

CHAPTER 1

Studying the Principals

At one point in my career, I planned to become a school principal. In that role, I believed I could continue to work closely with children *and* have a greater impact on the curricular and structural elements of schooling that frustrated me as a teacher. A principal could, I thought, be instrumental in developing a supportive, positive school environment in which both children and adults could learn and grow. I began to read more of the literature on principals, looking for insights into my potential role. Sometimes, I recognized my own relatively stereotypical views of the principal as an “effective leader,” someone who managed people and buildings in order to increase student achievement. I also found, however, that prior work on principals did not always reflect my version of what a principal could be or how I envisioned myself in the role. The given lists of skills and attributes seemed removed from the messy realities of schools, and the list makers generally omitted any mention of the actual person doing the job. As I worked with the principals in this study and experienced with them the complexities of their daily lives, my initial reservations about traditional work on educational leadership increased. What did the research mean by its definitions of effective leadership? What was left out of those relatively limited definitions? How could we begin to capture more accurately the dynamic process of principaling that I witnessed each day in the three schools in which I conducted this research?

In this chapter, I explore these questions, examining traditional portrayals of school leadership and the historical and social contexts within which these descriptions have developed. These contexts help us begin to understand the current frameworks within which school leaders function. I then consider how investigations of gender and school culture begin to challenge the norms of effective leadership described in the mainstream literature. While these latter studies add complexity to our understanding of leadership, they too have some limitations. In the final part of this chapter I propose an approach to educational leadership that uses both individual and contextual frames of analysis to provide a more complete and complex view of the principals.

THE EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL

Over the last thirty years, the school principal has been identified as a key player in school improvement and change. Studies of the principalship burgeoned when effective schools research in the 1960s showed that schools needed an effective leader in order to create an environment that would lead to student achievement and teacher satisfaction (Richardson et al., 1993; Donaldson, 1991; Porter et al., 1989; Lomotey, 1989; Boyan, 1988; Burlingame, 1987). The early studies defined the effective leader as someone who helped the school achieve the qualities associated with effective schools: teachers with high expectations for student learning, a positive school climate, increased time on instructional tasks, regular and systematic student evaluations, community support, and adequate resources (Richardson et al., 1993; Spring, 1989). Some current studies of effective school leadership continue to describe the school leader in these terms; even when they examine the principalship from other perspectives, researchers frequently use the term "effective principal" in the title or the text of their work, suggesting the framework, or at least the historical precedent, within which they are working (e.g., Blase and Kirby, 1992; Wooster, 1991; Lomotey, 1989; Mortimore and Sammons, 1987; Deal, 1987; Blumberg and Greenfield, 1986).

Analyses of effective principals typically emphasize three aspects of the position: the *tasks* the principal performs, the *skills* she brings to the job, and the *roles* she plays in the school and system. The first two approaches tend to support the view of the principalship as involving management and problem solving toward preestablished (or principal-determined) goals. The third approach, which focuses on the principal's role within the system, may incorporate a more ecological view of the school. Within this perspective, the principal is one of many players affected by the interpersonal, political, and physical context within which she works. Each of the three perspectives is described in more detail below.

The *task approach* to school leadership, although less prevalent in recent literature, provides a picture of a principal whose responsibilities include curriculum leadership, teacher supervision and evaluation, district and parent communication, and, at times, student discipline. Often this approach emphasizes the crisis management aspects of being a principal; that is, the principal has defined tasks to perform but often must instead (or in addition) respond to immediate crises. The principal's day consists of a series of seemingly unconnected events and interactions that must be addressed before she can complete the tasks expected of one in her role (Acker, 1990; Wolcott, 1973).

The *skills approach* to the study of school leadership, while it may also describe the leader's tasks and roles, explores particular competencies that result in effective management. The National Association of Elementary School Principals' publication *Principals for 21st Century Schools* assumes that because school-based management and teacher control and decision making will increase, future principals need to learn how to manage and facilitate these processes. The publication notes that effective principals' skills and competencies include the knowledge of good instructional practices; the ability to motivate and guide teacher-leaders; expertise in communication, interpersonal relations, planning, and implementation; and skills in site-based management, in building partnerships with parents, in gathering data for decision making, and in developing a school climate and culture that are conducive to empowerment (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1990).

Another skill-oriented view of the principal describes her as a craftsperson, a characterization that combines the ideas of playing a certain role and having a set of skills (Blumberg 1989, 1987). A craftsperson has an end product in mind and the ability to produce it. The craft of a school administrator involves "the idiosyncratic use of self to make prudent decisions concerning problematic situations in school life . . . the exercise of practical wisdom toward the end of making things in a school or school system 'look' like one wants them to look" (Blumberg, 1989, p. 46). Like many other approaches in this field (Blase and Kirby, 1992; Buell, 1992; Parkay et al., 1992; Smith, 1991), the craftsperson model describes a principal as someone with a vision for the school, what Greenfield (1987) calls a "moral imagination," and the skills to move herself and her colleagues toward that vision.

Surveys and first-person accounts of effective principals also focus on the competencies needed to allow faculty and staff to teach and nurture students (Donaldson, 1991). Blase and Kirby (1992) describe strategies identified by teachers as those used by effective principals. These include the use of praise; the ability to influence teachers by involving them in decision making and granting them professional autonomy; the ability to lead by standing behind teachers, offering material, instructional, and emotional support and encouragement, and providing feedback and rewards; and the appropriate and minimal use of formal authority derived from the principal's position in the system's hierarchy. Teachers in Blase and Kirby's study also note personality characteristics or traits they feel make a principal more effective, including honesty, optimism, consideration, and the ability to model the behavior expected of teachers.

Occasionally, when the skills are defined as interpersonal and the process advocated is one of participation, skill-oriented descriptions of the principalship include elements of emancipatory leadership, or leadership for empowerment. Beck and Murphy (1993), for example, describe the principal of the 1990s as more than a manager. They argue that not only must the principal as educator empower others to learn, she must also be a "social architect," one who takes responsibility for addressing critical moral and social issues through her role in the school. This approach to leadership emphasizes both individual growth and development and a moral imperative to help schools accomplish social change (Grundy, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1990). For the most part, however, the skills-focused literature describes the competencies a principal needs in order to succeed in specific tasks that will result in students and teachers reaching high levels of achievement in a comfortable learning environment.

All of these skills-oriented analyses focus on the principal as the visionary, the goal setter who uses her skills to help others in the school reach academic and personal goals. This perspective suggests that once a principal has gained these skills and accomplished these tasks, she can create a positive school environment in which teachers are decision makers and children achieve. These approaches tend to ignore the concept of the school and school system as institutions with processes, demands, rituals, and roles of their own that change over time. Skills-oriented analyses also pay little attention to the fact that the schools themselves exist within larger social and cultural frameworks that in turn circumscribe the behaviors, ideas, and interactions of the individuals within them.

Literature examining the principal's *role* more frequently looks at the school or school district as a system and the principal as a key player within an organizational structure (Griffin, 1990; Deal, 1987). Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) suggest that we need to throw away the "great man" approach to understanding effective school leaders and examine both the systems within which principals operate and the range of roles principals assume beyond that of the "leader." School systems, as loosely coupled organizations that value loyalty and maintenance of the status quo, provide few opportunities for communication and collaboration among principals. This kind of system reinforces its own structure, tends not to support creativity or change, and leads to a principal's isolation and sense of powerlessness vis-à-vis the larger system. Principals therefore turn their energies inward, toward their schools. Since schools themselves are loosely coupled, principals may find it difficult to orchestrate collaboration or to influence the entire school. They may therefore focus instead on individual, interpersonal relationships

rather than the organization as a whole. Given the limitations implicit in the organizational structure of schools, an effective principal must hold a vision for what the school could be, take initiative in structuring her own role in ways that keep her from getting mired in administrivia, and act resourcefully to avoid expending all her energy on organizational maintenance. Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) suggest that instead of thinking of the principal only in the role of leader, we examine the role of school routines and regularities in the principal's life and consider the school as a political and decision-making arena in which the principal is one player.

Each of these approaches—seeing the principal as fulfilling particular tasks, having necessary skills or strategies, and playing key roles—provides a perspective on the work and life of a principal. She does indeed have tasks that need to be completed, required by the system and the school and expected by the district, parents, teachers, and students. She draws on a variety of skills and strategies, some learned prior to assuming the principalship and others learned on the job, to carry out those tasks. And she plays a range of roles, depending on the situation, the others involved, her own past experiences and work, and her own and her school culture's notions of effectiveness. Only by combining the three approaches do we begin to develop a more complete and complex view of what a principal might do in order to be effective, what the process of negotiating the demands of the principalship might look like in practice and over time. Even in combination, however, I found that these approaches to studying the principalship provided only limited insight into the experiences of the three principals with whom I worked. The descriptions in the literature failed to capture the individuality of the women who filled the position of principal in the schools where I spent an intense six hours a day. Nor did existing studies include any reference to the contexts within which principals work. My field research persuaded me that the person and the contexts are key variables in understanding how a principal functions in her role and interacts with others.

In addition to overlooking the importance of person and context, the general literature on the tasks, roles, and skills of an effective principal rarely addresses the influence of gender (or race or class) on an administrator's actions, interactions, tasks, roles, or skills. By failing to acknowledge the impact of gender, this literature implies that all principals experience common demands and need similar strategies to be successful. Occasionally, studies refer to variables resulting from different school and district cultures and requirements (see, e.g., Blase and Kirby, 1992; Barth, 1990) and, less frequently, from the social, psychological and intellectual history the individual brings to the job (Blumberg, 1989,

1987). Blumberg refers to the latter as the individual's "baggage" (Blumberg, 1989, p. 48) and comments that despite idiosyncrasies in how each person interprets events and acts in situations, there is a common character in the things principals do and how they think about them: "what is most personal is generalizable" (Blumberg, 1989, p. 205). Although there are certainly generalizable characteristics of principals and their jobs, calling the effects of gender, race, and class either baggage or idiosyncrasies minimizes the impact of these social constructions and power relationships and suggests that the influences of gender, race, and class are individual interpretations rather than powerful, socially constructed aspects of experience.

In the few places gender is mentioned in this more general literature on school administration, authors emphasize the difference between our stereotyped views of women's characteristics and the attributes of a principal. In describing the 1990s "principal as servant," Beck and Murphy (1993) explain that "enabling leadership has a softer, more feminine hue to it. It is more ethereal and less direct. There is as much heart as head in this style of leading" (p. 191). The connection of servitude, softness, ethereality, and heart with femininity contributes to a sense of women's styles as different from men's, and until now at least, inappropriate when applied to educational leadership. The stereotypical skills women have, the tasks they emphasize, and the roles they play in society conflict with the expectations described in much of the literature on effective principals. On the other hand, approaches authors have described variously as leadership of the 1990s (Beck and Murphy, 1993), emancipatory leadership (Grundy, 1993), and transformational leadership (Sergiovanni, 1990) parallel emerging descriptions of women's leadership styles in schools (see, e.g., Astin and Leland, 1995; Regan and Brooks, 1995).

Work in gender and administration challenges, informs, broadens, and replaces some of the existing frameworks used to examine the principalship and the concept of effectiveness. Even if principals are more influenced by the requirements of their organizational role in the school culture than by other variables, including gender (Eagly et al., 1992), gender, race and class remain key variables in the tasks principals choose to address, the roles they play, and the strategies they use to carry out both. And gender influences the processes of negotiation and balance principals carry out in every context within which they function. In the sections that follow I examine the literature on gender and school administration and begin to question how it complicates this field of study, providing a more process-oriented understanding of the position, the person in it, and the contexts within which she works.

GENDER AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

In one interview I had for a principalsip, an administrator asked me how I would “handle” veteran male teachers. When a different interview committee found out that I was recently married, they asked if there were any circumstances I could foresee in the next few years that might keep me from doing the job (i.e., did I plan to have children any time soon?). Gender, in a multitude of unspoken ways, influenced my experiences as I considered and was considered for the principalsip.

The historical development of educational administration has, however, led to a field of study and practice that neither questions nor reflects on the place of women in the system. In the United States, teaching and administration have long been considered separate professions. By the mid-1800s, teaching had become “feminized” (Spring, 1986; Hoffman, 1981), acceptable and appropriate for women as an extension of their work with children in the home. With the development of public schooling and the organization of school districts in the late 1800s and early 1900s, teaching came to be defined as a female profession and administration as a male domain. The management structures and styles of the developing bureaucratic and capitalistic system of the early twentieth century carried the implicit message that just as men controlled industry and government, so should they manage schools and teachers: “Reform and adoption of the business model, in which administrators and professors of administration controlled the structure, the knowledge, and the values for education, took place without much interference from the community, minority groups, teachers, or even from school boards” (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988, p. 125).

Schools followed a pattern of early-twentieth-century municipal and corporate reform and development to become more hierarchical as well as more professional. John Philbrick, principal of Quincy High School in Massachusetts, described this structure in 1856: “Let the principal or Superintendent have the general supervision and control of the whole, and let him have one male assistant or sub-principal, and ten female assistants, one for each room” (quoted in Spring, 1986, p. 135). The emphasis on hierarchy, efficiency, and scientific management led to the creation of the myth of the neutral professional educator: “Business managers, school board members, and other social groups encouraged school administrators to become more professional, to apply scientific-management ideologies in their work, and to build power on neutral apolitical expertise separate from the politics of the community” (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988, p. 125). Hierarchy also contributed to the gendered division of labor in education; women, in their roles as teachers, assumed the “appropriate” subordinate role in the institutional structure.

Schools thus came to resemble other competitive bureaucratic institutions that emphasized management and control. Educational historians such as Katz (1987) and Tyack (1974) have pointed out that this "one best system" was not inevitable but the result of a series of choices made by those who gradually assumed power over educational organizations and practice in the early 1900s. These choices led to patterns of success and training for school administrators that continue to dominate: "The myths that become standards for success as a school administrator are male models of discipline and power, business (also male) models of administrative science, and anti-intellectual models of training that focus on mentoring by skilled and traditional veterans" (Gosetti and Rusch, 1995, p. 21).

Research in educational management has followed a similarly narrow course. There have been few studies of women and minorities, in part because women and minorities have been underrepresented in positions of educational leadership and in part because traditional patterns of research in the field have reflected the male-dominated nature of school administration. Yeakey et al. (1986) and Blackmore (1993) trace the neglect of gender in this literature to the acceptance of the "rational man" model of organizations that emerged from the early 1900s emphasis on school administrators as professional experts who should run their schools as effective businesses. Yeakey et al. also point out that the study of educational administration is grounded in the positivist tradition of the 1900s that emphasized "noncontroversial, detached 'truths' that remained impervious to larger equity issues, social realities and social problems" (p. 113). As a result, the field of educational administration has failed to examine the larger social and cultural constraints and norms within which educators function:

The traditional management of knowledge in educational administration has had the combined effects of (a) separating educational administration from education; (b) blinding educators to inequities and incongruities that have become part of the accepted system of schooling; and (c) promoting a base of theory, research and knowledge disconnected from the voices, needs, and realities of individuals who do not comply with or benefit from the ethos of hierarchical control. Conventional management knowledge has also inhibited the exploration or explanation of social system characteristics that have maintained the separation of men from women in education and, particularly, the unequal access of women to significant administrative careers. (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988, p. 126)

The history of educational administration has, therefore, contributed to knowledge, policy, theory, and research in this field that emphasize hierarchical control and efficiency. Acceptable study of

school administration has focused on issues such as organizational size and structure, teacher productivity, and budget and management rather than teaching-oriented issues such as pedagogy and the goals of schooling. Studying women in educational administration challenges some of the key assumptions underlying theory, knowledge, and practice in schools and in school leadership.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The explicit study of women in educational administration has experienced shifts in emphasis during the past twenty years. Early studies examined the numbers, documenting the underrepresentation of women in all levels of educational administration, and probing the reasons for this discrepancy (see, e.g., Edson, 1981; Wheatley, 1981; Biklen, 1980; Clement, 1980). These studies focus on discrimination and stereotyping that limit women's entry into and success in the field and document patterns of socialization that prevent women from developing the expected behaviors, aspirations, and values that would allow them to apply for administrative positions. This earlier research tends to ignore larger systemic issues of power and ideology and often fails to see the individual as able to act, either on her own or in coordination with others, to challenge the existing system.

A second group of studies examines differences in male and female management styles. To a large extent, male management styles provide the norm; studies of women look at what women do differently from men, without attempting to explore why the documented differences exist.¹ Current studies that emphasize management differences tend to redefine traditional terms such as leadership and power so that women's management styles can be examined on their own merits rather than in comparison to men's (see Regan and Brooks, 1995; Adler et al., 1993; Ozga, 1993; Astin and Leland, 1991). But these new definitions run the risk of essentializing women's characteristic approaches.

More recently, studies have begun to focus on the organizational structures of schools and their reflection of larger social structures that perpetuate gender, racial, and class inequities. "What is provided is a different view of organizational reality. By grounding organizational social theory in the larger social structures, in the organizational realities from which it emanates, the weight of the evidence reveals that the position of racial minorities and women in organizations is inseparable from the relative position of women and racial minorities in the larger social system" (Yeakey et al., 1986, p. 118). While this approach con-

tinues to emphasize a gender difference in style, it locates that difference in larger institutional and social realities, questions its source, and examines its effect on outcomes. The sections that follow examine the key issues of access, management style, and institutional structure and culture in more detail, exploring how each contributes to a more complex understanding of the principalship.

Access Issues

Much of the earliest research on women in educational administration examines issues of access, probing the reasons behind the decreasing numbers of women principals between 1930 and 1980. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the number of women in elementary principalships increased, the result of the feminist movement, the organization of women teachers, the right to vote in local elections, and the economic advantage to a school district of hiring lower-paid women (Shakeshaft, 1989). Even during this "golden age" of women administrators (Hansot and Tyack, 1981, as quoted in Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 34), women were only about 55% of the elementary principals but constituted almost 90% of elementary teachers (Shakeshaft, 1989). Between 1930 and 1980, the number of women in principalships declined, despite the fact that the number of women elementary and secondary teachers remained between 80 and 90%. Traditional concerns about women administrators resurfaced: women were constitutionally incapable of maintaining needed discipline and order; they did not fit the picture most school boards held of a school administrator; they were expected to leave the profession early for marriage; and they lacked men's abilities to interact with other men in power and to deal with community issues and problems. In addition, the Depression, the consolidation of school districts, and the slowing of suffrage and union movements led to a decline in support for women in administration and an emphasis on providing jobs for family heads, that is, men (Shakeshaft, 1989; Stockard and Johnson, 1981). Even though the percentage of women principals has increased marginally in recent years, the disparity between the proportion of women teachers (83% at the elementary level and 53% at the secondary level) and the proportion of women principals (36% and 11%, respectively) continues to raise questions (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994).

Explanations for women's underrepresentation in administration have focused on external barriers, internal constraints, and the mixed experiences of women who do become principals. In her study of 142 women who hoped to enter educational administration, Edson (1988) explains that women *do* want to become administrators. They want the

professional growth and challenge, they believe they will be good administrators, and they hope to do something positive for children. Yet even women who aspire to school administration face barriers of discrimination in hiring and promotion that often limit their movement. One of the key barriers is that those in positions to hire, school boards, superintendents, and other school administrators, are usually men. These "gatekeepers" tend to hire people with whom they are comfortable and who most resemble themselves in attitudes, behaviors, career path, and values (Bell and Chase 1993; Edson, 1988, 1981; Marshall, 1984; Stockard and Johnson, 1981; Wheatley, 1981; Clement 1980). Existing stereotypes of what constitutes leadership, in contrast with women's traditional strengths and roles, also work against the hiring of women for these positions. As discussed above, school leaders historically have been managers, organizers of people and schedules who are able to negotiate successfully with superintendents, school boards, and communities and evaluate, hire, and fire teachers. Women have been described as lacking in independence and task orientation and as being too emotional, dependent on feedback from others, and collaborative to fit into the bureaucratic hierarchy of school administration (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Biklen, 1980; Clement, 1980). Ortiz (1982) describes the experiences of women teachers who aspired to principalships and who consequently had trouble getting tenure; their principals told them that if they did not want to stay in teaching they should get out of it. One principal told Ortiz, "Teachers who start out thinking they're going to be administrators aren't as committed to children and their learning problems. Those persons just aren't as successful in the classroom" (Ortiz, 1982, p. 59). A double standard exists for women and men who pursue administrative careers; women educators are expected to be dedicated to their classrooms and their children while men may move on and still be seen as committed to the field.

Other external barriers limiting women's access to educational administration include a lack of available information about positions and few structural opportunities to gain the skills and visibility needed to advance in the system. Women, especially elementary teachers, tend to be bypassed for selection for attendance at conferences and meetings, access to special funds, and selection for training programs, since this form of recognition is distributed informally by male administrators who, again, may choose to reward and encourage those most like themselves or those who they feel will most benefit from or be likely to use the new skills in the future (Yeakey et al., 1986; Edson, 1981; Wheatley, 1981). Women may engage in less GASing (Getting the Attention of Superiors), a form of anticipatory socialization that men use to gain access to information and positions (Ortiz, 1982). Without information

and experience, women may not know about possibilities for advancement or may, in the eyes of those who hire, lack the preparation required for the job. In addition, those in positions to hire may see women as lacking in the motivation to advance and to take the steps needed to prepare themselves for administrative tasks. Again, we hear a dependence on the historical notion that women make good teachers, but, because they lack ambition and commitment, they do not make good administrators.

Women sometimes lack the information and experience that would provide stepping stones into the bureaucracy because they do not have the networks and mentors frequently available to male teachers who aspire to (or are encouraged to consider) administrative careers (Edson, 1988; Miklos, 1988; Fauth, 1984; Biklen, 1980). Given the lack of role models and the social and structural barriers to advancement, women may need extra encouragement and support; many women who do become school principals point out that they were "pushed" into the role by others who told them that they had something to contribute (Ozga, 1993; Pavan, 1991; Yeakey et al., 1986). Yet fewer women than men connect to mentors and to networks that would provide this support. For the most part, the men's network is unconscious, informal, and private, and yet it operates to give young male teachers greater access to the people and experiences that prepare them for selection into a principalship. Lack of mentorship contributes to women's later (in comparison to men) entry into the principalship and to feelings of isolation for those women who aspire to and assume positions of leadership (Edson 1988; Fauth, 1984).

Studies that focus on internal or psychological barriers to access examine socialization patterns that lead both men and women to perceive that women lack skills and behaviors needed for administrative success. Women, the research argues, have been socialized to internalize traits perceived by themselves and others as incompatible with leadership roles, such as a sense of self as helper rather than leader, as warm rather than ambitious, as emotional rather than rational, and as passive and deferential rather than active and independent (Grogan, 1996; Pavan, 1991; Yeakey, 1986; Weber et al., 1981; Biklen, 1980). Acting in ways that challenge these traditional roles may lead to conflict or stress for women administrative aspirants. It may also limit the numbers of those who apply for administrative positions, even if they aspire to the role.

Some argue that women have chosen not to pursue educational administration both because they have a realistic sense of what is possible in a discriminatory system and because they do not want to take on the tasks of school management as these have traditionally been defined

(Ozga, 1993). If women cannot maintain and use their existing values and styles of interaction and leadership (some of which may be seen as traditionally feminine), they do not want to enter the field of educational administration. In addition, the perceived rewards of administration—power, influence, money, status, increased sense of competence—may be neither the kinds of rewards women want to work for nor the way in which they define success (Clement, 1980; Sassen, 1980). These patterns of behavior may also conflict with the choices a woman has made about her family responsibilities and roles and the quality of life she wants to lead (Pavan, 1991; Biklen, 1980). In looking at some of the reasons why many of the 142 female aspirants to administrative positions had not reached their goals, Edson (1995) explains, “While the world of teaching more easily accommodates the dual world for many women, the demands of administration still often presume one has a ‘wife’ at home” (p. 44). The prevailing definitions of leadership and power in schools thus contribute to many women’s decision to opt out of leadership positions. While this approach allows us to see women as agents (rather than victims) who make autonomous choices about their lives and careers, it tends to sidestep the fact that these “choices” are influenced and limited by gender role patterns deeply embedded in our social structures.

Several studies have examined the similarities and differences in men’s and women’s career paths into educational administration (Grant, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Edson, 1988; Fauth, 1984; Prolman 1983; Clement, 1980). This work suggests that the traditional notion of “career” needs reexamination when applied to many women in education (Smulyan, 1990; Grant, 1989; Sikes, 1985). Women choose teaching, remain in teaching, grow and change as teachers, and enter educational administration in ways that reflect both personal and social/historical pressures on their lives. These factors differ from those affecting men, whose life patterns have been used as the norm against which women are examined. For example, research suggests women generally enter teaching because they “love children,” because it is a socially acceptable role to family and friends, because they can envision making a difference in the world through teaching, and because in some cases they perceive limited opportunities for women in other fields (Pavan, 1991; Prolman, 1983). When they become teachers, women generally have no plans to enter administration (Polczynski, 1990; Grant, 1989; Sikes, 1989). Women who do leave the classroom tend to do so after many years of teaching, and possibly after raising a family (Marshall and Mitchell, 1989). Those women who do leave teaching usually work in special curriculum areas (e.g., reading, curriculum development) rather than in school administration, maintaining their connection to teaching and instruction rather than shifting to management

(Mitchell and Winn, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Prolman, 1983, Paddock, 1981). When we include women's experiences in descriptions of leadership, becoming a principal emerges as a less linear and more complicated process of balancing personal and professional needs and internal and external expectations of role and success.

Gender Differences in Management Style

Many studies of gender differences in management style define school leadership in terms of the principal's control over certain aspects of the schooling process. The assumption in these studies is that there is an organizational role (described above as modeled after an early twentieth-century male executive norm) that may conflict with assigned or socialized gender roles when the organizational role is filled by a woman. The organizational role itself is rarely questioned or examined; if anything, researchers seem to applaud when women appear to outshine men in these positions.²

This literature suggests that women principals tend to pay more attention to curriculum, interact more frequently and regularly with students and teachers, involve teachers in democratic decision making, and focus more on developing the school as a people-centered community than do male administrators (Eagly et al., 1992; Shakeshaft, 1989; Schmuck et al., 1981; Gross and Trask, 1976). There appear to be few gender differences in the level of concern principals have for academic achievement, in their desire to involve parents in school activities, or in their level of task orientation or desire to get the job done well (Eagly et al., 1992; Charters and Jovick, 1981; Gross and Trask, 1976). These studies present conflicting views of possible differences in male and female principals' levels of interaction with their faculty and colleagues; for example, while Gross and Trask (1976) found that male principals maintained a greater social distance with the staff outside of school than female principals, when other variables were controlled, this contrast seemed to occur primarily as a result of differences in marital status. Charters and Jovick (1981) suggest that both personal and situational factors (e.g., size of school) seem to influence leadership style as much as does gender. They do, however, substantiate Gross and Trask's claims that female principals communicate more with their faculties than do male principals and that both male and female teachers tend to be more satisfied with their working conditions under female principals, given these principals' closer personal relations with teachers and their concerns with the educational affairs of the school. Again, this research provides a sense of the quantity of interactions that occur, but not the quality of those interactions and the dynamics behind them.

The different career paths of male and female administrators contribute to differences in both the particular roles and tasks they emphasize and the style in which they carry out those tasks within the community (Shakeshaft, 1989; Marshall, 1985; Tibbetts, 1980). Spending more time as teachers and in positions emphasizing curriculum may lead women principals to focus more on instruction and on the work of the teachers in the schools; they tend to see their job as more that of a master teacher or educational leader than that of a manager. Teaching and learning are of primary concern; women principals emphasize achievement, coordinate instructional programs, know teachers and students as individuals, and work to help them develop (Shakeshaft, 1989). Given their own negotiations in their personal and professional lives, and the position of "outsider within" (Collins, 1991) in the historically male-dominated culture of school administration, women may bring different perspectives and skills to their work.

In both research and first-person accounts, women administrators describe themselves as different from their male administrative colleagues. They write, or tell researchers, that they listen more and that they are more patient, committed, open and honest, caring, vulnerable, communicative, and connected to their school community of teachers, students, and parents (Ozga, 1993; Young, 1990; O'Rourke and Papelewis, 1989). They also emphasize their interactions with others:

One of the reasons why I have a bigger in-tray is because I spend a lot of time on my staff, the door is always open. Most of the male managers I have worked for get through their in-tray enormously quickly, I'm not saying they all do, but for many it forms a large part of what they do, whereas I spend more time with the punters and customers. I do the paperwork around people, whereas the contrary is that you see the people around the paperwork. (Adler et al., 1993, p. 121)

Other research has yielded similar conclusions: "Although the activities that men and women undertake to fulfill their job responsibilities are primarily the same, there are some differences in the ways they spend their time, in their day-to-day interactions, in the priorities that guide their actions, in the perceptions of them by others, and in the satisfaction they derive from their work" (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 170). Some women administrators point out that the incorporation of the skills and processes they emphasize could enrich definitions of good management that have developed from more male, hierarchical structures in schools (Traquair, 1993; Regan, 1990).

Shakeshaft (1989) and Marshall and Mitchell (1989) connect their understanding of the management style of women school administrators

to the work of Gilligan (1982), Lyons (1983), and Noddings (1988), which suggests that women tend to operate within an ethic of care while more men function within an ethic of justice.

Relationships with others are central to all actions of women administrators. Women spend more time with people, communicate more, care more about individual differences, are concerned more with teachers and marginal students, and motivate more. Not surprisingly, staffs of women administrators rate women higher, are more productive, and have higher morale. Students in schools with women principals also have higher morale and are more involved in student affairs. Further, parents are more favorable toward schools and districts run by women and thus are more involved in school life. (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 197)

This notion of different cultures, gendered ways of knowing and responding to the world, is controversial because of its tendency to polarize and essentialize what we consider male and female (see, e.g., Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1990). This framework does, however, provide greater insight into how and why women and men may carry out and experience the principalship in different ways than do approaches that count the number of times women and men principals talk to teachers or to central office staff.

Efforts to examine gender differences in management style from a structural perspective have contributed to a gradual reshaping of the prevailing definitions of leadership and power. Regan and Brooks (1995), for example, describe feminist attributes of leadership that arise out of women's experiences "below the faultline" of power in our society.³ They point out that "school leadership might be enriched by a synthesis of below-the-fault attributes, generally known and practiced by women, and above-the-fault qualities, grounded in men's experience, but taught to and learned by all women who become successful school leaders" (p. 18). Hurty (1995), too, describes a different kind of power evident among the women elementary school principals she studied. The power "to get the job done" rather than power over people and resources draws on five strategies: a willingness to expend emotional energy, an ability to nurture learning and development, an ability to talk with rather than at others, the use of "pondered mutuality" (i.e., employing a give-and-take approach to making decisions), and a commitment to working collaboratively with others toward school change. "The 'different voice' that emerges conspicuously from the data as women speak about their experiences as school leaders is one of connectedness and coactivity, of shared and expandable power, and of empowerment" (Hurty, 1995, p. 395). Rita Irwin (1995), in a case study of a woman supervisor, describes this new kind of leadership:

Leadership framed from a feminist (socialist) viewpoint would conceptualize power as a sharing of responsibility, decision-making, and action among participants in an effort to share power with others or nurture empowerment. Through leadership, people are empowered to improve practice. (p. 153)

Astin and Leland's (1991) investigation of women in positions of educational leadership from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s raises questions about the adequacy of traditional frameworks for explaining women's leadership behavior. To encompass certain "feminist" aspects of administration, these authors redefine leadership to include desired practices and outcomes: "Leadership is a process by which members of a group are empowered to work together synergistically toward a common goal or vision that will create change, transform institutions, and thus improve the quality of life" (pp. 7-8).

These studies of leadership and power argue for the need to redefine our notions of leadership, to provide models that challenge the assumptions and values of the dominant culture of leadership, that legitimize women's experiences, and that provide alternative strategies for both women and men. They neglect, however, to examine the impact of context on the ways in which women carry out their roles. How does a particular community context affect the definitions of leadership available to a particular principal? How do issues of class, race, and age affect the relationships between a principal and the teachers and families with whom she works? We also need to examine how others' expectations influence leadership style, and what the resulting patterns of interaction look and sound like. Do teachers, central office administrators, students, and parents *expect* women to be more nurturing and caring, more focused on curriculum and on the social-emotional well-being of students and staff? How do these expectations create patterns of interaction and establish particular roles for women that may differ from those of their male colleagues? Work on women in university teaching (also a male-dominated profession in both structure and persons) suggests that students expect women university faculty to be more caring and more understanding than male faculty. When women professors do not live up to these expectations, students find them wanting as teachers and faculty members; when they do, students find them less rigorous academically than their more impersonal colleagues (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988; Hall, 1982). The case studies presented in chapters 3, 4, and 5 illustrate how this double-bind of expectations creates conflicts for women principals, both in their interactions with their varied constituencies and in their evaluations of themselves as school leaders. As long as the norm of the effective principal remains male-oriented, women may

continue to see themselves as different or to describe their work as balancing what others expect from a leader and what they expect from a woman (Bloom and Munro, 1995).

Impact of Organizational Structure and Culture

Many studies of gender and management style tend to dichotomize male and female approaches and skills, emphasizing women's traditional skills of collaboration and care and obscuring the larger social fabric within which people work. When examined within larger frameworks of institutional power and control, however, these gendered patterns of thinking and action reported by researchers and by the administrators themselves suggest that women in educational administration consciously or unconsciously function within a male-oriented system of discourse, relationship, and power. Focusing on the school as a culture helps reframe the notion of difference, emphasizing less the polarities between the experiences and behaviors of men and women school administrators and more the interaction of life experience and institutional structure in the development of styles of action and interaction.

While all principals have the experience of being in the middle, balancing demands of parents, teachers, and school or district administrators, women and men experience the social system and the bureaucratic structures of the institutional context differently. They operate within different constraints and may respond differently within similar situations as a result of actual and perceived differences in status, experience, and roles. A school or school system can be seen as a culture dominated by masculine language, values, patterns of interacting, definitions of knowledge, and standards of appropriate behavior (Marshall, 1993, 1988; Ballou, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Weiler, 1988; Connell, 1985). These cultural beliefs, behaviors, and values contribute to the production and reproduction of gendered relations and actions at the institutional level (Blackmore, 1993). Given this frame of analysis, new questions emerge in the study of gender and schooling. For example, what are the preferred values and behaviors in the existing culture and what are the values and behaviors of those who tend to be marginalized within or excluded from school administration (e.g., women and minorities)? How do "deviants" (again, women and minorities) operate within that culture (Marshall, 1988)?

In psychology (Bem, 1993; Schaef, 1985) and political science (Ferguson, 1984), researchers have argued that male-dominated institutional structures influence all aspects of women's experience and behavior. It is not gender per se that causes difference but women's and men's

positions in a social structure “so androcentric that it not only transforms male-female difference into female disadvantage; it also disguises a male standard as gender neutrality” (Bem, 1993, p. 182). Women thus bring to their work social, interpersonal, and institutional experiences that differ significantly from men’s experiences in society and that operate as subsystems within the larger patriarchal structure. Schaeff argues that a White Male System “surrounds us and permeates our lives. Its myths, beliefs, rituals, procedures and outcomes affect everything we think, feel, and do” (Schaeff, 1985, p. 2). Women live within their own Female System and yet learn to function within the White Male System in a variety of ways, including acting like men or playing out the role of the traditional woman.⁴ Ferguson (1984) has argued that “women’s experience is institutionally and linguistically structured in a way that is different from that of men” (p. 23). The male bureaucracy, which permeates all public and most private institutions, creates self-perpetuating mechanisms that make it difficult for individuals, especially those (such as women and minorities) who occupy token roles, to see, let alone resist, the structures. Both Schaeff and Ferguson suggest that women can begin to create alternatives once they recognize the larger structures within which they operate; but these authors also describe the limitations to resisting the existing bureaucracies and structures that characterize institutions such as schools.

When women enter the “administrative culture” of schools, they get signals that tell them that they can expect occupational segregation and isolation, the pressures of tokenism, and work in a culture whose norms were developed with the expectation that males would fill most positions. Marshall and Mitchell (1989) suggest that women principals experience stresses in their job that men in the same positions do not, including comments about their gender and flirtatious teasing. Others, including both peers and their superiors in the system, may expect them to have problems with discipline and authority, see them as a sex objects, ignore or isolate them, and give them more work to do and less credit for their achievements than their male counterparts. Women administrators are expected to accept and adapt to male values, language, and norms of interaction in order to find a place in the system.

As women adjust to this culture they may learn to adapt in a variety of ways.

Thus, for women, political lessons are: you must compensate, you will be excluded, and you must not make a fuss. Even though they will not really be “one of the guys,” women should not call attention to that fact. Even though they must spend time alleviating other’s anxieties about their presence, women learn to do this extra work and stay quiet. (Marshall, 1993, pp. 172–173)

One result of the press of this male-dominated institutional context is that women tend to personalize any experience of discrimination or difference rather than see it as part of a collective experience (Chase, 1995; Schmuck and Schubert, 1995). Women often speak easily and confidently about their professional lives, accomplishments, and dilemmas. When asked about the role of gender in their experiences, however, they become more guarded and find it difficult to generalize from their own personal examples of discrimination or conflict. The desire to be judged by their competence and to be accepted as a professional overshadows the experience and language of inequity. Women administrators may, then, either ignore the issue of gender or develop individual solutions to inequities they and others experience rather than take an activist stance that makes addressing inequality a part of one's work. The institutional and social structures within which women leaders operate do not support a collective, ideological approach to gendered experience.

EMERGING THEMES IN THE STUDY OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Prior studies of women and educational leadership have complicated traditional descriptions of effective administrators. They position differences in management style within an examination of the structural contingencies which contribute to and shape a principal's actions and interactions. But these same studies may overemphasize institutional and social frameworks of behavior and belief. They rarely describe the individual's adaptations to those structures, and they provide little insight into immediate or systemic changes an individual can accomplish. When I began to compare and contrast my experiences in the field with the theories and data presented in the literature discussed above, I found that existing frameworks of analysis did not always capture the emerging pictures of women's lives and work in my case studies. By listening to the principals themselves, observing their actions and interactions, and attending to the voices of others with whom they worked, I began to identify a set of four themes that characterized their experience. These themes arose primarily from an analysis of the data collected for the cases, although they also reflect some of the issues raised in the literature on gender and leadership. The first theme, *Becoming a principal: Negotiating the personal context*, uses the experience of the three principals in this study to consider the questions: How do women become principals, and how do their career paths differ from the normative paths established by the many men who have preceded them? How does each woman's personal context affect her entry into the principalship