Introduction

"Scattered All over the Road"

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> They left dreams scattered all over the road.
> —Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run With the Wolves*

With the research of Patricia Schmuck, Flora Ida Ortiz, Charol Shakeshaft, and others, a foundation was laid for a previously neglected area of study—women in educational administration. As a result, many have joined those interested in the obvious question: If women have dominated the teaching ranks at all levels since the turn of the century (Tyack and Hansot 1982), why do men occupy 93 percent of superintendency positions? This question has driven a number of research studies focused specifically on women in the superintendency.

Not surprisingly, the research undertaken on women in the superintendency has been done primarily, if not only, by other women. This in itself is problematic. If only women find the topic important enough for further investigation, the cries for change will remain marginalized. The normative assumption, that only men can be superintendents, is far stronger than any female voice advocating that women of all races belong in the position.

Hope is not lost. Hope remains because recent research that has focused on reform efforts has drawn attention to the role of the superintendent. This new attention to the role is not a result of concern about inequalities surrounding gender and race, but rather because of the realization that the office of superintendent plays an important part in advancing reform agendas, including parental choice and site-based decision making (Carnoy and MacDonell 1990; Murphy and Hallinger 1993). Even with this realization, there is very little in the literature that informs or supports specific ways that the superintendency may change or is changing (Crowson 1988).

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There are at least two reasons for this lack of analyses. First, reform action has been focused on the local school community and on state and federal change initiatives (Cuban 1990; Smith and O'Day 1990), with the widely held belief that reform can happen without concern for the superintendency (Murphy 1995). Second, some reformers believe that superintendents are not only a major cause of the problems with schooling, but also are unwilling to relinquish their control over education (Chubb 1988). Thus, research aimed at helping superintendents as they consider transforming their practice becomes extremely pertinent.

A review of the literature on women in positions of power clearly shows that women bring to their practice many of the characteristics noted as currently missing and necessary for reform. With this in mind, research on women in the superintendency becomes vastly more important to anyone interested in educational administration. To be sure, calls for public school reform fall at all points along the ideological continuum. Decentralized decision making is one major thrust of certain reforms, such as site-based management, teacher empowerment (Hallinger 1992; Mohrman 1993; Wohlsetter, Smyer, and Mohrman 1994), joint problem diagnosis (Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector 1990), high-performance schools (Odden 1995), and connecting schools and communities (Crowson 1992). A small portion of the literature on decentralized decision making focuses on administration and points out how successful superintendents spend time enhancing and supporting various collaborative decision-making efforts (Murphy 1995) that facilitate reforms, which in turn advance high academic achievement for all students (Odden 1995).

A second major thrust of reform highlights the moral issues facing public school educators. Some of the issues dealt with are social justice (Purpel 1989), with an emphasis on academic achievement for every child (Capper 1993); higher-order democratic values, exemplified by equality of input and equality of opportunity (Tyack 1974); and the notion of an "ethic of care" (Noddings 1984, 1992), which combines caring, administration, and academic achievement (Beck 1994). This literature admonishes superintendents and other administrators to care enough about people—children and adults—to listen to them, suggesting the replacement of the current pyramidal governance structure with a circle model within which no point is in a superior position (Beck 1994, 84). Despite this thrust, there is no literature to help superintendents transform their practice in a way that addresses these moral issues.

We believe that research on women in the superintendency would inform and sensitize all people, men and women, either seeking or already in the position of superintendent, to issues raised by the two major reform thrusts discussed above. Further, we believe that drawing attention to the worth of women's practice in the superintendency would increase the number of women in the position. Given these goals and those outlined in the Preface, this book

addresses many topics of importance for women and men as they consider, seek, and then step into the role of superintendent of schools.

Without a doubt, research on women in the superintendency is as scarce and scattered as the women themselves. In an effort to unify and solidify this body of literature, this book pulls together, for the first time, leading scholars who focus on this specific topic. The book is organized into four sections. Using quotes from Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992) as an organizer, the sections are arranged in a sequence that follows the thoughts and life of a woman who becomes a superintendent of schools. The first section contains information a woman might want when her thoughts first turn to the idea of becoming a super- intendent. Estés' compelling quotes are an appropriate organizer because they communicate a deeper sense of what women superintendents express about their work and lives. The second part discusses issues of interest to a woman as she decides to pursue a position. The third division covers facets of the life a woman might experience while in the position, and the fourth section offers her reflec- tion on the connection between research and the actual superintendency prac- tice.

The representative sampling used by the researchers, when doing their stud- ies, ensures a range of diverse contexts and perspectives. Further, several path- breaking insights can be drawn from across the chapters which assist women as they traverse the unfamiliar terrain of the superintendency. Five of the most important of these insights include: 1) the affirmation that most women, even in the most powerful position in public school education, are strongly inclined and willing to share power; 2) the confirmation that women superintendents experi- ence gender bias, and that they acknowledge the experiences; 3) the overt recog- nition that an articulation of the complexities, difficulties, and strengths brought to the superintendency by women of color is critically important to all people; 4) the fact that women in the superintendency have ways to talk about how they have succeeded in the role, and that their strategies of success are useful to other women; and 5) the collective opinion of women superintendents that they are at their best when the needs of children come first. This collective insight suggests that women in the superintendency provide the type of leadership needed to keep all educators focused on basic moral essentials during this period of school refor- mation.

The first part of the book, "Crawling Through the Window of a Dream— Surveying the Terrain," centers on what the superintendency looks like for women, historically and in general, as they consider the position. In the first chapter, Jackie M. Blount uncovers historical events that shaped the terrain in ways that made it more difficult for women to enter the superintendency. Mari- lyn Tallerico follows with a comprehensive review of the literature on women in the superintendency. She not only provides a fuller view of the position from the

perspective of gender, but also identifies gaps in the literature that require fur-
ther research if women are to understand the role.

The second part of the book, "Do It Anyway—Gaining Access," makes clear
gender and racial issues surrounding the selection of women for the position of
superintendent. Women wishing to gain access face numerous constraints and
need information in order to seek the position in spite of barriers—in other words,
to "do it anyway." Estelle Kamler and Charol Shakeshaft open the section with a
chapter devoted to the impact search consultants have on the selection process and,
in turn, the careers of women administrators. C. Cryss Brunner's chapter is
broadly cast around the issues of power, gender, and the selection process. Next,
Judy A. Alston writes about the difficulties that African-American women face
when seeking positions. She focuses specifically on constraints and facilitators that
black female superintendents encounter en route to the superintendency. Contin-
uing the focus on race, Flora Ida Ortiz's chapter addresses two areas: how the
search and selection process leads to the appointment of Hispanic female super-
intendents, and how Hispanic female superintendents prepare for the position.

The third part of the book, "Small but Brilliant—Living the Life," captures
snapshots from the "small [in number] but brilliant" lives of women superin-
tendents, from the beginning stages to times when they may choose to "stop" liv-
ing the life. Barbara Nelson Pavan opens the section with a chapter aimed at
exploring the beginning years as experienced by four women in the superinten-
dency. Sylvia E. Méndez-Morse's chapter follows four Mexican-American women
as they sought and stepped into the role of superintendent of schools. She high-
lights the transformation of these women as they gained confidence in their own
strengths and capabilities. Barbara L. Jackson's chapter includes information
about thirty-two African-American female superintendents, including their career
paths and views of their positions. In the last chapter in this section, Cynthia
Beekley discusses issues that caused women in her study to leave the position of
superintendent. The issues are organized into three frames: cultural/social, orga-
nizational/ professional, and personal/family.

The final part of the book, "One's True Song—Authenticating Research,"
addresses our goal as researchers to do work that reflects the "true song" of the
women we study and crystallizes what they have taught us in a way that makes
our work useful to women seeking or occupying the superintendency. To that
end, this section includes three interactive chapters that examine the usefulness
of the work of two researchers through the eyes of a woman superintendent cur-
rently in practice. This section brings the reader full circle from the introduction,
where we offered our voices in support of women desirous of the position of
superintendent, and puts our voices to the test. We put our work under the look-
ing glass, and ask a woman superintendent to examine it closely for its worth.
We ask if we are building a foundation of strength for women, or missing the

mark. What is it we have done? In C. Cryss Brunner's chapter, narrative data from a woman superintendent, Debra Jackson, is analyzed, using a framework, "strategies for success," that Brunner constructed in previous research.

Margaret Grogan's chapter analyzes the same data that Brunner collected from Debra Jackson (in addition to narrative data from another woman superintendent), using a feminist poststructuralist lens. In the last chapter, Jackson responds to Brunner's and Grogan's individual analyses and poses additional questions. The interaction among these chapters is a model for future dialogue focused on authenticating research in ways that may enable us, as researchers, to keep the promises we make to those in practice. Susan Chase closes the book by reminding us that having women in the superintendency serves the larger purpose of social justice.

Women wishing to become superintendents or women superintendents who seek the promise of support deserve a "promise kept." These women have often faced difficulties in their lives because of their courage to think and act outside of social norms in our culture.

> Sometimes they tried to be good according to whichever standards were most popular, and didn't realize till later what they really wanted, how they needed to live. Then, in order to have a life, experienced the painful amputations of leaving their families, the marriages they had promised under oath would be till death, the jobs that were to be the springboards to something more stultifying but better paying. They left dreams scattered all over the road. (Estés 1992, 193)

And while leaving "dreams scattered all over the road" may be the cost to women who aspire to positions most often filled by men, we hope that our research helps keep one of their sacred dreams in place; that is, that women can and should be superintendents of schools.

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