doctoral candidates did not attempt building principal or central office certification (p. 29).

Additionally, Glass (2000) revealed that women in leadership positions have a less developed mentoring system when compared to men. Along with

suggesting that states provide incentives for women entering administration, Glass stated that carefully choosing mentors could attract women into leadership. Similarly, several authors stated the importance of mentoring for attracting and retaining principals, although only half reported the specific importance of mentoring for women in administration (Adams, 1999; Cushing et al., 2003; Hammond et al., 2001; Hopkins et al., 1998; Howley & Pendarvis, 2002; Lovely, 2004; NAESP & NIREL, 2003; Orem, 2002; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond & Gundlach, 2003; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Ragins et al., 1998; Shipman, Topps, & Murphy, 1998).

So, do school districts need to mentor potential women principals as well as those who are already in the position? Yes, unless school districts do not mind missing half the market of qualified, competent candidates (Glass, 2000).

### **What Does Mentoring Look Like?**

The concept of mentoring incorporates a plethora of examples and nomenclatures. Historically, the poet/philosopher Homer, circa eighth or ninth century B.C., is credited with the term, "mentor." Mentor is the name of the character chosen by the Goddess Athena, in *The Odyssey*, for helping Telemachus to "mature, to learn courage, prudence, honesty and a commitment to serving others" (Woodd, 1997, p. 333). The task was to be accomplished through Mentor's wisdom and moral teachings to the much younger protégé. The continued use of the term, mentor, indicates the importance of the mentoring relationship for the emotional, social, and intellectual growth of the protégé.

One best definition of mentoring, because the word is used frequently in common speech, may not exist. There does seem to be agreement on the common use of the word mentor to describe a relationship between a senior adult and a junior protégé for the purpose of teaching the junior needed skills and attitudes for success at work and in life. In the field of educational administration, the term mentor previously defined a relationship promoting the inculcation of the status quo through what was, and continues to be, identified by some as the "good ol' boys network." Mentoring relationships developed so that the new principal would understand "how things are done around here" in terms of personnel and curriculum. Although the relationships described in educational literature still use the terms mentor and protégé, Homer would probably recognize few of the functions and outcomes of mentoring.

Perhaps a strict definition of the word mentoring is not as important as clarifying the process of mentoring as it currently exists and what it could become in the future. To make the definition of mentoring women in school administration align with other processes of professional development, a working definition of a mentoring relationship may be more appropriate. For the purposes of this discussion, the process of mentoring has some or all of the following characteristics:

1. A symbiotic relationship where both mentor and protégé benefit intrinsically and extrinsically, although not necessarily to the same degree.
2. Changes in behavior occur as a result of frequent communication between mentor/protégé.
3. The relationship, an evolutionary process of interdependence ultimately establishing peer collaboration, develops according to phases using Kram's phases (initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition) as a framework (Chao, 1997; Kram, 1983, p. 614, 621).
4. Mentors may be from inside or outside the district, they may be of any appropriate age, and they may or may not have successful experience in the position.

Principals who have mentors and coaches as part of an extensive, career-long network of relationships for career and psychosocial enhancement may experience greater satisfaction, or less dissatisfaction, as the role of the principalship changes. To perceive that job satisfaction will encourage potential administrators to enter the field and will encourage those already in the field of educational administration to remain there is a logical conclusion.

A working definition sheds light on the necessity and the process of mentoring. However, the structures and functions of mentoring, when mentoring occurs, and the relationship between those involved in mentoring reveal a vein-like network of overlapping experiences all streaming toward hiring and retaining principals, especially women.

### ***Types of Mentoring***

Almost as varied as the interpretations of the term mentoring are the different types of mentoring that occur. The significance for educational administration is highlighted in the impact on attracting teachers to the principalship, as well as the impact on the growth and continued development for retention of experienced administrators.



### **Informal Versus Formal Mentoring**

Informal mentoring relationships may be described as moving through Kram's four phases of "initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition" (1983, p. 621). Each phase of the mentoring relationship, independent of terminology employed, consists of cognitive and affective experiences shaped by the protégé's "individual needs and by organizational circumstances" (Kram, 1983, p. 621).

Informal mentoring relationships develop spontaneously, whereas formal mentoring relationships—with organizational assistance or development—are usually in the form of voluntary assignment or matching of mentors and protégés . . . Formal relationships are usually of much shorter duration than informal. (Ragins & Cotton, 1999, p. 529)

Informal and formal mentoring relationships differ in how the initiation of the relationship transpires: informal relationships form based on perceived similarities between the mentor and protégé (e.g. similar attitudes toward interactions with staff); formal programs usually assign mentors. The structure of formal mentoring relationships delineates meeting times, agendas, the goals, and the duration of the relationship. In contrast, informal mentoring lasts over a period of up to six years, has goals that respond to the current environment, and meet flexibly and spontaneously (Allen, Russell, & Maetzke, 1997; Blake-Beard, 2001).

Several authors note the importance of formal and informal mentoring for women seeking leadership positions (Ehrich, 1995; Hubbard & Robinson, 1998; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Reyes, 2003; Russell & Adams, 1997). The under-representation of women in school administration, especially at the secondary level, influences the ability of women to mentor other women based on sheer numbers of available mentors (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Perceived similarities between mentor and protégé, so important in the initiation of informal mentoring relationships, becomes an obstacle when few women occupy leadership positions from which to mentor (Burke & McKeen, 1997a; Ragins, 1997). Women administrators are consequently forced to participate in formal mentoring programs for career advancement. Since these formal relationships are matched, short in duration, and have pre-arranged agendas and times, they may become barriers to the advancement of women and other minorities (Blake-Beard, 2001; Dreher & Dougherty, 1997; Friday & Friday, 2002; Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan, 2000; MacGregor, 2000; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins et al., 2000). In referring to formal mentoring programs as organizational interventions attempting to replicate informal relationships,

Ragins et al. (2000) supported earlier findings (Ragins, 1997) with discussions of power in the mentor/protégé relationship. Minority mentors are viewed as having less power in the organization and are avoided by majority protégés. A summary of this study revealed that homogeneous mentor/protégé relationships have more mentoring functions than majority mentor/minority protégé. For example, minority mentor/minority protégé pairings promoted the psychosocial and role modeling functions of mentoring; majority mentor/majority protégé experience career development, psychosocial, and role modeling functions in their mentoring relationships (Allen, Poteet, Russell, & Dobbins, 1997; Hite, 1998; Ragins, 1997). Ragins et al. (2000) reported that the quality of the mentoring affects participants' work attitudes and satisfaction with the relationship, regardless of whether the mentoring is formal or informal.

### **Peer Mentoring**

Mentoring metamorphosed from an authoritarian, parent/child relationship to one more congruent with the changing role of the principal. The traditional parent/child relationship, the functionalist perspective of mentoring, occurred predominately in educational systems in adult/student mentoring and new teacher/master teacher relationships. Much of the current practice in *principal* mentoring reflects the Radical Humanist perspective: mentoring is collegial and promotes co-learning (Darwin, 2000; MacGregor, 2000). The evolution of the mentoring process emphasized the need to include alternative mentoring relationships that encompass women in the administrative network. Indeed, mentoring now includes peer and peer-group mentoring, critical friends, and coaching (Conyers, 2004; Holbeche, 1996; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Knouse, 2001; Robertson, 1997; Russell & Adams, 1997). All include the elements of the working definition of mentoring. For example, the symbiotic and evolutionary nature of the relationship and the use of frequent communication are particularly important in peer mentoring, coaching, and in the development of critical friends.

Hansen and Matthews (2002) made a strong case for peer mentoring, although not as an informal, one-on-one relationship. Barth (as cited in Hansen and Matthews, 2002) promoted the development of collegial networks that, "improve the quality of life and learning in schools" and "clarify operating assumptions, establish opportunities for shared problem solving and reflection, and create mutual support and trust for personal and professional relationships" (p. 30). A parallel, although one-on-one, process of professional development is described by Robertson (1997) in a study of "critical friends," a pairing of principals that combined coaching and peer

data gathering (p. 2). Coaching, described as a short, skill-intensive mentoring process, has its impact through the high level of knowledge and skill of the mentor or coach (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Yerkes, 2001). Lovely (2004) discussed the importance of both instructional and facilitative coaching. Facilitative coaching builds the emotional intelligence of the new principal above the blame and defensiveness levels to encourage transformational leadership (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003; Lovely, 2004). Another form of cognitive coaching, called peer coaching, differed in that the peers developed a collegial relationship for the specific purpose of reflecting on problem solving, with the added benefit of reducing isolation (London & Sinicki, 1999; Barnett, 1995).

### ***Mentoring Relationships***

Studies of the mentoring relationship focus on a number of issues. These issues are being discussed under three general themes: (a) outcomes and functions, (b) costs and benefits, and (c) characteristics of mentors, their training and selection.

#### **Outcomes and Functions of Mentoring**

Ragins is the most prolific author of studies that address the outcome and functions of the mentoring relationship. Although her research is not taken from the educational environment, much of Ragin's work provides empirical support for Kram's (1983) phases and speaks especially to gender issues. Several of Ragin's ideas are replicated in other studies. The findings of her studies include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. There were no significant differences between men and women in mentoring experiences, intentions to mentor, or the benefits/costs associated with mentoring relationships. (Ragins & Scandura, 1994)
2. Female protégés with a history of male mentors received significantly more promotions than male protégés (regardless of the gender of their mentors); however, female protégés did *not* receive more compensation. Female mentors with male mentors received significantly greater compensation than female protégés with a history of female mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Additionally, protégés with informal mentors reported greater satisfaction with mentoring and significantly more compensation than protégés with formal mentoring relationships (Burke & McKeen, 1997b; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

3. Individuals in highly satisfying mentoring relationships reported more positive attitudes than non-mentored individuals, but the attitudes of those in dysfunctional or marginally satisfying relationships were equivalent to, and in some cases lower than, those of non-mentored individuals (Ragins et al., 2000).
4. Ragins' research, and that of others, showed that for career advancement and mentoring relationship satisfaction, informal mentoring relationships are better, especially for women (Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins et al., 2000; Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Schwiebert, Deck, Bradshaw, Scott, & Harper, 1999).
5. Scandura (1998) provided a framework for identifying marginally satisfying mentoring relationships and those that are considered dysfunctional, ultimately ending in termination of the relationship (Ragins & Scandura, 1997; Scandura, 1998). The framework consisted of two good-intention and two bad-intention types of dysfunctional mentoring. The good-intention behaviors were: (a) difficulty (conflict, a psychosocial function), and (b) spoiling (betrayal, a vocational or career function of the mentoring relationship) (Scandura, 1998). Bad-intention mentoring behaviors were: (a) negative relations (bullies, a psychosocial function), and (b) sabotage (a vocational function) (Scandura, 1998). Because dysfunctional mentoring relationships were harmful to the mentor, the protégé, and the organization, Scandura's (1998) framework offered an expanded view of Kram's (1985) work on organizational mentoring.

### **Benefits and Costs**

Several studies addressed the benefits and costs of participation in a mentoring relationship. Benefits to mentors included the following: (a) greater reflection of mentor's own professional practice through sharing (Allen & Eby, 2003; Bush & Coleman, 1995; Harris & Crocker, 2003; Playko, 1995); (b) reduced feelings of isolation/increased teamwork feelings (Allen & Eby, 2003; Playko, 1995); and (c) opportunity for self-renewal and continued learning (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Harris & Crocker, 2003). Benefits to protégés included: (a) practical knowledge and skills not studied in university preparation courses; (b) positive, pertinent feedback; (c) support for isolation and socialization to the position; and (d) career advancement (Playko, 1995). Although the benefits and costs of a mentoring relationship may vary with the individuals and the environment, Ragins and Scandura's

(1999) study suggested that protégés were more likely than non-mentored individuals to consider the benefit per cost ratio to be greater than one. In other words, it was reasoned that the benefits of being mentored would exceed the perceived negative aspects of a mentoring relationship (e.g., time).

### **Characteristics of Mentors**

Successful mentoring programs have three common elements: (a) release-time for the mentor to be available to the protégé; (b) guidelines defining the role of the protégé in meaningful activities; and (c) training for mentors (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Barrett, 2002; Crocker & Harris, 2002; Holloway, 2004). Training for the principals who become mentors is so important that it is a mandatory element in the Potential Administrator Development Program (PADP), promoting the collaboration between Halifax County Schools in North Carolina, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and Eastern Carolina University (Peel, Wallace, Buckner, Wrenn, & Evans, 1998). Additionally, the National Association of School Principals (NAESP) has recently developed the National Principals Mentoring Certification Program as part of the organization's Principals Advisory Leadership Services (NAESP, 2004).

How do school districts or university preparation programs select principal mentors? Geismar, Morris, & Lieberman's (2000) study revealed that there are two characteristics that separate mentors from non-mentors: (a) cognitive skills (interpersonal search, information search, concept formation, conceptual flexibility); and quality enhancement (achievement motivation, management control, developmental orientation). "Principals with high levels of these two characteristics make excellent mentors," said Geismar et al. (2000), who recommended using the Mentor Identification Instrument (Malone, 2001).

### **What is the Current Status of Mentoring?**

Principal mentoring occurs across the world (e.g., North America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and Australia.) The opportunities traverse a continuum from pre-service to early career to life coaching. Additionally, Higgins and Kram (2001) revisited the concept of one individual having multiple mentors in his or her career, thus setting the stage for a potentially large network of mentoring relationships. Although cultures and governments differ internationally, the issues are similar for female administrators: (a) underrepresentation in the field of school administration, (b) the lack of qualified

and available mentors, and (c) the changing role of the principalship. Knowledge of mentoring programs in many parts of the world accentuates the experiences of mentoring women administrators through shared successes and barriers.

### ***Pre-service Administrator Programs***

The programs used by school districts to encourage aspiring principals reflect variations in delivery and in the acronyms for the titles. For example, BELL (Building Education Leaders Locally), GOO (Grow Our Own), and SLI (School Leadership Initiative) represent programs that may inspire participants to pursue administrator certification (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Oregon School Board Association, 2001; Zellner, Jenkins, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, 2002). The programs specifically address the “grow your own” idea by encouraging assistant principals and lead teachers to experience the principalship as a mentored observer. Frequent conversations with experienced principals support the daily observations. Similarly, some school districts refer to their programs as internships, providing release time and a more intense experience as the interns participate in the daily activities of the mentoring principals (Calder, 2001; Cottrill, 1994; Erickson, 2001; Geismar et al., 2000). As with all of the aspiring principals’ academies, the school districts, private organizations and/or universities work collaboratively to provide mentoring experiences that encourage educators who may want to proceed into university degree programs (Restine, 1997; Tracy & Weaver, 2000).

Reyes (2003) reported on the importance of pre-service mentoring to movement into administration. The study found that participants who received pre-service mentoring by principals were more likely to be placed as an assistant principal within one year of completing the certification requirements. Additionally, minority and women participants who did not receive pre-service mentoring, “were still in the classroom as teachers after one year of successfully completing” the same preparation requirements (Reyes, 2003, p. 59).

### ***Principal Preparation Programs***

Internationally, principal pre-service programs often reflected the culture of the country, especially as it pertained to women in leadership positions. A comparison of principal preparation programs in China and the United States (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000) found that American principal preparation

programs were two-year, university degree-based, and covered a variety of curricular, management, and community issues. Americans primarily self-selected to participate. As recently as 1995, the Chinese National Ministry of Education required, after appointment to the principalship, a certificate of training (several months of courses) prior to job placement (Su et al., 2000). Significantly, both Chinese and American administrators placed highest priority on the need for mentoring and coaching by practicing administrators as part of the preparation process. Bush and Chew's (1999) study compared the preparation programs for principals in Singapore and in England and Wales. Mentoring for school heads in England and Wales voluntarily occurred during their first year, provided mostly psychosocial support, and constituted the only required training to be a school head. Unlike their counterparts in the study, Singapore's aspiring principals completed a one-year course of study that included a mentoring internship of eight weeks. During the eight weeks, the protégé (released from teaching duties) accepted a full-time position in a mentor principal's school (Boon, 1998).

Studies of aspiring principal mentor programs found in other parts of the world may energize principal preparation programs in the U.S. by illustrating how and when mentoring occurs. Current practice for U.S. universities appears to be project-based experiences in the employing school. These experiences encourage extensive structured observation, but contain few of the elements contained in the working definition of mentoring. The Regional Principal Preparation Program (RP3) was an attempt by the College of Education at Virginia Tech to alter radically its administrator preparation programs (Gordon & Moles, 1994). In developing what would now be identified as a field-based internship, RP3 focused on the mentoring relationship between the intern and the practicing principal. An unintended result of the mentoring relationship that was closely tied to the university program was the professional development benefits for the mentor principal.

If mentoring is recognized as a viable strategy for improving the careers of women principals, university programs will need to make changes in terms of the curriculum (expand the range of guiding leadership theories) and in the delivery of programs (collaborative programs with school districts that encourage co-mentoring). Suggestions for changes to university programs include: changing leadership theories, clarifying the requirements of effective preparation programs, establishing collaborative programs in school districts, and promoting co-mentoring among graduate students.

In a study of leadership theories taught in principal preparation programs, Irby, Brown, Duffy, and Trautman (2002) found that the male-based leadership theories promote five problems.

1. Leadership theories frequently taught do not reflect currently advocated leadership practices or organizational paradigms.
2. The theories most commonly taught in leadership preparation programs are not applicable to all learners.
3. The male-based leadership theories advanced in coursework, texts, and discussions perpetuate barriers that women leaders encounter.
4. The theories promote stereotypical norms for organizations. This indirect discrimination results in organizational norms that do not allow for diversity.
5. Male-based leadership theories fail to give voice to a marginalized group (women and minorities) in the population of chief executive officers in education. (p. 307-308)

In promoting an expanded curriculum of leadership theories for principal preparation programs, Irby et al. (2002) stated that including the Synergistic Leadership Theory in graduate studies would provide a relational and interactive theory that applies more appropriately to both males and females.

Clark and Clark (1997) also revealed concerns for the needs of women and minority leaders in restructuring a university educational administration program. Their task force for restructuring developed five elements of an effective leadership preparation program, including the following:

... instructional practices that facilitate involvement ... in project-based learning objectives; ... [have] field-based experiences; ... and increase the quality of mentoring and internship experiences ... Cohort groups have been found to be especially beneficial to women in addressing their needs and preferences for affiliation during the learning experience. ... (building a knowledge base, p. 21)

Similarly, Mann (1998) and Aiken (2002) reported that principal professional development should be collegial and should include job-embedded, authentic tasks, not only as part of preparation programs, but as an attempt to retain principals in the field of educational administration. Mullen (2000a) took the collegial nature of mentoring to a new level in a relationship called, co-mentoring. The premise of co-mentoring is a break from the traditional model of mentoring. Traditionally, “university faculties are grounded in theory while school faculties are grounded in practice, but neither group has established a process with which to mentor one another and to be co-researchers and co-authors” (a collaborative mentoring model, p. 4). Co-mentoring helps the school administrators become researchers and university faculty to become collaborators: “co-mentoring encourages



professional learning among partners that enables (both) organizational cultures to be reworked” (Mullen, 2000b, energizing school-university walkways, p. 4; Mullen & Lick, 1999). Educational administration programs could encourage collaborative instructional leadership by focusing on field-based problems in administration and by requiring collaboration with field-based practitioners (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Daresh, 1997; Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Mullen, 2000b).

Some authors suggested potential changes to university educational administration programs to ensure that “certification” equates with “qualified” in the minds and perceptions of school districts. These stakeholders require confidence that principals have the knowledge, dispositions, and performance abilities (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) to meet the challenges of the changing role of the principalship. If there is a shortage of “qualified” candidates for principal vacancies, then principal candidates, preparation programs, and school districts must collaborate on the following:

1. The changing role of the principalship and how to make the position more attractive
2. Why women and minorities do not seek principal positions or, worse, are not given the opportunity to apply for the position
3. Mentoring women into, beginning, and during the principalship

In summary, school districts perceive a shortage of qualified candidates for principal positions. State Departments of Education certify more than enough candidates each school year to fill vacancies: approximately half of these newly certified candidates are women. Additionally, women and minorities are under-represented in principalships: some are not being considered as qualified candidates by school districts, other qualified women may not accept the negatives aspects of the role. Women who are mentored, either into the principalship or during service, consider mentoring beneficial to their careers (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; MacGregor, 2000; Ragins & Scandura, 1999).

### ***Beginning Principals and Early Years Programs***

Krajewski, Conner, Murray, and Williams (2004) offered the results of a study conducted by Farkus, Johnson, and Duffett as follows:

A recent survey found that 67% of principals believe that school of education leadership programs are out of touch with what it takes to run a school district; only 4% praise their graduate studies, and a majority say that mentoring and guidance from people they work with has the greatest benefit for them. (p. 2)

This view of principal preparation programs hails from principals just starting their careers and who may be experiencing the isolation that will likely happen throughout their administrative tenure. Perhaps these lessons of isolation are un-teachable and un-learnable in university preparation programs. Establishing mentoring relationships may alleviate the sense of isolation and provide opportunities for career advancement, collegiality, enculturation, and professional development (Holloway, 2004; Kritek, 1999; Lashway, 2003a, 2003b).

Daresch and Male (2000) compared British and U.S. first-year induction programs for principals/heads and reported three findings. First, U.S. administrators have extensive university preparation for the principalship while the British heads have no training or certification for leadership. Second, Great Britain legislated a formal induction program for new leaders, funded it for one year, and then dropped the program as an unfunded mandate. Third and more importantly, is the similarity between U.S. and British training systems regarding isolation. Both British and American beginning principals experienced isolation and a lack of support from the organizations that hired them (Daresch & Male, 2000).

The early career occurrences of principal mentoring seem to vary state-to-state in structure and in funding, but appear to be based on a 1985 Danforth Foundation Program (Monsour, 1998) or are developed in conjunction with universities. Career advancement may be a value-added element of mentoring new administrators (Limerick & Andersen, 1999); however, psycho-social support and enculturation that address the isolation felt early in a principal's career are critical components of many formal and informal programs (Bloom, 2004; Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling, 1995; Brock & Grady, 1996; Bush & Coleman, 1995; Dukess, 2001; Lovely, 1999; Monsour, 1998; Norton, 2001; Robertson, 1997; Shevitz, 1998; Southworth, 1995; Weingartner, 2001). This need to address isolation and to address career advancement may be a greater need for women, as fewer numbers of women administrators currently hold positions from which they can mentor (Hansen & Matthews, 2002; Samier, 2000).

An interesting twist on the mentor role is found in the University of Santa Cruz, CA, partnership programs with school districts in central California. With "professional coaching at the heart" (Bloom, 1999, p. 14),

of the new principal programs, mentors cannot be full time administrators. They are, instead, retirees or New Teacher Center employees with extensive administrative experience and are highly competent professional coaches. Additionally, Bloom (1999) reported that new principals had to learn how to participate, as protégés, in the coaching/mentoring process. Some principals were resistant to the developmental aspect of mentoring and sought out other new principals as peer-coaches. In Singapore, beginning principals continued their professional learning by primarily using peers or “fellow principals” as mentors (Lim, 2002, p. 2). As in the U.S., using peer mentoring helped expand the principals’ network beyond the school district to include professional organizations and cohort university groups.

An alternative to peer mentoring is offered by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) at the organization’s website, [www.naesp.org/mentorcenter](http://www.naesp.org/mentorcenter) (Malone, 2002, p. 6). At the Mentoring Center, fellow principals offer advice through scenarios of typical dilemmas experienced by new principals. Online mentoring for principals continues to develop in a variety of formats. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has the Virtual Mentor Program for secondary principals at [www.principals.org/CPD/self/mentors.cfm](http://www.principals.org/CPD/self/mentors.cfm) (McC Campbell, 2002). “Technology-mediated leadership development” (Webber, 2003, p. 201) guided an effort by the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Started as an email discussion group, this listserv now performs the function of international leadership development through online courses, resource materials, and increasingly available face-to-face online interactions between leaders. The only limit, says Webber (2003), to the online informal and formal mentoring that occurs is the access to technology for participants. Knouse (2001) added that the instant feedback and information found in virtual mentoring are cost-effective. The anonymity of online mentoring opens doors for women and other minority principals to gain access to mentoring relationships.

Other attempts to provide online professional development for new principals have met with tougher obstacles. Northeast Ohio’s Principal’s Academy Entry-Year Program (EYP) based its program objectives on extensive use of the program’s website including functions such as a bulletin board, mail, and chat, in addition to electronic resource links (Beebe, Trenta, Covrig, Cosiano, & Eastridge, 2002). Although the program developers recognized the need to lessen new principals’ feelings of isolation through instant access to supportive networks, they failed to anticipate the amount of time new principals had to commit to learning how to work the software. Much more successful and enduring is the formation of electronic journaling

triads as described by Riede (2003). Riede, a superintendent in New York, described the relationship as a formal mentoring program as he wrote daily advice and support to his two protégés—a new high school and a new elementary principal—who are literally hundreds of miles apart in the state of New York. The mentoring relationship is as strong as any face-to-face mentoring with all participants reaching the ultimate mentor/protégé level: collaboration as peers. That the three have become close friends points to the emotional level attainable through mentoring, even if the contact is online.

### ***Career Mentoring***

The mentoring needs of experienced principals differ from those of new administrators in several aspects. For example, new principals need support for the transition to practice and for the potential isolation. The mentoring needs of experienced administrators are, however, similar to those of new principals (Daresh & Playko, 1994). New and career principals communicate a desire to establish and expand professional networks. Additionally, both groups should experience professional development activities that enrich the leadership and learning opportunities for continuing success in the principalship.

Although few examples are found in the literature for mentoring career principals, what is presented is rich in stories of the impact of mentoring for continued principal collegiality and in its focus on student achievement and learning. By focusing on student learning and achievement, mentoring to acquire specific building-based skills can be enhanced by targeted learning or job-embedded learning (e.g., mentor and protégé doing walkthroughs together to improve the feedback for teachers, Barry & Kaneko, 2002; Dussault & Barnett, 1996; Lairon & Vidales, 2003). Programs to retain quality principals appear to embrace the collegial nature of mentoring (Willen, 2001) and highlight the need for a network of mentor support and professional development (Zellner et al., 2002). Additionally, some districts are employing life coaches to make the direct connection between school leadership and student achievement (Killion, 2002; Sparks, 2001).

Successful mentoring focuses on student achievement and develops professional collegiality through an expanding network of mentors. These programs manifest in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings throughout the world, but appear to be particularly effective in attracting and retaining women for careers in administration.

### **What are the Implications for Research with Respect to Mentoring?**

The earlier questions in this review regarding mentoring women principals (Why do we need to mentor principals? What does mentoring look like? What is the current status of mentoring?) do not necessarily clarify the practice of mentoring. In fact, there has not been enough information gleaned through research to fully describe and predict the “best practice(s)” for mentoring principals. Until a body of research convinces superintendents and school boards of what is considered “best practice,” journals will continue to report a variety of efforts to mentor at a variety of career points with little confirmation these efforts will be successful.

It is important, then, that research continue. First, there is a need to investigate aspects of *formal* mentoring programs that could replicate or enhance the reported successes of informal mentoring relationships. Specifically, more research could clarify mentor training curricula (What should be in the curriculum? How should the curriculum be delivered? How long a time should this training occur?) for those who are to be mentors. Training for the protégé on how to benefit from mentoring, whether that mentoring is formal or informal, also needs clarity.

Another important issue for further consideration is how best to capture and assimilate the mentoring experiences from other cultures. Mentoring experiences around the world have similarities and important differences. However, if the body of research is to be large enough to influence the field of educational administration, an attempt must be made to share or report experiences in a manner that increases the opportunities for all voices to be heard (Megginson, 2000.)

Allen and Eby (2003) suggested that the duration of the mentoring relationship, shorter (up to 1 year) versus longer (up to 6 or 7 years) influences mentoring effectiveness, as do the perceived similarities between mentor/protégé and the learning and quality in the relationship (p. 481). The issue of duration of the mentoring relationship deserves continued investigation. This may be especially important for women seeking administrative positions and those who experience changing family commitments over time as primary caregivers for children and parents.

Furthermore, the impact of the changing role of the principalship and its relationship to mentoring necessitates further investigation. How do mentors recognize and assimilate their influence on protégés if the role of the principal continues to change? Is the increased demand for accountability for student achievement an issue that mentoring can address? If so, in what form

should the mentoring be and who should do the mentoring? How do universities accept the challenge of training mentors as the role of the principalship continues to change? The answers to these questions may reside in listening to more women's stories of their experiences seeking the principalship and to their stories of experiencing longevity in the dynamic environment of education and school administration and not by accepting images depicting the female principal as an iron-fisted version of her male counterpart.

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# Voices of Women in the Field

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## The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

Barbara A. Marchese

Editor's note: One of the frequently mentioned challenges noted by principals is finding adequate time to complete all the tasks that present themselves. Writing for journals is not on the priority list of most principals. Although Dr. Marchese agreed to "write" an article, in fact the real world of the principalship took precedence over the writing task. This article, then, is the result of a telephone conversation, lunch and a writing "collaboration"—my fingers, her words. (Grady)

### The Good

The good is about *being here long enough*. I have been here for 14 years. I've been able to see many of the kids grow, change their value systems, and their sense of responsibility and maturity grow so much. Kids who have had major issues to contend with have mastered them and grown incredibly.

Perhaps some of this is because of our ideal size. We are a school of 200 students. I know every one of them. I can call each student by name. I think it makes a difference.

When it is time for high school, a large number of our students are given scholarships to attend the private high schools in our area. The students do very well in academics . . . kids with major issues have blossomed.

The good is about *the staff*. The staff here is very supportive and unified. They actually like and enjoy each other. We have a very low turnover. We have individuals who are in their 6th year and individuals who are in their 29th year. The staff average is 15 years in this school. Another key is that we have the right people in the right positions.

The school is on the map. We are not a small, lost school. The students have excelled academically and musically. The students have produced three CDs of their choral efforts. They have sung at the Governor's Inaugural Ball and the Archbishop's Dinner this year.

I support and believe in all of these student activities. The kids compete in speech contests too. Before I came, there was no participation in speech. We have a junior high teacher who is good at this. Math was not a strength at

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the school. Now there are math trophies in our entry way. We have worked to achieve these accomplishments. I wanted the students to compete. Now they are doing far more than competing, they are winning the prizes. These accomplishments are possible because we have the right people in the right positions. The staff take more ownership of the students and their accomplishments. The view has changed from being simply this school to being members of a larger system. Our students have gained recognition beyond the boundaries of the school. The staff and students feel good about their accomplishments and have the confidence to move out to the diocese at large.

I now have teachers as well as students participating at the system level. One of the teachers is on the Archdiocesan Board of Education. Another teacher is a safe environment trainer for the diocese. When I was trained as a safe environment trainer, I took a teacher to the training with me. Now we both train other people. By doing this, the teacher's confidence in her abilities has been reinforced. We can move beyond the building in the work we do. I am just dumb enough to think all the teachers in this school have the capacity to do it.

The good is about the *new Activity Center*. The activity center was a parish dream. Plans for the center were made during the 1970s. It took people to risk enough, to say we'll do it, we'll move ahead. For the first time in the school's history we can finally be a home team in our own gym. We can host other teams here. Building this center sends the message that we are here to stay. What it has done for the parish and everyone else around is incredible in terms of building community and commitment.

We are not poor enough to get much attention, but we're not rich enough to get anything without a lot of effort. The activity center signifies what we get when we make an effort. The center has led to increased parent involvement in many ways, from working the concession stand to cheering for our teams. The transformation has been incredible.

The good is about *the Media Center*. Members of the community donated labor to build all new library shelves. We now have state-of-the art technology thanks to the collective efforts of our stakeholders.

The good is about the *planned Renovation for the Summer of 05*. This will be the second big building project that calls for \$600,000.00 that is outside the parish budget. For this project, the skin will be removed from the building, the windows will be replaced, the electrical system will be updated, a new entry way will be built and the building will be air conditioned.

The only way to raise this much money is through the people who are watching the school and like what is going on. It has taken a period of time to build this level of confidence. We now have \$293,000.00 in hand without a big donor of \$150,000.00.

Our students are involved in contributing to these fund raising initiatives as well. During the first part of the 2004-2005 school year, the students have raised \$8,000.00 from the sale of the CDs, bake sales, dress down days, SPN Stay Strong Bracelets, Boxtops for Education, and a student-directed junior high play. This effort is a result of students, parents, and staff coming forward with suggestions for student ownership.

### The Bad

The bad is about *Changes of Leadership*. What I have discovered is that the principal is the person who has to adjust to the change. The new person who comes in doesn't have to adjust. I have had four pastors in 13 years. Every single time I have had to adjust to the new person's leadership style or lack of style. That has been the key. Half of the new people have been exceptional leaders. Half of the new people have had serious problems: emotional, mental, and lack of leadership skills.

The bad is about *the situation I am in*. For instance the financial worries effect every aspect of this job. Finances are key in the teachers you can hire, the benefits you can offer, the additional benefits you can offer to students such as a counselor, foreign languages, or special education support. We, as a school, are limited in what can be offered because of what's available in terms of finances. I feel compelled to take on the development activities, the public relations activities, the fund raising activities, I take on everything. If I don't we won't have the resources we need to support the school and its activities. I'm on my own, and I know it. I feel alone and responsible although I have many volunteer helpers.

We are located in a middle class neighborhood, yet, we have extreme cases of wealth and poverty. Where we are situated, we do not qualify for much help. We're not able to write a check. We don't get considered for

grants. We have to rely on outside sources that we tap into through fund raising.

The bad is about the *home life of some of the students*. I see parents who do not have basic parenting skills. They are frustrated. It is hard to help parents understand what children need, what is really important. The parents must help the children become accountable and responsible for their actions. They should not give the kids everything they want. There is not a lot of follow through from some of the parents. I see more and more as kids go home to empty houses. I try to spend time teaching parents what they need to teach their kids.

I take junior high kids out to breakfast and lunch. I am amazed, disappointed, and concerned at the movies they have seen and where the kids have been. It is as though in their whole life there are no boundaries. They have no sense of what is important.

Although I see my job as instructing the parents, some of them aren't very open to it!

The bad is about *the added responsibilities schools have to assume*. It's a tale of constant add ons with no new resources. We are now responsible for asthma! There are more and more things that schools have to know. Many of these new issues are not about instruction or education, these are medical, health or social concerns that are expensive and unfunded.

A new issue for us will be the use of defibrillators. This again is a medical or health issue. We will not get any help with this. We will all need to be trained. It is hard to sell this need for training to the staff. The staff is good. The staff does much "parenting at school." In fact the teachers do more parenting and counseling than they ever expected to do in a school setting. There is so much to do and you just have to do it.

There are so many more medical issues we must be alert to. We constantly need more training on these medical issues. All of the teachers are CPR trained. When I became a principal, I never thought these medical aspects would be part of my responsibilities.

The bad is about the *expectations that follow acquisition of an Advanced Degree*. For me, once I received the doctoral degree, everyone looks at me differently. They look at me as though I should have all the answers. They look at me and question why I am still at that school? You're expected to move up an imaginary ladder and you must do it quickly.

I don't see things like that. After I completed 18 hours of graduate classes, I decided to go ahead and get a masters degree. I didn't start taking those courses with the idea of getting a masters degree. I didn't have that goal in mind. My approach to my doctoral studies was similar. I was



motivated by the learning opportunity not by the acquisition of a terminal degree.

I hear all kinds of conversation from others about where I should be. Degrees are equated with capability when I don't necessarily agree with that.

### The Ugly

The ugly is about the *Death of a Colleague*. The first year I was here, the pastor was sick and ended up dying. This was a person that I was close to and the person had become a support to me.

Other people have died in the years I've been here. One died very suddenly. I see my support system changing constantly. Another individual moved away. Another principal got fed up and retired. Your support system changes. People experience burn out.

I know that I make new friends and that keeps me going. When I look at the classes I took in my masters and doctoral program, they didn't talk about the people you'll become close to. They talk about curriculum and instruction. It's a very lonely job. You don't have a lot of people to share your work with. It has an emotional impact on me and I carry it home with me. Other people who do not do this job, don't get it the way people who do it everyday get it.

In crisis situations, I am looked to as the big mentor to help them. Maybe this is because I know how they feel. I get at least a call a day from people who don't know what to do when tragedies occur.

The ugly is about the *Brokenness of Staff Members*. I am struck by the sadness and brokenness of staff members who have issues in their families. It's very hard because they call me whenever something happens in their families. I'm called when the family has been blown out of the water by a crisis or tragedy. All I can do is be present. Then I am the one who has to call everyone else so they're not blindsided when they come to work and discover what has happened. In the months following these events, you are reminded daily of the tragedies because the individuals are with you every day. The anniversaries come, and you're reminded again. I am not complaining, it is simply that not in my entire life did I think I'd be sitting and experiencing this with someone else. The loss of a 14-year-old, the premature death of a spouse, the arrest of a family member, I feel these losses, and others, 100 times over every time I have to share the events with other staff members.

The ugly is about the *threats to the safety of children*. When child protective services shows up and wants to question a child, I must wonder what in the world do they want to question the child about? As a principal I

have to have training in all these areas. For instance, I need to be educated about the internet and what is appropriate and inappropriate internet use. The internet affects the family and the rest of the school when inappropriate internet use has occurred.

As principal, I must act with sensitivity and confidentiality as the complex issues of school and family are handled. I have been through one court case. I don't think families are aware of what's out there. In spite of all the educating we think we've done, parents never think it will happen to them and their kids. When I look at this, I have a second instance with the same child. Now I'm in a position of checking up on the parents and the child to make sure that the medical and psychological things are being taken care of.

The ugly is about the *Confidentiality Challenge*. I am the only person in charge. I carry a lot home with me each day. I can see how people get sick of carrying this load around. I have all this information and I can't share it with anyone. I don't have an assistant principal. I have chosen a teacher to help me sort through these things, to analyze and help look through the situations to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

My job is much more about relations than it is about curriculum and instruction issues. I believe the key to the success I have had is that I have taken the time to get to know the students, families, and teachers. I think I have proven to them that I first and foremost care about them.

The frustration I have with this aspect of my job is that my efforts may not show up on standardized test scores. The issue for me is that you can't evaluate these efforts by looking at a piece of paper. I believe the success of our school is that we are able to do both—the academic and the relationships. I care about and I know these kids. They know they are important. Because the kids know that people care about them, that is the reason for their successes.

In order to be a good principal, you need to have common sense, a sense of humor and compassion. I don't think my greatest strengths are what is written about the principalship in the books. It isn't about what I read in the books. I simply think "I get it" from being around people. I understand what they are feeling. People who work with kids have to get it because kids know if you get it.

# FIRST THINGS FIRST: WRITING STRATEGIES

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Marilyn L. Grady

This is a new section of the *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*. The purpose of this column is to encourage writers to write and to offer suggestions about writing. Mary Poppin's "Well begun is half done" should be the mantra of the writer!

First, Select a Topic!

Although the topics you can write about may appear to be endless, you would be wise to *stay close to your areas of expertise*. Your expertise may be based on the work you do every day. It may be showcased in papers you have written in the past. Your dissertation may be a focus of your expertise. Your expertise may be linked to a workshop you have led or a class you have taught. As a beginning, identify your areas of strength and stick with them!

It is easier to *choose your topic* than to have a topic assigned to you. Beware the trap of unmitigated enthusiasm. This would be the time when you say "yes" when you should have said "no." When someone suggests a great writing idea or topic, encourage that person to write about it. When it is time to sit down and write, the words flow more readily when the topic is yours. Writing can be very enjoyable—when you write what you know.

*Consider your passions.* Think about the topics you can talk about constantly. These topics may lend themselves to writing. Imagine sharing your passions with others through a printed manuscript. In education, there is a constant conversation about our knowledge of the craft of teaching, learning, and leading that is never translated into writing. The individuals who are specialists at this craft knowledge rarely write about their experiences. We need to remember that writing is one way to "pass it on!"

# Book Review

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Mark A. Giesler

**RECONSIDERING FEMINIST RESEARCH IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP. Michelle D. Young, & Linda Skrla (Editors). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003**

*Reconsidering Feminist Research in Educational Leadership* is rich feminist food for thought for both the novice and experienced researcher. Dubbed as “a critical reflection on the field of feminist research in educational leadership as a whole” (p. 3), the work is a three-part collection of articles edited by Michelle D. Young and Linda Skrla. In Part 1, four authors expose methodological dilemmas that “contradict and unsettle the foundational beliefs of many feminist researchers” (p. 4). Part 2 explores alternative, expanded methodologies based on the criticisms of Part 1. Part 3 is an application of the “reconsidered methods and epistemologies” (p. 4) offered by three researchers on educational leadership.

Michelle D. Young and Linda Skrla’s text is more than a critique of traditional, androcentric notions of educational leadership. It casts a critical eye toward feminist responses to such perspectives. Theirs is a book by researchers for researchers that provocatively questions and challenges the theoretical underpinnings of past and present feminist research practice.

Margaret Grogan (Chapter 2) takes a feminist/postmodern perspective on the problematic way research has framed the superintendency. Using the work of Foucault, Grogan identifies four paradoxes of the superintendency. She challenges the reader to identify new theories of leadership based on the paradoxes and lays the groundwork for a “reconception of the superintendency.” Grogan avoids essentializing leadership and takes into account the contradictions and tensions inherent in its construction.

In “Considering (Irreconcilable?) Contradictions in Cross-Group Feminist Research” (Chapter 3), Michelle D. Young applies the issue of ambiguity to the subject of difference. She sketches a broad overview of the problems involved in cross-group research, the idea that all research involves irreconcilable “crossings” (p. 36) between the researcher and the researched. To her credit, Young neither condemns nor condones cross-group research. Rather, she hopes “to explore the complexity of the issue” (p. 36). As a response to her critique, then, she offers concrete, provocative suggestions

### About the Author

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for feminist qualitative researchers. Her suggested alternative conceptual and textual strategies represent the kind of research that narrows the gap between the researcher and the Other: "Ambiguity may breed creativity and innovation" (p. 69).

Jennifer Scott (Chapter 4) frames the traditional dichotomous approach to research about gender as too simplistic. The "difference, deficit, and dominance" models of gender representation have ignored the "ambiguities, multiplicities, and contradictions inherent in sexual and gender identity" (p. 83). Scott utilizes a social constructionist perspective to give voice to the experiences of two women superintendents. According to Scott, women superintendents may consciously use stereotypically male leadership strategies, but they respond to discursive fields bound by social factors that tend to be viewed as gender-neutral.

This construction of genderlessness, Scott further points out, is harmful because it creates a "bifurcation of consciousness." Two worlds—the public and private spheres—coexist, but not peacefully. In the private sphere, for example, emotion can be expressed, whereas in the public setting, it must be repressed. The result is loneliness, despair, inadequacy, guilt, and a "fragmented identity" (p. 98).

Skrla's "Mourning Silence: Women Superintendents (and a Researcher) Rethink Speaking Up and Speaking Out" (Chapter 5) applies Derrida's work about mourning and the theme of institutional-individual silence to her own study of three female superintendents. Her use of "empowering research methodology" (p. 107) invokes a three-tier approach that she claims breaks down the researcher-researched dynamic. Each participants left the profession and mourned both her own career and the superintendency profession. Skrla further incorporates a feminist agenda in her description of "mourning one's research." She notes how the women in her study changed as a result of their participation in the initial interviews. Skrla breaks the silence of the women in the process; she allows them to "reflect, learn, grow, and ultimately, heal" (p. 127) through the research act.

The authors represented in Part 1 articulate a common theme in literature about the superintendency and educational leadership: the silence and silencing of women in higher education positions. Their work demonstrates the important task of feminist research, to give voice to such women. Yet, the effective means to that goal, in their views, is a matter of contention. Perhaps the only area of agreement among the authors is their acceptance of ambiguities, paradoxes, and complexities in that endeavor.

Part 1 does well to “unsettle the foundational beliefs” (p. 3) of feminist researchers. In Part 2, Young and Skrla locate the source of the unsettling. The six chapters in this section of the book suggest that research in educational leadership has been grounded in white, male, and heterosexual epistemologies at the expense of complexity and diversity.

Cynthia Dillard (Chapter 6) and Sylvia Mendez-Morse (Chapter 7) take the criticism one step further and implicate feminist research in educational leadership as centered in White feminist thought. Dillard explores an “endarkened feminist epistemology” (p. 132) a substitute for the term “enlightened” as it refers to the well-established canon of feminist research. Mendez-Morse, in her advocacy of Chicana feminist epistemology, explicates a “Pan-American” perspective. Both Dillard and Mendez-Morse call for a reconception of the “recipe metaphor” of research, where the researcher is set apart from the subject (the recipe) and the final outcome is “objective.” More useful, from their perspectives, is a metaphor that takes in the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and language.

Dillard writes of “research as a responsibility” (p. 134). Her use of life notes—“broadly constructed personal narratives such as letters, stories, journal entries, reflections, poetry, music, and other artful forms” (p. 134-135)—empowers African-American women to represent their ways of knowing in multiple and complex ways. Dillard outlines what “research as responsibility” might look like in her list of assumptions of an endarkened epistemology. Key to this approach is a researcher’s participation in his/her community. Dillard regards research as a spiritual pursuit of purpose, a vibrant, interactive dialogue, and foray into the everyday life meaning-making for African-American women. Dillard calls for a desire to place the power asymmetries that keep the racist, sexist, and classist structures in place at the center of the African-American research project. For Dillard, life note narratives signify the emergence of a silenced voice that will bring such power inequities to light.

Mendez-Morse’s survey of Chicana feminist work brings to light a similar expansiveness of educational leadership research. She focuses on one of three aspects of her Pan-American perspective, the application of multiple oppressions to the conversation of educational leadership. Mendez-Morse

explores how Chicana feminists have negotiated the oppressions of sexism and patriarchy, race/ethnicity, class, language, religion, and sexual orientation. She offsets a rather bleak picture by her discovery of hidden strengths and talents of Chicana women unrecognized by the mainstream culture.

Mendez-Morse's work warns of the one-sided nature of studies of gender in educational leadership. She aptly points out that most studies consider only "one form of difference"—gender. The significance of the other forms of difference she outlines and, more important, how they intersect to create the social construction of women in educational leadership, are vital additions to the feminist research project in the field.

The final chapters in Part 2 comprise a dialogue among several researchers about yet another epistemological framework, Julie Laible's concept of a "loving epistemology" (p. 179). The editors republish one of Laible's last pieces of scholarship (Chapter 8). Soon after she delivered the transcript she was killed in a car accident.

Laible assumes an explicitly Christian stance to "solidify a theory of knowing others that are human imperatives of living in the world as compassionate, loving human beings" (p. 182). Her speech considers what in the profession of educational leadership hampers that vision. She poses two rather controversial assertions: (a) that research on Others is fundamentally unethical, especially Euro-American research on people of color; and (b) that universities in the United States function in such a way that benefits Euro-American, middle-to-upper-class males. Rather than talk about systemic change in the university setting, she brings the discussion back to her research. She calls for the placement of ethics and responsibility at the center of the research process. She further discusses the need to "travel," drawing upon Lugones's idea that identifying with our subjects means understanding what it means "to be ourselves in their eyes." She concludes, "Only when we have traveled in each other's worlds are we fully subjects to each other" (p. 190).

Following the reprint of Laible's speech are responses from three fellow researchers. The articles are part memorial, part critical perspective of Laible and her idea of a "loving epistemology." Inspired by Laible's work, Catherine Marshall (Chapter 10) reflects on the evolution of research and policy approaches as they have perpetuated the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. Marshall calls for "social activism as research." Researchers must take advantage of "activism-embedded agendas" that "equip people to resist oppression and move people to struggle" (p. 217).

Colleen A. Capper (Chapter 9) expresses concern that Laible's criteria for responsible research implies a pecking order approach: "Why can't some

forms of knowledge production just be different from other ways?" she asks (p. 197). Capper builds on the notion of "loving" as movement beyond a "good guy-bad guy" perspective and toward "a sustained dialogue with multiple intersecting others, including those traditionally in power" (p. 199).

Laible's responders raise questions that get to the heart of research theory and technique. They enhance Laible's work in their recognition that research is a mutually engaging process. Responsible feminist research sees the Other in the self and vice-versa. To be sure, there is discomfort in this dance. Yet, a true "loving epistemology" requires researcher and researched to be close enough to step on each other's toes a bit.

Part 2 of *Reconsidering* uncovers an unsettling notion in the world of feminist research: that feminist research itself can be sewn into the "cloth of interwoven oppressions" (p. 167). It is not enough, the authors remind us, to write about the prominence of androcentric epistemology. This project is merely one fiber in the cloth. Attempts to unravel all of the fibers, even those perpetuated by single-minded feminist researchers, are necessary and "endarkening" pursuits. Laible's "loving epistemology" may be one way to approach this task. To speak the truth in research involves the courage to travel to other worlds, despite the fact that, as Laible's responders point out, the journey is fraught with epistemological difficulties. Part 2 inspires the feminist scholar to struggle with what "responsible research" entails on his or her own academic journey.

Young and Skrla characterize Part 3 of their collection as a demonstration of "the type of knowledge about school leadership that can be generated by researchers who are guided by reexamined feminist epistemologies and who use reconceptualized feminist methods" (p. 4). The represented authors apply the issues raised in Parts 1 and 2 to produce a vision of what a reconsidered feminist epistemology might look like. Of the three articles, Young's description of how Iowa education task forces and policy documents constructed a proposed shortage of school administrator, and in the process left gender out of the picture (Chapter 14), is most instructive.

Young points out that the omission was not intentional. Her point gets at the heart of the relationship between dominant discourse and feminist inquiry. Young places gender back into the discursive framework. She uses qualitative findings from interviews to unearth institutional gender discrimination and lack of role models as partial explanation for the shortage. Moreover, she asks the bigger question that underscores the feminist agenda as a whole: What impact does male-dominated ideology in constructions of educational leadership have on feminist critical thought?



The articles in *Reconsidering* suggest that dominant ideology must be challenged. How that happens is more a matter of dispute than agreement, a notion that falls in line with feminist inquiry. It is ironic that the cohesiveness of Young and Skrla's collection stems from the ambiguities and multiple complexities that dominant ideology ignores and/or subverts. The idea that a researcher can never ethically represent his/her subject is radical, but worthy of exploration nonetheless.

At times the authors in *Reconsidering* run the risk of ghettoizing feminist research epistemology. Grogan, at least, admits that her research should have addressed the systemic forces that make it difficult for women to reach and thrive in the superintendency. Young fails to address why the academy has been closed to her feminist alternatives of scholarly writing and thought. Nor does she discuss strategies to counter the preponderance of androcentric research in the nation's postsecondary institutions. Skrla avoids discussion of how she has mourned her own research, reflection that would illuminate struggles as a feminist researcher in an andocentric world.

The editors state that their book serves as a source for feminist researchers in educational leadership. Certainly, they have created a thoughtful forum for feminist researchers to reconsider their own methods of inquiry. But the book fails to address in any length the important issue of how such reconception might function in the real world of academia. How do feminist researchers negotiate a professional terrain that by most accounts remains the most male-identified of all the human service professions? How does the researcher use the ethical and political tensions identified in the text to empower, not paralyze her? How might the epistemologies represented in the book shatter the glass ceiling that the academician encounters each day?

Two authors in *Reconsidering Feminist Research in Educational Leadership* use the metaphor of a cloth to describe their hope for feminist research. Compared to dominant constructions, the cloth of feminist research is laden with a myriad of fabrics. They are fabrics of many textures and colors. They all have the potential to create a piece of clothing that will expose the oppression of hegemonic constructions of educational leadership research. The women and men who have the courage to adorn the result will be richer researchers indeed.