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WOMEN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:

MOVING BEYOND THE MYTH

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WOMEN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: MOVING BEYOND THE MYTH

By

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:
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By

Kathleen Emily Pecora

This study explored the lived experiences of three female high school principals. It focused on the stories that they told about their leadership practice and the ways that their experiences impacted their beliefs about the role of the high school principal. The purpose of this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. The central research questions were: How have the lived experiences of women high school principals, both professional and personal, defined how they think about and practice leadership? What can we learn from these lived experiences that might add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship? Three subsidiary questions were also addressed: (a) How has the women's gendered experience as high school principals defined their professional work as school leaders within the context of the high school? Has gender played a role in their philosophies? (b) How has the context of their work influenced their definition of self and leadership? What contexts do they believe are significant in framing their behaviors? and (c) As women in the high school principalship, how do/might they advocate for themselves and others aspiring to this position?

This was a qualitative study that used a phenomenological approach. Most importantly, it employed a feminist lens to explore the gendered dimension of the high school principalship (other areas of difference include race and ethnicity, class, age, and

marital status, although they were not explored in this study) in order to understand the perceived practice of three women high school principals and to explore the opportunities available to help them lead in the context of their roles and responsibilities as high school principals. In this study, poststructural feminist theory facilitated the analysis and deconstruction of the discourse and the contexts in which the participants practiced. This lens was focused on the concepts of knowledge about self, webs of power, and identity in the context of the profession.

The themes that emerged in the talk of these female principals related to how relationships influenced their definition of self, the ways they created an identity of power, and how they are reframing and revitalizing their professional identities through the contexts in which they live and work. Although each of these themes is unique, they are also closely interwoven, just as all of the women in this study are unique, yet at the same time, share many of the same leadership qualities.

The female leaders in this study had a repertoire of leadership behaviors that are particularly effective under current conditions in education. Giving women equal access to leadership roles in the high school not only would increase the size of a school's pool of potential principal candidates, but also it would be likely to increase the proportion of candidates with superior leadership skills. Implementing a policy of nondiscriminatory selection for leadership positions "would produce greater fairness and economic rationality, which are characteristics that should foster organizations' long-term success" (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003, p. 23).

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Howard A. MacIntosh, for what has been, and to my grandsons, Zane Atom Zwiernik and Joshua Michael Lenkowski, for what is yet to be. My father has always pushed me to do my best and has valued a "good education" above all else. Thank you, Dad, for the drive and determination you instilled in me. Following in my father's footsteps, I trust that both of you, Zane and Josh, will always do your best in whatever your endeavor. I hope that your love for learning is always a priority in your lives.

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I sincerely appreciate the wise advice and counsel of Sue Miller who served as the editor for this dissertation. Her thoughts and encouragement were the frosting on the cake. Thanks also to Karen Rivard for her skills, kindness, and patience.

Many thanks, of course, go to the women who participated in this study. Their willingness to share their time and their lives with me made me realize how lucky students in their schools are to have administrators of this caliber. Thanks go also to the other women high school principals who willingly fight the fight for their students every day.

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And a special thanks
to the people who didn't hire me
many years ago.
If it had not been for your
kindness
in refusing me a job
this humble person would never
have accomplished this
memorable task.

PREFACE

The monthly County Principals Meeting was held in January of 2003 in the Career Center restaurant. I arrived a bit early and found one long table set up for our group. I was the first to take a seat, and chose to sit with my back to the wall, right at the middle of the table. Soon after, many more principals filed in and found a seat at the table.

After a dozen or so had seated themselves, the principal of the Career Center and a co-worker who was presenting at the meeting seated themselves on either side of me. We were the only women at the table.

Within several minutes, it became obvious that there were not enough seats at our table, so the Career Center principal and her co-worker jumped up to ready another table for the still-entering principals. When they finished, rather than walk around the table to the back side where they had originally been seated, the principal and her co-worker chose to sit at the new table. They were quickly joined by those principals who were still entering the restaurant.

At this point, everybody was seated and chatting amiably with the principals next to them. At the end of the table to my left, there was enthusiastic discussion of the recent high school basketball playoffs. The discussion to my right involved pro football teams and their prospects for next year.

The chairs directly to my left and to my right remained empty, so I smiled and gazed out the window.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

MOVING BEYOND THE MYTH

Myth

Long afterward, Oedipus, old and blinded, walked the roads.
He smelled a familiar smell. It was the Sphinx.
Oedipus said, "I want to ask one question.
Why didn't I recognize my mother?"
"You gave the wrong answer," said the Sphinx.
"But that was what made everything possible," said Oedipus.
"No," she said. "When I asked, what walks on four legs in the morning,
two at noon, and three in the evening, you answered, Man.
You didn't say anything about woman."
"When you say Man," said Oedipus, "you include woman too.
Everyone knows that."
She said,
"That's what you think." (Muriel Rukeyser, Out of Silence, 1992)

Introduction to the Study

A myth is a story that has been transferred verbally from one generation to the next. It functions as a cohesive element in our culture because it gives people a sense of identity and belonging. At the same time as it provides cohesiveness, however, a myth also can serve to exclude those who are not defined as part of the community.

Our culture is fraught with myths that limit the options of women. Those with social, economic, and political power—mostly men—have the most influence over what is considered "important," and because of this inequity in power, women may find themselves in what has been called a "double bind" (Jamieson, 1995). A double bind occurs when people are placed in a situation in which, no matter what they do, they cannot win. According to Jamieson, "The double bind is a strategy perennially used by those with power against those without" (p. 5). More specifically, Rowe (1997) saw the double bind as a symbol for the dilemmas in which women find themselves, especially if

they happen to be intelligent and competent.

The "Dress for Success" mentality frequently found in management literature is typical of the masculine perspective that places women—especially women who are secondary school principals—between two competing worlds (Helgeson, 1997). In the July/August 1993 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, Nichols describes these worlds:

> Women who attempt to fit themselves into a managerial role by acting like men . . . are forced to behave in a sexually dissonant way. They risk being characterized as 'too aggressive,' or worse, just plain 'bitchy.' Yet women who act like ladies, speaking indirectly and showing concern for others, risk being seen as "ineffective." (p. 60)

Effective leadership has long been associated with masculine characteristics, but women who act outside of their traditional gendered role are viewed unfavorably (Shakeshaft, 1987). Women leaders are devalued if they act feminine, but also if they act masculine, leaving women in a dilemma as to how they should behave.

The myths surrounding leadership in educational organizations in general and in the high school principalship in particular, have either defined leadership in masculine terms or have assumed a universal view of leadership roles, acknowledging women but assuming that women and men perform the role in the same ways. "Feminine attributes are valued only in the most marginal sense" (Ely & Meyerson, 2000, p. 109). However, if we do not examine the experiences of women, if we do not look at the nuances and variations in their ways of leadership, the myths surrounding educational leadership, particularly at the secondary level, will persist. "Few studies have been done that examine a solely female view of the school world; until this research is done, we have only findings reported within a male framework" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 169). Whereas the male experience in educational leadership has been powerfully articulated, the experience

of women has not. The world of women as educational leaders must be examined in order to understand how women negotiate the organizations in which they practice. Until this happens, female principals will continue to sit in meeting rooms filled with male principals and smile and nod while the boys discuss the NFL. When Oedipus implies that there is little difference between the experience of men and women, the Sphinx replies, "That's what you think." The challenge of this research is to see whether the Sphinx was right.

Purpose of the Study

Women need to discover, speak, and live their own truths. Women need to tell their own stories and express their individual gifts to the world—especially if leadership is one of those gifts. Hence, my main purpose in this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. To fulfill that purpose, I explored the lived experiences of women who are high school principals. I examined their assumptions and beliefs about leadership by exploring the nuances and variations of their day-to-day practice. By gaining this knowledge, our understanding of school leadership can be expanded, potentially adding a new element to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship.

Historically, women have been an anomaly in the role of high school principal. During the 20th century, there was never a time when there were more female than male principals at the secondary level. By 1990, women accounted for nearly 75 % of all public school teachers, but only 12% of secondary school principals (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993, p. 1). Recent National Center for Education Statistics research indicated that from

1999 to 2001, 55% of secondary teachers were female, whereas women accounted for only 21.8% of secondary principalships.

Table 1.1: Eighty Years of Women in the High School Principalship (in percent)

	1905	1928	1950	1972-73	1982-83	1984-85	1999-2001*
Female Secondary Teachers	64.2	63.7	56.2	46.0	48.9	50.1	55.0
Female Secondary Principals	5.7	7.9	6.0	1.4	3.2	3.5	21.8

Sources: Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 20; *NCES, 2000-2001

Before 1970, there was no reliable, accurate system of data collection that would indicate the number of women in school administration. According to Shakeshaft (1987), the lack of accurate data leaves the status of women administrators "blurred and ambiguous" (p. 10). As in Table 1.1, much of the data must be assembled and synthesized in order to obtain a picture of the status of female administrators. Mertz and McNeely (1998) found a great deal of inconsistency in the way data have been interpreted and used, and argued that it is therefore difficult to determine whether the number of female administrators is increasing or decreasing. However, regardless of the approach, it is clear that the number of women in secondary school administration has not reached parity with the number of males in the position (Riehl & Byrd, 1997).

Shakeshaft (1987) also pointed to a theoretical void in the research. She asked, "What if the study of school administration took into account this female world? What would theory and practice look like?" (p. 198). In the last several decades, researchers in

the field of women's studies and particularly in the field of educational administration have questioned the traditional theories of school leadership whose underpinnings come from the fields of business, management, and sociology (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995). They have argued that our understanding of leadership comes from "an embedded privileged perspective, which largely ignores issues of status, gender, and race" (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995, p. 12).

Shakeshaft (1989) charted research on women in educational administration into six stages and noted that research on women in the field has been limited. The majority of inquiries have been concentrated in the first three stages (Table 1.2). Research in stages 4 and 5 has explored and documented the lived experiences of female administrators and has the potential to provide alternative views that challenge the embedded, privileged perspective that currently is the foundation of our understanding of school leadership.

Table 1.2: Stages of Research in Educational Administration

Stage	Question	Approach	Outcome
1. Absence of women documented	How many women are administrators, and what positions do they hold?	Surveys that count	Documentation of the numbers of women by administrative position
2. Search for current and previous female administrators	What are the characteristics and history of women in school administration?	Surveys of women administrators. Historical research on great women	Demographic and attitudinal descriptions of women administrators. Stories of female administrators
3. Women as disadvantaged or subordinate	Why are there so few women leaders in schools?	Surveys of attitudes towards women and women's experiences	Identification of barriers to advancement in administration
4. Women studied on their own terms	How do women describe their lives and experiences?	Surveys, interviews, observational studies of women	A world view from a female perspective
5. Women as challenge to theory	How must theory change to include women's experience?	Analysis of theories/ methods appropriate for women	Reality that theories do not work for women
6. Transformation of theory	What are new theories of human behavior in organizations?	A range of approaches.	Reconceptualization of theory to include men's and women's experience

Source: Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 327

To transform theory, research must proceed through the fourth and fifth stages. It is apparent from this progression of stages that, although recent questioning has expanded leadership theory beyond its traditional boundaries, a disparity still remains. This disparity supports the need for a study that captures the experiences of female high school principals.

Currently, female school administrators have few places to look to find validation and a sense of identification because texts, educational journals, and related literature rarely touch on their experiences (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995). (See Table 1.3) As a result, overgeneralizations and assumptions continue as women leaders are encouraged to buy into a universal notion of school leadership that fails to address them universally. According to Mertz and McNeely (1998), theories of school administration continue to "rest on a male-defined conceptual base" (p. 196).

Table 1.3: Privileged Viewpoints in 10 Years of Professional Journals (1983-1992)

Journal	Articles Identified by Search	Challenge to Privileged View	Limited Challenge to Privileged View	No Challenge to Privileged View
School Administrator	27	5	13	9
Executive Editor	31	8	8	15
Educational Leadership	56	16	18	22
Principal	18	1	7	10
NASSP Journal	37	8	15	14
Kappan	70	31	23	18

Source: Gosetti & Rusch, 1995, as cited in Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. 28

The number of articles that in some way challenge the privileged view of

educational leadership during the decade from 1983 through 1992 is indicative of the limited discussion surrounding diversity and equity in school leadership (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995). The low numbers of women in secondary school administration appear to be a nonissue and, as Gosetti and Rusch described it, present a "privileged silence" in professional journals (p. 29).

A feminist perspective on school leadership has the potential to illuminate women's experiences in the role of high school principal and thereby to rewrite the folklore that casts women as minor characters in the role, or worse, that eliminates them from the cast entirely. A feminist perspective challenges the myths surrounding the principalship, which come from a privileged notion of leadership that ignores gender. Skrla (1997), however, suggested that "scholarship informed by feminist theory would seem to be an obvious solution to counteracting the androcentric orientation of the bulk of the research in the field. Unfortunately, for those seeking a quick fix, rethinking a century's worth of organizational theory from a feminist perspective is far from simple" (p. 11). Although a daunting task, the research on the nuances and variations in the day-to-day practice of women high school principals will add to the knowledge base on effective school leadership and may ultimately help to provide a master narrative that includes women.

The Problem and Its Significance

Literature on effective school leadership (Fullan, 1998) has indicated that women typically bring to their practice many of the characteristics that currently are missing and necessary for reform (Irby & Brown, 1995). These approaches to performing the role of high school principal are extremely pertinent to all educational leaders as they consider

changing their practice. Promoting the broad-based understanding that women may see, value, and know their world differently from men is important, not only for those who may wonder whether women's ways of doing things are correct, but also for those working with them (Shakeshaft, 1987). Clearly, many women principals provide incontrovertible evidence that they are able to perform the tasks required of anyone in the role. They also furnish important role models for all high school principals looking to bring about sustainable, positive change in our schools.

It is clear that the role of high school principal is important (Murphy, 1999; Tirozzi, 2001). It is also clear that the traditional definition of the position must change to meet the increasing demands of governmental policy, parents and community members, and corporate interests. According to Fullan (1998), high school principals need, "a new mindset and guidelines for action to break through the bonds of dependency that have entrapped those who want to make a difference in their schools" (p. 1). The different ways in which women see, value, and know their world indicate that women may be uniquely suited for educational leadership positions. Studies have indicated that the typical female principal is better qualified for the job than the typical male principal: She is better educated, older, and has had more teaching experience (Gross & Trask 1976). In certain studies, women administrators rated higher than their male counterparts on their teacher evaluation scores, teacher examination scores, and college grade point averages (Shakeshaft, 1987). Shakeshaft (1987) suggested that women principals are more likely to see their job as that of "master teacher," whereas men seem to see the position from the old "managerial-industrial perspective" (p. 173). Much of the recent research has focused on efforts to explain why women continue to be so underrepresented in the field (Table

1.2, Stage 3) when the data reveals that women are qualified for the position.

Although women are underrepresented in the high school principalship, the data have also indicated that a more people-oriented, stereotypically feminine style of leadership is now finding success in the business world. As Fullan (2001) explained, "There is a new style of leadership in successful companies—one that focuses on people and relationships as essential to getting sustained results" (p. 53). The need for change in educational leadership at the high school level is clear; however, "if we are to make any lasting change, we must confront a system that is white male centered and white male dominated and change that system" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 144). The concepts of leadership that guide the choices of women presently filling the role of high school principal have not yet been identified in the body of literature surrounding the high school principalship.

Finally, women who are considering a leadership position at the high school level are reluctant to enter a world in which they are isolated by a lack of association with other women in similar positions, coupled with a lack of companionship and perspective (Irby & Brown, 1998). They are hesitant to join a culture that is male dominated and neither values nor supports their leadership attempts (Schmuck, 1995). Brown and Merchant (1993) listed four barriers for women who seek administrative positions: "(1) absence of role models for women, (2) lack of support and encouragement from others, (3) lack of sponsorship within and without the organization, and (4) lack of a supportive network" (p. 88). According to Gilligan (1977), women best understand themselves through the relationships they form with others, so relationships with other female high school principals can make an enormous difference in "broadening their perspectives,

generating alternative solutions, and enhancing professional and personal esteem (Levine, 1987, p. 75). On the basis of these studies (Brown & Irby, 1995; Brown & Merchant, 1993; Robins & Terell, 1987; Schmuck, 1995), it is apparent that advocacy and support for women secondary school administrators are critical components in fostering professional growth and learning. Even in schools of educational administration, however, this component often is missing. According to Papalewis (1995), "The tendency of scholars to minimize, if not ignore, women's experiences has resulted in a biased presentation about male/female differences. This, in turn, has not only disadvantaged women who want to be leaders, but has often made administrative programs more of a hindrance than a help in their development" (p. 195).

Although my main purpose in this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship, the significance of the study is that, in giving voice to these women's beliefs and assumptions regarding their experiences, it illuminates their common perceptions of leadership. According to Young (in Young & Skrla, 2003), "White male ideology continues to provide a foundation for how school leaders are thought about, identified, recruited, trained, and hired" (p. 292). Because the majority of research into the practice of high school principals has continued to rest on males' experience and perspective (Shakeshaft, 1989), I employed an alternative lens through which the leadership practices of female high school principals were explored from a female perspective. By giving voice to these female leaders, the discourse surrounding the high school principalship

will be expanded, thereby helping to fill a small part of the void in the research on secondary school leadership.

Conceptual Lens

Although this is a phenomenological study in which bracketing my biases is central, it is also important that my conceptual lens is clarified because it gives "insight into the perspectives that colour the researcher's explanations and elaborations of findings, as well as clarifying what the researcher means when using certain terms" (Kleiman, 2004, p. 3). To this end, I used poststructural feminist theory in deconstructing the data and interpreting the meanings that came from the data within each individual participant's context and in their relation to each other. Poststructuralism questions, deconstructs, and destabilizes notions of self, identity, power, and knowledge within the socio-cultural and political climate of our postmodern world (Macdonald, Kirk, Metzler, Nilges, & Wright, 2002). In this study, poststructural feminist theory promoted the analysis and deconstruction of discourse, identity, difference, and the political and cultural contexts in which the participants practiced.

According to Blackmore (1999), "Feminist poststructuralism, with its emphasis on language, meaning, culture and subjectivity, argues that language constitutes identity as a particular kind of subject" (p. 65). Language has power because it brings about a shared understanding that can reshape our discourse about women and leadership, thus affording the opportunity to bring about change in our definitions and expectations of school leaders. Recent shifts in the expectations of school leaders have placed women in the role of change agent (Marshall & Rusch, 1996), in part because of their skills and abilities as collaborative, collegial leaders. However, Blackmore (1999) pointed out that,

"their power is derived from their difference, out of the shared cultural experience and attributes of being female, out of women's shared ways of seeing, being and doing. It is a difference, however, valued only to the extent that it serves organizationally defined goals" (p. 83). Ultimately, women as high school principals are still positioned as either genderless or the wrong gender.

In this study I also used a feminist lens to explore the gendered dimension of the high school principalship (other areas of difference include race and ethnicity, class, age, and marital status, although they were not explored in this study) in order to understand the perceived practice of women high school principals and to explore the opportunities available to help them lead, both in the context of their environments and within their roles and responsibilities as high school leaders. All of the participants in this study were women, and this focus was deliberate, for several reasons. First, it reflects the fact that women teachers have been selected as high school principals much less often than the number of women teachers at this level would lead one to assume would occur naturally. Second, as in most other areas of education, women teachers in high schools outnumber male teachers and, rather than making up a unified, homogeneous group, they are diverse and dynamic actors with extensive knowledge of their environments, skilled in managing their classrooms and the curriculum (Shakeshaft, 1987). They actively shape the material and symbolic worlds around them, but their power, expertise, and knowledge often are hidden from view by conventional approaches to leadership, including beliefs about the skills and qualities necessary to become a leader at the secondary level. These gender-neutral approaches suspend gender from their analysis and use a universal yardstick of

measurement, analysis, and research based on the assumption that men are, by default, leaders, whereas women are considered the "other."

According to Cannella (1998), much recent feminist research has focused on life narratives, emphasizing two issues in particular:

> (1) The first is the issue of "voice." How are the "voices" of others to be heard? What does voice mean? and Must voices be made to fit the dominant discourse learned by the researcher? Based on this concern, postmodern feminists have begun to search for diverse (and unthought of) ways in which to provide accounts of women's lives (Lather, 1996; Fine, 1992; Wolf, 1992; Krieger, 1983).
>
> (2) The second is the issue of "experience." While we have accepted "experience" as representing life and educational work reality, postmodern feminists have demonstrated the instability of the concept. Experience is understood as both representing life and as a vehicle for the replication of oppressive systems (Scott, 1991). Experience is an interpretation of life within a context and requires historical, political, and social analysis. (p. 5)

Clearly, feminist research in educational leadership must recognize "difference" and raise questions about voice and who can speak for women. In this study I acknowledge that the universal definition of the role of high school principal does not recognize difference, and I address this void by allowing women to speak for themselves in the context of their practice.

Exploratory Questions

My main purpose in this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. Therefore, the central research questions were: How have the lived experiences of women high school principals, both professional and personal, defined how they think about and practice leadership? What can we learn from these lived experiences that might add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship? The following subsidiary

questions probe the underlying essence of the women principals' perspectives from reflexive, contextual, and sense-making standpoints:

- How has the women's gendered experience as high school principals defined their professional work as school leaders within the context of the high school? Has gender played a role in their philosophies?
- How has the context of their work influenced their definition of self and leadership? What contexts do they believe are significant in framing their behaviors?
- As women in the high school principalship, how do/might they advocate for themselves and others aspiring to this position?

Definition of Terms

Some of the following terms are defined specifically for this study, others according to their definitions in the literature.

Androcentric bias: According to Shakeshaft (1987), androcentric bias is the act of viewing the world and constructing reality through a male lens. This occurs when the male experience is treated as the norm, and female perspectives and realities are relegated to the 'other.'

Collaboration: As defined by Sergiovanni (1996), collaboration means to work together as a community, providing opportunities for colleagues to share information and resources in order to accomplish a common goal.

Discourse: As defined by Grogan (1996), discourse is the use of sets of commonly shared words, phrases, and symbols to communicate.

Feminine skills: Feminine skills are those leadership skills associated with the

feminine leadership model described in the literature. These skills are characterized by reliance on emotional as well as rational data, interaction, power sharing, and enhancement of others' self-worth. These skills may be demonstrated by either men or women, but typically are associated with women (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Gender: Gender focuses on the difference between masculinity or maleness and femininity or femaleness. In this study, gender refers to the identity associated with differing experiences and ways of knowing among men and women (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986).

Leader: A leader is one who leads through vision, a shared set of values, and a shared objective (Welch, as cited in Bennis, 1989).

Leadership: Leithwood and Riehl (2003) suggested that the core practices for effective leadership include setting direction, developing people, and developing the organization. In this study, leadership encompassed the practices used by female high school principals, as well as the voice and the lived experiences of the participants as they negotiated the context of today's principalship.

Manager: A manager is defined as a person who shapes the structures and processes of an organization to produce specific results.

Masculine skills: Masculine skills are those leadership skills associated with the stereotypical leadership model described in the literature. These skills are characterized by reliance on rational data, power-over, and hierarchical organizational structures. These skills may be demonstrated by either men or women, but typically are associated with men (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Mentor: A mentor is a sponsor, teacher, or coach who facilitates a person's

adjustment to and movement through a system. A mentor may also promote a person for promising opportunities (Kanter, 1977).

Traditional skills: Traditional skills are those leadership skills described in the literature as generally associated with male leaders, but that may be displayed by either gender (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Delimitations

Delimitations place a limit on the scope of the study. This study was delimited to a 1-year time frame and focused on female high school principals in the Midwest. No attempt was made to interview persons in elementary or middle schools, nor was there any attempt to interview males. No in-depth interviews were conducted beyond the group studied.

Overview

This dissertation is organized into 7 chapters. Chapter II contains a review of the literature about leadership in education, particularly about women as leaders. It also includes literature about the high school principalship, the history of women as teachers and administrators and the barriers they have faced, and the advocacy and support that has been available to women leaders. The methodology and conceptual framework used for the study are described in Chapter III, and Chapter IV contains the stories of the women who participated in the study. Chapter V contains the findings and interpretations about the high school principalship as it emerged from these women's talk about their leadership role. The summary and the significance of the study to the practice of the principalship are presented in Chapter VI. Further research possibilities are suggested and personal reflections on the impact of the study on my own practice are discussed.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

> *There are ominous signs that new versions of biological determinism have returned, with the claim that women are not meant, by nature or by psyche, for achievement. Myths about gender difference now "prove" that women should be confined to jobs that use their special "relational" abilities, that women's brains are not designed for leadership, and that they "cheerfully choose" low-paying jobs. (Barnett &Rivers, 2005, p. 1)*

Introduction: Examining Research (and a Few Myths)

Women constitute the majority of teachers in the teaching profession (Blount, 1998; Gates, Ringel, & Santibanez, 2003; Logan, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1987) and more than half of the enrollees in graduate educational administration programs (Bell & Chase, 1993; Edson, 1988; NASSP, 2001), yet "the top three administrative posts in public school education (superintendent, assistant superintendent, and high school principal) remain overwhelmingly filled by males" (Byrd-Blake, 2004, p. 1). These inequalities are a result of both historical patterns and social norms that have limited the access to these top administrative positions to white males (Shakeshaft, 1987; Young & Skrla, 2003; Tallerico, 2000). Marshall (1997) asked, "What goes on in shaping training, certification, selection, and promotion of educational administrators that ensures white male dominance and leaders oriented toward bureaucratic maintenance?" (p. 1). The answer to Marshall's question may be found when we look at these roles through an alternative lens.

During the last 20 years, numerous scholars have focused on the role of the public school superintendent (Grogan, 1996; Skrla, 2003; Shakeshaft, 1987; Tallerico, Burstyn, & Poole, 1993). These studies have yielded data on age, gender, salary, and education

(Banks, 1995; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; NCES, 2002), role descriptions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1982; Murphy, 1995), preparation standards (Murphy, 1990; Silver, 1982; Young & Laible, 2000), and lessons in survival (Gupton & Slick, 1996). Researchers have also examined the pathways commonly taken to the superintendency, finding that the role of the high school principal typically is an essential part of that pathway (Shakeshaft, 1987; Skrla, 2003; Tallerico, 1999). Tallerico wrote, "Clearly, the preferred sequence of job changes is from building-level to district-level administrative positions, thereby making other patterns less highly regarded" (p. 76). Yet little research has been focused on women in this important leadership role and, as Hurty (as cited in Dunlap and Schmuck, 2003) notes, "with but a few exceptions the educational research community has not focused its attention on women in the principal's office in order to understand the concepts of leadership and power" (p. 381). As I examined the literature, I found that the role had been defined by focusing on the male leadership experience.

This literature on educational leadership is centered on an androcentric view of the organization. Shakeshaft (1987) defined androcentrism as a male view of the world and criticized research in which it was assumed that the experiences of men and women are the same. She pointed out that many research samples have been drawn from the male corporate world and the military and the findings of such studies have been reported in language that is indicative of this assumption. For example, "A learning leader must assess the adequacy of *his* [italics added] organization's culture, detect its dysfunctionality, and promote its transformation, first by making *his* [italics added] own basic assumptions into 'learning assumptions' and then by fostering such assumptions in the culture of *his* [italics added] organization" (Argyris & Schon, 1996, p. 185). "Words,

sentences, writing styles, ways of presenting arguments, arguments themselves, criticism . . . all these are part and parcel of masculinist culture" (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p. 185). Adler, Laney, and Packer (1993) indicated that this androcentric view is influenced by organizational and management theories that emphasize rational problem-solving techniques and is essentially a male model of management. According to Shakeshaft (1989), the assumptions of this model limit women because they are not necessarily relevant to women's experiences and may not accurately explain their behavior.

Although the job of principal has become increasingly complex (Fullan, 1998; Langer & Boris-Schacter, 2003), much of the literature defining the role of the high school principal still portrays the building administrator's role as that of a manager (MacNeil & Yelvington, 2005). The principal dominates the school, enforces discipline, and values authority and rank (Hurty, as cited in Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995). According to a 2001 survey conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, "Typical high school principals work more than 62 hours per week (not including student activities, events, etc.). Of that, they report spending most time per week tending to parent issues, community-related tasks, and discipline. Facilities management also takes a lot of their time" (p. 29). However, effectively managing a building is no longer enough (Kochan, Spencer, & Mathews, 2000; Langer & Boris-Schacter, 2003; Institute for Student Learning, 2000). If the top priority of principals should be leadership for learning (Fullan, 1998), then "the principalship as it is currently constructed—a middle management position overloaded with responsibilities for basic building operations—fails to meet this fundamental priority" (Institute for Student Learning, 2000). In light of

the current shortage of qualified principals (Brunner, 1999; Grogan, 1996; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996), the position is ripe for examination and redefinition.

Organization of the Review

Because this is a phenomenological study of the reflexive, contextual, and sense-making experiences of high school women principals, the literature review will follow a similar pattern. First, I will explore the ways we think about and reflect on educational leadership in general, and about women leaders in particular. Then I will consider the present context of the high school principalship by reviewing the evolution of women in educational positions, including an exploration of leadership roles from historical, political, and cultural perspectives. Finally, the review will look at ways that we make sense of and interpret women's experience by examining the advocacy and support that exist for women high school principals.

Reflections on Leadership

The concept of reflection has a historical basis in the writings of Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin, who argued that reflection is essential for learning to occur (Imel, 1992). According to Cooper and Boyd (1994), "Reflection means focusing on thinking and understanding and not just on what you did or are doing. Good learners think about their own thinking; they reflect in action, for action, and about action" (p. 57). Those who reflect on their work are able to find the discrepancies between their theories and their actions, thus giving them a vehicle for change. By analyzing their experiences, individuals can discover new and better ways to define their roles. As Brown and Irby (2001) asserted, leaders who reflect:

1. View self-assessment and reflection as priorities for school improvement.
2. Recognize that external and internal challenges result in growth.
3. Intentionally engage in activities aimed at challenging current beliefs and practice and expanding understandings.
4. Understand that change is inevitable.
5. Recognize that chaos often accompanies change.
6. Share understandings with colleagues. (pp.18–19)

Reflective school leaders typically analyze their experiences, at least in part, by utilizing the leadership theories learned in school administration programs and by viewing behaviors in light of the traditional expectations of the role.

Theoretical Groundwork: Ways of Viewing Leadership in Education

The common element in most definitions of leadership is that it is a group process that involves interaction between at least two people who are in pursuit of a specific goal (Yukl, 1988, p. 3). Beyond that, the way in which leadership should be exercised within that group is a matter of debate. Some scholars have attempted to define leadership by looking at the different aspects of leadership. Studies have encompassed such topics as **power, influence, motivation, personality, traits, behaviors, situations, contingencies, selflessness, emotional intelligence, and culture** (Fairholm, 2004). Other studies have focused on the behaviors and qualities of successful leaders (Bennis, 1984; Kouzes & Posner, 1990). According to Fairholm (2004), these studies have provided a great deal of information about different aspects of leadership, but putting these pieces of leadership together to envision what leadership really is has proven to be a difficult task.

Early in the 20th century, leadership studies focused on the traits associated with great leaders. Trait researchers examined various qualities of leaders to find

commonalities, focusing on aspects such as intelligence and charisma. However, these traits were not always found to be related to leadership (Stogdill, 1974). Stogdill noted that the traits that correlated with effective leadership varied from situation to situation. The situational theory that emerged basically holds that leader behavior is determined by the type of task to be performed and the capability of the workers (Frank, 1993).

Schein (1985) proposed that leaders must understand the culture in which they operate and how their leadership can change that culture. Michael Frank (1993), president of a human resource consulting firm and an adjunct professor at the University of Maryland, wrote in a manner typical of a great deal of the leadership literature since the mid-1980s. Much attention has been focused on organizational politics and, according to Frank, "a failure to understand the appropriate manner to manipulate others in pursuit of various goals is a certain path to frustration and failure" (p. 385). Frank went on to emphasize that "people who are assertive (not to be confused with aggressive or obnoxious) stand a much better chance to obtain what they want than others. It is important to learn skills and tactics to help one express needs and obtain goals without offending others" (p. 386). Frank's definition of effective leadership includes goal setting, time management, and delegation, along with being a good negotiator and a good public speaker. Frank cited Kotter's insights into the use of power, including the suggestion that a new leader makes a lasting impression by "an absolute show of force and the termination of a powerful figure in the organization" (p. 387). Frank mentioned the stress that women leaders must deal with because they have the dual responsibilities of performing both at work and at home. These and similar leadership theories have

helped to define the expectations regarding how a successful educational leader behaves and the leadership qualities necessary to be effective.

Recently, one of the most prominent leadership theories that has guided research and practice in school administration is transformational leadership. According to Rusch and Marshall (1995), gender is also marginal in transformational leadership theory. "Transformational leadership in educational administration is framed by the work of James MacGregor Burns (1978), who, despite his verbal support for gender equity, based his theory almost solely on the study of male leaders. Burns also placed strong emphasis on hierarchical and patriarchal order for transformational leadership to take place" (p. 10). Rusch and Marshall also found the omission of gendered perspectives in more recent versions of transformational leadership, specifically citing Leithwood (1992), Rost (1991), and Sergiovanni (1990).

In 1989, Shakeshaft's article "The Gender Gap in Educational Research" was published in *Educational Administration Quarterly.* Shakeshaft found that previous educational research had had an androcentric bias, which is characterized as "the practice of seeing the world and shaping reality through a male lens" (p. 325). This traditional epistemology has defined the leadership role in education, whether that of the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, or the high school principal, from a male perspective. This perspective did not exclude women, but rather, it represented the male perspective as neutral and inclusive of women (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). Shakeshaft and Hanson (1986) reviewed 10 volumes of *Educational Administration Quarterly* from the 1970s and found androcentric bias in all stages of research. In 1994, Epp, Sackney, and Kustaski performed a similar review of educational research from the 1980s and early

1990s. They found that in two areas, language and gender of the author, there had been a decrease in androcentric bias. Other areas showed slight, if any, decrease.

Understanding the pervasiveness of androcentric bias in educational research allows us to direct attention to those things that have been missing, overlooked, and not stated (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 151). According to Epp, et al., research reveals that men and women do not lead in the same ways:

1. Women and men perceive the world in different ways.
2. Changing leadership paradigms may be more in keeping with the female ethos.
3. The public expectation of "male" characteristics of leadership discourages women from seeking administrative positions.
4. Women interpret the role of the principal differently from men.
5. Although women lead differently, research shows that, in general, women are effective administrators (Shakeshaft, 1986, 1987).
6. A blend of both styles would benefit our school systems.
7. Androcentric bias in research affects practice. (Epp et al., 1994, pp. 6-7).

Consequently, research that is male centered may keep women from applying for leadership positions in an era in which a paradigm shift in the way we think about leadership appears to be taking place (Wheatley, 1992).

According to Shakeshaft (1987), "Few studies have been done that examine a solely female view of the school world; until this research is done, we have only findings reported within a male framework" (p. 169). Some researchers, however, have discovered a difference between how men and women learn and their style of leadership. Adler, et al. (1993) examined the dynamics of "feminism, power, and educational management" (p. 130). They described new ways of leading as "feminist" ways of working and saw these ways as an alternative to the bureaucratic style of leadership traditionally found in educational administration. The women they studied were likely to describe their style of

leadership as cooperative and collegial, although their styles often conflicted with the hierarchical structures of their environment. Their attitude toward power was ambivalent, and they often delegated responsibility and power to others. They tended to be supportive of their staff in seeking change (p. 133). In general, research on gendered differences in leadership styles has indicated that women tend to lead differently from men; therefore, their success in the role must be measured with an alternative approach (Shakeshaft, 1987).

In contrast to androcentric research in education, feminist research has drawn on certain defining features. Although there is no agreed-upon definition of feminist research, according to Maguire (1987), "Feminism is: (a) a belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation; (b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms; and (c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression" (p. 79). There are many diverse interpretations of feminist research in education, just as there is a wide range of feminist theory. Therefore, "feminist research cannot claim to speak for all women, but can provide new knowledge grounded in the realities of women's experiences and actively enact structural changes in the world" (Brayton, 1997, p.10). Feminist theory and research, according to Rusch and Marshall (1995), have

> . . . introduced the caring ethic (Beck, 1994; Noddings, 1992); moral decision making that emphasizes relationships, connections, collaboration, and community (Gilligan, 1982); women's ways of talking, leading, and nurturing (Belenky, 1986; Cooper, 1994; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Regan, 1990, 1995); and feminist pedagogy (Grumet, 1988; Greene, 1988, Weis, 1988; Weis & Fine, 1993). p. 1

By reframing the definition of leadership through a feminist lens, we are able to see how women have been filtered out of leadership roles and to work toward constructing new theories that centralize women's experiences in these roles.

The High School Principal: Reflecting on the Role

Historically, managing the building has been the primary focus of the high school principal. This role includes public relations, busing, cafeteria management, discipline, safety, budgeting, ordering supplies, and supervising staff. However, as research has revealed the critical role that principals play in teaching and learning (Blackman & Fenwick, 2000; Educational Research Service, 2000; Murphy, 1999), it is apparent that the role of the high school principal is being redefined. As stated in a recent report from the Institute of Educational Leadership, "As studies show the crucial role that principals can play in improving teaching and learning, it is clear that principals today also must serve as leaders for student learning" (*Leaders for Student Learning*, 2000, p. 2). As the report continued, however, it became apparent that, although the requirements of the position have changed, principals are staying with what they know how to do and what they have always done.

School leadership typically has been examined using organizational theories that assume that schools are rational, controllable organizations. Most of the research that has been done based on these theories has not dealt with the daily realities of school administrators and therefore has not been especially useful (Shakeshaft, 1987). Likewise, most political theories that have been employed to examine school leadership, although grounded in everyday life, have not been helpful to the administrator who is looking for ways to bring about change (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 11).

Research on implementing change in schools and the effective schools research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s has indicated that the high school principal had a profound impact on the success of students (Wanzare & da Costa, 2000). Before that time, studies rooted in the rational and structural/functional theories of organizations focused on describing the role of the principal and resulted in lists of attributes that good principals should have,

> Ogawa and Bossert called this overall perspective the technical-rational view of leadership within organizations. . . . From a rational perspective, leadership is viewed as the influence that individuals in higher positions exert through their demographic traits and actions. . . . The rational view of organizations is therefore consistent with the bureaucratic model of organizations, suggesting that the hierarchical structure of leader authority functions to maintain the organization's stability over time through minimizing conflict. (Heck, 1998, pp. 5-6)

Heck described several other orientations toward leadership, including what he termed the "political-conflict perspective" which focuses on process, and the constructivist model which is concerned with sense-making within the organizational context. Heck argued that these traditional models are no longer compelling

> because paradigms tend to suppress challenges to dominant thinking (Kuhn, 1962; Marshall, 1995). Marshall et al. argued that paradigms framing most theories concerning research and practice in school leadership have fallacies, including the superiority of the bureaucratic organizational structure, a focus on visible administrators at the top of the structure, and White male domination. (p. 7)

The demands of a "culture of change" require new theories and new ways of research and practice (Fullan, 2001).

Murphy (2002) argued for alternative methods to define school administration. In *Reculturing the Profession of Educational Leadership: New Blueprints,* he stated,

> After 15 years or more of following this approach, school administration today looks a good deal like Weick's (1976) famous tilted soccer field or,

> perhaps even more aptly, like the typical American high school of the last half of the twentieth century, what Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) labeled "shopping malls." (p. 182)

Murphy questioned the appropriateness of the knowledge upon which administrative programs have been based and suggested that the profession needs to be rebuilt. He stated, "The central problem here is that the practice of educational leadership has very little to do with either education or leadership" (p.181). Viewing school leadership through an alternative lens will provide new insights into both education and leadership.

The high school principalship has been described as a "profession in crisis" (Tirozzi, 2001). "Today's principal is faced with the complex task of creating a school wide vision, being an instructional leader, planning for effective professional development, guiding teachers, handling discipline, attending events, coordinating buses, tending to external priorities such as legislative mandates, and all the other minute details that come with supervising a school" (p. 437). Obvious results of these expectations include increased levels of stress and inordinate time demands. Gerald Tirozzi, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, stated, "As the general public, legislative bodies, corporate leaders, and parents demand—and expect—improvement in student achievement, the schoolhouse will be the site of scrutiny and analysis. As the accountability movement pervades our education system, the principal ultimately bears the major responsibility for a school's success" (p. 438). The traditional role of high school principal as building manager no longer meets the expectations of this new definition of the position.

It is clear that the role of high school principal is an important one (Murphy, 1999; Tirozzi, 2001). It is also clear that the traditional definition of the position must change to meet the increasing demands of governmental policy, parents and community members, and corporate interests. According to Fullan (1998), high school principals need, " . . . a new mindset and guidelines for action to break through the bonds of dependency that have entrapped those who want to make a difference in their schools" (p. 1). This new mindset can emerge as a result of research on women in administration. In a recent study they conducted in Canada, MacMillan, Meyer, and Sherman (2001) found that women administrators are cognizant of being "different" leaders:

> Women have a distinct style, at least the women that I have met with seem to focus on priorities different than those of men. At principal meetings the males talk about problems specific to their own school, "I need two more computers." "I need a repair done in the tech room," things that are not of interest to the rest of us. The women are concerned about more holistic issues and the way they affect the children. The women talk about the students more and I think we are better communicators. We are interested in providing instructional leadership and what goes on in the classrooms keeps coming up in conversations. The men need to get away from the idea of their school as a private kingdom and be more willing to discuss issues that concern all of us. (p. 10)

Female principals differ from their male counterparts, and these differences suggest that women are uniquely suited for educational leadership positions. Studies have indicated that the typical female principal is better qualified for the job than the typical male principal; women are better educated, older, and have had more teaching experience (Gross & Trask, 1976; Gupton & Slick, 1996). Shakeshaft (1987) suggested that female principals are more likely to see their job as that of a "master teacher," whereas men seem to see the position from the old "managerial-industrial perspective" (p. 173). As Fullan (2001) explained, "There is a new style of leadership in successful

companies—one that focuses on people and relationships as essential to getting sustained results" (p. 53). The need for change is clear; however, "if we are to make any lasting change, we must confront a system that is white male centered and white male dominated and change that system" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 144).

Reflecting on Women in the High School Principalship:
Where are They? And How Do They Get There? . . . or Do They?

A redefinition of the high school principal's role from a feminist perspective also requires a review of the experiences undergone by women who aspire to leadership roles and those who have achieved these roles. Their experiences are critical in understanding the barriers that women face both in their hiring and in their work (Adler et al., 1993; Shakeshaft, 1987). Adler et al. reported that "Schein concludes that women will be discouraged from thinking of management as a career because they do not identify strongly with the role, while those women who are accepted may find it difficult to achieve a viable self-image and style" (pp. 9-10). Recent researchers have found that stereotypes about women and their ability to lead, external barriers, and norms in most schools all prevent women from experiencing the same opportunities as men (Bell & Chase, 1993; Marshall & Kasten, 1994; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1987; Skrla, et al., 2000).

The typical female school principal today is white, in her late 40's, married (59.8 %), holds a master's degree, is working on a doctorate, and has taught for an average of 15 years. The great majority are elementary principals (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993, p. 2). In contrast, the typical male school principal is much younger than the female principal and has taught an average of 5 years. He is married (92%), is less likely to be a minority,

and usually is from a rural community (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993, p. 3). Shakeshaft (as cited in Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993) stated,

> The "average" woman administrator . . . is more likely to be older, of a different race, religion, and political party, to be unmarried, and from a more urban background than her male counterpart. She is more likely to
>
> hold liberal views, to be more supportive of women's rights, and to understand the issues of single parents and divorce more personally. (p. 4)

In a study on the views of women principals regarding sex equity, Schmuck and Schubert (as cited in Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995) asked women principals about their experiences with discrimination. They were surprised to find that these women did not view their experiences as discriminatory. They seemed to accept the prevailing beliefs and attitudes and thought that their own experiences were the exception. "They take a personalized view of their experience; they see their experiences as individual, even idiosyncratic, and fail to comprehend the more fundamental concept of how gender serves as a segregating factor in the culture of educational institutions" (p.285). Apparently, then, there may be both external and internal barriers that prevent women from achieving equity in educational administration.

External barriers. There are numerous external barriers that prevent women from accessing leadership roles in education. Among them are the lack of support groups and the abundance of "good old boy" networks that exclude women, bias against women administrators from male administrators and board members, and processes in hiring that prevent women from advancing (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1987). Issues such as salary, time requirements, and even dress can also be barriers for some women.

Typically, there has been a disparity between the salaries of male and female

administrators. "In 1905 an average male elementary principal earned $1,542, while his female counterpart earned only $970. Almost eighty years later, despite the fact that women administrators have more years of teaching experience and are better educated than their male counterparts, the salaries of women administrators were 65 percent of the salaries of males in the same category" (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993, p. 6). So even though women might have earned the title of principal, their status, in many ways, is not equal to that of men with the same title.

The good-old-boy network and its influence on the hiring process has been an external barrier for many women looking to advance in educational leadership. Affirmative action policies, although well intended, seldom have been used by women wishing to enter administration. "Most women, after all, wanted to enter the system; filing a grievance or a suit against a district where one wanted to be hired was not seen as a wise career move" (Schmuck, as cited in Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. 209). The good-old-boy network often controls who is hired and who is promoted in a district, thereby frequently limiting the access of women to leadership positions.

A study recently was conducted of superintendents' perceptions regarding the quality of principal candidates and the number of "qualified" candidates available (Whitaker, 2001). The findings raised questions about how superintendents defined qualified and whether females were considered qualified for these positions. Superintendents ranked principal candidates as "poor" or "fair" (28.3 %), "good" (51 %), and "very good" (16.9 %). Lack of experience was the chief complaint about the candidates (Whitaker, 1998, p. 13). It is significant to note that nationwide, women students make up 50% of the enrollment in graduate education programs and the average

woman teaches for 15 years, whereas the average male teaches only 5 years before becoming an administrator (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Many superintendents also commented on principals' deficiencies in the areas of instruction and assessment. On the average, women have three times the years of experience in teaching before becoming an administrator than do men (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

When superintendents were asked specifically about female candidates, their comments were generally favorable. "'I think females have been showing us the strongest qualities of leadership potential, strongest desire, strongest commitment, and best people skills.' However, many of the remarks made concerned female candidates for elementary principalships. Few if any, remarks were made specifically about female candidates for secondary principalships" (Whitaker, 2001, p. 13). Because data have not always been disaggregated by gender and level of principal (elementary or secondary), it is difficult to assess the progress women have made at each level. However, Shakeshaft (1987) noted that "over the past 80 years, the only administrative position in which women have been dominant is the elementary principalship. Women have never been the majority of secondary principals or district superintendents" (p. 20).

In February 2000, the *Educational Administration Quarterly* published a study conducted by Marilyn Tallerico, associate professor of educational leadership at Syracuse University, entitled "Gaining Access to the Superintendency: Headhunting, Gender, and Color." Tallerico's purpose in the study was to use a critical, feminist perspective to examine how superintendents were selected in terms of gender and racial equity. She studied the hiring of women and minorities as school administrators and the relationships

between headhunters, routine practices of school board members, norms of school administrators, and the social and cultural values of our society. The study, although focused on superintendents, has explanatory potential for understanding the hiring for other administrative positions.

> I sought to explore and analyze current practices in terms of equity for females and people of color. I argue that attention to these issues is timely and important for several reasons. First, high numbers of superintendent vacancies are predicted for the near future. Second, increasing proportions of leadership preparation programs and administrative positions considered pathways to superintendencies are currently occupied by women. And finally, there has been little systematic study of how the variables of gender and race/ethnicity can inform the existing knowledge base on superintendent search and selection. (Tallerico, 2000b, p. 19)

Tallerico used gatekeeping theory, as defined by Lewin (1947), as her principal conceptual framework for the study. According to Lewin's theory, any process of selection has multiple pathways containing numerous decision points, or gates, where applicants are either "in" or "out." Ultimately, these pathways converge and selection occurs (Lewin, as cited in Tallerico, 2001, p. 19). Headhunters act as gatekeepers early in the process because they control the initial screening decisions. School board members assume that a good headhunter will take into account the criteria defined by their district.

Tallerico also used a career-mobility research model described by Riehl and Byrd (1997). Their research revealed how gender variables can be used to explore career movement in educational administration. They recognized traditional female roles in the home and lack of access to a network of powerful mentors as factors that differentiate accessibility to administrative positions. They also identified organizational factors (lack of role models, screening procedures) and sociocultural factors (sex-role stereotypes,

social climate) that affect the career mobility of women and minorities (Tallerico, 2001, p. 21).

Riehl and Byrd illustrated how gender further shapes each of these levels of influence. They concluded that the positive effects of personal and socialization factors such as aspirations, qualifications, and experience do not ensure women equity with men in administrative career development, given the powerful gender-stereotyped contextual, structural, and social forces that serve to counterinfluence individual action for advancement. In the words of Riehl and Byrd (as cited in Tallerico, 2001), "And so, all else being equal, women's predicted probability of becoming a school administrator generally remained below that for comparable men" (p. 22).

Tallerico's study was conducted over a 2-year period (1996-1998) in the state of New York, using qualitative procedures that included interviews, participant observations, and the analysis of documents. Participants in the study were 25 search consultants (headhunters), 25 school board members, and 25 applicants. Most groups were nearly equally divided, male and female, except applicants, of whom 20 were women and 5 were men. "Given both the equity focus of this study and the historical prominence of nonminority male samples in previous research, I intentionally targeted more female than male applicants and as many people of color as could be identified" (Tallerico, 2001, p. 26). This article is part of a full study conducted by Tallerico that focused on superintendent search-and-selection procedures.

Tallerico's review centered on three sets of findings from the larger study that illustrated elements in the hiring process that limit the advancement of women and people of color. These include (a) how "best qualified" is defined, (b) stereotyping and other

cultural dynamics that come into play, and (c) the role of "good chemistry" in determining interview success (Tallerico, 2001, p. 29).

Tallerico found that opportunities for advancement were most likely for candidates who had particular experiences before their application. The usual "track" to the superintendency was via the position of high school principal and assistant superintendent. Elementary principals and those in other administrative roles were not viewed as "qualified." Despite the listings of generic competencies that appear in many superintendency vacancy advertisements (e.g., excellent communication skills, instructional leadership ability, knowledge of budgeting and finance), school board members' and consultants' behind-the-scenes definitions of candidate quality relied more on hierarchies of previous job titles than on particular leadership skills (Tallerico, 2001, p. 29).

> When the quality of an applicant is, in part, determined by experience, women in education are at a distinct disadvantage for promotion to administrative positions. By far, white males hold the greatest number of school superintendent, assistant superintendent, and high school principal positions. Conversely, more elementary principals and other central office staff (e.g., curriculum director, staff coordinator) are women. When headhunters and school board members use this view of experience as a definition for "quality," white males are the obvious beneficiaries. (Tallerico, 2001, p. 31)

Tallerico also found many examples of social prejudices, gender stereotyping, and specific ideologies that close the gates to women aspiring to the superintendency. Candidates interviewed for the study cited the following examples:

(a) being told a particular district "isn't ready for a woman";
(b) laments that if the new hire is not male, board members will not be able to go out for the customary post-board-meeting drink with the superintendent;
(c) inquiries about child care arrangements that might limit a woman's ability to devote sufficient time to the superintendency. (Tallerico, 2001, p. 33)

These comments reflect a longstanding cultural bias that a school superintendent must be a white male.

At the end of the hiring process, school board members must interview candidates for superintendent. In fact, these interviews may be the most critical part of the hiring process (Tallerico, 2001). By this point, board members assume that headhunters have weeded out the "unqualified" candidates. Because the candidates who are left have passed the paper test of the headhunter, board members turn to their "gut feelings" as barometers for who is most qualified. They look for ambiguous qualities such as "good chemistry," and that usually translates into "How similar is this person to me?" (Tallerico, 2001). In gatekeeping-theory terms, the numerous subtleties that become critical in interview settings center on an individual power-holder's values and attitudes, which are personal, but at the same time reflect a particular background, experience, and set of beliefs (Tallerico, 2001, p. 35).

Logan (1999) summed up gender equity in administrative positions in an article in the *AASA Professor*:

> Under-representation of women in school administration contrasts with the high percentage of teachers who are women (Bell and Chase, 1992; Gupton and Slick, 1996; Nogay, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1987). Historically, few women entered programs to prepare for school administration positions, but the numbers of women entering graduate programs for educational leadership certification and doctorates have been increasing since the 1970's (Cunanan, 1994; Edson, 1988; Grogran, 1996). As early as the mid-1980's, women students made up at least half of the program enrollment in educational administration (Bell and Chase, 1993; Epp, 1995). The increasing numbers of women students in these preparation programs signal an urgency for university faculty to implement proactive strategies that help assure employment opportunities for women graduates . . . The results of this research indicated that traditional deterrents to hiring women still exist for the hiring of women into the positions of superintendent and high school principal. In addition, it was found that, generally speaking, UCEA programs are not doing much to address or to alleviate this

> situation. When addressed, proposed solutions tend to focus on providing support for women in the administrative programs, rather than on changing the hiring context. (p.1-2)

Traditional training for school leaders has marginalized women and other minorities. This, in turn, has perpetuated the myth that the white male is the "qualified" person for the position and, although researchers have not focused on the high school principalship as a gendered role, it is not difficult to translate research findings on school superintendents into meaningful assumptions about the role of the high school principal. It remains to be seen whether these assumptions are accurate.

Internal barriers. Frequently, when a woman is hired in one of these administrative positions, she believes that, in order to be viewed as competent, she must handle the position in the same manner as a man. "In the professional culture, women and minority administrators often feel they must hide feelings of difference and exclusion and become more like the dominant White men to be successful" (Marshall, 2004, p. 5). Scholars have pointed to lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation, and lack of aspiration as internal barriers that keep women from accessing leadership roles. However, Shakeshaft (1987) asserted that self-confidence, motivation, and aspiration have been defined in androcentric terms. "Thus it is this ideology of patriarchy resulting in an androcentric society that explains why men, and not women, occupy the formal leadership positions in school and society" (p. 95). What some might see as internal barriers are actually external barriers emanating from prevalent social, political, and cultural beliefs.

Scherr (as cited in Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995) studied women who aspired to the superintendency in order to discover their views of the role. She reports that they saw the

superintendency as "powerful, political, and public" (p. 318). The language these women used suggested "conceptions of control and authority drawn from the metaphors of business, the military, and athletics" (Kempner, as cited in Scherr in Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. 318). Scherr's conclusion was that many women choose not to become superintendents because of their perceptions of the role. If women saw the superintendency as more collaborative and relationship oriented, more of them might aspire to the position.

In many studies, women have reported that the one barrier that kept them from achieving a higher level of leadership in education was the myth that it takes a man to be a good high school principal (Isaacson, 1998; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993). According to Banks (1995), women have to fight not only the political and cultural system, but also the beliefs within their own school districts. The myths surrounding leadership in education, combined with the barriers to women who aspire to these roles, have long blocked women from leadership positions and promotions.

The Context of Leadership

The History of Women in Education: Why Political and Cultural Contexts Impact Leadership Roles and Access to Them

To appreciate the present role of the secondary school principal, it is critical to understand how the position has evolved. Using a feminist lens to explore the historical, cultural, and political evolution of the secondary principal's role sheds light on its present state and points us toward a redefinition of the role that includes women. "The principals of tomorrow's secondary schools will not be recognized and rewarded solely for their management skills...The political environment, the shortage of highly qualified

candidates desiring to become principals, and the call for increased accountability have provided a window of opportunity for advocates of school leadership" (Tirozzi, 2001, p. 434). In this discourse, it is essential that consideration be given to gender and the utilization of women in this role (Grogan, 1999; Nogay & Beebe, 1997; Young & McLeod, 2001).

A historical review of the role of women as educators reveals how gender-based inequalities were created, how these inequalities were built into our system of education, and how they have been perpetuated. Blount's (1998) history of women and their role in the superintendency identified both the overt and subtle resistance that women have met as they tried to move into leadership positions, "Educational administration scholarship that ignores teachers and women, then, is incomplete because it misses an important structuring force in the creation of this traditionally male-identified educational domain" (p. 3). Our political, social, and cultural history in education can also give us direction to enact structural changes in the field of educational leadership (Skrla & Young, 2003). Blount's history led her to conclude that "a truly fair system for female and male students will not exist until we question the deeply rooted tradition of denying women power in public schooling. And then we must change it" (p. 169). This change can come about through a redefinition of the leadership role of the principal using an alternative, feminist lens.

Discussions regarding "how it used to be" in schools often portray the past in an idealized manner, but history is significant in bringing about change because "anyone who would improve schooling is a captive of history in two ways. All people and institutions are the product of history (defined as past events). And whether they are

aware of it or not, all people use history (defined as an interpretation of past events) when they make choices about the present and future" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 6). The roles of teacher, principal, and superintendent have been shaped over the course of public schooling, and "these images persist today in the minds of policymakers, administrators, teachers, and the lay public, still influencing the direction that schooling should take" (Cuban, 1988, p. xviii). As we look to redefine the role of the high school principal from a new perspective, it is essential that we review the institutional and attitudinal history that has shaped the role of women in the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Teachers. The 19th century brought about a new element in the history of teaching. Before that, teaching had been a male profession. At the beginning of the 19th century, men accounted for nearly all of the teachers in this country, but by 1869, men made up only 38.7% of the public school instructional staff (National Center for Education Statistics, August 2002). In cities, the idea of a "master" who taught but was also in charge of the other teachers had been introduced (Cuban, 1988, p. 53). As access to education became a "right" for all children, the need for teachers grew, and "women stepped in to fill this need. By the start of the twentieth century, teachers were primarily women" (Blount, 1998, p. 32), and masters were primarily men.

Until the middle of the 20th century, most married women were banned from teaching, so the profession up to then was populated with single females. Many communities outlawed married women, but not married men, from teaching. Shakeshaft (1987) cites a New York Board of Education bylaw, "No married woman shall be appointed to any teaching or supervising position in the New York Public Schools unless

her husband is mentally or physically incapacitated to earn a living or has deserted her for a period of not less than one year" (p. 41). A report by the National Education Association from 1942 stated that 58% of school systems across the country would not hire married women (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 43).

Suspicions about the sexuality of single women and the onset of World War II brought the entrance of married women to the teaching profession. However, as Tyack and Cuban (1995) stated, "The shortage of teachers during World War II undermined the policy of firing married women teachers, but the practice of hiring men for administrative jobs continued unabated in the postwar years" (p. 25). Shakeshaft (1987) cited the Hansot and Tyack report on data compiled by the NEA:

> Amid proliferation of other kinds of statistical reporting in an age enamored of numbers—reports so detailed that one could give the precise salary of staff in every community across the country and exact information on all sorts of other variables—data by sex became strangely inaccessible. A conspiracy of silence could hardly have been unintentional. (p. 21)

Principals. As teaching became a feminine occupation, concerns about women's ability to teach effectively were debated. Their ability to discipline was a particular concern and it was widely believed that women needed the help of men to deal with disciplinary issues. Strober and Tyack (1980) concluded, "The presumed superiority of men as executives and disciplinarians seems to rest more on male vanity than on evidence. From the beginning, sex segregation was part of the design of the urban graded school" (pp. 499-500). The feminization of teaching also brought with it a loss of autonomy, status, and authority, and "essentially, power in educational employment shifted upward as administrative strata emerged" (Blount, 1998, p. 31). According to

Cuban (1988), "The wedge that pried principals out of classroom teaching was their superiors' growing expectations that they not only carry out orders, complete their reports on time, look after the building, [and] maintain decent relations with adults and children, but that they also manage the curriculum and supervise instruction" (p. 54). In order to effectively accomplish these tasks, the "master" or "principal" moved out of the classroom and into the office. Female teachers, who believed they had been stripped of their power in the schoolhouse, resented this division between teachers and administrators. However, "despite resistance, bureaucracy reigned and with it male dominance of administrative positions" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 33).

At the same time as the number of women in teaching began to increase, so too did the number of male administrators. As demonstrated in Table 2.1, by the latter half of the 19th century, most teachers were women, but these women rarely became administrators (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Table 2.1: Eighty Years of Women as Workers in Public Schools: 1905-1985 (in percent)

	1905	1928	1950	1972-73	1982-83	1984-85
Female elem. teachers	97.9	89.2	91.0	84.0	83.0	83.5
Female elem. principals	61.7	55.0	38.0	19.6	23.0	16.9
Female sec. teachers	64.2	63.7	56.2	46.0	48.9	50.1
Female sec. principals	5.7	7.9	6.0	1.4	3.2	3.5
Female dist. superintendents	--	1.6	2.1	0.1	1.8	3.0
Female school board members	--	11.0	12.0	12.0	28.3	38.3

Source: Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 20.

"The male educators who remained had to assert their masculine qualities somehow, thus many became administrators to control the labors of women just as fathers and husbands

long had done in the home" (Blount, 1998, p. 37). Gender expectations of the time dictated that men were in control, so most male teachers eventually became principals because, "by custom, women could not supervise men; so long as even one male teacher was subordinated by a woman's potential administrative advancement, she was denied promotion" (Blount, 1998, p. 51). As schools became more hierarchical in structure, men filled more and more of the leadership positions. As (1998) Cuban noted, "To explore the splitting apart of teaching from administering, then, is also to probe at the basic premises of reforms aimed at improving what happens in schools and why management rather than leadership has dominated schools" (p. xiii). Thus, the bureaucratic organization attempted to achieve efficiency through a hierarchy of roles. "Scientific management and, specifically, bureaucratization, then, helped keep women out of administrative roles because of the belief in male dominance that made it easier for both males and females to view women as natural followers and men as their leaders" (Shakeshaft, 1987, pp. 31-32). This hierarchy left women in the role of teacher, whereas men were encouraged to advance into leadership roles.

In another attempt to promote efficiency in the school bureaucracy, the concept of grade levels was initiated (Shakeshaft, 1987). Because women were naturally more nurturing than men, they made excellent elementary school teachers, whereas the upper grades needed those who were more authoritarian and could handle discipline easily (Blount, 1998). Teachers of higher grades also were required to be better qualified, so they were paid more than women who taught at the lower levels, "Relatively higher salaries could be made available for male superintendents, inspectors, principal teachers and headmasters, yet money could be saved at the same time by engaging women at low

salaries to teach lower grades" (Prentice, 1984, p. 51). Thus began the history of women teaching in the elementary school and men teaching in the secondary school, then advancing into administration (Prentice, 1984). According to Blount (1998), men were especially drawn to administrative positions because those positions had been centered on a male-defined role from the start, "As administrators assumed more control, male teachers felt less comfortable remaining in the classroom. They either left teaching or found other ways to pursue masculine-appropriate work within the profession. Teaching had become a woman's profession—controlled by men" (p. 37).

Superintendents. In 1909, Ella Flagg Young became the first female superintendent in the city of Chicago. She stated,

> Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a large majority of the big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. It is woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first woman to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show cities and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man. (Young, 1909, as cited in Blount, 1998, p. 515)

In some states west of the Mississippi, superintendencies were elected positions, and a number of women were elected to those positions. Generally, this occurred because women could be paid much less than men, although they were expected to work harder and longer (Shakeshaft, 1987). At the turn of the century, the women's movement and the right to vote propelled more women into positions of power in the educational system. "During these years, hundreds of women waged successful campaigns for superintendencies, and by 1930 women accounted for nearly 28 percent of county superintendents and 11 percent of all superintendents nationwide" (Blount, 1998, p. 61).

After 1930, the number of women in leadership positions began to decrease. According to Shakeshaft (1987), "The number of female elementary principals, and county and state superintendents, began to decrease and the major power position in the school—the district superintendency—was still almost always held by a man" (p. 39). By 1932, 25 states still had no female superintendents (Hansot & Tyack, as cited in Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 39). Barriers that kept women from leadership roles at the highest level of education included beliefs that women were unable to discipline because of their size and nature; biases held by those who hired administrators, most of whom were white, Protestant males; expectations that women would leave when they married; support groups that were for men only, including the NEA and Phi Delta Kappa; and equal-pay laws that were used to pay men more than women (Blount, 1998; Cuban, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1987).

During World War II, the number of women in leadership roles increased, although as men returned from the war, the number of women in these roles dropped dramatically. "The numbers of women who held school superintendencies declined rapidly from 1950 to 1970, the steepest drop of any point in this century" (Blount, 1998, p. 109). Some researchers who conducted studies in the 1960s and 1970s attributed the low numbers of women in administrative positions to sexual discrimination. "Even though there were no written policies precluding women from administrative appointments and very few school systems acknowledged unwritten policies, women were still not likely to be appointed principals or superintendents. In fact, an analysis of the data revealed that the only factor that appeared to have any significance on the hiring process was that of sex" (Taylor, 1971, as cited in Blount, 1998, pp. 131-132).

Since Ella Flagg Young's 1909 prediction that "women are destined to run the schools," there has been only one period when women held a majority of principalships, and never a time when they held a majority of superintendencies. In 1928, females held 55% of elementary principal positions, whereas 8% of secondary principals and 1.6% of district superintendents were women (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 20). Before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission report in 1970, no systematic collection of data on women in administrative positions had ever taken place, so the numbers available are somewhat incomplete. However, what is clear is that women have not advanced much further in educational administration from where they were in 1900.

Sense-Making: The Art of Interpreting What We Know

Interpreting the Role of Leadership for Women: Where Do Women High School Principals Find Advocacy and Support?

Mentors, advocates, and others who support women educational leaders are those who understand the difficulties women face in turning their aspirations into reality. They realize the moral, practical, political, and personal issues that these women continue to face on a regular basis, and are willing to lend their support on both the personal and professional levels. Unfortunately, although this support is important, women in the high school principalship often find themselves the "lone ranger." There are so few female principals that those in the position are isolated from others in the same role and advocacy and support from other areas (i.e., male leaders, the university) are sorely lacking (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995).

The need for support. According to Gilligan (1977, 1982), women are concerned with relationships and connectedness; These qualities become an important part of their

identity and define how they view themselves and their work (Irby & Brown, 1998). Irby and Brown suggested that women need structured support, as indicated by their struggle with self-esteem issues, issues of care and concern, and issues of relationships and support. They cited Levine's investigation into the benefits of a support group on self-esteem: "(1) discovering a new way of looking at a problem, (2) benefiting from one another's failures or successes, (3) willingness to serve as resources to help one another form new professional relationships, (4) the importance of professional contacts to offer and receive support, and (5) meeting other dynamic women educators in a wide range of management positions" (Irby & Brown, 1998, p. 2). Although a support group can help women leaders feel connected to others in a similar role, it also provides an environment of care and concern, and it helps women deal with the isolation built into the position.

The importance of mentoring to women leaders also has been supported in the literature. Witmer (1995) called mentoring "the single most important advantage an aspiring administrator can have (p. 187), and Kanter (as cited in Chase, 1995) stated, "If sponsors are important for the success of men in organizations, they seem absolutely essential for women" (p. 124). Mentoring has been defined as both communicating and "connecting" on an emotional level while also supporting the physical and logistical aspects of leadership (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). However, in a recent study, Byrd-Blake (2004) found that women have not yet begun to employ the beneficial tactics that men have used, such as the networking and mentorship possible in the good-old-boys club. There is no "girls club" and, in fact, many women have reported that rather than being mentors and offering support, women administrators are "defensive and aggressive toward other females" (Byrd-Blake, 2004, p. 9). Women leaders typically use individual

coping strategies, rather than eliciting support from another individual. This in turn perpetuates the lack of a collective voice with which women might speak to redefine the role of the principalship.

Recent studies have found that mentoring has been advantageous to those in leadership positions, but according to Malone (2001), "Although valuable in the relationships that it fostered and the leaders that it produced, such mentoring tended toward "like producing like," which meant that women and minorities frequently fell to the wayside. Formalized mentoring programs helped correct these inequities, but these artificial unions usually lacked organizational support and even engendered resentment among mentors who had little or no say in choosing their protégés" (p. 2). Table 2.2 outlines the positive functions that mentoring has had when properly supported.

Table 2.2: Functions of Mentoring

Career Functions	**Psychosocial Functions**
Sponsorship/promote/recommend	Role modeling
Exposure/viability	Support and encouragement
Coaching	Counseling
Protection	Friendship
Set challenging task/performance standard	Encourage risk-taking
Share expertise	Enhance self-confidence
Provide needed information	Help formulate career plan/act as sounding board
Chance to observe/learn by association	Facilitate move from classroom
Arrange administrative experience	Arrange access to other administrators
Advise on salary negotiations	Provide feedback on progress

Source: Wesson, 1998, p. 9

Since 1980, the literature on women in school leadership positions has shifted emphasis from explanations of the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions to a need for systems of advocacy and support (Gupton & Slick, 1996). A focus on

mentoring, role models, and other means of support for women may be one reason for the greater numbers of women entering the field. Mentoring and advocacy help women make the transition from the role of teacher to that of leader and are important in aiding women in successfully accomplishing that change. According to Irby and Brown (1995), as more women assume leadership roles in education, support networks should be redirected toward helping them find success and career advancement. These support networks can provide the advocacy and role models that men historically have had available to them.

Challenges faced by women's leadership organizations. Women administrators need support, confirmation, and a sense of connection with others who understand the world in which they work (Helgesen, 1990; Irby & Brown, 1998). They benefit from unique perspectives, networking opportunities, and resources for new ways of doing their work. According to Levine (as cited in Irby & Brown, 1998), small support groups for women leaders can have a significant influence on women's potential and can be a "mechanism for broadening perspectives, generating alternative solutions to managerial problems, and enhancing professional and personal esteem" (Irby & Brown, 1998, p. 75).

However, many women struggle with their need for support and the possible repercussions of belonging to a "women's group." "Due to the pressures of working in androcentric cultures that do not recognize or support them, many women are ambivalent about women's rights and feminism. Some women administrators, because they work in male dominated fields, are reluctant to join networks of women and consequently have few means to develop a strong identity of leadership" (Tripses, 2004, p. 1). Because of this reluctance, there has been little significant political movement toward redefinition of leadership roles that include women.

Women face many internal conflicts as they assume the role of high school principal (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1987). Shakeshaft asserted that, although there are differences among societies and cultures, in all cultures men and women recognize a division of labor based on sex in which male tasks are more valued than female tasks. This androcentric worldview reinforces the belief in male superiority and a masculine value system that accepts two sets of rules, one for men, and the other for women. As they become leaders in education, women learn from theories that exclude their experiences and voice. Administrative research and theory have traditionally reflected a white male worldview (Sergiovanni, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1987) that values competition and winning, but lacks balance from other perspectives and experiences. According to Shakeshaft (1987), when the behaviors of women contradict androcentric theories, their leadership, and not the theory, is found inadequate. Women in school leadership positions often deal with these issues by remaining isolated and dissociating themselves from their female identity. They hesitate to identify with other women and instead identify with male gatekeepers of the profession. This denial serves to perpetuate the status quo because women do not offer a different voice (Matthews, as cited in Gupton & Slick, 1996).

It is clear that women in educational leadership positions would benefit from the support and advocacy of other women in the profession. In turn, the network formed by this support could function as the vehicle that brings about the necessary changes in the definition of the high school principal's position. However, the usual advocate for a high school principal is the woman herself. There appear to be few opportunities for women to be mentored by other women leaders. Also, few women's support groups are functioning

at a level that is helpful to the practicing female administrator at the high school level. In fact, according to Kanter (1997), neither men nor women traditionally see women as mentors, but rather as the recipients of mentoring. Therefore, even when women do achieve power, "they have not necessarily been able to translate such personal credibility into an organizational power base" (Kanter, 1997, p. 142). Women in the high school principalship are especially isolated because they function in an overwhelmingly male culture. However, Edson (1995) conducted a 10-year longitudinal study on successful women administrators and concluded that, "despite all the obstacles for women trying to advance in a largely male arena, these female educators continue to be committed, resilient, and for the most part, successful" (p. 46). She commented on how little help these women leaders needed to be successful, but recommended further study on the process of encouraging and supporting these women in the lonely work that they do.

Summary

After reviewing the research that has been conducted on school leadership, it is evident that "we are faced with, not reasoned conclusions based on research, but expected role behaviors, outdated role models, prejudices, biases, and unexamined assumptions" (Berry, 1979, p. 49). If the role of school leadership is examined through an alternative lens, it is evident that these outdated role models, prejudices and biases have played an important part over a long period in limiting the opportunities for women in the field of secondary school administration. (Van Meir, as cited in Berry, 1979, p. 45). This bias can be corrected only when the educational community recognizes the need to modify its social and cultural expectations of those in school leadership positions.

The politics of education may be viewed from two broad perspectives, macropolitics and micropolitics. Macropolitics typically has referred to "the schools' external relationships and environments at the local, state, and national levels and the interactions of public and private organizations with, between, and among levels (Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 7). In the last decade, macropolitics has focused on policy and implementation studies, which have found that "those actually implementing policy in schools turned out to be the final policy makers, as evidence mounted that they could reshape or resist the intentions of policies adopted at higher levels" (Boyd as cited in Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 8). It is crucial, then, when looking at school leadership issues, that one looks closely at the micropolitics of an organization.

Blase and Blase define micropolitics as:

> The use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part political action results from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously motivated, may have "political significance" in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact. (pp. 9-10)

Whether consciously or unconsciously, decisions made in the hiring and/or appointment of school administrators are influenced by the values and ideologies of the decision makers as well as the political culture of the organization as a whole. "Predictably, certain political forces in a school work to sustain (maintain) the status quo; other political forces serve the interests of change and innovation. . . . An organization's political processes, as well as its political culture, dramatically influence most school outcomes, including teaching and learning" (Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 10). The decision to hire a female administrator is clearly one of those outcomes that is related to the

micropolitical forces at work within an educational community.

The leadership theories prominent in educational administration come from many disciplines, including business, management, and sociology. With these theories come ideas and values imbued with a certain perspective. "We argue that the texts, conversations, writings and professional activities that construct our knowing and understanding of leadership come from an embedded privileged perspective which largely ignores issues of status, gender, and race and insidiously perpetuates a view of leadership that discourages diversity and equity" (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. 12). One of the constructs that is embedded in our culture is the assumption of the male view of the world in which we live. "The concerns, interests, and experiences forming 'our' culture are those of men in positions of dominance whose perspectives are built on the silence of women (and of others). As a result, the perspectives, concerns, interests of only one sex and one class are represented as general . . . and a one-sided standpoint comes to be seen as natural and obvious" (Smith, as cited in Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. 13). These standpoints continue to shape the world of education and administration. In order to see these embedded perspectives and to bring about change, it is essential that one views educational leadership through a different lens.

Feminist theory in education allows us to see that definitions of gender differences in leadership have been constructed by our male dominant culture. Current research has shown discrepancies between the beliefs women hold about their experiences and what they actually experience (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Most women who have achieved administrative levels in education find that they live in both the male world of the administrator and the world of their own experience. "As outsiders within

educational leadership, women can see the fault lines which exist between the dominant culture and their own experience as women leaders in the margins. They not only experience a different reality than the dominant group, but also provide a different interpretation of reality" (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. 15).

Research in recent years (Marshall, 1997; Young & McLeod, 2001) has suggested that to redefine the role of school administrators, one must look beyond the center to the margins and the areas of silence (Marshall, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1987). This is especially apparent in an era of predicted shortage of school administrators, when the majority of teachers and half of those enrolled in administration programs are women. Young (as cited in Young & Skrla, 2003) examined the shortage of school administrators and found that "these explorations indicated that the discourse surrounding the leadership shortage has failed to seriously consider the role that gender plays in the shortage. Thus, the leadership shortage is taken to be a gender-neutral one (i.e., gender is not a factor)" (p. 267). Unless the shortage of high school administrators is viewed as a gendered issue, "the solutions that grow out of task force analyses will not only fail to adequately address the predicted shortage but will continue to perpetuate the gendered leadership crisis in educational administration" (Young as cited in Young & Skrla, 2003, p. 293). It is therefore critical that the role of the high school principal be redefined from an alternative viewpoint that considers gender and the utilization of women in this role.

Finally, the role of the high school principal matters because it influences student achievement. A recent study analyzed 30 years of research on practices associated with student achievement. From those studies, researchers identified more than 20 leadership

areas that were significantly related to student achievement. "Effective leaders understand how to balance pushing for change while at the same time, protecting aspects of culture, values, and norms worth preserving. They know which policies, practices, resources, and incentives to align and how to align them with organizational priorities" (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). According to Gordon and Gordon (2003), "Principals influence student achievement by first shaping the school setting in which learning takes place, and the culture, in turn, shapes not only the students and staff, but the outcomes as well. The question remains as to why some principals are more effective than others in these areas" (p. 4). Perhaps a view through a new lens can provide an answer.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

It's interesting how all the leadership roles in society require the male brain, while the female brain lends itself to the domestic arena. (Barnett & Rivers, 2004, p. 1)

Introduction to a Phenomenological Study

In the literature review I explored the historical, political, and cultural experiences of women leaders in educational settings. I also explored the generalizations that have been made about leadership and women's role as leaders, as well as the advocacy and support that women principals need and might or might not receive. What is missing in the literature are the nuances and variations in the day-to-day experiences of women who are high school principals. Understanding these nuances and variations would help us to define their role as leaders. My purpose in this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. To accomplish that purpose, I explored the lived experiences of women who are high school principals. I examined their assumptions and beliefs about leadership by exploring the nuances and variations of their day-to-day practice. I also examined their assumptions and beliefs about leadership and how these meanings define their practice. The overarching research questions were: How have the lived experiences of women high school principals, both professional and personal, defined how they think about and practice leadership? What can we learn from these lived experiences that might add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship?

Research Design

Qualitative Research Utilizing Feminist Theory

Qualitative methods often are used to generate in-depth information on a limited number of people (Patton, 1990). These methods can be used to identify and describe complex social problems and the intricacies of human experience, while providing insight into the meaning of a particular phenomenon. Qualitative methods focus on the process, rather than the outcome of that process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This approach also requires that the researcher be open to new ideas, insights, and theories that may emerge directly from the participants and their experiences. The validity of the study depends on the researcher, although loss of rigor may occur through differences in personality, energy level, outlook, and expertise. However, loss of rigor is compensated for by the flexibility and insight that can be achieved (Marshall et al., 1999). Information acquired through qualitative research may be applied, by analogy, to other situations; however, the limited focus of a qualitative study prohibits generalization to other populations (Patton, 1990).

According to Hatch (2002), qualitative research that utilizes a feminist paradigm has a framework that raises the consciousness and provides understanding that may lead to action and change. In *Beyond Methodology,* Fonow and Cook (1991) listed four characteristics of feminist research: reflexivity, an orientation to action, focus on affective aspects of research, and use of the "situation at hand." The reflexive component is important because it encourages the researcher to engage in critical reflection and analysis. It allows the researcher to be introspective and to adjust and refine the research goals as the study progresses. The action orientation helps the researcher focus on goals

that might influence policy and create opportunities for change in the lives of women. Focusing on the affective domain ensures that the researcher values the important aspects of lived experiences and that important elements in the interpretation and analysis of data are not overlooked. Finally, studying the "situation at hand" means paying attention to everyday occurrences and acknowledging the significance of daily lived experience (Kirsch, 1999).

Defining a Phenomenological Approach to This Study

One of the most common methods used in qualitative work in education is phenomenological research (Hatch, 2002). Phenomenological inquiry describes and attempts to clarify the meaning of our experiences. Its intention is to delve beneath how subjects or participants describe their experiences and to ascertain their basic beliefs and assumptions (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). In such an inquiry, the researcher seeks understanding through descriptions of lived experiences, gathered through interviews, discussions, and participant observation. The researcher acquires a thick description of the experience and is as faithful as possible to the participants' understanding of the experience. She aids the participants in exploring their experiences and attempts to identify core themes and patterns without imposing her own biases and interpretations on the data. The result is a text that is strong and insightful, one that is accurate, detailed, and descriptive, one that captures the essence of experience and produces a structure of the phenomenon under study.

In the literature on the high school principalship, there appear to be few studies describing the experience from the perspective of the principal, particularly the high school principal who is female. This dearth of information presents the opportunity to

apply a more descriptive methodology when investigating the leadership role of the female high school principal. Phenomenological inquiry invites the reader to share in the interpretation of the meaning of everyday situations encountered by these principals in their schools.

Phenomenological inquiry in the social sciences is a philosophical orientation for studying human beings and how they view the world (Husserl, 1962; von Eckartsberg, 1998). According to Creswell (1998), "Researchers search for the essential, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning" (p. 52). The goal of a phenomenological study is for the reader to better understand the essence of the experience and know what it is like for someone to experience a particular phenomenon.

Moustakas (1994) outlined a phenomenological method that offers a way of interrelating subjective and objective factors and conditions. It provides a way of using description, reflection, and imagination in arriving at an understanding of what a phenomenon is and how it came to be. The use of this methodology results in a process that reveals possibilities for awareness, knowledge, and action (Moustakas, 1994). Given the perceived opportunity for gaining an increased understanding of the phenomenon of the female high school principal and the apparent gap in the field regarding awareness and knowledge of this phenomenon, a phenomenological methodology was deemed most appropriate for this study. I used this approach in exploring the complexities and processes surrounding the experiences of female high school principals, including

descriptions of the context, setting, and participants' frames of reference. Through in-depth interviews, I investigated the salient patterns that emerged and how these patterns were linked (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). These methods of research are defined as "transformative" because they necessitate a dialogue between the researcher and her participants (Hatch, 2002). As feminist research, the intention was to gain awareness, understanding, and I hoped, transformation for high school principals and those aspiring to the position, whether male or female.

Phenomenological research aids the researcher in reconciling the tensions between what the participants *think* about the position of high school principal (based in part on their understanding of theory and role expectations) and how they *feel* about it. It promotes an understanding of the tension between the participants' conceptual accounts of their experiences and their actual firsthand lived experiences.

Preparation, Data Collection, Analysis, and Conclusions

Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) indicated that the two central questions phenomenological researchers must ask are: What were the subjects' experiences? In what context or situations did they experience it? (p. 4). Although the phenomenological method is not set and predictable, but rather fluid and flexible, there are broad steps within the phenomenological method that guide the researcher in her attempt to answer these questions (Moustakas, 1994). These steps include epoche (bracketing or the setting aside of the researcher's views), identification of significant statements (horizontalization), clustering of themes, synthesis of themes into textual and structural description, and then a composite description of meanings and essences of experience (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 6).

Moustakas clearly and concisely outlined the steps of the phenomenological model. According to Moustakas (1994), through use of this model, "one learns to see naively and freshly again, to value conscious experience, to respect the evidence of one's senses, and to move toward an intersubjective knowing of things, people, and everyday experiences" (p. 101).

The phenomenological model used in this study is outlined in Table 3.1. Because the research questions have already been formulated and the literature review completed, my description of the process will begin with the selection of participants.

Table 3.1: Summary of Methodology

Preparing to Collect Data: *Formulate Question *Conduct Literature Review *Develop Criteria for Participant Selection *Develop Instructions/Guiding Questions
Collecting Data *Engage in Epoche *Bracket the Question *Conduct the Interview
Organize, Analyze, Synthesize Data *Horizontalization *Reduction and Elimination *Clustering and Thematizing *Final Identification of Themes *Construct Textural Description *Construct Structural Description *Construct Synthesis of Textural-Structural Description (Essence of Experience)
Summary, Implications, and Outcomes *Summarize Study *Relate Findings to Literature Review *Relate to Possible Further Research *Relate Study to Personal Outcomes *Relate Study to Professional Outcomes *Relate Study to Social Meanings and Relevance *Closing Comments

Source: Moustakas, 1994, pp. 180-182

Participant Selection

After the researcher formulates the research questions and conducts a literature review based on the philosophical perspectives behind the phenomenological approach, the criteria for participant selection must be determined. The primary source of data for the phenomenological researcher is the subject or person being interviewed. As the person relates his or her experience and it becomes known to the researcher, the researcher can study these experiential descriptions and process them through a series of operations to arrive at a final understanding of the experience being investigated (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). The goal of phenomenological research is therefore not to explain the phenomenon under investigation, but rather to describe it and to find meaning in the actual experience. According to Kruger (1988), subjects or participants who are largely suitable for phenomenological research are those who: (a) have had experiences regarding the phenomenon being researched, (b) are willing and able to communicate their feelings accurately, and (c) express a willingness to be open with the researcher.

My task in this research was to present the experiences of these principals in enough detail and depth that those who read the study can understand and appreciate the experiences described and understand the issues that these experiences reflect. I approached potential participants for this study with these criteria in mind and selected candidates based upon my judgment and their geographical accessibility. Because participants would be asked to reflect on the significance of their experiences, they were experienced classroom teachers who had a minimum of 3 years of experience as high school principals. Because there are so few female principals, other variables such as age and ethnicity were not a consideration. The participants were not a random sample,

representative of a specific population, but rather a purposeful sample of those particularly suited to this study: females with at least 3 years of experience as principals, and from a variety of demographic contexts.

The context of the participant's particular school setting (urban, rural, or suburban) was relevant to this study, because experiences could vary depending on that context. Therefore, I selected one participant from a large Class A urban school district, another from a smaller Class A urban school district, and one from a Class C school district. (Class size is determined by pupil count: Class A = more than 1,058 students; Class B = 496 to 1,057 students; Class C = 251 to 495 students; and Class D = fewer than 250 students). According to Giorgi (2003), the number of participants in a phenomenological study usually ranges from one to a maximum of about 10. In this study, I chose to include three participants, in part because of the difficulty of finding female high school principals, for geographic convenience, and in consideration of the time available for the study. In this report, participants are not identified by name or by school district, to protect their anonymity.

Developing Guiding Questions

In phenomenological research, the interview process involves "an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions" (Moustakas, 1995, p. 114). Open-ended interview guides provide an opportunity to engage in a heightened level of conversation, rather than a simple question-and-answer session. Before developing these guides, I reviewed several interview protocols used by other researchers studying gender issues related to educational administration. To determine the effectiveness of each question, before beginning the interview process I tested each

protocol with a person who met the criteria for participation. After the series of interviews began, I modified the second and third sets of interview questions based on information from the previous interview. The final focus group questions were based on information acquired in the previous interviews and included the potential themes emerging in the study.

Collecting Data

In this study I attempted to record and understand the ways the participants constructed and made sense of their professional worlds. After engaging in epoche and bracketing the question, I collected data through an initial biographical questionnaire that established personal background information, followed by a series of three 90-minute interviews with each of the participants, and a final focus group session (Creswell, 1998). I audiotaped the interviews and the focus group session and transcribed and manually coded the data after each interview or session. In the first interview I explored the participants' beliefs and assumptions regarding high school leadership; this interview was reflexive in nature. The second interview was focused on the context of the participants' professional worlds and revolved around artifacts chosen to represent their beliefs and the world in which they work. In the final interview, I asked participants to make sense of their experiences by asking them how they had been advocates for themselves and others aspiring to this leadership position. The focus group session served as a member check to clarify with participants the credibility of my inferences (Greene, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and provided an avenue for further discussion of specific topics.

Multiple interviews are typical of much feminist research, perhaps because they help form a strong interviewer-interviewee bond that some researchers have defined as

characteristic of feminist research (Reinharz, 1992, p. 36). In recent years, feminist researchers have questioned whether the objective role of the traditional researcher as interviewer is even possible. They have also questioned the underlying assumptions and ethics of an interview paradigm that reflects masculine traits like detachment to the exclusion of feminine traits such as sensitivity and emotionality (Fontana & Frey, 1994). According to Le Compte (1993), the researcher's role is that of a mediator who helps participants give voice to their thoughts and understanding to the events and the circumstances in their own lives. I saw this as my role as a researcher in this study: to help make visible the thoughts and understandings of the participants so that others could know and understand them.

As a high school principal, I developed a rapport with the participants that was both reflective and self-revealing. I made every effort to establish an atmosphere of engagement and trust that encouraged participants to construct meaning and to share feelings that typically are missed in traditional interview research. My own self-disclosure served as a model of openness to aid in building trust; I was careful to be aware of my interactions and looked for cues to the participants' readiness to know more about me.

Organizing, Analyzing, and Synthesizing the Data

According to Lester (1999), one of the difficulties with phenomenological research is that it creates a great deal of information (notes, recordings, observations), all of which the researcher must consider. Another difficulty is categorizing the information, which does not necessarily fall into "neat categories" (p. 2).

The first step in analysis is reading through the data, identifying the key themes (horizontalizing), and setting aside data that appear irrelevant. The next step is organizing and coding the data to determine each of the invariant constituents by determining whether it (a) contains a necessary piece of the experience, and (b) can be abstracted and labeled. "The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). The invariant constituents are then clustered and labeled by core themes. The core themes are validated by checking them against the participants' transcripts: They should be explicitly expressed or, if not, then compatible with the transcript. Any themes that cannot be validated in this way should be deleted (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). The textural description is written for each participant, using the validated themes. The structural description is written based on the textural description and imaginative variation [using imagination, varying frames of reference, and different perspectives to "arrive at the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced"] (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). From each of the individual textural and structural descriptions, a composite description of the essence of the experience is created for all of the participants.

I audiotaped all of the interviews and then transcribed and manually coded the data following each interview. I read each interview first in its entirety to capture a sense of the whole and to acquire a sense of voice for each participant. I manually coded the invariant constituents, and then clustered them by themes. After deleting themes that could not be validated, I wrote a textural description for each participant, followed by a composite description that captured the essence of the participants' experiences.

Summarizing: Implications and Outcomes

After organizing and analyzing the data, the next step in the phenomenological process and the final chapter in this study was to summarize the entire study and consider its limitations. To do this, I returned to the literature review and "distinguished the findings from prior research, outlined future research that would advance knowledge on the topic and discussed the outcomes of the investigation in terms of social meanings and implications as well as personal and professional values" (Moustakas, 1995, p. 155).

In the final chapter or summary of this study, I describe the personal and professional factors that motivated me to research this topic. I briefly outline the methodology that guided the research, present my research findings, and discuss the implications and outcomes emerging from my analysis (Moustakas, 1995, p. 156). I point to the original knowledge resulting from my research and propose how future researchers might approach the topic in a way that will further extend the knowledge of the role of the high school principal. Finally, I reflect on the implications of the data for the practice of the secondary school principal and also on their implications for my own professional journey.

Trustworthiness

One of the most significant concerns with phenomenological research is the issue of trustworthiness. How does the researcher establish the reliability of the descriptions and interpretations? Churchill, Lowery, McNally, and Rao (1998) compared three phenomenological studies that used the same descriptive evidence and found that,

although there were some differences in interpretations, a common set of themes was found in all three studies. They indicated that:

> The chief point to be remembered with this kind of research is not so much whether another position with respect to the original descriptions could be adopted (this point is granted beforehand) but whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoints as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it. That is the key criterion for phenomenological research. (Giorgi, as cited in Churchill et al., 1998, p. 81)

The goal in phenomenological research is for the researcher to be open and empathetic so that the reader can sense the participant's situation and meaning (Seamon, 2000, p. 19).

According to Polkinghorne (1983), there are four criteria that a reader might use to judge the trustworthiness of phenomenological research: vividness, accuracy, richness, and elegance. Trustworthiness relies on the *power to convince*, rather than the subjectivity of the research. "Ultimately, the most significant test of trustworthiness for any phenomenological study is its relative power to draw the reader into the researcher's discoveries, allowing the reader to see his or her own world or the worlds of others in a new, deeper way" (Seamon, 2000, p. 21).

I used several methods to ensure that the information presented in this study was accurate. First, three interviews were conducted with each of the participants, and each had a different format. The first was reflective in nature and relied on the participants' recollections of their experiences. The second was a "storytelling" interview in which participants related stories that symbolized their beliefs and revealed details regarding the contexts in which they operated. In the third interview, I asked participants to create a lesson in which they made sense of their experiences by becoming advocates for others. The fourth method of data collection was a focus group in which member checks took

place and I checked feedback from the participants concerning categories and themes for accuracy (Creswell, 1994).

Through rich, thick description and vivid portrayals of the participants' experiences, I created stories that draw the reader into the research and, ultimately, move that reader down new paths of understanding. My intention was for the reader to see a clear relationship between the lived experiences of the participants and my analysis and interpretation of those experiences.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that I conducted the study in an ethical manner, I considered Kvale's (1996) ethical guidelines:

- Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time.
- All information was handled with the utmost confidentiality and concern for the protection of the participants' identities.
- I obtained informed consent from each of the participants who agreed to take part in the study.
- I offered contact numbers in case an interview left any participant with feelings or issues she might wish to discuss with me.

Furthermore, I scrutinized all information collected from the participants for its potential to embarrass or otherwise harm participants if published: Such information will be omitted from public reports.

Limitations

This study encompasses the nature of the experiences and leadership assumptions of a small sample of female high school leaders. The women's experiences and beliefs are contextually embedded and are therefore limited to the environments in which they work and to their personal histories or "ways of knowing" (Belenky et al., 1986). The results are therefore not generalizable to other people or populations.

As a female high school principal, I acknowledge my own privileged lens that framed my analysis of the participants' experiences. According to Sleeter (1996), "Every time white economically privileged women presume to speak for all women without engaging a plurality of women in conversation, we are asserting power granted to us by virtue of our racial and social class privilege, tacitly accepting racial and social class relationships as they now exist and consequently, presenting a distorted picture of whatever we are speaking about" (p. 202). In this study I do not presume to speak for all women; research on diverse women must also be done and shared in order to fully inform the leadership field. This study serves simply as an additional piece in the literature on the leadership of high school principals and is therefore limited in terms of the inferences and interpretations that can be drawn from it.

My inexperience and the difficulty of bracketing also limited this research. Experienced researchers might be able to find more, or less, in the analysis of the transcripts.

Definition of Phenomenological Terms

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), phenomenology is the study of *essences*. In phenomenology, essence is a complex term that derives from the Greek word *ousia*,

meaning the inner essential nature of a thing, its true being. It is a term that describes the ways of being in this world, how a phenomenon reveals itself in our thinking, in how we encounter something, and in the relationships or intentionalities that we maintain in our world.

Intentionality is the way we are connected as humans to the world in which we live. All thinking is always about something; all of our activities have an object. However, intentionality occurs only in retrospect, when we reflect on our activities (Moustakas, 1994).

Lived experience describes the aspects of a situation or activity as experienced by the person in it. It refers to the way a person experiences the world as real and meaningful. Lived experience reveals the pre-reflective consciousness a person has about the event that is experienced. A person uses these events by recalling them and transforming them into consciousness (Kleiman, 2004).

Bracketing or epoche involves the setting aside of one's biases and beliefs to study the essential structures of the world.

Reduction is the act of looking at a phenomenon in its totality. Ultimately, we get a textural description of the essences of the phenomenon.

Horizontalization occurs as an early step in phenomenological reduction. Here, every statement is treated as having equal value; statements are then clustered into themes (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97).

Imaginative variation follows reduction and seeks to grasp the structural essences of experience.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXTS

Not in strength are we inferior to men;
the same our eyes, our limbs the same;
one common light we see, one air we breathe;
nor different is the food we eat.
What then denied to us hath heaven on man bestowed.
(Queen Penthesilea of the Amazons
Homer, The Iliad)

Introduction

In classical mythology, Amazons were portrayed as beautiful women in Amazonomachies, an art form showing battles between the Amazons and Greeks. Amazons were trained to use all weapons, especially in single combat. They were honorable, courageous, and brave, and they represented rebellion against sexism (Ruffel, 1997). According to Diodorus Siculus in the 1st century B.C., Amazon women were trained in combat and warfare, whereas the men looked after the homes and children. Parallels between those ancient women and the women in this study are remarkably easy to draw. It seems fitting, then, that the participants in this study, trained as administrators and engaging in the many battles being fought in today's public schools, are represented as Amazons performing their jobs in a male-defined arena.

My purpose in this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. By examining how women high school principals perceive their role in an environment traditionally dominated by males and by exploring their assumptions and beliefs about their leadership

experiences, the potential exists to expand the conventional understanding of the role of the high school principal. This new understanding potentially can add a fresh element to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship.

The knowledge base of a high school principal is permeated by personal experience. How principals respond to specific situations is influenced by their assumptions and beliefs about their role. Therefore, it is important to know how their beliefs were constructed, how their beliefs influence their practice, and how they make sense of their experiences. According to Laible (2003), "Traveling to someone else's world is a way of identifying with them because by traveling to their 'worlds' we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes! Only when we have traveled in each other's worlds are we fully subjects to each other" (p. 190). Through the stories of the women in this study, we can capture the voice of experience, which too often is missing from the literature on educational leadership. These women's stories add collectively to an emerging literature base intended to unravel how educational leaders think and work.

The women in this study were honorable, courageous, and brave. They boldly entered a profession that has been defined by men and found success as school leaders. Although the women were very different in many ways, they shared a profound sense of their mission as educators, an honesty and integrity beyond reproach, and an unquestionable belief in their ability to make a difference in the education of the students in their schools. They shared their professional and personal stories and reflected on their assumptions about leadership, giving all of us the opportunity to make connections between their experiences and their beliefs.

I selected the women in this study based on recommendations from other administrators and their accessibility during the time period of this study. The participants were all experienced principals and former teachers, willing to share their experiences in a research setting. Each woman was interviewed three times for approximately 90 minutes, and two of the three participated in a lengthy focus group interview. In this chapter I tell the story of each of these women and briefly describe the environment in which each was working at the time of the study. The descriptions of the participants are based on their experiences as related in our interviews and discussions and on my observations as a researcher.

In addition to interviewing the three participants in the study, I asked myself the same questions and recorded my answers. I have included that information and a description of my own work environment first. According to Letherby (2003), "We need to acknowledge the location of ourselves in research and writing in order to make it clear that the production of knowledge is a dialectic loaded in favour of the researcher" (p. 9). Although the researcher may set aside biases and beliefs, personal biographies and experiences are also "relevant to the research that we do in terms of choice of topic and method, relationship with respondents and analysis and presentation of the 'findings'" (Letherby, 2003, p. 9). Thus, in feminist research, it is appropriate that the reader have access to the knowledge and processes used to construct the findings.

A Dialogic Approach

In telling a story, the storyteller's meaning depends not only on the structure and content provided by the speaker, but also on the storyteller's relations with others

(Wortham, 2001). Therefore, in order to understand what the storyteller is saying, the listener must understand the position the storyteller is taking in regard to others. According to Bakhtin (as cited in Wortham, 2001), "The expression of an utterance can never be fully understood or explained if its thematic content is all that is taken into account. The expression of an utterance always *responds* to a greater or lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker's attitude toward others' utterances and not just his attitude toward the object of his utterance" (p. 19). In other words, a storyteller tells a story about a past interaction. According to Wortham, the action of telling the story is the storytelling event. The interaction or event described in the story is the narrated event. Therefore, in every story, the teller takes a position with respect to what others have already said. In addition, the storyteller anticipates the response of future speakers. "For Bakhtin, then, dialogue does not only look toward the past. For any utterance, 'its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others'" (Wortham, 2001, p. 22). It is clear, then, that the context of the storyteller is as important as the story that is told.

In this study I explore the voices of several women whose experiences in life and leadership are different. Therefore, it is essential, in order to explore and analyze their stories, that we first understand the context of the stories they tell. In this chapter I will, through the words of each of the participants, paint a picture of each of their lives. This conceptualization of the participants will contribute to a fuller understanding of each of the participants and a more complete analysis of the findings in Chapter V.

Introducing the Participants

Personal data about the participants are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Participants' Personal Data

Name	Age	Marital Status	Children	Degrees	Years as a Teacher	Years as an Administrator
Kathy	56	Divorced/Remarried	4	BA: English MA: Counseling	10 (+ 10 as Counselor)	7
Eleanor	53	Married	5	BA: English MA: Ed Admin.	11	7
Penny	53	Divorced/Remarried	0	BS: Life Management MA: Life Management Spec: Ed Leadership	18	12
Dina	49	Single	0	BS: Phys. Ed. MA: Ed Leadership	8	19

Phenomenological research involves inquiry into the relationship between what people say and their experiences within a specific context. Thus, each participant's school setting is also relevant to this study. I attempted to choose participants from a variety of school settings, including urban, suburban, and rural, and from school populations that exhibited varying degrees of student diversity (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Description of Each Participant's School and School Community

2005 Data	Kathy: Sparta High School	Eleanor: Athens High School	Penny: Troy High School	Dina: Arcadia High School
Reading Proficiency (%)	77.4	73.9	87.6	64.1
Math Proficiency (%)	62.0	48.9	75.4	40.6
ACT Average Score	22.1	21.1	23.5	
ACT Participation Rate (%)	42.9	47.4	76.2	n.a.
NCLB: AYP?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
School Environment:				
Enrollment	360	1757	1749	390
White (%)	99.2	60.8	94.7	73.9
Black (%)	0.0	33.2	0.7	4.0
Hispanic (%)	0.0	3.3	1.6	20.8
Economically Disadvantaged	8.0	48.0	4.0	43.0
Community Profile:				
Population	6,029	60,496	24,080	6,832
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.6	7.6	4.3	7.4
Median Household Income ($)	78,655	52,002	113,928	53,182
Adults with Bachelor's Degree (%)	22.3	19.2	28.2	8.2
Single-Parent Households with Children (%)	8.2	15.1	8.0	13.9
School Type	Rural	Urban: Mid-Size City	Suburban: Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	Small Town

Source: Data from Michigan Department of Education, School Matters: Standard and Poor's, 2005

Introducing Kathy: Alkai, an Amazon general
Whose Name Means "Mighty One"

Feminist research is grounded in the personal and is accountable to its readers. Although the phenomenological method requires epoche and bracketing, it is essential in a feminist framework to present my own views and acknowledge my own beliefs and influences so that, as Stanley (1991) argued, the reader has knowledge of the reasoning

process that produced the findings/outcomes of the study. According to Young and Skrla (2003), "How we know and what we see is always filtered by who we are" (p. 205).

To situate myself, I am a 50-something, white female high school principal, who came to an understanding of hegemony after several confusing experiences in my attempt to enter the world of educational administration and a big "aha" after beginning doctoral work and reading feminist literature for the first time. I was born and raised in Michigan by working class parents who valued education for their children. My father had great hopes that I would be a doctor, and, although a doctorate in education was not what he had in mind, he is nevertheless delighted that, at what he deems the rather advanced age of 56, his daughter is finally going to be a doctor "of sorts."

Although I grew up before women's playing high school sports, I started golfing with my father when I was 12. This gave me immediate insight into the good-old-boys world of golf. By the age of 17, I was fairly disgusted with the old boys and the game in general. I have not played since. During college, I played intramural sports and was first exposed to playing on a team. I thoroughly enjoyed it, but was dismayed as an English major to find that women could not minor in physical education; there was no need for it because women were not coaches. The only activity I have coached in 30 years in education is the Quiz Bowl team.

I spent 10 years in the classroom as an English teacher and recently was rewarded when I found a former student's web page where she listed me as her favorite teacher because "She taught me to love reading." During the time I spent in the classroom, my greatest rewards came from the relationships I formed with my students. I found teaching exhilarating. Even after I began working as a high school counselor, I taught

summer school and adult education in the evening because I missed the contact with the students.

It was an easy choice to earn a master's degree in school counseling, although it was difficult trying to juggle a marriage and four children while working full time and going to school. When I started counseling, there was a shift in how I worked with students. I no longer knew everyone, although my relationships with many students were much more intense than they had been in the classroom. I then spent 10 years as a high school counselor, where I watched first-hand as administrators worked with students.

Although my personal belief was that "Even God wouldn't want to be a high school principal," there seemed to be a strange synchronicity when both my present building administrator and a former building administrator suggested that I would make a good principal. I was flattered by their suggestion and began taking courses in educational administration at Michigan State University. When I began taking courses, I had four children living at home and a husband who was less than pleased about wasting time and money on college courses. He was a teacher and a football coach and strongly believed that a high school principal had to be big, mean, and aggressive. Taking classes focused on becoming a secondary school administrator was therefore a waste of my time and his money, and we had numerous and lengthy arguments about my inability to take care of the children and keep the house clean. We went to counseling for a brief period, but when the counselor suggested that I do the housework as soon as I got home from work, rather than trying to do it later in the evening, I refused to see him again. Shortly thereafter, my husband and I were divorced.

I applied for a position as an assistant principal in the building where I had been counseling for 10 years. I thought that the interview went well, but then the principal drew me aside. I was smiling and eager to hear his comments. He began by saying that he had never conducted such an excellent interview with any candidate. "However," he continued, "the school board member on the interview committee doesn't feel that you are a good role model for students because you ride a motorcycle." A male teacher/basketball coach from a nearby community was hired for the position.

Soon after that, one of my former administrators, who was now a school superintendent, called to tell me that he had an opening for a high school principal; would I like to apply? Six men and I applied for the position. After the second round of interviews, I was offered the position and accepted it. The superintendent began his personal welcome with, "You know, I could have put a piece of shit on that chair and it would have been better than what we've had."

Two years in the high school principalship brought me once again to Michigan State University, where I began a doctoral program in educational administration. I spent the first year in the program trying to find a topic that would sustain my interest. I thought about mentoring principals and new teacher induction as possible topics, but kept coming back to the embarrassment and humiliation that I had felt in my first attempt at an administrative position. I had been personally insulted by a criticism of my life style, and I did not understand why. When I came across Marilyn Tallerico's work on female school superintendents, I was surprised to find that much of what she had written matched my own experience as a high school principal. Further investigation led me to educational work written from a feminist perspective. Suddenly, I had a new word in my

vocabulary: hegemony. And suddenly, I also had a new perspective on my foray into educational leadership.

One of the incidents that stands out in my mind was a situation in which the school had invited some staff members in from another school district. They had asked to come because we were on a block schedule and they wanted to see how it operated.

> My assistant principal at the time was a male and I'm 5'2" and he is about 6'6" and probably 250 pounds. We were sitting next to each other in the library. And this guy from this other school district, this teacher, looked at my assistant principal and looked at me and then he said to me, "And I assume that you are the assistant principal?" And I looked at my assistant principal and we just starting laughing because I know that man—that teacher's assumption was based totally on a gender thing. He was a guy, he was a big guy, so he must be the principal and I must be his assistant.

When I became the high school principal of a small, rural district, I was in charge of both managing my building and providing the instructional leadership for my staff. Two years ago, because the district is growing so rapidly, the school board hired a curriculum coordinator. I was supportive of the new position; in fact, I pushed the school board toward that decision. What I did not realize was how much it would change my own role. Now, I manage my building, but the instructional-leadership piece belongs to the curriculum director. I know that I could not keep up with the demands of both aspects of the job, but it is a loss and a disappointment to have to relinquish what I believe is a critical part of my job.

Because I am a principal in a small rural school, I still have a personal relationship with many of the students. "I enjoy the relationship with kids. And it is not the day-to-day thing like you have when you're teaching, but it is a one-on-one relationship with most of the kids that is a lot easier to maintain. So I can still enjoy that." I have generally had a good relationship with my teaching staff, but, because the district

is growing, we have a large number of new teachers, and that makes my job more difficult. I have found that, although they might know their subject matter, many of them know little about managing a classroom. I have many teachers who work long hours before and after school, but I also have a number of teachers who walk in after the bell rings in the morning and nearly beat the students out the door at the end of the day. Holding teachers accountable is difficult, unless I am in their classrooms on a regular basis. Time constraints prevent me from doing that, unless I know there is a problem. "I think more than anything else, it's dealing with teachers who don't do their job. In the last couple of years, that certainly has been an issue for me. They're professionals and it makes my job very difficult and very challenging if the professionals who work in my building don't do their job the way it should be done."

Confronting teachers is unpleasant and is one part of the job that I truly dislike. However, I think that I am careful to do what I need to do in a helpful and positive way. I was shocked when a teacher told me that some of my staff members were afraid to talk to me. My perception of myself was never of a harsh, ruthless "boss", although in retrospect, I have fired several teachers in the last 7 years. Perhaps those teachers who have concerns about talking to me are the same ones who are afraid that they are not doing the job they should be doing. "And it bothers me that a teacher can't just come in and talk to me. She has got—he or she feels that she has to have the union rep with her just to have a conversation with me, and that offends me." In most cases I think that our discussions are straightforward and open, although the teachers' union has started to flex its muscle and those relationships are beginning to change.

I have never had a mentor, although I would value that relationship. Especially as a new principal, I think it would be immensely helpful to have someone to talk to about the decisions I have to make. "Sometimes you just need somebody to talk to. And I talked about confidence before and I think having somebody to talk to who can affirm your ideas or your thoughts or your decisions and say, 'Yeah, you're doing the right thing,' sometimes that can be really nice." Although some people have asked if I am interested in the position, I have no aspirations to be a superintendent. I dislike the politics, the finance and budget issues, and dealing with the school board. I do not have confidence in my ability to do the job of a superintendent, although if I had a mentor, that relationship might make a difference in how I feel about pursuing the job.

I am the principal of Sparta High School, the lone high school in a district with a student population under 1,500. There is little ethnic diversity districtwide, but a small but significant diversity in the socioeconomic background of the students (see Table 4.2). The high school is small enough that I know the names of all of the students, their siblings, their parents, and often their grandparents. I am constantly in the halls and frequently in their classrooms, so they know me fairly well, and we generally have a good relationship. The superintendent has been in the district for 4 years and has a middle school administrator/coach background. I find him to be quite controlling in many situations, although he is willing to let me be in charge when a controversy arises.

Introducing Eleanor: Alcinoe, an Amazon Warrior Whose Name Means "Mighty Wisdom"

"I'm the first woman principal at Athens High School. It was my goal. That was my goal when I was in college. My mother said to me, 'You went to college, now what

is it you're going to do?' I said, 'I'm going to be the first female principal of Athens High School.'" Eleanor was a graduate of Athens High School, as were her children, her parents, her grandparents, and her great-grandparents. At the age of 19, she began working as secretary to the superintendent of Athens Community Schools. At 35, she graduated from college with a degree in English and began her teaching career at Athens High School. By then, she was married and had two children.

> When I was 19, I was secretary to the superintendent. But I have been around this district for 34 years in some capacity. I was a secretary, or I was a parent, you know, my kids went through. I was room mother and did all of that kind of stuff. I was the president of the PTO and that sort of thing. And then I did my student teaching here, and I taught here for a hundred years. And I was always a volunteer reader in the literacy program and stuff like that. So I have been around and worked in Athens my whole life.

Eleanor was married to a man who worked out of their home. She had two grown daughters and recently had adopted three children, the youngest of whom was three. She talked frequently about her children and the changes they have brought about in her life, "The kids have made a huge difference in my path. That was a huge detour. I explain to people, when I get up in the morning it is five people I have to get out that door. The little girls do the hair and wash the baby and then get him dressed." Choosing to adopt their youngest children was a difficult decision for Eleanor and her husband because it changed their career plans, particularly Eleanor's. "I think of my professional life, my career. But the first thing I think of is my kids. If we didn't have Max right now, or even the girls, if we had never adopted the kids, I would probably be finishing my doctorate and doing a superintendency."

After adopting their three youngest children, Eleanor's husband moved his business to a building at the back of their property so he could be home with them.

However, she had found that the traditional expectation of the woman as caretaker and homemaker was often a source of discontent in their marriage,

> My husband has no problem saying, "I am not one of your damn kids." He has no problem saying that. "You are not going to order me around." And with Nick being home much more often than I am, that really—we're still struggling with that. We are struggling with it very much. More so here than at Ithaca. But we also adopted another kid in the last 5 years. Nick was always the one that worked, and my income was for the extra things. But now I'm about this. So now I'm working for real. And that is not just a little additional income, now it is the real thing. And we're still struggling with that. . . who does what and when and why and how often and how well.

Eleanor was an English teacher at Athens High School for 10 years. She believed that the relationship that a teacher establishes with his or her students is crucial to the teacher's success in the classroom. "I think I have quite a sense of humor, and I can laugh at myself. And that has been a key to my success in the classroom." However, as an administrator, Eleanor had found that she did not have as much respect for teachers as she did when she was a teacher herself.

> But I find I don't like them as much either. And that is sad, that's sad. Because I have been friends for 20 years with some of these teachers. I find that I don't like them as well. I see they are not as successful in the classrooms as I had originally thought. I see the inconsistencies and how it impacts the kids. I see some of my favorite teachers not taking responsibility for a class full of kids where 80% failed. They say those kids are lazy. Not motivated.

Eleanor's first principalship was at Ithaca High School, a small school just west of Athens. When she was hired, she was expected to make some difficult changes in the district, including firing three tenured teachers.

> There were three teachers in Ithaca who had 30 years plus experience, who were actually horrible. My superintendent expected me to do some really, really controversial hard-to-wade-through things. And—I got rid of three teachers with over 30 years of experience. And that definitely took a toll on me. It also took a toll on my relationship with them.

As their first female high school principal, Eleanor had to deal with people in this small rural community who had specific ideas of what a principal should look like. "I had a man come in and I had just suspended his daughter for 3 days for fighting. And he was just as serious as he could be. He said, 'You know, Ithaca is very rural. Don't you all think a man principal would have more authority over them kids?' Those words are burned in my mind. And I just stood up and I thanked him for coming and I said, 'Elizabeth can come back on Thursday.'"

Eleanor's experiences as a rural high school principal prepared her for the many facets of the principalship. "That experience was helpful in learning to wear all the hats. At Ithaca, I did everything. So I had to be on top of everything: the dates, the deadlines, the details. Now I feel like I am losing out on the latest of everything because there is someone at central office who does this and someone who does that." After 3 years as principal at Ithaca High School, Eleanor returned to Athens High School as its principal.

> Many of my former colleagues were on the hiring committee. I had a very strong support base. And when I first came in, the support was very strong. It has waned a little bit as I had to make decisions that didn't make them happy. The first year, I closed campus and I made I.D. tags for all of the kids. The tardy policy was enforced. The dress code was enforced. Then I turned the whip on the teachers a little bit. There were a few things I guess that just held everybody more accountable. They hold me accountable for breathing. That's probably the biggest negative—having to be the boss of former colleagues.

Eleanor had had to adjust to a different relationship with teachers than she had when she taught English at Athens High School. "I have four teachers right now who think I'm not trustworthy. And I haven't lost trust with a person in the world, but I can't explain to them what I have done because what I have done is very confidential." What

she was able to share with her colleagues as a teacher was much different now that she was their administrator.

> It's funny, whenever I made a catty little remark that they would have laughed at 10 years ago and thought I had a great sense of humor, now, I'm being sarcastic or cynical and somehow cutting. Somehow this remark is against the union. My perspective of myself has changed because of that kind of feedback.

Eleanor's perception of herself had changed in several ways with her move to the principalship. She believed that she had become hardened and much less empathetic to others, her teaching staff, in particular,

> The thick skin quality is one I'm realizing is more needed than most. I got a nasty e-mail from a teacher right here and I'm not going to open it until after our conversation because it will just flip me out for the rest of the day. I know who it is from and it is going to be nasty. And it [my skin] is thicker than it used to be. Some of it gets too thick once in a while and they really are insulting me. Personally.

One thing that had not changed was her concern for students and their education. As a principal, students were Eleanor's first priority and she enjoyed the interactions she had with them in the hallways and the lunchroom. Her relationship with them was, however, on a different level than it was when she taught in the classroom.

> I love working with kids. And I miss that in the classroom—the fact that your association with the good kids has come to a screeching halt. You come in and they get their posters signed and they hang them up and down in the lunchroom. I'll tease them and that kind of stuff. But I don't know their names; I don't know anything about them. But I get to know all of the bad kids, and what their home situation is, how many children they have and that kind of thing. So that part I found negative and somewhat depressing.

Eleanor viewed herself as having been an excellent teacher, one whom students sought out for help and support. Although she still attempted to maintain a positive relationship with them, she found that it was much more difficult as a principal.

> I think the first time that I put my hands on a student and held him against a locker, and the whole hall was going "ohhh!" about 6 weeks into my being here. And that pretty much set the tone. What has been hard for me is going from being a teacher here—because I was a teacher here for many years and had just lots of positives from the kids; they wanted to be in my classroom and they wanted to take my class and that kind of thing—to me being the evil woman. That's been hard for me to come back to a place I taught, and it was such a positive experience at that point and then to go to such a negative. The kids immediately hated me when I came in because I closed campus and made them wear ID tags. It was during the summer. So they hated me right off. They were never negative overtly. They would just very much avoid me or grumble or turn away when I came by. If I smiled at them, they would turn away. That kind of thing. And that was hurtful. I really haven't dealt with it well. This is hurtful. I have to at some time realize the world doesn't always love me, and that's hard. And that's a hard thing for a teacher kind of people person.

Eleanor's four assistant principals dealt with most of the discipline. Although she got along well with the three male assistant principals, the one female assistant principal had continually created problems.

> She just makes a mess of the building. It was always a fun collaborative time, but she has made a battle, a battle, a war, no question. A kid's mother died yesterday and he didn't have his ID tag. You don't knock them as hard as a kid who has deliberately left his ID tag out in his car for five years in a row. She said, "You know what—sorry to hear your mother died, but rules are rules." Can you imagine suspending a kid whose mom died the day before because he is not wearing ID? Oh, please.

When students had a particularly persistent or severe problem, Eleanor was the person who had to expel them.

> [I'll say] I care so much about you and I love you as a person, but I can't have you in my building behaving like that. I suspend kids and they are usually crying and apologizing and go on their way. But still. Unfortunately, that is the story of their life and they are used to it. You would like to care more or provide more opportunities, connect in a different way and motivate them to succeed.

Eleanor was very clear regarding her own best qualities. The flexibility to plan the day and then change those plans at a moment's notice was important. So too was

integrity. "I have four teachers right now who think I'm not trustworthy. And I haven't lost trust with a person in the world." A persistent concern was her relationship with her teaching staff, many of whom had been fellow teachers when she taught English at Athens High. "This job is more exciting. It has a lot more challenges to it. But the negativity is in the interpersonal relationships. I don't make enough money for people to feel like this about me. Sometimes I just shake my head and think, 'What did I do?' It can be numbing. How can they say I would be dishonest? Oh, my gosh, that's hard." She spoke of the petty issues that teachers, some of whom were previously close friends, brought to her and how often her day was swallowed up by one small crisis after another.

> I have become a fireman, and that is not what I planned on doing. In this district I know it so well and I have been here so long. In this district I wanted to establish consistency, to return to some of the traditional things that we had done before for years and years and years. And that's been done. We have done that. The return—my eyes are watering—the return to the tradition, I think that has been a real plus and curriculum is my strength, no question. But what has actually transpired is I have had less and less time to do the altruistic things, if you will, and more time to come and get the child out of room 203 who won't leave—to be a fireman. And again, that is the difference between management and leadership. And I get way too mired in management.

The expectations of the job sometimes required more time than Eleanor had in a day. She frequently was at her desk an hour or two before school started, and often, she stayed late into the evening.

> I get here about 7:00 a.m. I used to get here about 6:00 a.m. The school is out at 2:45, and on the ideal day, I leave about 4:30, but because it is a huge gap between school getting out and when sports and things start, I very seldom leave because I live so far away. About 30 miles one way. So for me to do the school and then go home and then come back, that's 120 miles of driving in one day. It doesn't work. So I usually stay. The expectation is that I am at everything. Every night of the week.

Eleanor was aware of gender as an issue in her position and believed that the expectations of the role had a definite gender bias. She explained her gendered view of her role as high school principal:

> You have the little kids, that's a very nurturing mommy kind of thing. And when they get to high school level, that's kind of a boss, of course, that's a male. And in a large school like this, they are looking at things like controlling a fight, for example, controlling the kids. Making decisions for a much more academic group than maybe the elementary teachers. And I think they look at that as a male-dominated thing. But as long as the duties are kind of related to the wife and mom sort of thing, that's where your elementary principal is a female, that's fine. But into the dad sort of thing, like making decisions, that's high school and male.

Eleanor's relationships with others, including other administrators, teachers, and students, played a key factor in her perception of herself as a leader. "I said *ass* in front of a teacher last year, and he [the superintendent] was actually going to discipline me for it. I said to him, 'It is interesting that you would say that when what I said was in front of three or four people. When Marc [the previous superintendent] talked about his liaisons and all of his crazy weekends and the language that he used . . . that just went unquestioned." She talked about the difficulties she had with people in central office:

> I love the assumption that men are assertive and women are aggressive with the same action. That's exactly how it is perceived. He's assertive, he's a leader, he's strong, follow him. She's aggressive, she's pushy, you know, that sort of thing. Bitchy. This exact same action. I see a couple of men who have been here a long time. And they yell and degrade our superintendent and just be evil, and then they get what they ask for. And I'll ask for it appropriately, professionally, I think, and be denied based on such and such. So over the last 3 years, I have gotten much more what they call "aggressive," much more bitchy, whatever, and find that that works. And I don't like that. Because to have to be something so negative and if I'm not perceived as difficult—I don't get what I need in order to run my building appropriately—that is disheartening. I think I have a bitchy side, there's no question. But not my everyday activity, it takes a lot to get to that. And now it is coming out more and more because I can't run the building or get things we need to run the building without being annoying or obnoxious.

It was clear that Eleanor valued empathy and relationship-building in her own style of leadership and found both pleasure and pain in the ways these traits were influenced by her beliefs and assumptions regarding her role at Athens High School.

Although she did not presently have a mentor, Eleanor was animated when discussing the need for a female network of high school administrators.

> I think it would be nice to be able to deal with other female administrators who share similar concerns. Hands down, I think we are much more concerned about our family balance than male administrators. I think that we have to try harder than they do to earn the same respect that they get almost automatically because of their gender. I think it would just be nice to do a lunch once every so often or breakfast or whatever just to talk about the different things that go on in our buildings.

When Eleanor was teaching, she did have a particular teacher whom she considered a mentor. He was her journalism teacher when she was in middle school, he was her supervising teacher during her student teaching, and she took his position when he retired. As an administrator, she had kept in close contact with the superintendent where she first assumed a principalship. "Probably the most helpful thing he has ever done for me is to let me know that it is not me. 'It is not you, Eleanor, it is the position. You can't take that personally.' He encouraged me not to burn bridges. 'Build bridges, not walls,' is what he used to say." She valued both of these mentoring relationships and thought that there was a definite lack of support for her as a leader. She commented wryly that the most supportive person she had in her school was her secretary.

Although not a person whom she would call a true "mentor," a former assistant principal at Athens High School gave Eleanor the opportunity to fill in for her on numerous occasions. Eleanor found that "I enjoyed the diversity of the day. I enjoyed

that very much. I think at some point, I simply was very tired of teaching what I was teaching. And I felt I needed a break. I don't know if I intended it to be a 20-year break!" When she thought about her future in education, her feelings were mixed. During the first interview, she announced that she was applying for the superintendency in a neighboring school district. By the final interview, she was much less convinced that this was the direction her career path should take,

> I guess I have questioned the direction that I have gone. Would I have been happier staying in the classroom? Should . . . should I have gone on to a superintendency in a smaller school? Should I retire now for the baby? And I question. And you're on autopilot, and you stop and go on and you go to bed at night and do it again the next day. But when you stop and think about those things, it is like, "Whoa, it's too late now, here I am."

Eleanor's office was at the top of the marble steps in a building centrally located in downtown Athens. Because the building was more than 50 years old, the halls were narrow and dark, and the classrooms small and crowded. Eleanor's office, although also small, was comfortable and quiet. A big, overstuffed chair sat under the window, next to a bookcase that displayed Shakespeare and the Holy Bible on the top shelf. Seated on the chair was a small, white-bibbed teddy bear. The bib read, "Friends are great to grow old with." Next to the teddy bear was a pillow proclaiming, "My goal in life is to be the kind of person my dog thinks I am." Pictures of her three adopted children faced any visitor who sat across from Eleanor's desk.

Athens High School was located in a community of slightly more than 60,000 people; At the time of this study, nearly half of them were considered economically disadvantaged. Ethnic minorities comprised more than a third of the high school enrollment. Eleanor was very comfortable in her role as principal at Athens High School

and knew many of her students and their families from her years as a resident of the community. Eleanor's oldest daughter married an African-American man from the community and they had three children. Eleanor enjoyed her role as a grandparent, but was also the parent of three young children she and her husband had adopted. Their two youngest children were also biracial.

Introducing Penny: Penthesilea, an Amazon Warrior Known for Her Bravery, Her Skill in Weaponry, and Her Wisdom

Penny drew her lifeline as a flat line with one bump. "My lifeline is uneventful. The only major event was a divorce in 2000 after 18 years of marriage." In fact, Penny attributed much of her ability as a leader to having successfully worked through her husband's infidelity and the ensuing divorce.

> Once I took a group of students to [visit] a judge for a field trip. The judge was talking about divorces. And he said there really wouldn't be divorces if people first thought about their spouse, second, their children, and put themselves as third. I really think that's my philosophy. It is not about me. And I do hear a lot of people, I don't like this and on and on—they use the "I" word and the "me" word. It is not about me. And I do see some people who like to puff their chest up a little bit and say, "This is my job." This is not it. The focus should always be . . . if you are high school the focus always should be on the kids first. But I still feel that to get that, you have to get to the teachers so that they look at those 30 students that they have and they can interact and be successful and have a harmonious environment. So they can be productive and learn because that's what it is all about.

Penny married for the first time when she was 30. Her husband had been married before and had children from his first marriage, "And he warned me long ago, that we shouldn't get serious if you want to have children. And I don't know why, I just never saw the need to have them." One evening, in the 18th year of her marriage, Penny stopped at their cottage Up North on her way home from a conference. Her husband had been staying up there for a short vacation and she dropped in to see him. "I got the biggest

surprise of my life." Her husband swore that the woman who was there had just been with him Up North, but Penny later found pictures of them together in her hometown. She confronted her husband and filed for divorce.

> And when I tell people that story, people are like "I can't believe that!" Actually, I kind of look at it more like an educational experience. What a positive outcome it has had. I get people coming in all of the time with marital problems and stuff. I think all of those things have really been a good thing because I'm much more humane when I sit at that desk and talk to those people. That's kind of part of the whole leadership thing. It doesn't matter male or female at times; it is just really understanding and knowing when you need to be tough and when you need to be gentle.

Although Penny had remarried, she expressed some regret about the relationships she had missed, "Selfishness, total selfishness. My life revolved around me. Truly, the thing I feel most guilty about is my life has always been my life, nobody else's. Even married twice, it is still . . . I have never had to sacrifice for somebody else. I have never done that."

Penny credited her father with giving her the education that allowed her to take care of herself financially during and after her divorce. Her father was a blue-collar worker and her mother a homemaker. Both parents stressed the importance of education for Penny and her sister and brother.

> My mother was a tough taskmaster. And she was—kind is not a word that I would use to describe her, though she is a sweet, loving person. When we were kids growing up, we used to play Parcheesi. And my mother would do this blockade and you couldn't get by and you would lose your turn every time. She would do that to my sister, and my mother would not let it go. And my dad would say, "Come on," but Mother would say, "No, they have got to learn in life. It is not going to be easy." She would have been a great principal. And my sister would leave, crying. I remember looking at my mom and saying, "Did you really have to do that?" "Yes," she replied, "she has got to learn the rules."' She would have been great, and those lessons, as a female administrator sometimes there are those out there who think we're going to be mush because of who we are. And I more than anybody say, "Suck it up, guys. Just deal with it and move on."

Penny began her career in education teaching junior high home economics in the Detroit area. She thought that the experience as a teacher enabled her to be an effective administrator:

> There are times I just think to be an administrator, regardless of gender, you need to have been in that classroom long enough to learn to respect teaching as a profession. My assistant principals weren't in the classroom very long. Seven years maybe at the most. And I find them lacking at times and being critical of teachers, and I have to bring them back and remind them that actually the teaching job is more difficult on a daily basis than our job is.

Penny stated several times that she saw herself as a teacher first, even though she was now an administrator. She was certain that experience in the classroom made a better administrator.

> If you ask me my favorite thing, I would like to find a job where I got paid by listening and talking to people because that is what I like to do. But you have to be there for them. And they have to know that they can come in and talk with you and that you'll want to listen, that you aren't going to turn them away or shun what they are saying, that it's important. In this people will certainly disagree with me, but I think you need the experience of having been a teacher in the classroom.

After 17 years in the classroom, Penny accepted a position as a high school principal in Homer, a small rural school district. After 3 years there, she left to become the assistant principal at Troy High School.

> When I was interviewing here at Troy, they sent a team of three men to Homer to interview me. One was a math teacher, and one was the assistant principal, and one was the athletic director. They sent three jocks. The math teacher was the wrestling coach, the assistant principal had been the athletic director—they really did send three men, I call them men's men. This is my thought—Troy thought we have got to bring a woman on, it is just politically correct. But we really don't want to bring a woman on. Then one of the teachers in Homer said to them, "If you are looking for a female, but you're really not wanting a female, go with Penny because she thinks like a man."

In 2002, after 6 years as an assistant principal, Penny took the interim position as director of the local Career Center Consortium, headquartered in Troy High School. The following year, she was asked to take over as high school principal. "In the two places I have been an administrator, they both thought in those terms, that they didn't want a female. That wasn't what they were looking for. What I'm about to say is not flattering to the person that I followed here, but I say, 'You always want to follow a bad act. They can put anybody in that chair and it will be better.'"

Penny did not believe that she had any particular skills or goals that put her in a position to be hired as a principal. In fact, she attributed her success to being in the right place at the right time.

> I have pretty much fallen into both jobs I have gotten. The only job I really . . . the only two jobs I really knew I wanted and went for were my first teaching job and my first administrator's job. And then since I have been in Troy, I have had three jobs in 10 years, and none of them have been because I have been really goal oriented, it is going through the back door. I keep falling into things.

According to Penny, she had a good working relationship with her teaching staff and understood how they thought.

> Another principal said that he was sick and tired of teachers. You give them everything they want and they still whine. But I see that as the nature of the beast. I do. They always will whine. And we'll have a nasty contract year and they won't disappoint me because I know exactly what they will do. They'll stand across that street. They'll wait until the bell rings before they walk into the building. I know all of those things. And I'm not going to take it personally. I think that's what you learn; you don't take those things personally. That is just really who they are.

Penny had a great deal of admiration for the teachers and the job they do. "He [the union rep] commented afterwards that he likes the way that I handle teachers and that it isn't a confrontational situation. It is, 'I'm here to help you.'" However, even though

Penny valued the relationship she had with her staff, she had concerns that she would be unable to maintain this positive relationship with them because of the nature of the job.

> If I knew I was going to be in this job for 10 more years, I don't think I could keep it up. I think they [teachers] need change, I really do. I have got them where I like them right now, and they like me. And I would like to keep that and exit and then let the next group take over. Because I think it is hard to sustain that, really hard to sustain that.

She attributed the difficulty in sustaining a positive relationship to the fact that her role as an administrator put her in what she thought was an awkward position with the staff. Although she truly valued her relationship with teachers, it was not the same as a teacher-to-teacher relationship.

> I clearly understand that though I say I'm a teacher first and an administrator second, the bottom line is I am an administrator. And I know my role is different. So I also know that they're really—I don't want to say they're not my friends, but yet I think that is the term I would use. They're not my friends. It is funny because I used to think that I haven't really developed any friendships on the staff. And then it dawned on me that I really didn't want friendships from the staff.

Penny believed that the purpose of her job was to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in whatever they chose to do after high school. Her goal was to work with the teaching staff in order to provide students with those skills and that knowledge. She enjoyed the relationship she had with students when she was a teacher, but readily admitted that the influence she had on students was much different now that she was an administrator,

> I love the kids. But I've got to tell you that, in a job like this, I see little of the kids. And I love talking to the kids but I have got to be realistic. I don't touch kids here. They . . . they haven't figured out, half of them don't figure out that they have a female principal. I mean, the 9th graders, I get introduced at the start of the school year to the 9th graders. But they don't get the concept. So if I said I enjoyed working with the children and impacting their lives, that would be a joke because I really haven't impacted any of their lives.

Penny did enjoy the relationship she had with her assistant principals. She had three male assistants and one female, and they were all in their early to late 30s. When she talked about failures and successes in her job, Penny said these were the people with whom she could share. According to Penny, her assistant principals were among the few people who understood the position of the high school principal.

> We are a very close-knit team, and we celebrate a lot. And I say celebrate: We laugh a lot, and we order pizza and sit in here at lunchtime. And I know people come in and think we're playing, and it looks like, aren't they supposed to be working? Well, it is our lunch hour and we enjoy the camaraderie of one another. And I think that's probably where I rejoice the most and talk about the good and the bad.

Penny delegated a great deal of work to her assistants because she believed that, in order to be successful in the future as principals, they must learn how to be disciplinarians, how to schedule, how to deal with staff members, how to run a meeting, and how to carry out the many other responsibilities of the position. She knew that assistant principals often are relegated to one particular area and do not have the opportunity to learn the many other aspects of the principalship. "I do think, though, if you want to move up, you need to put your time in these roles as assistant principal. I think it shows that you have the stamina." She thought it was important that they be exposed to all of these areas, "If I left tomorrow or disappeared off the face of the earth, they would never know. And I'm serious. They would never know. I have delegated so much to them that the previous [male] principal didn't. And they longed for that."

Penny had always had someone she could rely on if she needed help. However, none of these people had been women.

> It is interesting that my mentors have always been men. I guess I wouldn't call them mentors, but I have go-to people for advice. So I can't say that I

> haven't had a mentor; I think the difference with having a mentor is you feel you have somebody when you're at your wit's end, somebody you can go to and they're like your protective person to make you feel that it is going to be okay. That's what I miss. What I don't have is that person who comforts you. It is really that comfort that it provides. It is kind of a safety net I would say, and you just don't have that safety net when you don't have a mentor. The women I worked with are deadly. They are the first to want to slit your throat. And I'll never understand it. I just don't get it. And I have to link it to their own insecurity.

Penny had always had a group of female friends who also were educators, two of them middle school principals and one a high school assistant principal. They periodically got together and the focus of their discussion was usually education and their jobs,

> I don't know if there is a correlation with women who didn't settle down right away and have children, because we didn't talk about babies, we didn't have babies. So we talked about our jobs. And it was all, quite frankly, an accident. It wasn't planned. I just didn't meet Mr. Right.
>
> If those women hadn't been in my life, if I had gone a different path, if I had married early and had children, my life would look much different than it does today. And it was all, quite frankly, an accident.

Another source of support was a book that her husband had given her several years ago, *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* (Frankel, 2004). Penny had found this book to be a source of both information and inspiration.

> This is a great book. And this is what I would tell them to read. But what I see, viewing men in authority as father figures, it's an excellent book. It talks about obediently following instructions, which is something that I have always done, when a man told me what to do. But it talks about not making your . . . it talks about how to shake a hand. And not making your office into a home.

Penny believed that having been a successful teacher provided people with some of the tools they need to be successful principals. However, even those teaching tools are only a small portion of the skills and abilities necessary for the job. The true measure of a person's capacity to be a successful principal is the ability to think like a man.

> I think we come . . . I want to say that most people . . . that I think it is not the educational piece—how you work on curriculum, how you handle discipline. It isn't those items that will trip you up. It is the real common sense things that men somehow innately have had because they have always been in the workplace and women have had to learn how to adapt to them. And those are the things that I would talk about and that's what that book does. If you have been a good teacher and you have good tools, then those tools will take you to a certain level, but after that point, then you really have to think like a man. I got this job in Troy because I thought like a man.

In addition to thinking like a man, Penny viewed a good relationship with people as a necessary skill in the prinicpalship, "I think you really have to enjoy people. You have to like people. You have to like to be with people. You have to like to listen to people. And it doesn't matter if it is a student, a parent, a teacher, or support staff. And I'm speaking, obviously, from my own perception that I like people." However, at times she also saw liking people as a negative trait: "I am probably too kind. One of the union presidents said, 'That's what we love about you and what we hate about you.' Because he wanted me to fire a teacher, and I said, 'I can't fire the teacher.'" She mentioned the principal who had been her predecessor in her present position: "He would say things and I'd walk out of a meeting and think, it really was hurtful what had happened. But he was unaware of it. One woman, he never called her the right name for the entire year. And she hated that, and she said, 'I hate him because he thinks so little of me. He can't even get my name right.'" She believed that it was important to be perceptive and aware when dealing with people, although she was wary of allowing that trait to be a determining factor in her decisions.

Penny did not view gender as an issue in the hiring of high school principals; she believed that either a man or a woman has an equal opportunity to be hired as a high school principal. Since starting in education as a teacher at the secondary level, she had always worked with men and had always thought that their jobs were equitable.

> So I feel more that way than I do gender. As a high school teacher though I always liked men. We always worked with men, where the elementary teachers didn't. And I think the difference too is men were always equal. We were equal to men in the workplace, we didn't fight for disparate salaries, and we were equal. And so men in my life have always been equal colleagues that always brought an interesting perspective. So it is hard for me to say that it is gender.

Penny believed that men have the ability to be direct. Therefore, they are better able to make decisions quickly and incisively, thus making them naturally better at negotiating the role of high school principal:

> I laugh because I don't think men are . . . I think that there's a directness that men have. I think men don't want to talk it to death. And I think that . . . I don't want to say that's really a man thing, but the stereotype is that. We [women] like to beat that horse to death before we make a decision. So I think there is a directness about it. And I think it is more of a black and white approach than a gray approach.

Her experiences with other women administrators had not always been positive. In fact, Penny talked frequently about her skepticism regarding other women with whom she had worked.

> But yet I watch other women in the workplace where they try to sabotage one another. And I don't know if men tend to do that as much as women do. But I think it is a thing that as a woman you have to be very cautious of. When you have to pick out who are your enemies, as I started through that with . . . that's not who I would have thought would have been my enemy. I thought they would have been the supporter of me. Even though I have had some great female friends.
>
> You know, it is strange because women—there are certain school districts that I would not want to work in because the women are not nice to one another. And even here it is amazing to me that . . . we should be our own best friends. Women should be great colleagues for one another, and often we're not. The women I work with are deadly. They are the first to want to slit your throat. I just don't get it. And I have to link it to their own insecurity. I think they see another woman as a threat. I really do. I haven't had much luck with women. My first principal was a female; she was a nun. They don't get any uglier than that. And she was wicked.

Being a high school administrator had changed Penny. She valued her relationships with others, whether at home or on the job. However, she sensed that she was less tolerant of people who wasted her time.

> My mother and my sister and I were together, and my sister said, "You've gotten bossy." And I looked at my mother and I said, "Mom, you're going to let her say that?" And she said, "She's right. You are bossy, but in a nice way." And I was not bossy before then. But I'm much different now. Now I get so frustrated in any situation where I see people who can't figure out the direct route from point A to point B, and I tend to want to tell them. And that's where I've changed. And I think people say, "She's more like a man."

As a high school principal, Penny was in a role that traditionally had been male. In her view, her more "masculine" approach to the role had been successful for her both as a leader and in obtaining leadership positions. In retrospect, her greatest regret was that she did not have a career plan, "The only things I wish I would have done is given more thought to my career. And more of a plan. But I was always falling into jobs rather than saying this is what I would like to do."

Penny's life was very organized. Her office was extremely large, with a beautiful view from windows extending from the floor to the ceiling. The architects had spared no expense in designing this principal's office and it embarrassed Penny. "I sit in that chair now and I sit in this lofty office that was not built for me; it was built for the guy before me who was supposed to stay around but didn't. Because I'm embarrassed a little bit by it." The office was austere. There were no personal touches, no stacks of papers or piles of books. There were no family pictures or mementos of past students and activities. Penny's personal life was also very much under her control. She had married a man who was an administrator at a large university close to Troy, and they enjoyed a relationship that was managed by Penny.

> This weekend we have a poker party at our house, we're going to the Michigan game, we're going to a wedding after the Michigan game, we're spending the night in Ann Arbor, and he's going to a funeral on Sunday from there and I'm going to a play here. And I have packed. I have got the food prepared. I have got the clothes packed for the wedding Do you know what I mean? Maybe that is a wife's role, I don't know.

Penny was proud of the fact that she "thinks like a man," but had not thought much about what that meant for her as a woman. She did not think that being a female made a difference in how she did her job, but then added,

> But you know, that can't be right. Because I'm thinking if I were a man, would I be the same? And I don't know that it has to do as much with gender as just the experience through life. I went through a brutal divorce in the sense that—it was so hard for me because what I thought I had, I didn't. You know, after all those years you wake up and you realize it wasn't what you thought it was at all.

One of Penny's closest relationships was with Carol, the new Career Consortium Director, who took over when Penny was named high school principal. "I couldn't ask for a more wonderful person to work with. She is a man. If you know what I mean. Whatever they call her. She thinks like a man. And she and I have great conversations about it." Penny never had children and had been able to talk to Carol about that similarity.

> Neither one of us has children. We never had children. You don't want to say to another woman, "Jeez, why didn't you have children?" I would never say that. It would be hurtful if they had wanted to and were unable and all of that stuff. But it was about a couple of months after working together and she looked at me and said, "God, am I glad I didn't have kids." And I looked at her and I said, "I always wondered when I was going to go through that period of my life where I said, 'I should have had children.'" "And," I said, "it never hit me." And she said, "It never hit me, Penny." And we got laughing. We got so busy with our careers it was almost like we forgot to plan time for children. And then before you knew it the time wasn't there.

Penny's husband had two grown children and five grandchildren. "I don't want to work any longer. I really know that I married a wonderful man. I have five grandchildren

and children right here in Troy, they're all local. I really want that." Although she missed being a mother, Penny planned to enjoy her role as a grandmother. She had no intention of pursuing any higher-level administrative positions.

> We have a superintendent's opening, as a matter of fact, here. And you know, I just, I'm not political. I hate school board meetings. I hate the public manner of it, and I hate the parent complaints. I hate it. I hate the fact that I could say something and it could get printed in the newspaper. And I have had my face on the Troy State News and I hate it. I hate it. I'm too private. Your skin gets toughened, it does. But your family could be humiliated in a matter of seconds. And I would like to have a job where it doesn't cross into my personal life. But this job will always cross into your personal life.

Troy High School was located in an affluent and growing suburb of a medium-sized city. The nearby university employed many residents of the community; therefore, many of Troy High School's parents were college-educated. At the time of the study, the median household income was well over $100,000 (see Table 4.2). The high school was new and state-of-the-art. Its student body of nearly 1,800 students was primarily white; less than 6% of its population was minority, and only 4% were economically disadvantaged.

Introducing Dina: Deinomache, an Amazon Whose Name Means "Terrible Warrior"

Dina's lifeline dealt entirely with her education and the rewards and recognition she had received through her work as a teacher, a coach, an athlete, and a principal. In a note at the bottom she stated, "I have never been married—too busy working—made it easy to escape the attachment thing." She had been born, raised, and still worked in the same county. Her father was a factory worker and part-time farmer; her mother was a homemaker who did not work outside the home until Dina was in high school. She lived

in close proximity to her parents and her brother and had a close relationship with her niece. One of her favorite activities was home construction, "I did remodel a cottage on the lake and made it into a home—it was 9 months of intense work that used every spare moment I had. It was fun seeing something for my efforts . . . unlike the majority of time spent at school."

Dina expressed regret about her personal life. "It would be nice to have family or to have children. The part I don't know if I really missed—having to put up with somebody else all of the time. But it would be nice to share some of the low. I mean, when it comes." Dina's boss once told her that her life was different because she did not have responsibilities:

> Do you want me to tell you something about my life? I have far more responsibilities than you have. Who cleans your eaves troughs? Who mows your yard? Who buys your groceries? Who washes your clothes? Who cooks your food? Who cleans your house? You know? You don't have to do it alone. I do.

Dina believed that men and women still fall into traditional roles at home, so a man who is married has the opportunity and time to do the job of a principal, without the worries about taking care of the home and the day-to-day responsibilities of a family.

> I mean, men are going to do what they want to do most of the time—I think for a female and especially the whole aspect of having a family, you know, if you are going to have a family and you're going to be in a situation with a husband, then you're going to want to make sure that that husband, he's going to be there also. Not just the . . . you're supposed to do everything.

She mentored a young male administrator and thought that she had "molded him a little bit:"

> He has children; he has three small children. And his wife is a teacher. And I have said to him, "Tony, you're not going to be here at all this stupid stuff. You need to have priorities and your priority needs to be your family. Yes, there's things you have to be at, but you don't have to be at all of them." So we would truly share things. I would make him be at home with his family. I said, "You don't need to be here for this, that's stupid." Or we would take turns. That's the part that eats you alive.

Although Dina did not have children of her own, she was close to both her niece and the children next door.

> A friend who taught here is my neighbor. And she has been my best friend for years and years and years. Of course, people said things about her and I. Yeah, yeah. That's fine; say what you want. And she has three children. She adopted three children. And one of the children is my goddaughter. And they are my neighbors. So I have . . . I have these children that come to my house. It is like I'm the aunt, the next-door aunt. And I love it. I have just enjoyed those children so much. And it makes me feel bad that I didn't have children. But I also know that I could never have had kids and not raised them—and I think this is why, I guess I knew I was going to work.

Dina realized that she had made her own choices between family and career and, as she approached retirement, she thought more often about what her life might have been like if her choices had been different. Although Dina consciously incurred these costs, she reflected sadly on what she had missed.

> I think you put those expectations on yourself. I used to be at all of the events. Because I thought that I needed to be visible and I needed to be there. You know what? That's really dumb. And I have changed that. I have really changed that. And actually, thank God, for my neighbor and her children that's . . . because I feel bad if I don't get to see those children. I really do feel bad if I can't see them. Because I've been able to . . . I have been, I helped be their caregiver, and it has been wonderful. And I feel sad if I don't get to see them at night. I've told my assistant, "You can be in this position, but I'm going to tell you something. This job is your job. This is not your life." And I mean I have tried my very, very hardest to not have her stuck with things because there are things that I did that I didn't have to do. I started thinking, you know, this isn't my life. I can let it be, but it is not my life. And there is life after a job, and so I have changed. I have definitely changed. I don't have to be at all of this stuff. I missed time with children. I missed that opportunity or I didn't make that

> a priority. I didn't miss it—I didn't make it a priority to be there. And I'm not like, "Woe is me," and I am not depressed about it. I made a choice and I have accepted that choice. But, you know, I have a niece and she is 21 now. So I had her but she just, she grew up fast. I think that was another thing that I realized, how quickly children grow up. And how important it is to spend time with them.

Although Dina had no children of her own, she had been adamant that those administrators she mentored, whether male or female, put their families first.

> I had a very serious talk with Christine about this. I knew that she would be effective in the position that she was coming into. And I knew that was what she wanted to do down the road. So I said, "Do it, but you're going to have to make sure that you promise yourself that you don't let this job get in the way of having a family and raising children." And I think that school systems should make that work. If I'm a parent and I have a child in another school system and that child is on the basketball team, I think it would have to be an understanding that I'm going to be at my child's event. What kind of an educator would I be—do you know what I'm saying?—if I would tell my teachers that they shouldn't be supporting their children? Hello!

Dina's journey to the principalship started when she began teaching and coaching. She taught physical education for 10 years and was part-time athletic director for 8 of those years. When asked why she made the decision to become an administrator, she replied, "I don't know. I really at that time, I really, I don't know. I think—I don't know." She commented about using her experience as an administrator, "I try to consult the people that do this because when I forget what it is like to be a teacher, then I have got to get the hell out of here because then I am not helping the teachers." She viewed her role as helping teachers be the best they could be for their students. "I think you have to use those teachable moments with teachers. I think I try to do that. And I try to use examples. And I guess that's how I probably give people my expectations more than going to the teacher and saying, 'Do this.'"

However, Dina also viewed her relationship with teachers as one of the most difficult parts of her job.

> The most frustrating part about being a principal is not the kids, to me. The kids don't bother me. They come in and they have their problems. But that's okay because they're kids. It's the adults. Actually, it's the teaching staff, the people that I work with—but if they're jerks it's my fault because I hired them.
>
> I don't like to have to tell an adult that they're not doing their job. I don't like to be point blank and tell somebody that they are screwing off. I don't like to do that. I do it, but I don't like it. It is hard. It is hard.

As a high school principal, Dina believed that a good leader is a person who provides opportunities for teachers to grow and work together to create a learning environment for the students. The frustration came from teachers who might be knowledgeable, but were unable to connect with the students in their classrooms. Dina talked about a band teacher who was upset over a broken instrument:

> She doesn't get it. I walk into her room to deal with the situation because her maraca got broken. And here's this boy and girl. And they're sitting. She is about sitting on this boy's lap. He has his arm around her, and they are holding hands. It pissed me off. The teacher is walking toward me and I go, "What are they doing?" And I'm thinking, "You asshole. I'm not going to sit and dick around with your fucking maraca being broken." I'm thinking this to myself, "Because you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing. Because you're a dip shit. Because you can't be consistent."

She told another story of a teacher having a blood drive who asked another teacher for a pitcher of ice:

> She needed a god-dang pitcher of ice. They have an ice machine in the training room, so she sent a kid to the gym teacher and the gym teacher says, "It is just for athletics." So the teacher calls me and I told her I'd be right there. Now, I was embarrassed that I had to get the pitcher and go in and say, "Jimmy, why do you have to be a prick? Jimmy, come on. That's the stuff that doesn't do you any good. Be nice to people. Now that kid you said it to knows you're a prick, the teacher knows you're a prick. How many kids is the kid going to tell? How many teachers is the teacher going to tell? How many kids are going to tell their parents? You know?"

One of Dina's goals as building principal was to make sure that the teachers had the tools and support they needed to do the best job they could do with the students.

> You need to set things up in the classroom, that, by God, this class is important. I walked by a classroom and when I walked back by the room again, she [a substitute teacher] is sitting. And I said to the teachers at a meeting, "I'm going to tell you something. The reason she had an issue is because she wouldn't get her ass off of the chair and out from behind the desk." And if the teacher doesn't let the kids know that what they're doing is important, and I care about what you're doing, and I am with you, whose fault is that?

Dina talked about the fun she had had with other teachers early in her career and how lonely life was now because she could no longer have those intimate friendships.

> I think the most difficult thing is we can't be friends with those people. You can't have intimate friendships with them. And that's probably been the loneliest because I used to be a pretty social type person. I was pretty social. But I am not anymore. And it has changed—parts of the job have changed who I am.

Dina enjoyed being with other people, having an occasional drink with friends, and going to a party now and then. She had found, however, that she had to be careful about where she went, what she did, and with whom she was seen. She believed that teachers, in particular, had a very critical eye regarding an administrator's life style: "There are expectations that teachers have of what a person in a leadership position does—what those expectations are. And it can take its toll. It can take its toll on what other people, what position they put you in or where they put you and the expectations of what you're supposed to be."

Dina had a passion for children that had shaped her life. She stated that she stayed in the field of education because of her concern for children:

> The people that you have to have a passion for are the children. And if you have a passion for the children, it makes it easier to stay in this position

> and put up with some of the other stuff. So that is why I stayed here. That's probably the number one reason I stayed here. When you see kids that you haven't seen in a long time and you know that . . . they're happy to see you. You know, like you're somebody in somebody's life.

The respect of the students she had known gave meaning to Dina's life. She expressed sadness that being an administrator had moved her further and further from the students as the years went by, "The thing that I don't like, and I am kind of glad that I'm pretty much getting close to the end of this job and my career, is I know I'm not getting close to kids anymore."

Dina began her administrative career as an assistant principal and athletic director in a small town, and, after 2 years there, moved to a position in her present district as middle school/high school assistant principal and adult education director. She was named middle school/high school principal 2 years later, then named high school principal last year when the new high school was completed.

> I really didn't have a career plan. I thought at one point in time that I liked the coaching thing. I really didn't even think about being an athletic director. That kind of just happened to me. It was secondary, I was teaching. So you know, it kind of just started. And then I think I liked that—and I don't feel like I'm a very organized person, but I liked that organizing stuff. And it was something that you would organize and then you could see it happen. I think that's what I liked about that part of the leadership role thing. But I was kind of starting to run out of gas a little bit with it. And, of course, I knew being an administrator, a principal, was not going to be easy, But I thought it would be a different focus. And I think at that time I thought, "Oh, my gosh, I'm getting old. I better, if I'm going to get into administration, I better do it." And that's the one regret that I have. I wish I would have waited a little bit longer. I wish I would have taught longer. Because I missed the classroom. I missed the teaching part. But then once you get into administration, it was like if I didn't do that anymore I was giving up on myself. It was like I was going backwards.

Dina saw much of the high school principal's job today as going from one task to the next. She found very little time to attend to curriculum and instruction or to be what she refers to as a "real leader."

> When I think of overall leadership, it is like I know . . . I guess I am more task oriented. So okay, this is the task that's today, and it has to be done. I hope I did this and I got this and that. You know, it is kind of like so much of the time, I think we spend on these tasks. It is all of the anticipation that goes into things, and it is like, rur rur, and whew, I'm glad that's over with. And then it is like on to the next task. And it makes me nervous because, okay, how many interruptions am I going to have?

She believed that a high school principal can be empathetic, although that empathy should not get in the way of doing the job properly. She saw herself as soft when she needed to be, but not the kind of person whom people can take advantage of: "I'm no push up. I think I can be soft, but not compromise, if it's the right thing to do. I can be soft with somebody, but that doesn't mean that you're going to also kick me in the ass. Do you know what I mean?" Rosie the Riveter was Dina's heroine, and she identified with both the softness and the toughness of Rosie:

> I think it is the whole thing that women can do whatever it is that they want to do. You know, accomplish what they want. I guess kind of the thing that I said, she was obviously a very strong woman, a person in that era, she was a strong woman. And this job needs to be done, and by God, we're going to step up and we're going to do it because it needs to be done. So I guess that's part of it. I think she's a leader, obviously. There was a task, a job to get done, and she was the person that was going to take charge in getting that task done. Now, me being a female, does it have that twist on it? I suppose, maybe a little bit. But there's a job to get done and somebody has got to do it. If I'm in this position to get this job done, then I'm going to do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Dina was careful to keep her emotions in check and thought that it was essential for anyone in this position to think clearly in order to get the job done.

> But I don't think . . . you can't, you can't have any compromises for the emotional part. You have to make sure that you get the job done. That's

> the bottom line. I can shoulder responsibility. And if push comes to shove, and shit is going to happen, I can handle that, too. I'm not a chicken. I'm not a chicken about anything. And in dealing with . . . I guess part of the whole situation is there is a job to be done and this is my piece. These things are my responsibility.
>
> I think one of the things you have to do with people is you can't let your personality . . . and you know women are going to be told all of the time that you're moody and you have got PMS and then menopause, and women are these moody, crazy women. And if a person does have any mood-swing issues, they can't bring that into the damn job. So, you know, if you are going to be in a leadership position and if you have any of that mood swing shit, don't do it. Because you'll never be effective because people won't take you seriously.

Dina did not believe that her gender had had much of an effect on her career. Her own experience as an athlete and an athletic director had placed Dina in a male dominated world early in her career.

> That kind of stuff never really bothered me. It seems like most of my career it's kind of been that way. I mean, even as an athletic director, you know that question was asked of me when I applied, or I was asked to apply, for the AD job at Valencia. So I did. And I didn't get the job, which I really didn't think I wanted. I was a full-time athlete, I wouldn't have liked that job, I don't think. But I did it. And I can remember them saying, "Well, how would you deal with male coaches?" I said, "How would I deal with male coaches?" I said, "Well, I don't know, just like they're people." I don't look at people as male or female. Which I know you deal with men differently than women. Because women—the Venus and Mars thing. I think I understand that pretty much, you know, but you have to deal with the person's personality, whether they are a man or a woman or whichever. Gender to me is not an issue. It has never been an issue. The gender thing has never been an issue with me.

Although she was supportive of any woman who aspired to the principalship, Dina was equally supportive of any man who had the desire and the necessary abilities. She viewed people as individuals and did not believe that gender was a factor in the expectations of the job. Her view was very simple: "If you don't feel your strength is going to be in dealing with discipline and you're going to be the only person dealing with

discipline, then you just don't take the job. You set yourself up for success. You don't set yourself up for failure."

Dina had never had a person whom she viewed as a mentor, although her athletic connections provided her with a network of coach/educators who were there to support her when she first started teaching and coaching. "But it didn't have anything to do with the male/female thing. I didn't think it had anything to do with that. I had been associated with other people that were principals. And people that were friends. Were they women? Hell, no, there weren't any women. There weren't any." When Dina first became a principal, her superintendent was very supportive, but that relationship had eroded over the 20 years that they had worked together. "But I have no aspirations to be a superintendent. No, none whatsoever. If I was going to do that, I would have done that a long time ago, too. Politics. I don't like it. I think I could do it. It would be a challenge that I might do for a while, but I don't think so."

Although she still valued her job and the work she did, when Dina allowed herself to reflect on her life, she did feel some regret:

> I'm standing on a Friday night at a football game in the pouring rain with mud up to my ankles, and I don't even really like football, to be very honest with you. And we're getting our doors blown off, but it still is a 35-point spread and the clock is not running the second half. And I can't leave yet. It is like . . . you end up, I find myself sometimes in those situations wishing my life away. And that's not a good thing. I'm wishing time away. You should be able to enjoy time and life and moments. And I guess that's probably the thing that I can really . . . I just keep doing it. I just try to laugh and walk and do something else.

Dina was the high school principal in a building that had just opened and adjoined the old middle school. Dina was able to make the transition from being middle school/high school principal to being only the high school principal with relative ease.

Her staff was made up of teachers who had taught in both the middle school and the high school and some staff members still were shared between the two levels. The student body had a fairly large percentage of Hispanic students (20.8%) and the community itself had a household income of slightly more than $50,000 (Table 4.2). Although the school district was considered to be in a small town, the town itself adjoined a mid-size city.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an initial description of the participants in this study, including myself as researcher. I also provided a description of the environments and the situations in which the participants worked and lived. The stories these women related revealed each as unique, arriving at her leadership position in a different way, addressing the challenges she encountered with unique strategies, and negotiating relationships among the various characters in her story with her own distinctive approach.
These stories revealed the context in which the women operated and provided a venue for characterizing the nature of their experiences as female high school principals.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

I will tell you something about stories, (he said)
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off
illness and death.

Trinh T. Minh-ha
Woman Native Other, 1989, p.136

The New Warrior

Sally Helgesen (1990) ended her book *The Female Advantage* with a chapter entitled "The End of the Warrior Age." Helgesen suggested that traditional Warrior values such as fearlessness, devotion to an ideal, and aggression are outmoded in "a world that knows the human cost of pure Warrior values" (p. 255). In contrast to the Warrior, the Martyr, or female archetype, represents care, sacrifice, and suffering. Helgesen suggested that we move beyond both of these images and accept a "new kind of hero that unites the qualities of both: the Magician" (p. 256). However, the term "Magician" conjures up images of mysterious men in pointed hats, performing tricks—creating illusions that make the unreal seem real. I would suggest that, rather than the end of the warrior age, we instead look to a new kind of warrior. This new warrior is one who is still a warrior, but a warrior tempered by knowledge of the interconnections that draw people together. This new warrior has power, but draws that power from the strength and energy of those around her. The new warrior is still disciplined, strong, and courageous, but also gentle, caring, and kind. The women in this study were new warriors. They were,

at times, aggressive, pushy and bold; at other times, they were tender, compassionate, and humane. They were the embodiment of the new warrior, one who has the strength and the passion to bring about change in her world.

The findings presented in this chapter were composed from the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of the three women participants in this study. In addition, I have included my own thoughts and perspectives. All of us are presently negotiating our roles as high school principals. Although some of our stories revolve around gender at the intersection of leadership, our contributions are certainly not limited to that arena. It is important, also, to acknowledge that as a researcher of the same gender, generation, and profession as the participants, I have conducted the research and the analysis of these stories. The findings and their analysis are therefore open to interpretation by others because they remain, as Lather (1992) suggested, *permanently partial.* Although I did not compare the perceptions and observations of the participants to the views of others who regularly interact with them, they do allow for analysis of common themes. The findings presented in this chapter cannot be generalized to all female high school principals, but should be viewed as a contribution to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship.

Exploratory Questions

My purpose in this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. Therefore, the central research questions were: How have the lived experiences of women high school principals, both professional and personal, defined how they think about and

practice leadership? What can we learn from these lived experiences that might add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship?

The following subsidiary questions probe the underlying essence of the women's perspectives from reflexive, contextual, and sense-making standpoints:

- How has the women's gendered experience as high school principals defined their professional work as school leaders within the context of the high school? Has gender played a role in their philosophies?
- How has the context of their work influenced their definition of self and leadership? What contexts do they believe are significant in framing their behaviors?
- As women in the high school principalship, how do/might they advocate for themselves and others aspiring to this position?

Conceptual Lens

Early feminist theories regarding gender often viewed organizations as gender neutral. However, recent researchers have examined how deeply embedded gender is in organizations, how persistent its pattern and how repeatedly it is reproduced (Acker, 1987). "Theories that posit organization and bureaucracy as gender neutral cannot adequately account for this continual gendered structuring. We need different theoretical strategies that examine organizations as gendered processes in which sexuality also plays a part" (Acker, 1987, p. 2). Using gender as a means to analyze research is an attempt to find new ways to explain the persistent devaluation of women in our work and in our culture.

In this study I used a feminist lens to explore the gendered dimension of the high school principalship (other areas of difference include race and ethnicity, class, age, and marital status, although they were not explored in this study) in order to understand the perceived practice of women high school principals and to explore the opportunities available to help them lead in the context of their roles and responsibilities as high school principals. These women actively shaped the material and symbolic worlds around them, but their expertise and knowledge were often hidden from view by conventional approaches to leadership, including beliefs about the skills and qualities necessary to become a leader at the secondary level. These gender-neutral approaches suspend gender from their analysis and use a universal yardstick of measurement, analysis, and research based on the assumption that men are, by default, leaders, whereas women are considered the "other."

In present-day schools, decision-making power generally is accorded to white, professional males who claim to represent the universal interests of parents and the school. According to Blackmore (1994), feminism challenges "the myths of consensus and coherence around a universal interest. Feminism argues against abstract universal truths, recognizes difference and calls for a context-specific relational morality which considers who makes what decisions about whom, by whom, in what context" (p. 14). During the interview and data-collection process, I used the constructs of reflexivity, context, and sense-making to explore the leadership of the women participants.

Finding ways to think about, talk about, and make sense of women as leaders is a difficult and complex task. Blackmore (1999) called for a "feminist reconstruction of the concept of leadership" (p. 94). To that end, in this study, drawing from a small number of

participants, I examined some of the ways that women in high school leadership positions actually thought about their roles. I used poststructural feminist theory in deconstructing the data and interpreting the meanings that emerged from the data within each individual participant's context and in their relation to each other. Poststructuralism questions, deconstructs, and destabilizes notions of self, identity, power, and knowledge within the socio-cultural and political climate of our postmodern world (Macdonald, et al., 2002). In this study, poststructural feminist theory facilitated the analysis and deconstruction of the discourse and the contexts in which the participants practiced. This lens was focused on the concepts of knowledge about self, webs of power, and identity in the context of the profession.

The Participants

As their stories in Chapter IV indicated, the women participants in this study came from very different schools, districts, and educational contexts. However, although each had pursued her own unique path to the principalship, they also shared many commonalities. Most significant, they were all daughters of working-class parents, all baby-boomers born shortly after the end of World War II. Goldin and Katz (2002) reported that change in the economic and social status of women in the U.S. first began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, just when this group of women reached college age and entered the work force.

In addition to changes in the labor force, the 1960s and 1970s also were a time of social and political change. The effect of affirmative action, the resurgence of feminism, changes in social norms, abortion reform, and the availability of the birth control pill all

influenced women's career decisions. Birth control and abortion reform, along with the rebirth of feminism, made delaying marriage acceptable. According to Goldin and Katz,

> The age at first marriage for college graduate women soared from 1972 to 1979, when the fraction marrying before age 22 plummeted from 0.38 for the cohort born in 1950 to 0.21 for the cohort born in 1957. In sharp contrast, there was virtually no change in the age at first marriage of college graduate women born from 1940 to 1950. Thus, starting with the cohorts of college graduate women born in 1950 there began a strong secular trend toward greater marriage delay. (p. 2)

The women in this study were born between 1949 and 1956 and were in their 20s during the early to mid-1970s. This period of changed perception regarding marriage and fertility gave women the choice of delaying marriage and of postponing the birth of children either temporarily or permanently.

It is important to note that the study participants were from a particular generation of women, and therefore the results are not generalizable to any other group or generation of women principals. However, it is also worth noting that women of this generation are most likely to be the ones who are presently mentoring and instructing the young women who are new principals and those who aspire to be principals.

Emerging Themes: Exploring Self, Power, and Identity

Recent research on warrior women has revealed the dynamic and important roles they played in their societies. "Weaving in mythology and literature, we see that intense feminine beings, with status, power, and position, persevered. These warrior women were the underlying foundation that held ancient societies together. They are our heritage, our role models" (Davis-Kimball, 2002, p. 240). Today's women warriors are no less dynamic and important. The women in this study explored concepts of self, aspects of power in the context of their work, and perceptions of identity as educational leaders. The

notion of "difference" was a key strand in their thoughts and discussions. As Lorde (1982) contended, "We have all been programmed to respond to the human difference between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate" (p. 115). The ensuing explorations of self, identity, and power reflect the ways the participants have handled difference in the context of their own experiences.

The first theme to emerge in this study is The Conundrum of the Double-Edged Sword. In 1946, Ruth Benedict wrote *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture,* in which she related stories about "places that are not here and people that are not us" (Yoneyama, 1999, p. 72). Geertz (1988) maintained that the objective of her ethnography was to distance and disconcert the familiar "us" by contrasting it with the unfamiliar culture of a country that organizes lives and social relations in ways that are much different from our own. In the same sense, I found that the women in this study defined themselves by their relationships with others, accepted the familiar "us," but were then wounded by the double-edged sword because they were still, in our culture, the "other."

Noddings (1984) and Gumport (1994) described their efforts to construct their own knowledge of self. Both found that their relationships with others—the attachments that they formed, and the connectedness of their lives—were important in determining self and their role as leaders in their schools. "The analysis of relationships—especially those peculiarly one-sided yet reciprocal relationships that characterize teaching and parenting—is central to my work today" (Noddings, as cited in Neumann & Peterson,

1997, p. 235). As these women explored and shared their personal selves, it became apparent that what made sense and seemed natural in the traditional context of their roles as leaders may no longer be so if we look through a different lens.

The second theme, The Mythology Broken: The Realities of Power Revisited, concerns how these women created power as they struggled with the male-defined role of the high school principal. Again, they had to create power in a different way. According to Foucault (1980), power is exercised, not possessed. It operates from below and is produced at every moment and at every point; power is productive and positive, not repressive and negative. Power, viewed through a feminist lens, is not finite, but expands as it is shared with others (Shakeshaft, 1987).

The third theme, Knowledge Found: Reframing and Revitalizing Identity Through Context, emerged as the women struggled with the contexts of their roles. They struggled to create a professional identity that belonged to them, one that was not defined by an old, male-centered epistemology of leadership. A feminist approach to knowledge of identity begins with an awareness of not only the historical context in which we live, but also the political and the cultural contexts (Westkott, 1983). This approach also allows us to understand that the world can be different. "It assumes that alternatives are possible to the historically created male-dominated structures that presently oppose the freedom of women. By clarifying that which we oppose, we set the groundwork for creating a vision of that for which we long" (Westkott, 1983, p. 212).

The Conundrum of the Double-Edged Sword

As these women high school principals reflected on their experiences, the stories they told focused on their relationships with teachers, students, and their families. These

relationships were key in determining their definition of self—their satisfaction in their role as school administrators and, more generally, their satisfaction with the choices they had made in their lives. Shakeshaft (1987) identified differences between the leadership practices of men and women. She found that relationships with others were central to the actions of women. The women administrators in her study spent more time with people, communicated more, and cared more about individual differences. In the present study, however, in every relationship that was important to these high school principals, the sword was always double-edged. These women yearned for positive relationships with teachers, students, and their families, and although they told many stories of positive and fulfilling relationships, a sense of loss also permeated their stories. All of their stories eventually led back to their relationships and how, in the course of their stories, these relationships defined who these women are as people and leaders.

The sword and the chrysanthemum: Stories of teachers and expectations. The delicate beauty of the chrysanthemum stands in stark contrast to the icy deadliness of the sword. To envision the beauty of the flower and the coldness of the steel at the same time is difficult, if not impossible. However, women school leaders must deal regularly with tensions that are similarly incongruent. As noted in the literature (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), relationships are central to women's development of self and the "focus on care . . . is characteristically a female phenomenon in the advantaged populations that have been studied" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 330). However, the discourse surrounding the high school principalship has been built around masculine values characterized by self-assertion, separation, independence, control, and competition (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995). The tensions created by the opposing demands of these male and female constructs

require women principals to navigate new and uncharted pathways in their attempts to be effective educational leaders within the current contexts of schools and communities.

As school administrators, the women in this study were particularly conscious of the relationships they had with their teaching staffs and the nuances and variations that emerged in those associations. They saw themselves as role models for their teachers and found themselves instructing teachers, rather than directing and exerting authority over them. As Penny stated, "I'm a teacher first, an administrator second." Shakeshaft (1987) suggested that female principals are more likely to see their job as that of a "master teacher," whereas men seem to see the position from the old "managerial-industrial perspective" (p. 173). However, the role expectation of principal as building manager often interfered with the way these women would have liked to do their job. As Dina noted, her days were filled moving from task to task, and as Eleanor poignantly noted, "I have become a fireman and that is not what I planned on doing."

Even though the women in this study were administrators, maintaining their connections with teachers was a significant part of what they did in their job. In fact, all of the participants, either directly or indirectly, stated that the ability to maintain that connectedness with teachers was a fundamental ingredient in determining their view of themselves. "Gilligan (1982) and Lyons (1983) use the terms *separate* and *connected* to describe two different conceptions or experiences of the self, as essentially autonomous (separate from others) or as essentially in relationship (connected to others)" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 102). Leaders who experience the self as separate tend to base their leadership on more impersonal procedures. Those leaders who experience the self as connected base their leadership on an ethic of care (Noddings, 1984). Although these

women were closely connected to teachers, this connectedness also produced tensions, because the traditional expectations of the role of the high school principal focus on separateness and power over others (Strachan, 1999).

These relationships and the connectedness they created were also a source of distress for the women in this study. They all spoke several times of their disappointment with teachers: "I'm still me. But I find out I don't like them [teachers] as much either. And that is sad, that's sad." The disappointment they felt about teachers was clarified when they spoke of how relationships changed when they became principals. "If, as Gilligan and Miller claim, women tend to define themselves in the context of relationships, then it is not surprising that women making a break with their pasts and former relationships may enter a period in which there is considerable flux in self-concept" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 81). Both Eleanor and Dina eventually became principals in buildings where they had been teachers, thus forgoing that teacher-to-teacher friendship. Although Penny and I both moved to different districts, the relationships we formed were with other administrators, not with our teaching staffs. As Dina pointed out, "I think a person really needs to understand that whole thing that comes with it [the principalship]. It is not just a job. It is more that just a job—it's how you have to live your life." In this regard, Andrew, Lee, and James (2002) noted that,

> To know where we stand in relation to others, particularly in a democratic society, is a fundamental end of education. Yet we continuously relegate that type of knowledge to the margins of educational organizations, accept the premise that there is a theoretical reality separate from these relations, and delude ourselves that "individualism" serves to promote democratic ends. (p. 275)

Although the participants valued and respected the job that teachers do, they found it difficult to deal with those teachers who would not or could not do the work that

needed to be done in the classroom. Part of that difficulty stemmed from the fact that these kinds of interactions inevitably change relationships. Holding teachers accountable for their work is not only difficult to do, but it inexorably changes the essence of the relationship between the principal and the teacher. "Interpersonal behavior that is skillful (e.g., in terms of understanding others' feelings and intentions) should facilitate a managerial style that is democratic and participative. Making decisions in a collaborative style requires not only the soliciting of suggestions from one's peers and subordinates, but also the preservation of good relationships with them when evaluating and perhaps rejecting their ideas" (Eagly & Johnson, 1990, p. 224). Dina vividly expressed her concern about maintaining good relationships: "I don't like to be point blank and tell somebody that they are screwing off. I don't like to do that. I do it, but I don't like it. It is hard. It is hard." The traditional male discourse surrounding the role of the high school principal has made it clear that principals lead in a manner that makes use of the power that comes from their organizational position and formal authority, rather than from the relationships they form (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995).

The women in this study defined themselves as teachers and constructed relationships with teachers that they were unable to maintain in the same manner once they became administrators. As one participant stated, "I also have a number of teachers who walk in after the bell rings in the morning and nearly beat the students out the door at the end of the day. Holding teachers accountable is difficult, unless I am in their classrooms on a regular basis." The tenor of these relationships changed when the women in this study became principals, even though the collegial relationships formed during their years of teaching were critical in providing a sense of who they were as

professionals. The loss of these teacher-to-teacher relationships changed the participants' perceptions of themselves, who they were, and what they valued as educators. The interpersonal complexity of leadership is a double-edged sword for principals who value relationships, yet, at the same time, must hold teachers accountable.

Because the women in this study also saw themselves as role models for their teachers, they held themselves accountable for maintaining a professional persona that fits the traditional expectations of their role as high school principals. Winfield (1997) talked of maintaining two selves, one professional and one personal: "I would often (at least in my own head) make a conscious and deliberate distinction between my profession (or what I do) and who I really am" (p. 237). This division of self was clearly articulated in my own story. I do not share my personal life with teachers in particular, or with other professionals in general. Dina also hinted at other relationships in her personal life that she did not share with her staff: "Of course, people said things about her and I. Yeah, yeah. That's fine, say what you want." Although a divided self may make sense, it is difficult and stressful to maintain. For the women in this study, the expectations of the principal as leader extended into the personal, creating a separateness that allowed these women to operate privately and independently of their profession, yet precluded forming relationships that included the personal self.

Despite the frustrations and disappointments they might have felt about some teachers, the women in this study viewed their relationship with their staff as key to their definition of self as leader. As Penny stated, "I think that's what you learn; you don't take those things personally. That is just really who they are." According to Belenky et al. (1986), "What seems distinctive in these women is that their strategies for knowing grow

out of their very embeddedness in human relationships and their alertness to the details of everyday life. These women value what they see and hear around them and begin to feel a need to understand people with whom they live and who impinge on their lives" (pp. 86-87).

Relationships were, in fact, so significant that the women returned repeatedly in their discussions to their concerns regarding the losses they had experienced in these relationships. According to Taylor (1999), "the issue of loss is of fundamental importance to change-focused leadership whether for self or the organization. My point is that hope and loss are inextricably associated with change, and that leadership which pays attention to only one of these—hope—exhibits optimism that is naïve at best" (p. 3). This concept of loss in dealing with teachers was prevalent in all of the participants' stories. For them, becoming high school principals meant exchanging the teacher-to-teacher relationships that they had developed when they were teachers for new ways of relating as leaders. Their sense of camaraderie and the feeling that "we're all in this together" changed because the traditional expectations of the role still define the principal's relationship with teachers in a bureaucratic, hierarchical manner (Brunner, 1997). The women in this study were thus left with a self that was splintered into vaguely sensed parts (Belenky et al., 1986). Although still deeply concerned with their connectedness to their teachers, they were cognizant of the fact that the entire structure of their relationships with teachers had changed. Eleanor, Penny, Dina, and I are continually redefining what that relationship should be. Because few women have gone before us, the path ahead is not clear. However, we are committed to continue our journey as women warriors—boldly, yet alone.

The sword and the chrysanthemum: Stories of students and tough love. All of the participants in this study recognized and valued their influence on students. However, as high school principals, their direct influence was now most often limited to the "bad" students, and their general influence on students occurred from a much greater distance than they would like. As Dina noted, "The thing that I don't like and I am kind of glad that I'm pretty much getting close to the end of this job and my career is I know I'm not getting close to kids anymore."

The change in roles from teacher to principal created a different relationship with students that these women believed was another "loss," similar to the loss they experienced in their changed role with teachers. This caring ethic, described as an affinity for people and a commitment to act on their behalf (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, Regan & Brooks, 1995), was evident in each of the women's stories. Because the expectations and demands of the principalship are so broad and varied, the women in this study found it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain positive relationships with the students in their schools. Dina spoke of being gentle and Eleanor of loving students, but both voiced frustration that their role with students was most often limited to that of disciplinarian. Riehl and Byrd (1997) noted, "Professional socialization processes often reward conformity to existing norms rather than the introduction of fresh values and ideas" (p. 60). As Eleanor said, "I care so much about you and I love you as a person, I can't have you in my building behaving like that." The caring ethic, the desire to help and motivate students, created a tension for these women because the traditional role definition clearly identifies the principal's primary relationship with students as disciplinarian. Although much has been written in recent years about the changes

necessary in the principal's role (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Murphy, 1999), the management of the school, the discipline, the supervision, and the many other day-to-day tasks are so time consuming that, in reality, the role has changed very little.

For Dina, the students were the reason she became an educator and the reason she remained in education: "The people that you have to have a passion for are the children. And if you have a passion for the children, it makes it easier to stay in this position and put up with some of the other stuff." As a group, these women believed that they must combine a tough commitment to learning and education with a deep regard and respect for students and their needs. "A common theme running through the educational leadership literature, both that written by feminists and that written about feminist educational leadership, was that through regard and respect (Beck, 1992), through nurturing and compassion (Court, 1991; Hurty, 1995), a sense of community, of belonging, of being cared for, is built" (Strachan, 1999, p. 123). Unfortunately, as Hackney (1999) states, "Women leaders who value relationships and are relaxed in their leading are often perceived as too soft, indecisive, weak, and incompetent" (p. 2). As Dina said, "I can be soft with somebody but that doesn't mean that you're going to also kick me in the ass." Women high school principals must be tough, yet soft; they must be aggressive, yet gentle; they must be separate, yet connected. This dichotomy creates continual conflict with the self as it is juxtaposed with the gendered expectations of the principalship.

Wangensteen (1997) identified the five most common traits in women managers as empathetic, supportive, nurturing, relationship building, and sharing. The women in this study often defined themselves according to their fulfillment of these five traits.

Eleanor stated, "I love working with kids. And I miss that in the classroom—the fact that your association with the good kids has come to a screeching halt." As classroom teachers, they had been better able to see their influence on students because their relationship with them was much more direct. As principals, they frequently evaluated themselves and were evaluated by others on data, rather than on direct feedback from students. Thus, although test scores in their buildings might have been improving, these women leaders often felt disappointment and frustration because test scores do not measure the traits that they valued: empathy, caring, and nurturing. Traditional gender roles and sexual stereotypes may make women more likely to report themselves, and others more likely to evaluate them on these more conventional assumptions about appropriate female behavior (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). However, demands for accountability based on data leave little room for evaluation of principals' success based on the relationships that they value.

According to Gordon (2003), "Principals influence student achievement by first shaping the school setting in which learning takes place, and the culture, in turn, shapes not only the students and staff, but the outcomes as well" (p. 4). However, there is little research in today's data-driven environment concerning such hazy constructs as school climate and culture. Although the participants in this study spoke of curriculum, academic rigor, and high standards and expectations, their primary concern was for the overall well-being of their students. Their common goal as educators was that students learn their strengths and weaknesses and develop the skills that they need to be successful in their lives.

What is clear about these women is that their philosophies regarding schooling were centered on what typically have been considered "women's ways of leading" (Helgesen, 1995). One of their primary concerns was focused on their relationships with students and on the stereotypically female traits of supporting, nurturing, and caring. As Penny stated, "I don't know that it has to do as much with gender as just the experiences through life." So, although gender was not a conscious factor in shaping their philosophies, it is apparent that their preferred ways of leading were what researchers historically have defined as feminine.

The women in this study have defined who they are, in part, by the intuitive, caring relationships that they have had with students. The other side of the sword, however, finds the hierarchical expectations of the job removing them from student connectedness and moving them further and further from the relationships they value. "We *feel*, many of us, that women are more caring and intuitive, better at seeing the human side, quicker to cut through competitive distinctions of hierarchy and ranking, impatient with cumbersome protocols. Our belief in these notions is intuitive rather than articulated; we back it up with anecdotes instead of argument" (Helgeson, 1995, p. 5).

The sword and the chrysanthemum: Stories of family and regret. Kellerman (2001) made the point that "leadership is demanding: it takes time, energy and is often the total focus of a leader's life" (p. 55). Women leaders must make decisions about these leadership demands and their values as spouses, daughters, and mothers. When leadership was juxtaposed with family, the women in this study found that they sometimes had to make difficult choices. Dina stated emphatically, "I think the expectation is there that certain events, of course, I would have to be at. Some I don't have to be at. But I used to

be at all of them because I thought that I needed to be visible and I needed to be there. You know what? That's really dumb. And I have changed that. I have really changed that." Kellerman discussed the difference between male and female leadership and suggested that "the difference may be that women are less motivated than men to limit the number of family tasks they undertake and interests they pursue. In short, the difference may be that women are less willing than men to incur the costs of leadership, particularly if the benefits, such as money and power, are less valued" (p. 56). The women in this study had all incurred the costs of leadership. Those costs were different for each, but nonetheless, they were significant. It was apparent in the stories these women told that the double-edged sword of leadership often had family on the other side.

In 1993, Pigford and Tonnsen discussed the effect that being a female administrator can have on one's family. They wrote, "If your children are old enough to assume household responsibilities, then insist that they do so. Remember, you are not only teaching them responsibility, you are also reinforcing the fact that families share responsibilities and work together" (p. 72). However, these changes in traditional family roles do not come about without a price. When asked whether she felt guilty or ashamed about anything, Eleanor promptly replied, "Leaving my kids and working." Former Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder once commented on how surprised she was to find that raising children is more difficult than anything she had done professionally. "Being a mother required more skill, more patience, more self-discipline, and more judgment than being a lawyer. Part of the reason I was shocked by that discovery is that we live in a culture that says rearing children is not work. Everybody knows how to do it, it is easy, it is not a job, it is no problem" (Schroeder, 2001, p. 87). For Eleanor, being a high school

principal and the mother of five children had been the equivalent of holding two full-time jobs. "The wife/partner of the male principal normally bears the bulk of domestic responsibilities, but in the households of the female principals the women tend to have a 'double shift' where they look after the home and children as well as having a profession" (Acker, as cited in Coleman, 2004, p. 6).

For Eleanor, the traditional role of the wife who cooks, cleans, and takes care of the children had been partially supplanted by new roles that she was continually reworking and redefining. "With Nick being home much more often than I am, that really—we're still struggling with that. We are struggling with it very much." Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) noted, "Women who enter administration with the expectation that they can continue to fulfill their traditional roles are setting themselves up for disappointment, frustration, and guilt. Couples need to recognize that role changes for the wife most assuredly will necessitate role changes for the husband, particularly if young children are involved" (p. 71). In Eleanor's case, although she and her husband recognized that they needed to shift some roles and responsibilities, she had found that this was difficult to do when historical and cultural traditions are ingrained and persistent. "The anxieties of change center upon the struggle to defend or recover a meaningful pattern of relationships" (Marris, 1974, p. 1). As much as Eleanor wanted to make her career choices and her family responsibilities work smoothly together, doing so is another matter entirely. The "conservative impulse" dictates that new experiences are processed by putting them in the context of our old construction of reality. Because our culture maintains traditions of what is appropriate male and female work, Eleanor's attempt to establish new roles and responsibilities was an uncomfortable and uneasy fit.

Penny had experienced loss that she had not resolved. When she married her first husband, he already had children and did not want more. "He warned me long ago, that we shouldn't get serious if you want to have children. And I don't know why, I just never saw the need to have them." When asked about feeling guilty, however, Penny replied, "Selfishness, total selfishness. My life revolved around me." Guilt and shame cannot be easily separated. "Psychological theorists note that guilt and shame often appear together: we feel guilty, we feel ashamed of feeling guilty, we feel ashamed of feeling ashamed, and so on. As emotions, guilt and shame share certain characteristics: both involve painful judgments of the self" (Fisher, 1984, p. 193). As a result, Penny had changed her perception of what she valued in her personal and family relationships to fit her new sense of what was important in her world.

Dina was strong in her belief that a woman coming into the principalship, or even considering it, has to know how the job will fit into her personal life. Dina reflected poignantly on the loneliness of the position and the toll that the expectations of the job take on a woman. "I'm wishing time away. You should be able to enjoy time and life and moments," she said. Dina had adapted to the expectations of her leadership role. She had given her life meaning by interpreting and assimilating her environment. Marris (1974) described these "structures of meaning" as "Shorthand for the complex mental organization which makes everyone a consistently adaptive being in the range of environments he or she can tolerate" (p. 4). Although Dina did not enjoy some of these aspects of the principalship, she had made this job her life, it was how she defined herself, and she had accepted those choices. Creating structures of meaning enabled Dina

to continue performing her job and to adapt to those facets of the position that she found less than enjoyable.

The sword and the chrysanthemum: Stories of women about women. Several women in this study spoke of their relationships with other women administrators. Surprisingly, this was one relationship that they found to be negative in many instances. In the early 1970s, researchers discovered that women who were successful in business often denied the difficulties that women face and were reluctant to help other women. Researchers labeled this the "queen bee" syndrome (Staines, Tavris, & Jayaratne, 1973). Abramson (1975) found that women who had achieved management levels tended to deny that there was systemic discrimination against women. "Recent research chronicles lingering difficulties with what sociologists once labeled 'Queen Bees:' women who believe that they managed without special help, so why can't everyone else?" (Rhode, 2003, p. 13-14). Many women, including Penny in this study, see the imbalance in the number of women in the high school principalship as the responsibility of women themselves.

It became apparent, as I worked through the transcripts of these interviews, that women also play a role in maintaining the traditional male discourse that surrounds the principalship. According to Marshall (1997), unless a different discourse is introduced and used, gender discrimination probably will remain a trivialized issue. Penny, in fact, viewed other women educators as one of the reasons why there are so few women principals. Young (2004) found that "the reasons the women in my Iowa research gave for women's low percentages in educational leadership were thickly laden with victim-blaming ideology. . . . In other words, the gender imbalance was really the responsibility

of the women themselves" (p. 8). Young also found that women maintain the present discourse by viewing the problem as "depersonalized and distant, something akin to folklore. Stories of glass ceilings, sexism, and discrimination were presented as distant and thus unconvincing myths of the female administrative experience" (p. 8).

Penny's stance was an ongoing puzzle to me, although Eleanor at one point also commented on her relationship with her female assistant principal: "She has made a battle, a battle, a war, no question." Young's study and Funk's (2004) description of horizontal violence clarified their perceptions. Funk commented on Edson's research (1988): "She also noted, paradoxically, that many women in education find themselves drawing up battle lines instead of forming alliances" (p. 5). In particular, female administrators have concerns about jealousy and lack of support from other female leaders. Funk discussed this concern, defining "horizontal violence" as

> harmful behavior, via attitudes, words and other behaviors that are directed to us by another colleague. Horizontal violence controls, humiliates, denigrates or injures the dignity of another. Horizontal violence indicates a lack of mutual respect and value for the worth of the individual and denies another's fundamental human rights. (p. 3)

Penny called herself selfish and, when asked about guilty feelings, responded, "Selfishness, it is total selfishness." "Schmuck described a thread of anti-feminism that ran through the stories of the women in her study and concluded that some of the women in her research appeared to deny their femaleness, caring solely about themselves and their own careers" (Funk, 2004, p. 4). Penny saw horizontal violence in others, although not in herself, and identified horizontal violence as one of the reasons that women do not have equity as leaders.

Funk described four categories of female administrators, based on the earlier work of Matthews (1995). These categories include,

> (a) "activists" whose concerns are gender equity and the active support of women into educational administration; (b) "advocates" who support other women, belong to female advocacy organizations, and believe that women bring unique strengths to school administration; (c) "isolates" who detach themselves from equity issues and do not believe that sex discrimination existed, was not worth worrying about, or was not even a problem; and (d) "individualists" who believe that the individual, female or male, took precedence over the group and did not believe in supporting or promoting women or taking action to correct the sexual imbalance in school leadership. (p. 6)

Using these categories, it is not difficult to see how the women in this study fit loosely into them. Eleanor, although she did not actively advocate for other women, was supportive of women and believed that, as a woman, she brought unique and valuable strengths to the position. She fit well into the category of "advocate." I put myself in the same category. Penny, who discounted her own abilities and insisted that she just kept "falling into" leadership positions, fits into the "isolate" category. "When viewing other women coming into school leadership positions, they [isolates] see them as threats. Their perceptions are based solely on the male point of view, and these individuals see men as the source of authority" (p. 7-8). Dina might be viewed as an "individualist" because she found gender irrelevant. She was supportive of any person, male or female, if she believed the person was suited to the leadership role. Funk (2004) noted, "In contrast to the individuals that Matthews classified as isolates, the individualists appeared to be more concerned with the attributes of individuals, male and female, and not with the cause of sex equity in school administration" (p. 6). Women who are isolates and individualists are usually oblivious to any gender discrimination in their world. "These women appear

to have no vocabulary or conceptual framework within which to categorize instances of discrimination as such" (p. 7).

Funk also found that some women believe that they have never experienced discrimination and are not like other women. "As they dissociate themselves from their female identity, they remain self-oriented and tend not to identify with other women but rather with those who are the gatekeepers of the profession" (p. 10). Gupton and Slick (1996) reported that female administrators expected that men would resist their leadership, but were shocked by the antagonistic behavior of other women. Penny stated, "It is a flaw that a female has and I think it is a very sad state of affairs. But I have had that more than not in my career." Women such as Penny identify with the male power figures in their workplace and often do not provide support for other women. Because of her experiences, Penny was reluctant to support and advocate for women and identified strongly with those holding power. According to Schmuck and Schubert (1995), some women principals want to become part of the dominant leadership culture and, to do so, they deny their identity as a female.

The sword and the chrysanthemum: Struggles with the double-edged sword. To change is to suffer loss. People who undergo change may lose certainty, the comfort of the known, and their sense of competence. The women in this study had all undergone changes in their relationships with teachers, students, and their families. In addition, they had undergone changes in their perceptions of themselves. "Whenever human purposes depend on relationships to other people—whether of love or friendship, power or status, security or belonging—the satisfaction of these purposes seems to fasten on a specific person, class or group of people, with whom they become identified. Hence the loss of

these relationships seems irredeemable, because no substitute attachment would be equivalent" (Marris, 1974, p. 149). Marris suggested that when we impose change on ourselves, we need to "allow some kind of moratorium on other business" (p. 150) so that we can rebuild our patterns and attachments. Unfortunately, the job of the high school principal allows no time for moratoriums. It also makes building new patterns of relationships difficult, if not impossible, because there are no other women around. Once again, the woman warrior finds herself carrying the double-edged sword, alone.

The Mythology Broken: The Realities of Power Revisited

Power is a central theme in the literature on feminism and leadership; indeed, issues surrounding gender and power are not new. The Amazon warrior women of the seventh millennium B.C. are a distant memory of the kind of power that women once held. "Reason conquers mystery, male conquers female, and the image of the Amazon blossoms brilliantly, representing that which must be loved and lost, admired and then wiped out, attractive and compelling though it may be . . . The hero *had* to crush this female monster—whether she took the form of a dragon or an Amazon, it was all the same" (Wilde, 1999, pp. 190-191). Power in organizations, including schools, reproduces the heterosexual world in which men are dominant and women subordinate (Adler et al., 1993). Therefore, gender is seen as a problem for women, whereas an androcentric view of the world and the workplace is seen as the norm. Women who choose to enter this male world are still women and must "manage their sexuality and gender" (Adler et al., 1993, p. 16).

According to Blackmore (1994), "Increasingly, research from a cultural studies perspective is focusing upon how different masculinities and femininities are constructed

in relation to each other, of how particular masculinities become 'hegemonic' in particular contexts" (p. 7). In the construction of the role of high school principal, masculine definitions of the role based on perceived male traits such as authority, assertiveness, and aggressiveness have been normalized, therefore making perceived female traits such as compassion, empathy, and care of lesser importance. Although "women's ways of leading" have been touted as models of best practice and women's skills in communication and interpersonal relationships are seen as desirable, in actuality,

> feminist leadership is being positioned as powerless within a new gender order which is no less "masculinist" than the "paternalism" of the dominant management discourses of modernity. While discourses that call upon new forms of leadership for postmodern times talk about professional collegiality and teamwork, dominant management practice encourages competition and rewards individuals. Indeed, the appropriation of the strategies of feminist leadership by dominant malestream management discourses is an important aspect of the building of consent required to maintain hegemony of particular masculinities, to the exclusion of others. (Blackmore, 1994, p. 13)

The mythology broken: A warrior's gendered power. The women in this study varied significantly in their recognition of gender and power as factors in the work they did. Although all were from the same generation, they viewed the expectations of the position in very different ways because of their own particular contexts. When Eleanor entered the teaching profession at age 35, she was already married and had children. She viewed the role of high school principal as a gendered position and found the behavioral expectations, particularly those centered on power, uncomfortable, at best. "So over the last 3 years, I have gotten much more what they call "aggressive," much more bitchy, whatever, and find that that works." Rhode (2003) noted that "women who take strong positions risk

being stereotyped as 'bitchy,' 'difficult,' or 'manly.' Women who try to avoid those assessments risk losing ground to men who are more assertive" (p. 8). Eleanor's assessment of her present situation was aligned with Rhode's findings and indicated a much narrower range of acceptable behavior for women leaders. For Eleanor, there was a contradiction between being female and being a high school principal. "There is an inherent contradiction between maintaining feminist principles and holding a powerful position in a linear hierarchy" (Adler et al., 1993, p. 135). This dilemma forces women principals such as Eleanor to either accept the male-defined role, to adjust or adapt so that it blends with their own view of power, or to struggle against it.

When asked about giving advice to women who aspire to the high school principalship, Penny recommended the book *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* (Frankel, 2004). The book focuses on the mistakes women make at work and gives them "coaching tips" to help them "reach their full potential" (p. xiii). For Penny, this book offered concrete ways that she could adapt to the "masculine ethic" of rationality as defined by Kanter (1975): "This 'masculine ethic' elevates the traits assumed to belong to men with educational advantages to necessities for effective organizations: a tough-minded approach to problems; analytic abilities to abstract and plan; a capacity to set aside personal emotional considerations in the interests of task accomplishment; and a cognitive superiority in problem-solving and decision-making" (p. 43). Penny did not see gender as a factor in her beliefs and assumptions about leadership, and, in fact, did not see that gender had affected her life or her career. Penny had adapted her leadership style to fit the hierarchical male myths about the high school principalship and the power that

the position holds. She referred to a masculine view of her leadership style several times, yet she also was proud of the fact that she had delegated so much authority to her assistant principals. "Power, it seems, is both undesirable and desirable" (Adler et al., 1993, p. 133). By delegating power to her assistants, Penny was able to maintain, at least in a limited sense, her feminine beliefs of "power through," yet, at the same time, to maintain a masculine leadership style that gave her assistants "power over."

Rhode (2003) observed that "a central problem for American women is the lack of consensus that there is a significant problem. Gender inequalities in leadership opportunities are pervasive; perceptions of inequality are not" (p. 6). Penny fell into that group of women and men who believe there are no barriers for women and that a glass ceiling is nonexistent for women who aspire to leadership roles. Power rests in a hierarchy of roles. She saw her role as gender neutral and had adapted her leadership style to fit the traditional male expectations of the role. Penny stated,"But what I see, viewing men in authority as father figures, it's an excellent book. It talks about obediently following instructions, which is something that I have always done when a man told me what to do." However, Penny also had another view of power: She maintained her comfort with her personal style of *power through* by empowering her assistants. Tension was created because she recognized the incongruity of the hierarchical system in which she participated, where power was constructed as *power over*. To deal with the tensions created by this incongruency in her perception of power, Penny had adapted her leadership style to fit both a feminine *power through* and a masculine *power over*.

Dina, never married and without children of her own, also saw a gendered view of power, at least in her own experience, as irrelevant. As an athlete and an athletic director, both her personal life and her professional life had operated predominantly in a male world. What was important to Dina, however, was that power can be used to influence students and their educational experience. She mentioned numerous times that it was important that "when you see kids that you haven't seen in a long time and you know that . . . they're happy to see you. You know, like you're somebody in somebody's life." She enjoyed spending time with students and believed that she was a significant person in many of their lives. It was important to Dina to build powerful relationships that allowed her to influence the values, beliefs, and attitudes of her students.

Although gender, in Dina's opinion, had not been a relevant issue for her personally, she recognized the limitations that the male definition of the role puts on both women and men who aspire to the principal's position. Dina gave strength to others, whether male or female, who were in administrative positions, and worked to help them resist the dominant discourse of masculinity that defines the role of the high school principal (Gold, 1996). Dina made a point of working with students, staff, and other administrators to make decisions collaboratively, to communicate with others in a compelling manner, and to develop power in others. By sharing power with her assistants and also with teachers and students, she had built a potent web of power that made a positive contribution to her school.

The mythology broken: Warriors spinning webs of power. All of the participants talked of empowering teachers, of increasing their autonomy, personal control, and self-esteem. However, according to Alimo-Metcalfe (1995), many teachers are skeptical of

empowerment because there is a dissonance between its definition and how many educational leaders presently use it. Alimo-Metcalfe noted, "It is a seductive concept, which holds an immediate appeal for me, and doubtless many others, clothed as it is in the warmth of humanistic language. Under the guise of empowerment being provided as a gift to employees—something they will just love—it creates a sense of paternalism, and appears to encourage notions of selfishness and self-sufficiency" (pp. 6-7).

Although the women in this study cherished the feminine values of interdependence and cooperation, many educational leaders use empowerment as a pretext to maintain separation and control. "Not only do the imbalances of power remain, since it is still in the power of the leader to remove the gift, but the individuals empowered become more accountable for the disappointments and failures which previously were regarded as responsibilities of their manager" (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995, p. 7). Teachers are suspicious of empowerment rhetoric, concerned that it is a catch phrase for more work. Eleanor had given up in frustration and had become the "bitchy," aggressive woman who gets what she needs for her students. Penny had delegated power to her assistant principals and watched from a distance as they used that power.

Dina and I have both tried to maintain power with our teachers; however, their response is frequently, "Just tell us what to do." Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) spoke to the power that a gendered discourse has:

> Violations of the gender divide, which have occurred in all times and places, mostly result from technological discovery, public calamity, private misfortune, or occasional emergencies. Having always been experienced as a terrifying force when carried out collectively, they also constitute an effective means of redressing a power imbalance or defying the established order, and they aim, not at effacing the gender line, but at *confirming it through change.* (p. 116)

The calls for empowering teachers may indeed be a way of saying something else altogether. In assuming the feminine trait of empowerment, the male discourse surrounding the role of the high school principal redefines empowerment. Instead of the feminine model of sharing power, the masculine definition encourages autonomy and separateness. "Empowerment therefore smacks of old-style autocratic management, but 'dressed up' in a warm, humanitarian model" (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995, p. 7). Rather than erasing the gender line, it appropriates feminist strategies of leadership and builds the consent necessary to maintain hegemony (Blackmore, 1984).

According to Foucault (1997), power "both constrains individuals by subjecting them to regulation, control, and normalization and, at the same time, enables or empowers individuals by positioning them as subjects who are endowed with the capacity to act" (p. 51). In the traditional linear hierarchy of power found in most schools, administrators are endowed with the power to act, whereas those below them are regulated and controlled. Eleanor and Dina were both frustrated with the hierarchical power in their districts. As Eleanor said, "I see a couple of men who have been here a long time. And they yell and degrade our superintendent and just be evil and get what they ask for. And I'll ask for it appropriately, professionally, I think, and be denied based on such and such." As a result, Eleanor had changed her manner of engaging with her superiors. Rather than asking in what she deemed an appropriate manner, she had resorted to making aggressive demands. Gutting (as cited in Young & Skrla, 2003) stated:

> The choices available (and those not available) to the individual at each point in his life history could be read as due to the structure of the culture in which he lives. Conversely, the development of social structures in one direction rather than another could be read as corresponding to a

> specification of the sorts of individuals that can (and those that cannot) exist in the culture. (p. 252)

In the practice of the high school principalship, most people who are principals adapt to the existing norms of how they are expected to act and think. At the same time, the norms are being shaped by the actions and thoughts of those who are principals. "This, then, is how the productive effects of power operate through normalization. The rules, expectations, understandings, and discourses that make up the normalizations . . . act to produce the normal situation" (Skrla, 2003, p. 252). Therefore, it is clear that the choice available to Eleanor to get what she needed determined her actions. Because that choice was to become demanding and aggressive, those actions were normalized and continued to be accepted as how principals enact their role. According to Skrla (2003), socially accepted gender roles form the foundation of this administrative culture and play a crucial role in maintaining the male discourse that surrounds the high school principalship.

Rather than a linear model of leadership, when the women in this study chose to share power in a more collaborative approach to decision making, they created a web of interaction. Dina stated, "These things are my responsibility. But I can let . . . I think I'm able to let people who I know are responsible handle things." Penny, although more hesitant about broadening her web of power, delegated a great deal to her assistant principals. Rather than exerting power by reaching down, these women reached out (Helgesen, 1990). "This image of an interrelated structure, built around a strong central point and constructed of radials and orbs, quite naturally makes me think of a spider's web—that delicate tracery, compounded of the need for survival and the impulse of art, whose purpose is to draw other creatures to it" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 46).

The women in this study often established power by showing care and concern, by listening carefully, and by treating people fairly. According to Shakeshaft (1987), staffs of female administrators therefore have higher job satisfaction and are more engaged in their work than those of male administrators. These high school principals also found that "they have to push more, to show more strength" (Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis, 2001, p. 7). They also spoke of the need for intensity and determination. Both Eleanor and Penny mentioned that a requisite quality in the job was a thick skin. As Eleanor stated, "The thick skin quality is one I'm realizing is more needed than most." Having power did not mean leaving their emotions at the schoolhouse door.

None of the women in this study had an abiding interest in pursuing a superintendency, although Eleanor had considered it at various times. In the traditional linear hierarchy of school administration, becoming a superintendent is considered "reaching the top" and is frequently the goal of high school principals. As Helgesen (1990) noted, "In the web, the top is too far from the center. The ideal center spot in the web is perceived in the hierarchical view as 'being stuck' in the middle—going nowhere . . . . The women in the diary studies were eager to be 'in the center of things' and chilled by the notion of being 'alone at the top'" (pp. 50-51). As long as schools maintain top-down structural models, those who value interconnectedness, the sharing of information, and strong, caring relationships will be reluctant to step into top administrative roles.

The mythology broken: Repositioning and realigning power. The women in this study perceived and used power in diverse ways. Although they were comfortable with a feminist view of power, they were not averse to making use of an aggressive, bold, more male-oriented style of power when they saw the need to do so. According to Davies

(2000), "By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist" (p. 180). Although these women might not have wanted to disrupt the effects of power, or even saw the need to do so, by knowing how power is used by them and in their organizations, others may acquire the knowledge necessary to undermine the male discourse that defines the principalship.

Knowledge Found: Reframing and Revitalizing Identity Through Context

Context plays an important role in defining who principals are and what they do. Schools are not self-contained entities; they have multiple connections with their environment. Context includes the teachers, students, and staff in a building and parents, district personnel, and other members of the school community. It also includes history, both in a micro- and macro-political sense, demographic characteristics, and the social and cultural values in the world around us (Hausman, 2000). However, when defining what principals do, contextual elements are often ignored in favor of an idealized view of the high school principal's role. Women who become high school principals must

> become "abnormal" women; they must transcend the social expectations of femaleness in order to aspire to the socially prescribed role of leader. And because they do not fit the expectations of the attributes of leaders, they are also "abnormal" administrators. Their position as administrators make them "insiders"' to the organization but their "abnormal" status as women make them "outsiders" in their organizations. (Schmuck, 1996, p. 356)

Establishing a sense of identity is crucial in human development and involves not only understanding who we are and how we see ourselves, but also how we connect with

others in the context of the world around us. Researchers (Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Lachman & James, 1997) have indicated that a woman's identity develops differently than a man's. Whereas theories of male identity development focus on career as a core element, women's models of identity focus on relationships and affiliation.

Knowledge found: Creating a professional identity. The idea that generations differ due to their unique social and cultural experiences is fundamental to theories of feminist identity. As individuals move through their lives, their micro-political experiences are influenced by the macro-level historical context in which they live (Peltola, Milkie, & Presser, 2004). In this study, all of the participants were part of what is commonly termed the "Baby Boomer" generation. This generation of women, born between 1946 and 1959, were young adults during the peak of the second wave of feminism, a period of intense political activity and unique opportunities for women. Although many of the women from this generation do not identify themselves as feminists, many of them support feminist goals (Williams & Wittig, 1997).

However, developing identity is a uniquely personal process, one that takes place in both interpersonal and cultural contexts. By comparing themselves to others, people determine what they personally value and what they do not. Penny was clear about what she valued in her work and her beliefs about her practice, "If you have been a good teacher and you have good tools, then those tools will take you to a certain level, but after that point, then you really have to think like a man." People also determine their identity by how well they adhere to the beliefs, goals, and attitudes of their culture. Josselson (1986) noted, "Identity is how we interpret our own existence and understand who we are in our world. I am a woman, but my identity as a woman is my unique way of being a

woman in the culture in which I live" (p. 30). Eleanor described her way of getting what she wanted in the context of her school district: "I think I have a bitchy side, there's no question. But not my everyday activity, it takes a lot to get to that. And I don't like that." Josselson theorized that female identity is formed by the spheres of competence and connection. Competence refers to the feeling of being effective and doing things of value, whereas connection refers to having ties with others. In contrast to the traditional male spheres of love and work, "women bring relatedness to the workplace; they also bring working to relationships" (Josselson, 1986, p. 184).

A tension for the women in this study was embedded in the fact that, as Hansot and Tyack noted in 1981, our educational system is fashioned by male hegemony. In this system, the male-dominant culture has constructed the definitions and expectations of roles, including the leadership of our schools. Although some writers have used terms such as *scripts* or *metanarratives* rather than hegemony, all of these terms allude to the fact that there are role definitions that exist and those definitions have been created by the male-dominant culture. Women who take on these roles are co-opted into this same set of values and beliefs and, because of the incongruity of roles, often find themselves in a double bind. A double bind refers to the "mismatch between the characteristics traditionally associated with women and the characteristics traditionally associated with leadership" (Kellerman & Rhode, 2004, p. 15). Again, Eleanor was cognizant of this mismatch: "Because to have to be something so negative and if I'm not perceived as difficult—I don't get what I need in order to run my building appropriately—that is disheartening." Smith (1990) noted that the discourse surrounding leadership rarely includes a woman's perspective and therefore does not feel like ours. Once a perspective

gains power and privilege, the potential to problematize the practice is limited (p. 52). The job of women who are high school principals requires adherence to behaviors that fit the accepted definition of the role; their gender requires behaviors that may be much different. However, because hegemony is so pervasive and powerful, most women principals move through their personal lives and careers with no awareness of how their world has been constructed.

Knowledge found: Warriors or firemen? Historically, managing the building has been the primary focus of the high school principal. Fullan (2001) stated that good leaders can both manage and lead, but "leadership is needed for problems that do not have easy answers" (p. 2). As noted in the literature review, Adler et al. (1993) examined the dynamics among "feminism, power, and educational management" (p. 130). The women they studied described their style of leadership as cooperative and collegial, although their styles often conflicted with the hierarchical structures of their environment. Their attitude toward power was ambivalent, and they often delegated responsibility and power to others. As Penny noted, "If I left tomorrow or disappeared off the face of the earth, they would never know. And I'm serious. They would never know. I have delegated so much to them that the previous [male] principal didn't. And they longed for that." Eleanor also commented, "I fear that we are quagmired in management to the exclusion of leadership. So I do fear that. And that's what I'm dealing with right now in trying to find ways to get myself out of the mire of detail that I have gotten into."

All of the women in this study preferred to operate in a collegial manner, delegating authority to their assistants and their teaching staffs. Although they could and did work as managers of their buildings when they found it necessary, they favored a

collegial leadership role that empowered their staffs. Unfortunately, time was a factor and so too were the crises that regularly occurred, as Eleanor noted when she spoke of her disappointment in becoming what she termed a "fireman." According to Hall (1996),

> A picture emerges of women heads enacting strong leadership within a collaborative framework. In spite of this, the women heads . . . were firmly committed to the belief that sharing leadership still required them to take the lead when appropriate, including having a personal vision for the school. They saw themselves (and were seen) as key players, co-coordinating, developing, and using others' efforts to the benefit of the school's purpose. (p. 190)

The women in this study saw themselves as key players in their schools, but their disappointment in having to manage at the expense of school leadership was clear. As Dina said, "So okay, this is the task that's today, and it has to be done. I hope I did this and I got this and that. You know, it is kind of like so much of the time, I think we spend on these tasks." Not only did they spend large parts of their days managing the details of running the school, they believed that they had lost the opportunity to use their real leadership skills toward the betterment of their schools. They identified themselves as managers, rather than leaders. Eleanor's comment that she felt like a fireman echoed the sentiments of the other women in the study, and although they believed that academic excellence and rigor should be the focus of their work, it seldom was.

How these women did their jobs was defined not only by the tasks that filled their days, but also by the expectations of the school district and the local community. The influence of school and community demographics on student outcomes has been supported by research (Heck & Mayor, 1991). Socioeconomic status, educational attitudes in the community, and academic expectations of teachers and parents all affectt student outcomes (Oakes, 1989). These factors also contribute to the definition of the

principal's job in a particular high school. For example, Dina, the principal in a small school, shared an assistant principal with the middle school. Therefore, her contact with students and her relationship with them was much different from that of Eleanor and Penny, who both worked in schools with student populations approaching 2,000. "Thus, contextual factors may sometimes constrain and shape the principal's exercise of instructional leadership. This assumption about differences in the principal's role is probably correct, because the requirements and demands of leadership are confounded and compounded by school size, curriculum complexity, and the scale of administrative obligations" (Heck, 1992, p. 22). For example, Dina described her leadership as task oriented, whereas Penny, who had four assistant principals and operated in a community where the median income was nearly $115,000, was more often able to enjoy her role as instructional leader in her school.

As noted in the literature review, high school principals in all school contexts are experiencing increased demands for accountability from parents, central office, and local, state, and federal government agencies (NASSP, 2000, p. 1). They are expected to implement change, be instructional leaders, and, at the same time, smoothly coordinate the daily tasks of managing students, teachers, parents, custodians, cooks, bus drivers, athletes, and band and choir members (Whitaker, 1996). Althouh Eleanor had four assistant principals, she worked in a community where the median income was slightly over $50,000 and college-educated adults comprised less than 20% of the population. Eleanor talked with frustration about the expectations the school and the community had of her. "The expectation is that I am at everything. Every night of the week." Participants in this study cited the need to complete numerous tasks at once while enduring constant

interruptions, the number of evening meetings, increased paperwork, ongoing budget cuts, and the effort to respond to everyone as particularly troublesome. Hence, the normalized definition of the principal's job as manager is still, for many principals, the way they must fulfill the expectations of the position and the way they view their identity as professionals.

Knowledge found: Hegemony and career aspirations. There is evidence that women in education, particularly those in leadership positions, do not develop a career plan (Alley & MacDonald, 1996). Lack of planning can limit career advancement and mobility (Ozga, 1993) and can also limit a woman's understanding of her leadership role and her place in the context of her working environment (Alley & MacDonald, 1996). According to Crow and Glascock (1995), the ability to identify a career role "helps build confidence and establishes effective strategies for responding to new responsibilities" (p. 23). In her first interview, Eleanor discussed her career plan, which included her desire to be the first female principal at Athens High School. She achieved that goal, and "now," she said firmly, "I am currently actively seeking a superintendent's position." However, by the final interview, she had begun to question that decision.

Although Eleanor had goals for her career, they were not part of a long-range plan. This is typical of many women who are in leadership positions. As Coleman (2003) noted, "The difficulties for women in planning their career may then be compounded by child-bearing, and by the tacit acceptance in society that the career of the man (husband) takes priority over that of the woman. Nearly a quarter of the women principals but a much smaller proportion of men said that they had *never* formulated a plan including headship" (p. 10). For Eleanor, marriage, the birth of her children, and then the adoption

of three more children had had, as she described it, a great influence on her career. Her personal identity as a mother, in particular, created a conflict with her identity as a principal that she had been unable to resolve.

Penny summed up her aspirations throughout her career: "I have pretty much fallen into both jobs I have gotten. The only job I really . . . the only two jobs I really knew I wanted and went for [were] my first teaching job and my first administrator's job. . . . I keep falling into things." "Feelings of powerlessness are common to women in school leadership" (Hurty, 1995, p. 383), and failure to recognize their own worth and abilities is typical of women leaders. As Kanter (1979) wrote in *Life in Organizations,* "Powerlessness has consequences for behavior and attitudes. . . . Those with accountability for results but without the capacity to take action—to bring in the needed resources, to mobilize the needed people, to influence the wider environment—are essentially powerless, even though they might have formal authority of a wide scope" (p. 11). Penny, in particular, measured herself against the normalized male definition of the principalship and of leadership in general. Her "think like a man" approach was successful, so she identified with the traditional male discourse surrounding the principalship.

According to Riehl and Byrd (1997), "There seems to have been a certain amount of 'drift' into school administration, since the vast majority of new administrators had prepared for their career moves but did not express particularly strong feelings about leaving teaching in the near future" (p. 55). Dina had a difficult time explaining why she had gone from the classroom into administration, "I don't know. I really at that time, I really, I don't know. I think—I don't know." My own reason for entering the profession

was based on the encouragement of two former male administrators. Rhode (2003), found that most women who assume leadership roles "have had at least one white, male ally—at least one white, male champion willing to support, mentor, and share influence with a woman successor. In this new century, women confronting a glass ceiling must enlist more white, male leaders to help shatter the glass" (p. 184).

None of the participants in this study expressed a strong desire to move up the administrative ladder, although, as noted earlier, Eleanor at one point thought she might like to do so. When asked about the superintendency, Dina replied, "If I was going to do that I would have done that a long time ago, too. It's the kid thing. Politics. I don't like it. I think I could do it. It would be a challenge that I would like to do for a while, but I don't think so." Penny echoed Dina's remarks: "We have a superintendent's opening, as a matter of fact, here. And you know, I just, I'm not political. I hate school board meetings." I also dislike the politics, the finance issues, and dealing with the school board, so I too have no interest in the superintendency. In her early research, Kanter (1975) found that the primary differences between male and female work groups were in their view of interpersonal relationships and level of aspiration. "One might interpret this as consistent with the training of women for family roles and thus label it a sex-linked attribute. But such orientations could also be seen as *realistic responses* to women's structural situation in organizations, of the kinds of opportunities and their limits, of the role demands in the organizational strata occupied by women, and of the dependence of women on relationships for mobility" (p. 54-55). In the case of Eleanor, her hesitancy to take on the superintendency was in part related to her family role. However, all of the

women revealed a reluctance to take on the demands, particularly the political burdens, required in the superintendent's position.

According to Brunner and Grogan (2005), the top four reasons women give for not aspiring to the superintendency are: (a) I'm happy with my current position and have no interest in changing jobs, (b) the politics of the job don't appeal to me, (c) too much stress, and (d) superintendent's salary is not high enough for the weight of the job (pp. 39-40). "Interestingly, none of these reasons are related to childrearing or family responsibilities. Instead, these reasons are career focused—either in terms of work conditions and benefits or personal satisfaction with their current circumstances" (p. 40). These findings echo the reasons most of the women in this study gave for eschewing the superintendency.

Knowledge found: The identity of the high school principal. Defining the role of the high school principal is no easy task. To do so, those who are high school principals must make sense of their role, both for themselves and for those who aspire to it. Sense-making rests on a metaphor of a person traveling through a situation, dealing with gaps, building bridges, and then making sense of the outcomes (Teekman, 2000). It is a way to examine the constructs that people create to bridge the gaps between themselves and other people, situations, and events.

Women continue to be underrepresented in the high school principalship, in part because of the mismatch between the characteristics typically expected in the role and the characteristics typically expected of women. These gaps place women principals in a double bind. They may appear too soft to handle discipline and not equipped to make tough decisions. On the other hand, if they are tough and self-assured, they appear

aggressive and "bitchy." Making sense of these conflicting expectations contributes to a broadened discourse surrounding the role and a better understanding of how the gaps between the expected roles of women and leaders can be bridged.

The women in this study talked at length about their desires and responsibilities and the tension created between the expectations in their personal lives, their work expectations, and the norms of the high school principalship. Close friends, parents, spouses, and children provided support for these women, enabling them to pursue their demanding careers. Even so, women such as Eleanor struggled with the responsibility for many of the emotional and practical needs of their children and family. She asserted, "The first thing I think of is my kids. If we didn't have Max right now, or even the girls, if we had never adopted the kids, I would probably be finishing my doctorate and doing a superintendency." Eleanor also spoke with frustration about her struggle with time management. Often, when women choose to put their families first, they are viewed, or at least perceive that they are viewed, as being unable to accept the challenges of leadership and using family as an excuse to avoid taking on additional responsibilities (Gardiner et al., 1999). Eleanor was experienced as a high school principal, knew the expectations of the superintendency, and was in an excellent position to assume the role of superintendent. However, she was concerned about how the expectations of moving up the ladder would affect her family.

Eleanor also spoke eloquently about the frustrations of the job. From students, to teachers, to parents, to central office, they all wanted her time and attention. Eleanor, who was reflective and self-critical, held herself to a high standard and sometimes questioned whether she could or should do the job as it was expected to be done. In this situation, the

gender stereotype of women being soft and the job stereotype of principals being tough created a double bind and a no-win situation for Eleanor. Although she challenged the stereotypical behavioral expectations of the high school principal herself, it was often difficult to act on her beliefs in the face of pressure from teachers and other administrators who were firmly enmeshed in the traditional understanding of how a high school principal should behave. Although Eleanor had found herself in a situation in which she was challenged and undermined, she had accepted those challenges and persevered because of her strong beliefs about her role.

Penny stated that her goal as an administrator was to be humane in whatever she did. She saw the ability to listen, understand, and communicate as the key factor in her personal success as a principal. However, in a later interview, she stated, "I am probably too kind. One of the union presidents said, 'That's what we love about you and what we hate about you.' Because he wanted me to fire a teacher. And I said, 'I can't fire the teacher.'" Penny's desire as a person was to be kind, although the behavioral expectation of her position from both herself and her staff presented a conflict. She was appalled at her predecessor's lack of sensitivity. "He would say things and I'd walk out of a meeting and think, it really was hurtful what had happened. But he was unaware of it. One woman, he never called her the right name for the entire year. And she hated that, and she said, 'I hate him because he thinks so little of me. He can't even get my name right.'" There was a conflict between Penny's personal values and priorities and her role expectations as a high school principal. However, in Penny's case, rather than learning the rules and bending them to her advantage, she had learned the rules and adapted to

them. "They accepted me because I think like a man. And I have been told that a couple of times in my life."

According to Montgomery and Grow (2006), "Utilizing men's method of leadership is the easiest way for a woman to be hired for administrative positions, especially since this approach to leadership has repeatedly been established as acceptable to the public and successful in attracting promotion and recognition" (p. 2). Blackmore (1999) noted, "Whereas many newly appointed female principals of the baby boomer generation had lived through the feminist politics of the 1970s, had fought for equal pay and equal opportunity legislation, and had actively worked as change agents in the 1980s, others had little reason to reflect upon gendered politics once in power" (p. 193). For women such as Penny, gender is not part of how they see and value themselves, and "indeed to recognize gender would downplay their own success" (p. 193).

Although Dina believed that her gender was irrelevant, she chose Rosie the Riveter as the artifact that best represented the job she did. "I think it is the whole thing that women can do whatever it is that they want to do. You know, accomplish what they want." Dina approached her role as a high school principal much in line with the stereotypical expectations. She saw herself as tough, decisive, and firm, although she also believed that she could be soft and gentle when she needed to be. Although Dina could be "soft," the softness did not compromise the need to be tough and "get the job done." When women mimic the male model, they often are seen as harsh and overly aggressive. "An overview of more than a hundred studies confirms that women are rated lower when they adopt stereotypically masculine authoritative styles, particularly when the evaluators are men or when the woman's role is one typically occupied by men" (Kellerman &

Rhode, 2004, p. 15). Other research has indicated that individuals with a masculine style are more likely to emerge as leaders than those with a feminine style, so women face double binds that men do not (Kellerman & Rhode, 2004). Dina, however, identified strongly with the masculine ethic and thereby avoided, at least from her viewpoint, the double bind that many women face in the leadership role.

Dina had strong feelings about women who are emotional and who allow those emotions to show in their job. "So, you know, if you are going to be in a leadership position and if you have any of that mood swing shit, don't do it. Because you'll never be effective because people won't take you seriously." In order to be taken seriously, a leader, in Dina's mind, must be careful to hide her emotions. Gender is irrelevant; whether male or female, her view was the same: Do the job and do it well. In Dina's view, the principalship is gender-neutral. Through intact male-dominated structures, men and women such as Dina have come to view their perspectives and norms as being representative of gender-neutral, human organizational structures, and assume the structure is "asexual."

The pressure to conform to the norms of the job was overwhelming for the women in this study, and at times it seemed that the biggest roadblock to success was not necessarily the biases of other people, but their own fears. Hart (1995) noted that the demands of practice often pressure school leaders to abandon the skills and knowledge they have acquired and conform to existing norms. "The most frequent result: the replication of existing practice and patterns of school leadership" (p. 106). Even those principals who are aware of the masculine discourse find themselves reluctant to believe

in its power and pervasiveness. It is much easier to find fault with one's own skills and credentials.

The discourse surrounding the high school principalship has been and largely continues to be male. These discourses, "Constrain the possibilities of thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations" (Ball, 1990, p. 2). Eagly et al. (1995) reported that, in leadership positions that are rarely held by women, women may need to display masculine characteristics to be seen as effective. "Women who have achieved leadership positions generally have been selected and socialized to conform to accepted organizational norms" (Rhode, 2003, p. 20). Penny's and Dina's attitudes are typical of those who accept the masculine definition of the high school principalship. Throughout their lives, they have either adopted stereotypically masculine traits, as in Dina's case, or accepted them as the norm, as in Penny's case. The masculine traits Dina exhibited in her leadership were not perceived as incongruent. By assimilating the male stereotype of the high school principal's role, Dina avoided the negative response that a more feminine style evokes. Penny's belief that she must think like a man clearly had worked successfully for her. By accepting the normalized definition of the high school principalship, both women had managed to avoid the double bind that many women experience in the role.

Knowledge found: Advocacy and mentoring. For the women in this study, informal networks of support and mentoring had been elusive, not only as administrators, but also as teachers. All of them suggested a need to alter this trend for both teachers and administrators. Researchers have noted that male administrators, however, seem to have a strong network that revolves around a central focus on athletics. Not only do athletics

serve as a common source of discussion at local and state conferences, athletics also serves as a means for men to network socially. Blackmore (1999) noted that, "highly discriminatory practices at work conferences were 'normalized' as typical of male friendship" (p. 94). These practices, and the informal networks they created, were exclusionary, supporting men rather than women. The women in this study either pursued support through relationships with female educators in other districts or did without. Penny, in particular, talked about long-standing friendships with other women who had advanced to leadership roles. The story at the beginning of this study is typical of the experiences that women in this study had encountered.

As she thought about advocacy, Dina described a good candidate for the principalship as a woman who sees herself as a strong, capable person, ready for the role of the high school principal. In her view, this self-concept is important for a woman seeking a principalship at the high school level. All of the women in this study believed that a woman who is interested in being a high school administrator must have a good understanding of the job responsibilities. Although these responsibilities differ from district to district, a candidate must do research on the expectations for that position. As Dina said, "If you don't feel your strength is going to be in dealing with discipline and you're going to be the only person dealing with discipline, then you just don't take the job. You set yourself up for success. You don't set yourself up for failure." Penny agreed and added, "Really know what you want to do before you venture into it. And know what the job is. I do think, though, if you want to move up, you need to put your time in these roles as assistant principal. I think it shows that you have the stamina."

All of the women in this study also believed that teaching experience was the key to being a good principal. Eleanor stated, "There is no way you can ever explain to someone what it is like to be a principal. No way." Penny stated, "Experience in the classroom is the key. I think you learn why, when you're disciplining students in the office, you don't return them to the classroom at all." Only one of Eleanor's assistant principals, a woman, had any classroom experience. Penny's three male assistant principals had a total of 11 years of teaching experience among them. Her female assistant principal had been in the classroom for almost 10 years. It is evident that experience in the classroom was important to the women principals. Typically, however, their women assistants had much more experience, as a whole, than the men.

Although the participants in this study had achieved leadership roles at the high school level, they all recognized that they were the exception to the rule. Whereas the women in this study had been supported, at times, by male colleagues, it is much more common for male administrators to mentor and develop other males. Eleanor, Penny, and Dina indicated that female mentorship would, in fact, be a welcome means of guidance and support. Eleanor said that a former superintendent had been a mentor for her and helped her through her first principalship. Now, however, she found support from her secretary, who had been in the position for many years.

Historically, women have not been encouraged to pursue leadership positions in school administration (Banks, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1987). The women in this study all stated that they would encourage women to enter the field of administration. However, at the time of this study, only Dina was mentoring a female aspiring to the principalship, and I was mentoring a young male teacher. Although one of Penny's assistant principals

was a female, she did not indicate any interest in mentoring her. In Eleanor's case, time was a factor in providing support for someone else. As Rhode (2003) noted, "At the end of the day, many men head for drinks. Women for the dry cleaners. Men pick up career tips; women pick up laundry, kids, dinner, and the house" (p. 13). Pence (1995) added, "Women administrators have additional difficulty learning their administrative role because there are conflicting attitudes about the stereotypes of what it means to be female and what it means to be an administrator" (p. 125). The double bind of being female and an administrator makes learning the job of high school principal especially challenging.

It is apparent, even in this microcosm of the world, that women speak in many different voices. Gender is not the determining factor in all situations in a woman's life. There are obviously many factors that relate to each other, all producing different outcomes for the individual. Nevertheless, the women in this study viewed it as critical that educators advocate and mentor aspiring principals, both men and women, so that we can enhance the natural skills and abilities that they bring to the high school principalship.

Knowledge found: Learning from lived experiences. The women in this study, although few in number, had important things to add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. Despite a great deal of dialogue about instructional leadership in an environment of change, these women found that they spent most of their time managing their buildings and attending to daily crises and tasks. The old male managerial expectations of the principalship were still firmly embedded in the work they did on a daily basis. Hegemony pervades the position and educational leadership in general. Aspiring to a higher level of leadership within their organizations was not particularly

appealing to these women, was not part of a long-range career plan, and generally, retirement was viewed as a more satisfying option. A mismatch still exists between the expectations of the role and the characteristics typically expected of women. No matter how they act, whether tough and aggressive or gentle and kind, there is still a gap that needs to be bridged. Tensions between work and family expectations exist and continue to affect their sense of identity and self. There continues to be very little support for women, either personally or professionally, and they find that they are still frequently excluded from the networks built around the high school principalship.

High schools are complex arenas in which principals are constantly bombarded by the demands placed on them by students, parents, and the educational community. They are, at the same time, regulated by rules that are implicit within the educational system and the school itself, so their responses to the demands placed on them are shaped by the contexts in which they work. In this study, women principals were surviving leadership, but the tensions, conflicts, and incongruities they faced continued to take a toll on them both professionally and personally.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, SIGNIFICANCE, AND REFLECTIONS

Women have been in darkness for centuries.
They don't know themselves.
Or only poorly.
And when women write,
They translate this darkness.
Men don't translate.
They begin from a theoretical platform that is already in place,
Already elaborated.
The writing of women is really translated from the unknown,
Like a new way of communicating,
Rather than an already formed language.

(Duras, 1975, p. 174)

Out of the Darkness: Moving Beyond the Myth

Women high school principals are the new warriors of the 21st century. They lead in ways that are bold and aggressive, yet at the same time, they are caring, nurturing, and kind. Their stories need to be told, examined, and explored so a new discourse can be created that encompasses their differences as women. Women who are high school principals need to see a connection with each other, because only by making that connection can they resist being co-opted into the dominant discourse. They need to ask questions about the status quo, about whose interests are being served by our existing organizational hierarchies. They must be critical of how the discourse surrounding the principalship affects them as they define and redefine their roles.

Myths regarding education and the high school principalship abound. These myths define the role from a male perspective, either defining leadership in masculine terms or assuming a universal view of leadership that acknowledges women but assumes

that women and men perform the role in the same ways. These myths, products of our history, socialization, and culture, serve not only to maintain the status quo, but also to regenerate it. Through the dominant discourse surrounding the high school principalship, the prevailing interests are protected and preserved, and as long as this discourse is perpetuated, leadership in our public high schools is unlikely to change. A feminist poststructural approach reveals that the leadership hierarchies in place in our schools frequently institutionalize sexism and a politics of difference which serve to maintain the existing structures of power.

Research that leads to self-reflection can provide a forum for constructing new discourse around the principalship. It can empower new thinking and action that has the potential to undermine the masculinist assumptions that created and continue to maintain the traditional role of the principal. Deconstructing this dominant discourse certainly will require more research and much more discussion about the patterns of practice within the culture of the high school principal.

It is therefore important that women are studied on their own terms. Exploring their practice through lived experiences helps us discover their sources of knowledge, their understanding of self and identity, and their ways of exercising power. In doing so, we can find an expanded understanding of leadership and practice that is founded on excellence and quality in a culture of social justice and equity. The stories of women such as Eleanor, Penny, and Dina are just the beginning.

Conclusions

The main purpose in this study was to explore how the lived experiences of women high school principals define how they think about and practice leadership and how these experiences add to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. In order to add to the knowledge base on effective school leadership, I examined the participants' assumptions and beliefs about leadership by exploring their day-to-day practice. Through this knowledge, our understanding of school leadership has been expanded, adding a new element to the discourse surrounding the high school principalship. In turn, new understandings can change the way we define and prepare high school principals. In this research I explored and documented the lived experiences of female administrators and provided alternative views that challenge the embedded, privileged perspective that currently is the foundation of our understanding of school leadership.

The themes that emerged in the talk of these female principals related to how relationships influenced their definition of self, the ways they created an identity of power, and how they are reframing and revitalizing their professional identities through the contexts in which they live and work. Although each of these themes is unique, they are also closely interwoven, just as all of the women in this study are unique, yet at the same time, share many of the same leadership qualities.

The women in this study told many stories that revealed how their care and concern for others in the school environment defined their leadership practice. The relationships that they had with their teachers and their students were of primary importance to them in shaping their view of themselves as leaders. Although these

relationships were generally positive, the participants had all experienced what they perceived as negative changes in these relationships once they became principals. Because they had all suffered change and loss in their relationships with teachers and students, they were guarded in how much of themselves they shared with others. The major pattern that emerged was that these women based their thinking and their talk about leadership on their personal core values of care and concern. However, their behaviors always were tempered by their knowledge of how a high school principal is supposed to act. In other words, they thought that it was acceptable to have feelings of care and concern, but not always appropriate to show them or to act on them. Even so, in contrast to the traditional male view of the principalship, these women constructed nurturing and caring as strengths, rather than weaknesses in their leadership. They strongly believed that school communities should be rooted in dignity and respect, with students as the focus of their leadership.

All of the participants defined their practice by an unwavering commitment to the education of their students. They frequently spoke of academic rigor, accountability, and achievement. However, what emerged from their talk was the belief that the focus of their leadership was to provide a caring environment in which students could develop the skills they needed to be successful. They were emphatic that school should be a place where students build relationships and gain a sense of direction. The purpose of their leadership was to create a learning environment that met the needs of their students, rather than to focus on achievement, test scores, and standardized data. The demands of policy makers who measure success by data trends created tensions for these women as the demands were juxtaposed with their values and commitment to students and community. It was

apparent that macro-level policy requirements shaped the context of school reform in ways that contradicted their individual leadership values.

As they talked about their leadership practice, it was also clear that some of the women in this study helped to maintain the traditional male discourse surrounding the principalship. All of the participants held very different views regarding the effect of gender on their role; Eleanor recognized the constraints of working in a male-defined arena, whereas Penny and Dina did not see gender as an issue. Penny, in fact, believed that women themselves are the reason there are so few females in the high school principalship. Dina viewed the position as gender-neutral and believed strongly that every educator, male or female, has an equal opportunity to be a successful high school principal if he or she has the right skills and motivation. Both of these viewpoints, however, serve to maintain the status quo. If gender is not viewed as an issue, the discourse is unlikely to change. It is significant that these women, members of the Baby Boomer generation, women who lived through the women's rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, had not considered gender a factor in their role.

In their talk about the principalship, a common definition of power was difficult to ascertain. Although power through/with/to was a common thread, by no means could it be viewed as the only way they exercised power. These women were almost chameleon-like in their ability to move from exercising an aggressive masculine power to a caring, collegial feminine power. The key was context. All of these women had the uncanny ability to size up a situation and decide whether it called for power with, power over, or some combination of the two. The point here is that these women were so skilled in their understanding of people and so diverse in their abilities, that they could choose the

appropriate response in each unique situation. However, rather than power that was hierarchical in nature, their preference in most situations with teachers and students was a more web-like power in which they were intimately involved in sharing power. This web of power was both multidirectional and multidimensional (Blackmore, 1989).

Attitudes toward power clearly added a new element to the discourse surrounding the practice of the high school principalship. The women in this study were neither passive nor weak. Neither were they ambivalent toward power. In fact, they were quite conscious of who held power and how it was used. Again, however, each of them personally used power in different ways, usually determined by the particular context in which they found themselves. In a school organization, which is hierarchical in nature, it is difficult to be feminine and hold power over others; therefore their definitions of power encompassed both the masculine and the feminine. Although these women exercised their organizational power and authority at times, there is a vast difference between focusing on competence and task completion and being comfortable in an authoritarian position. The conflictive nature of the principalship requires that women assume the socially expected norms of the position, yet also maintain the gendered expectations of being female. The women in this study were able to use these constructions strategically, with remarkable virtuosity, in exercising power as high school principals.

The high school principalship presents unique challenges to the women who occupy the position. In turn, women in the high school principalship provide the opportunity to add to the discourse surrounding its practice. As policy makers focused more and more on school reform, these principals were expected to manage change within their schools, dealing simultaneously with the demands of outside influences and

the internal discord that change invites. The present political climate and the conflicts it brings are linked closely to constructions of power and authority. Because these are male-defined characteristics, these women faced issues, particularly with senior-level administrators, when they tried to exercise authority. Because dominant historical and cultural traditions demand that women behave in specific feminine ways, these women had to make choices regarding their leadership. At times they accepted the masculine construction of leadership and acted accordingly. At other times, they adapted their personal, more feminine style of leadership to fit with more masculine expectations. To be successful, these women needed to either adopt or to adapt the masculine qualities of competency, assertiveness, decisiveness, and rationality.

However, success also came at a price. Although these women found that they must move fluidly between masculine and feminine contexts, the need to do so often caused exhaustion, guilt, isolation, and sacrifice. The demands of the principalship not only affected their day-to-day activities in the workplace, but also spilled over into their personal lives. For these women, the high school principalship was often an all-consuming job in which they were continually trying to redefine their roles.

Because there are so few women high school principals, those who are advocates for women often operate in the margins and have been largely ineffective in offering meaningful support. Local, state, and national organizations for principals offer little support for female principals, other than the occasional workshop on how to be successful as a principal, how to write a good resume, and where to find a job. These male-dominated organizations are unlikely to challenge the traditional discourse. Programs that prepare administrators must recognize the dominant-gendered discourse in

educational administration and address it. The assumption that educational leadership is gender-neutral does not prepare women for the tensions and conflicts that the women in this study faced in their daily work as high school principals.

The female leaders in this study had a repertoire of leadership behaviors that are particularly effective under current conditions in education. Giving women equal access to leadership roles in the high school not only would increase the size of a school's pool of potential candidates, but, because women aspiring to the principalship are often more highly qualified than male applicants, it also would increase the proportion of candidates with superior leadership skills. Implementing a policy of nondiscriminatory selection for leadership positions also "would produce greater fairness and economic rationality, which are characteristics that should foster organizations' long-term success" (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003, p. 23).

Contributions to the Practice of the High School Principalship

The results of this study will contribute to the ways we talk about and practice the high school principalship. Although some of our present theory includes leadership that encompasses women's ways of leading, the actual practice of the principalship tends to co-opt these feminine aspects of leadership and use them to further the male discourse surrounding the role. Rather than creating new ways of practicing the principalship, we find that new ways of leading are frequently absorbed and adapted by the traditional male discourse and ultimately serve to maintain the status quo. This study adds elements to the traditional discourse that reveal how women experience the high school principalship in a bureaucratic, hierarchical structure.

Although rhetoric surrounding new leadership practices abounds, the reality for

the women in this study was that very little has changed in the job expectations of the high school principal. Despite research supporting the need to empower teachers, to lead in a collegial manner, and to be instructional leaders rather than managers, successful high school principals are still expected to be tough, aggressive, and male. "It is a very difficult time for collaborative leadership to take place, given that centrally there are a fairly large set of expectations being put on leaders within schools not to be collaborative, and to in fact adopt line management and very authoritarian models of leadership and decision making" (Blackmore, 1994, p. 13). The discourse surrounding the role of the high school principal must be reframed, both in practice and in research, to challenge the deeply embedded culture of leadership that continues to be based on 20th-century norms.

As research begins to reflect the advantages of leadership that is collegial and empowering, behavioral expectations also need to change. The difficulty here is that actions focused on relationships and caring have long been viewed as feminine and therefore not appropriate in the male world of the high school principal. Being relational and caring is seen more as a personality characteristic than as a leadership skill, and because leadership that is relational and caring is perceived as feminine and unskilled, it is associated with powerlessness. This new kind of leadership is therefore viewed as antithetical to the ways we have been taught to consider educational leadership. As a result, the potential for new leadership practices to transform the way principals do their work is silenced by the gendered dynamics at work in educational administration.

In addition to enhancing the ways we talk about and practice leadership, this study is also significant to those who design and teach educational administration programs. "Once again, privilege is a powerful determiner of what counts as important knowledge.

By limiting studies that would advance our knowledge and understanding of these complex issues, professors of school administration may be unconsciously perpetuating a landscape in which women are strangers" (Rusch, 2002, p. 74). The texts and literature selected for these programs should reflect challenges to the traditional views of the principalship and should include feminist leadership standpoints. The literature should not only challenge gender-neutral theories, but also provide a more varied view of the different perspectives on leadership. Data on women and others of diverse backgrounds in the principalship should be presented and discussed. Practitioners in the field should be invited to speak to aspiring principals. Even though many women principals may have difficulty articulating gender issues, as did the women in this study, it is important that they share their viewpoints. Recent research, such as this study, can be used to expose aspiring principals to the unique experiences of women who are high school principals.

Women who are aspiring high school principals can see how the women in this study, presented with gender in the foreground, dealt with the largely hidden and ignored difficulties that they faced in their day-to-day work as principals. This study should help aspiring women principals understand what those difficulties are and evaluate for themselves how best to go about dealing with them. I hope that the insights provided here will encourage women to access leadership roles at the secondary level so that their talents and skills are not lost to future generations of high school students.

This study should also be significant to both men and women who are presently fulfilling the role of the high school principal. This study provided a clear picture of the ways a gendered discourse influences the leadership of the principal, whether male or female. According to Rusch (1999), however, "Few principals made reference to equity

as a vexing problem, whether for students, for teachers, or for administrators" (p. 42). As long as principals, including the women in this study, fail to see gender as an issue, it is unlikely that there will be changes in the expectations of how high school principals should go about their work. This study clearly revealed how a gendered discourse affected the practice of these women principals and can provide insight for those who are presently in the position.

Those principals who are much like the women in this study, those who want to make a difference for the students in their schools, know that a data-driven standard of accountability will not, in and of itself, guarantee success for every child. The culture and climate in a school are factors that, although difficult to measure, are significant to the achievement of the students in our schools. It is also clear that women's ways of leading are conducive to creating this kind of environment, where students and staff care about each other, where they find support in webs of empowerment, and where collegiality is both exciting and challenging. Men and women principals can find support in this study for leading in collaborative ways that can potentially transform the way we do business in schools.

This study also contains significant information for those organizations developed to support the principalship. It points to the fact that organized support for women principals is lacking. The networks that operate at this level are overwhelmingly male dominated, and the services provided do not fit the needs of many female administrators. As the story at the beginning of this study revealed, many women feel isolated and out of place in these male dominated settings. Until local, state, and national support groups for secondary administrators are more equitable, most women's groups that exist will

continue to operate in the margins. "Many of these groups also give practical advice to women, such as how to interview for administrative positions, how to present resumes, and how to get important exposure through work on state committees and task forces" (Grogan, 1999, p. 533). It is apparent that the support offered to women through these existing networks does not focus on gender as an issue, but rather often serves to perpetuate the status quo. Clearly, a need exists for advocacy groups that are associated with practices of connectedness and care.

Indirectly, this study is significant, most of all, for students. The potential for all students to attend school in a caring, nurturing environment where the needs of all who go there are considered is unlikely to exist until the discourse surrounding the leadership in secondary schools changes. The myths that permeate our schools, those beliefs about sexism, racism, and poverty, are not apt to go away because test scores are higher. Those who are leaders in our schools, the secondary school principals much like the women in this study, could, in an environment of care and concern, look at the causes of school failure instead of the symptoms. Linear systems of power and authority often serve to institutionalize a politics of difference that maintains the status quo. "However, the discrimination experienced by women is not to the advantage of the system as a whole if able women are arbitrarily excluded from leadership" (Coleman, 2003, p. 15). Women's ways of leading can bring the strength and power of connectedness and caring that can speak to the inequities in our schools and perhaps bring about meaningful change.

Implications for Further Research

This study was not intended to compare how men and women practice the high school principalship, but rather to explore the lived experiences of women principals

through a feminist lens. What this study did provide was a contrast between the traditional expectations of the role and the way women actually practice. In this study I told the stories of women in the high school principalship and described their ways of leading within the context of their schools and communities. Future researchers might focus on the following:

- Investigate how principals might integrate autonomy and connectedness in their practice.
- Examine what is being taught in educational administration programs at the university. What literature is used that accounts for the experiences of women?
- Examine where women go and what they do after they have been high school principals.
- Examine woman-to-woman mentorship between principals and aspiring principals.
- Examine the relationships between female administrators. Is horizontal violence an issue in educational leadership?
- Focus on one female high school principal and examine her leadership behaviors and assumptions in a long-term study to evaluate change over time.
- Describe the attitudes and reactions of male administrators to female principals.
- Examine how organizations change as women and their ways of leadership become part of the discourse surrounding the role of the principal.
- Duplicate this study with younger, perhaps less experienced women who are also high school principals to reveal the extent to which the women in this study were products of a particular generation.

- Duplicate this study with women of more diverse backgrounds to reveal any significant differences in thinking and practice.
- Because the participants in this study were all in their early to mid-50s, explore research on how adults in leadership positions develop and change in mid-life.
- Explore the emotional aspect of leadership. The women in this study expressed pleasure in their accomplishments, but also regret and sadness about their changing relationships. Leadership, for these women, was obviously not just a job, but a way of living their lives.

Reflections on the Journey

Some of my earliest memories are of my mother reading stories to me. We "read" book after book, over and over again, until I finally memorized the words and could read along with her. I grew into a voracious reader, one who pedaled her bicycle 5 miles to and from the local library in the dead, humid heat of our Michigan summers to find the thickest books I could carry home. I loved stories; I lived along with the characters in them and dreaded the moment when I turned the final page and the story ended.

My journey through the process of this dissertation has been much the same. This time, however, I was the character on a journey of self-discovery. By examining the stories of the women in this study through a feminist lens, I came to know myself and my practice as a high school principal in new ways. As the women in this study told their stories, at times I nodded in total agreement, amazed that our experiences were so much alike. At other times, I was puzzled and surprised that four women who were all so close to the same age could have such different viewpoints. I understood Eleanor's outrage at having to behave in ways that made her uncomfortable, yet I was taken aback by Penny's

firm belief that she had to "act like a man." Their stories encouraged me to explore my own beliefs and practice and reevaluate my commitment to leadership.

As a researcher, I learned a great deal about the gendered discourse in educational administration. I found that, despite decades of progress, women remain underrepresented in the high school principalship and that the reasons for this are varied and complex, certainly not as simple as some researchers would have us believe. I wish I had known this years ago, when I believed that the reason I did not get the job I really wanted was because I was not "good enough."

I know that many women are simply choosing to opt out of leadership; when faced with choices between leadership and family, they are choosing family. I know these women; I talk to them every day and I still feel angry and frustrated that they have to make this choice. As educators of children, it seems only logical that jobs within our own profession should consider families in their expectations and requirements of the work that we do. In this study, it was apparent that the participants did not choose family over leadership. However, the toll that gender biases and the discourse of difference have taken on these women and others like them in the principalship must be addressed. As the role of the high school principal continues to become more and more demanding and complex, I doubt that either women or men will want to assume a position that is rapidly becoming impossible to accomplish successfully

As I listened to the stories of these women, it was apparent that they struggled with the tensions created between the difficulties and demands of leadership and the expected roles of women in our families and our culture. They did not choose to opt out of leadership to perform their traditional role in the family, but rather adjusted and

adapted their lives in order to meet the demands of both. Unfortunately, the adjusting and adapting that was necessary also caused losses in their relationships with peers, co-workers, and family. The women in this study continually questioned whether or not the adjustments they had made and continue to make are the right decisions, because no matter what the decision, it always seemed to have a negative effect on a relationship that was significant.

I found that it was important as I read and studied current research that I understood that the majority of research focused on leadership has been carried out from a gender-neutral stance. It is significant to know that in most research on educational administration, leadership differences between men and women have been ignored. There has been a great deal of discussion among researchers about empowerment, collegiality, collaboration and other interpersonal qualities that are commonly associated with women. However, the reality is that the role of the high school principal is still often associated with dominance, authority, and aggressiveness. The lens through which a researcher views a topic makes an enormous difference in what the researcher sees. As I began to view research through a feminist lens, I was able to question the conclusions and recommendations that many researchers offered. This new lens also gave me new insights into my own experiences with the gendered discourse of the high school principalship.

Even though I have experienced gendered issues in my own efforts to enter the administrative field, I did not recognize that gender was a large part of the problem until I started doing research utilizing a feminist lens. The traditional male discourse surrounding the position of the high school principal appears to be so embedded in most

people's understanding of the role, that women who attempt to access the principalship often believe that the reason for their failure is personal. In my own case and in the stories of the women in this study, a lack of confidence in our own skills and abilities often has kept us from seeking positions that have been male dominated for many years. Rather than seeing the gendered issues surrounding the position, we see deficits in our own abilities.

This study and much of the research conducted on the high school principalship have described it as a less than desirable position. The women in this study told stories of the time demands and the long workdays that extend into evenings and weekends. They also spoke of the complexity of the job and the demands of the school community. I believe that the demands of the existing discourse perpetuate administrative roles that are distanced and disconnected from caregiving and depend on separation from the family in order to be successful. Although we live in a world that is changing and revising its gender expectations, the role of the high school principal is still bound by traditions that have existed for more than 100 years. There is little research on the mismatch between the expectations of the high school principalship and the lives of those who aspire to the position.

However, women also must consider the expectations and demands of a role that is deeply embedded in a leadership culture based on male-defined norms. As this study clearly revealed, in the adjusting and adapting that goes on when women practice as principals, we lose relationships that are important to us. Although the relationship may still exist, its essence has changed. For some of us, these adjustments are a constant source of tension and concern, often co-existing with guilt, frustration, and loneliness.

Yes, there are women who opt out because they choose not to compromise their relationships. However, if women continue to make that choice, I doubt that the paradigms of leadership surrounding the position of the high school principal will ever change.

In the last several years, I have spent a great deal of time immersing myself in the literature and in the world of the female high school principal, examining the history of leadership, and attempting to understand the complexities of the contexts in which we work. This research has been an effort to know and describe the ways in which women leaders approach the tensions and conflicts they confront in their daily work. Through this research, I have come to respect the firm commitment that these women have to conduct their principalships in a connected and relational manner, despite the extraordinary pressures to conform to a more aggressive, directive approach. In my own practice, although I have found that there are occasions when I have to be pushy and bold in my demands for students, this is not a stance I assume comfortably.

What I learned from the women in this study was that they used the skills and abilities they had developed in their years of experience as educators to do what they needed to do for the students in their schools. They were particularly adept at knowing when and how to use power, whether a more feminine use of a web of empowerment or a more masculine use of a hierarchical power over others. Their focus was to get the job done, and that job was to ensure that their students were getting the tools they need to be successful.

My research has led me on a journey of discovery that has changed the way I perceive my practice. I understand why I am often frustrated and uncomfortable when

faced with others who have certain expectations of how a high school principal is supposed to practice. I can sit at a meeting with 10 or 12 other (male) principals and feel comfortable redirecting the conversation from sports back to education. When I talk to young female teachers, I find myself encouraging them to take on leadership roles. However, although my perception of my work is different, my practice remains basically unchanged. In order to survive and be successful as a high school principal, I choose to conduct my work in ways that conform loosely to the traditional role expectations of the high school principal. Nevertheless, I am also planning a sequel to this story. How exciting it will be to turn that first page!

A BEDTIME STORY

Once upon a time,
an old Japanese legend
goes as told
by Papa,
an old woman traveled through
many small villages
seeking refuge
for the night.
Each door opened
a sliver
in answer to her knock
then closed.
Unable to walk
any further
she wearily climbed a hill
found a clearing
and there lay down to rest
a few moments to catch her breath.

The villagetown below
lay asleep except for a few starlike lights.
Suddenly the clouds opened
and a full moon came into view

over the town.

The old woman sat up
turned toward
the village town
and in supplication
called out
Thank you people
of the village,
if it had not been for your
kindness
in refusing me a bed
for the night
these humble eyes would never
have seen this
memorable sight.

Papa paused, I waited.
In the comfort of our hilltop home in Seattle
overlooking the valley,
I shouted
"That's the END?"

Mitsuy Yamada, Camp Notes
(from Trinh Minh-ha, 1989, pp. 150-151)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF APPROVAL FORM

UCRIHS MATERIALS

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Initial IRB Application Approval

October 10, 2005

To: Maenette K. BENHAM
419A Erickson Hall

Re: **IRB # 05-781** Category: EXPEDITED 6 7
Approval Date: **October 10, 2005**
Expiration Date: **October 9, 2006**

Title: WOMEN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:

MOVING BEYOND THE MYTH

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been approved.**

The committee has found that your research project is appropriate in design, protects the rights and welfare of human subjects, and meets the requirements of MSU's Federal Wide Assurance and the Federal Guidelines (45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR Part 50). The protection of human subjects in research is a partnership between the IRB and the investigators. We look forward to working with you as we both fulfill our responsibilities.

Renewals: UCRIHS approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. If you are continuing your project, you must submit an ***Application for Renewal*** application at least one month before expiration. If the project is completed, please submit an ***Application for Permanent Closure.***

Revisions: UCRIHS must review any changes in the project, prior to initiation of the change. Please submit an ***Application for Revision*** to have your changes reviewed. If changes are made at the time of renewal, please include an ***Application for Revision*** with the renewal application.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects, notify UCRIHS promptly. Forms are available to report these issues.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with UCRIHS.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at UCRIHS@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D.
UCRIHS Chair

c: Kathleen Pecora
3060 Budd Rd.
Stockbridge, MI 49285

OFFICE OF
RESEARCH ETHICS AND STANDARDS
niversity Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects
Michigan State University
202 Olds Hall
East Lansing, MI
48824
517/355-2180
FAX: 517/432-4503
Web:
v.humanresearch.msu.edu
E-Mail: ucrihs@msu.edu

APPLICATION FOR INITIAL REVIEW

APPROVAL OF A PROJECT INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Biomedical, Health Sciences Institutional Review Board (BIRB)
Social Science, Behavioral, Education Institutional Review Board (SIRB)
202 Olds Hall, Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824-1047
Phone: (517) 355-2180
Fax: (517) 432-4503
E-mail: irb@msu.edu

Office Hours: M-F (8:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.)

IRB#: 05-781
ID# i023248

1a.	**Responsible Project Investigator:** Name: **Maenette K. BENHAM** ID#: **XXX-XX-1785** Department: **Ed Admin** College: **EDUCATION** Academic Rank: **Professor** Mailing Address: **419A Erickson Hall** Phone: **5-6613** Fax: **3-6393** Email: **mbenham@msu.edu**
1b.	**Secondary Investigator:** Name: **Kathleen Pecora** ID#: **XXX-XX-5265** Department: **EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION** College: **EDUCATION** Academic Rank: **NA**

	Mailing Address: **3060 Budd Rd.** **Stockbridge, MI 49285** Phone: **5178514357** Fax: **5175225490** Email: **keenekat@msu.edu**	
1c.	**Additional Investigators:**	
2.	**Study Coordinator:** Name: ID#: Department: College: Academic Rank: Mailing Address: Phone: Fax: Email:	
3.	**Title of Project:** WOMEN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: MOVING BEYOND THE MYTH	
4.	**Have you ever received Preliminary Approval for this project?**	NO
5.	**Category of Review**	6 7 EXPEDITED
6.	**Is this project being conducted to fulfill the requirements of an education/training program?**	Ph.D. Dissertation
7a.	**Funding:**	Project is not funded
7b.	**The protection of human subjects often requires resources be dedicated for things such as the consent process (space, personnel), the performance of the research (trained personnel interacting with subjects), care of subject issues or injuries (counseling, medical care), confidentiality of data (space, equipment) and other monetary and non-monetary resources. Describe the resources that are available for this project for the protection of human subjects.** A locked file cabinet in my home A password protected computer	
8a.	**List all sites where this research will be conducted.**	

	High Schools in the Midwest	
8b.	**Do any of these sites have their own IRB?**	NO
9.	**Do you have any related project that were approved by an MSU IRB?**	NO
10.	**Have you submitted this to another IRB(s)?**	NO
11.	**Is another institution(s) relying on MSU's IRB as the IRB of record?**	NO
12.	**Are you using an FDA approved drug/device/diagnostic test?**	NO
13.	**Are you using an FDA approved drug/device/diagnostic test for a non-FDA approved indication?**	NO
14.	**Has this protocol been submitted to the FDA or are there plans to submit it to the FDA?**	NO
15.	**Does this project involve the use of Materials of Human Origin (e.g. human blood or tissue)?**	NO
16.	**Research Category** Education Research ☑ Yes Survey/Interview ☑ Yes Audio/Video Recording ☑ Yes Oral History ☑ Yes Internet-based ☐ Yes Analysis of Existing Data ☑ Yes International Research ☐ Yes Gene Transfer Research ☐ Yes Fetal Research ☐ Yes Medical Records ☐ Yes Stem Cell Research ☐ Yes Medical Imaging ☐ Yes Oncology ☐ Yes Clinical Trial (specify below) ☐ ☐ Surgical ☐ Therapeutic ☐ Prevention ☐ Other ☐ NO	
17.	**Project Description (Abstract)** The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the nuances and variations in the lived experiences of women high school principals and to explore their beliefs and assumptions about their practice. Through a series of three ninety-minute, audio-taped interviews, participants will explore their knowledge, thoughts, and feelings surrounding their lived experiences and practice as high school principals. A personal biography, artifacts, and a final group interview will also be part of the data collection. Data will be transcribed, then described, analyzed, and interpreted for the dissertation chapters. Each of the interviews in this phenomenological study will utilize the characteristics	

	commonly found in the literature regarding the high school principalship and female educational leadership. It is my intent that this study will contribute to the reframing of the literature surrounding the practice of secondary school administration to include the experiences of women.	
18.	**Procedures** Completion of a brief biographical questionnaire Sharing of an artifact that depicts leadership practice Three individual, in-depth, audiotaped, ninety-minute interviews One final audiotaped and videotaped focus group interview Review and analysis of interview transcripts and final group narrative	
19.	**Does your investigation involve incomplete disclosure of the research purpose or deception of the subjects?**	NO
20a.	**Subject Population** Women high school principals with at least three years of experience.	
20b.	**Age range of subjects:**	25 to 65
20c.	**The study population may include:** **Target Population:** ☐ Minors ☐ Pregnant Women ☐ Women of Childbearing Age ☐ Institutionalized Persons ☐ Students ☐ Low Income Persons ☑ Minorities ☐ Prisoners ☐ HIV/AIDS Individuals ☐ Psychiatric Patients ☐ Incompetent Persons **Incidental Inclusion:** ☐ Minors ☑ Pregnant Women ☑ Women of Childbearing Age ☐ Institutionalized Persons ☐ Students ☐ Low Income Persons ☑ Minorities ☐ Prisoners ☐ HIV/AIDS Individuals ☐ Psychiatric Patients ☐ Incompetent Persons	
20d.	**Expected number of subjects (including controls):**	3-5
20e.	**Justify your sample size:** According to Giorgi (2003), the number of participants in a phenomenological study usually ranges from one to a maximum of about ten. In this study, there will be a minimum of three participants and a maximum of five. These numbers have been chosen, in part, because of the difficulty of finding female high school principals, for geographic convenience, and in consideration of the time available for the study.	
20f.	**Describe the criteria for the inclusion of subjects:**	

	Participants for this study will be selected based upon recommendations from other educators of women high school principals with three years of experience, the researcher's judgment, and geographical accessibility to the researcher. Since participants will reflect on the significance of their experiences, they will be experienced classroom teachers who have a minimum of three years of experience as a high school principal. However, since there are so few female principals, other variables such as age and ethnicity will not be a consideration. The participants will not be a random sample, representative of a specific population, but rather a purposeful sampling based on those who are particularly suited to this study: female, a minimum of three years experience as a principal, and from a variety of demographic contexts.	
20g.	**Describe the criteria for the exclusion of subjects:** Less than three years experience as a high school principal. Male high school principals.	
20h(1).	**How will the subjects be recruited?** Participants will be asked to participate based upon recommendations provided by other educators that verify that the women high school principals meet the selection criteria for the study. I will make initial contact with each of the participants by a telephone call that will explain the study and its methodology and relate details regarding time commitment, expectations for participation, and potential risks. A follow-up memo will further explain these details and will be sent with the participation consent form.	
20h(2).	**Will an advertisement be used?**	NO
20i.	**Are you associated with the subjects?**	NO
20j.	**Will someone receive payment for recruiting the subjects?**	NO
20k.	**Will the research subjects be compensated?**	NO
20l.	**Will the subjects incur additional financial costs as a result of their participation in this study?**	NO
20m.	**Will this research be conducted with subjects in another country?**	NO
20n.	**Will this research be conducted with subjects in the U.S. from an ethnic group of sub-group or other non-mainstream minorities (including non-English speakers)?**	NO
21a.	**Risks and Benefits for subjects: Describe and assess any potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, economic) and assess the likelihood and seriousness of such risks.** Athough there may be some initial risk of the participants feeling somewhat vulnerable as they contemplate and describe their life experiences and then unpack them within the context of their work as school principals, I do not anticipate serious risk for the women in the study. Each of them will sign a consent form prior to the study.	
21b.	**Describe procedures for protecting against or minimizing potential risks and provide an assessment of their likely effectiveness.** Participants will not be identified by name or by school district. This should be very effective in protecting the identity of each participant. Participants may discontinue the taping of their interviews and/or their participation in the study at any time without penalty of any kind.	
21c.	**Assess the potential benefits (if any) to be gained by the sujbects in this study, as**	

	well as benefits which may accrue to society in general as a result of the planned work. Potential benefits to the participants include the opportunity to more fully clarify their values, beliefs, and approaches to school leadership and how, as women, they fit into the evolving descriptions of the role. Literature on school administration and schools themselves may benefit from an alternative view of the role of high school principal.	
22a.	**How will the subject's privacy be protected? Include a description of who will be interacting with the subjects or accessing and abstracting data from the subject's records (academic, medical, etc.) and where the study will take place. For example, will individuals not associated with the research study be present during the consent process and the conduct of the study?** A pseudonym will be used for all participants and for their schools and school districts. I will be the only person interacting with the subjects, other than the final focus group which will involve all of the participants meeting each other. The participants' identities will be kept confidential and research findings will not permit associating participants with specific responses or findings. All interviews will take place in the participant's office, with the exception of the focus group which will occur in a convenient location agreed upon by the participants.	
22b.	**Where will the data be stored and for how long?** The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home and on a password protected computer for a maximum of five years.	
22c.	**Who will have access to the research data?** I am the only person who will have access to the data.	
22d.	**How will you ensure the confidentiality and/or anonymity of the research data? Include a description of the procedures and safeguards you will use, including if identifying information will be stored with the data.** All research data including tapes and transcripts will be destroyed after a five year period. Data gathered from subjects may be indirectly attributable and participants will be informed in the consent document as to these limits of confidentiality. Identifying information will not be stored with the data.	
23.	**Does this project involve protected health information as defined by HIPAA?**	NO
		NO
24.	**(a) Select appropriate consent option.**	Approval of a consent form and process
	(b) Consent Procedures: Once UCRIHS approval is received, a telephone contact will be made by the researcher with each potential participant to explain the study and its methodology as well as details about time commitment, expectations, and potential risks. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns about their participation in the research. A follow-up letter will further explain these details and will be sent with the consent form that the participant will sign.	
25a.	**Have you or will you or a member of your immediate family receive, from the sponsor of the research, financial or other forms of compensation?**	NO

25b.	**Do or will you or a member of your immediate family have a significant financial interest in the company/agency/firm that is to sponsor the research?**	NO
25c.	**Are you submitting FDA form 3454 or 3455 (Conflict of Interest)?**	NO
26a.	**When would you prefer to begin this project?**	10/20/2005
26b.	**Estimated duration of project:**	12/30/2006
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS/ATTACHMENTS		
01. 9/22/2005 **Consent Form** (i023248_9-21-05_Appendix A_Consent.pdf) **02.** 9/22/2005 **Survey/Instrument** (i023248_9-21-05_AppendixB_Interview.pdf)		

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS

CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Kathleen Pecora and I am a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University in the Department of Educational Administration. You are invited to participate in a study of the nature of leadership experiences among female high school principals and the ways in which gender and leadership intersect for these women. This study is being done as research for my dissertation. I hope to learn how female high school principals lead and how they perceive the interaction between their construction of leadership and their practice of the high school principalship.

YOUR PARTICIPATION

If you participate in this study, I will conduct three audio taped interviews, lasting approximately 90 minutes each and one focus group interview, lasting approximately 90 minutes, that will be both audiotaped and videotaped. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Michigan State University. Should you choose to participate, you may discontinue that participation at any time even after signing this form.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

The study supposes minimal risk to you as a participant. A pseudonym will be used for you and your school and school district. However, published data may be indirectly attributable to you. The benefits include contributing to our understandings of the challenges that female leaders face in the educational arena, particularly that of the male dominated and constructed high school principalship. In addition, this study will highlight varied perspectives of leadership offered by female high school leaders. This study may also offer you the opportunity to more fully clarify your values, beliefs, and approaches to school leadership and how, as a woman, you fit into the evolving descriptions of the role.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To reiterate, any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Any publications or academic presentations that may stem from this study will identify you by pseudonym. Likewise, the name of your school and school district will also be altered. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

DATA GATHERING

All interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. Observational field notes may also be utilized during visits. The focus group interview will be audiotaped and videotaped. All tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed five years after the conclusion of the study. If the participant chooses to withdraw from the study, all tapes from that participant will be destroyed immediately.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the investigator listed below. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anonymously, if you wish—Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the Univesity Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, FAX: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you.
Kathleen Pecora
3060 Budd Rd.
Stockbridge, MI 49285
517-851-4357 (home)
517-522-5575 (office)
email: keenekat@msu.edu

Consent Form

1. The investigator may have talk to me about my perspectives, feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and knowledge about leadership and the role of the secondary school principal.
_____Yes _____No

2. The investigator may audio-tape focus group and individual interviews.
_____Yes _____No

3. The investigator may use audio-tapes and/or videotapes that may include me in presentations, as long as it does not identify me by name or through other background information without my consent.
_____Yes _____No

Your signature below indicates agreement to participate in this study and to permit the interview/s to be tape-recorded and videotaped.

_____ _____
Participant Signature Date

_____ _____
Investigator Signature Date

UCRIHS Approval/Expiration Stamp

UCRIHS APPROVAL FOR
THIS project EXPIRES:

OCT 0 9 2006

SUBMIT RENEWAL APPLICATION
ONE MONTH PRIOR TO
ABOVE DATE TO CONTINUE

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interview Protocols

Biographical Questionnaire

Purpose: Obtaining information about the participants' childhood, family, and educational experiences before becoming a principal will establish a starting point for the series of interviews and provide basic information about the participants.

Directions: This questionnaire will help us establish an informed starting point for our first interview. Please respond to the questions and statements with brief written answers and mail the questionnaire to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope prior to our first scheduled interview. If you prefer, you may wish to include your resume.

1. What is your full name?

2. Date and Place of birth?

3. Type of community in which you grew up (small/large; urban/rural; etc.)?

4. Place of parents' birth? Highest level of education attained by them?

5. Father's occupation? Mother's occupation?

6. Where did you attend school K-12? Provide a brief description of that

experience.

7. Your post-secondary education? (or include resume)

8. How do you spend your leisure time? Has this changed over the course of time?

9. What special talents do you have outside of the workplace?

10. Do you have or have you had any particular health issues?

11. Marital/partner status?

12. Children? (gender, ages)

13. Level of education attained by spouse/partner?

14. Occupation of spouse/partner?

15. Other significant adults in your life? Explain their significance.

16. Below or on the back of this sheet, please sketch a Lifeline of critical events or defining moments in your life up to the present time (i.e. major accomplishments, losses, unique experiences, marriage, travel experiences, parenting, changes, awards, etc.)

First Interview

Purpose: To explore the participants' beliefs and assumptions regarding high school leadership. It will focus on how they construct their roles as high school leaders, how gender influences that construction, and, in particular, how their beliefs and values impact their perceived practice.

Questions:

1. Looking at the Lifeline you drew, what most influenced you to become a high school principal versus remaining in a teaching role?

2. What makes a good leader at the high school level?

3. Some researchers claim that school leadership definitions and research come from a privileged perspective (explain). What do you think of that claim?

4. What do you think are your greatest challenges?

5. Describe what it is like to be a female in a male-dominated occupation within your building, interacting with different groups, at conferences, etc.

6. Why do you think women are so under-represented as principals at the high school level?

7. Do your expectations at home and those you have as a principal come into conflict? How have you resolved this conflict?

8. When you first took your job, I am sure that many different groups had expectations of you. What do you think your school community expected/s from a female high school principal?
Your staff?
Students?
Parents?
Central Office?
Other high school principals in your district?

9. As a high school principal, have you ever felt you were being ignored or couldn't get your way because you were a woman? If so, tell me about how you persevered.

10. Does gender make a difference in what you do? Explain why or why not.

11. With whom do you share your successes and frustrations?

12. Anything else you'd like to share?

Probes:

- Background
- Preparation
- Challenges
- Leadership contributions
- Modifying behavior
- Gender issues
- Initiating change
- Changes in leadership style

For the second interview, please bring with you an artifact from your leadership experience that you believe most accurately depicts who you are as a leader in your school. I will call to remind you several days before our scheduled interview.

Second Interview

Purpose: To focus on the details of each participants' experience by using the artifact as a focal point and working around the feelings the artifact elicits. This interview will be focused on the context of their professional worlds and will revolve around the artifact chosen to represent the collisions between their beliefs and the world in which they work.

1. Tell me the story about this object.

2. How has this story/event impacted your leadership?
   - What is your purpose as a leader?
   - How do you accomplish your work?
   - Can you draw a model of how your school organization operates?
   - Who holds power and influence in your model?
   - What does this particular experience say to you about your leadership?

3. As you think about what this artifact represents, tell me about the relationships that this artifact involves.
   - Relationships with other administrators?
   - With central office and school board members?
   - With staff?
   - With students and parents?
   - What are the key aspects of these relationships?
   - What are the most positive relationships for you?
   - What relationships are most difficult? How do you deal with these relationships?

4. Did this event enhance or hinder your development as a leader?
   - What makes you a leader? How did this event impact the way you go about leading?
   - How do you think your staff views you as a leader?
   - Your superintendent?
   - How do you see yourself? How do you want to be seen?

5. Are there other stories that have impacted your beliefs and values as a leader?

6. Are there any other stories or experiences about your work as a school leader that you would like to share with me before the close of this interview?

The next interview will ask you to prepare a brief lesson for aspiring female high school principals. Please think about what you would like to share with them and the advice you might give them. You will probably want to jot down a list of ideas before the interview. I will call and remind you several days before our scheduled interview.

Third Interview

Purpose: The final interview will ask participants to make sense of their experiences by asking them what they might say to others aspiring to this leadership position.

Imagine you were called by the university to teach a class of aspiring female high school principals. What lessons have you learned that you would share with them? What advice would you give?

1. Would you encourage other women to become principals? Why? Why not?
    - If you knew someone who would be a good high school principal candidate, what would you say to her?
    - What qualities would be important for her to have to be successful?
    - What hurdles and challenges should she be prepared to overcome?

2. Did you or do you have a mentor?
    - Who is/was your mentor? How did you find this person?
    - How has this person been most helpful to you?
    - What would your work have been like/what is it like without a mentor?
    - What did your mentor encourage/not encourage you to do?

3. Where have you found support in your role as high school principal?
    - What people were supportive in your early years as an administrator?
    - Who was NOT supportive? Why do you think this happened?
    - How important was this support to you personally?
    - How did support/or lack of it impact your performance?
    - How would you go about finding support for a new female administrator?

4. If you could do your principalship over again, would you do it again? Differently? How?

5. As you look back on your work, what have you liked the most about it? Least?

6. What do you think have been/are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
    - How did you accentuate your strengths?
    - How did you compensate for your weaknesses?

7. As you consider your life and leadership work, what are some of your feelings?
    - What are you most proud of? What have been your greatest accomplishments?
    - Of what are you least proud? Ashamed? Guilty?
    - What are you most angry about?
    - What have you been most hurt by?
    - What have you been most frustrated about?

8. As you make sense of your life and work, are there other things that you want to say or add to what we have discussed?

9. How has this researched impacted you?
    - Any major learnings?
    - Any implications for your thinking and practice as a school leader?

Focus Group Interview Protocol

(Video and Audio taped)

Introduction for the respondents: Today is an opportunity to reflect on your experience as a female high school principal. We've had three individual interviews that resulted in rich stories about your experiences. The distinctive feature of today's focus group interview is that you get to hear the experiences of others. The listening process is meant to prompt the memory of your own experiences as you compare and contrast your thoughts and ideas with the thoughts and ideas of others.

Our work today will be audio and video taped affording me the opportunity to go back and reflect about our work together. It will be used strictly for reviewing your responses as I reflect on the data you've provided through this discussion.

Purpose:

1. Prompt an open discussion about the experiences of being a female secondary school principal
2. Probe the thoughts and feelings you have about your role, particularly as a gendered position
3. Probe your thoughts and feelings about the support you may or may not receive in your position
4. Explore your ideas on leadership preparation for women

Setting the tone:

Introduce the Participants:

I have had the wonderful opportunity to hear your stories. You live in different places and work in different schools, yet your experience as a female high school principal gives you a particular connection. Take a moment and introduce yourselves by sharing your name, your school and something new that you may have recognized as a result of this research process.

Personal reflection:

Before our Focus Group meeting, I would like you to jot down the experiences

and/or influences that have had the most impact on you in your journey thus far

into the high school principalship. Consider your mode of transportation, your

destinations, your

arrivals, the bumps, potholes, and storms you have encountered, the scenic surprises and perhaps a few collisions that have made up your journey. The purpose of the sketch is to give you an opportunity to think and reflect about some of your experiences before we begin our discussion. Briefly tell us what it was like making the timeline or sketch. We will talk about the contents throughout the morning so save that part for later.

Focus Group Protocol:

Thank you for your introduction and personal reflection sketch. Please feel free to refer to your sketch any time throughout the interview. Let's begin. I'll ask a question. Take a moment to think about it, and if and when you would like to respond, go ahead. Since it is important to hear from everyone, I'll check with you before moving on to a new question.

1. You've been on a journey of discovery since you became a high school principal. There have been bumps in the road, peaks and valley's, and a few collisions. Describe some bumps you have had along the way? Some peaks? A collision? Perhaps a detour?

Probes: (Use your notes to help with your response).

a. What is the most significant experience you have had as a high school principal?
b. Why was this experience significant? Did the fact that you are female impact or change this experience? Why or why not?
c. What is the one most important thing you have learned as a female principal?

2. Let's talk about your leadership as a school principal.

Probes:

a. Who or what guides your journey as a principal? Explain.
b. What did you learn in your preparation program that has been useful to you in your role?
c. What scares you the most about being a principal?
d. Tell us about your leadership style. What makes it work for you?

3. Leadership is connected to influence and different kinds of power. What is the style of your leadership that most affects your influence and your positional power.

Probes:

a. What have you learned about influence and power? Who do you believe holds the most power in your school? Explain.
b. Has your leadership style changed over the years that you have been a principal? Why or why not?
c How has the fact that you are female affected your relationships with your staff, students, and other administrators?

4. Where and how did you find support as a high school principal? In what ways have others been supportive of you? Where and when did you need support and perhaps not find it?

Probes:

a. How has support or lack of support changed how you think and feel about the job?

b. What do you think might have been different for you had there been an existing formal support network?
c. The principalship is challenging work. How has the support/lack of support changed you as a leader? As a woman?

5. In thinking about your experiences as a high school principal, what might have made it easier for you?

a. How effective were the classes you took in educational leadership?
b. What did you learn in your coursework that was particularly helpful?
c. What should be included in principal preparation?
d. Is there anything else that would be helpful in preparing females for the job of high school principal?

6. How has today's discussion affected your thoughts about yourself?

Probes:

a. What statement or question do you have for the group?
b.What have you learned from the discussion about yourself?

7. What's next for you?

Think about:

a. What are your aspirations for the next leg of your journey?
b. From your learning, what do you plan to do differently? What do you plan to do more of?

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