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Framing the Stories

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As the large volume of books and articles about and by firsts attests, there is a general fascination with stories about pioneers. We are curious and inspired about how they dared, what they faced, how they overcame the odds, why they bothered. The present volume about first-generation females in all-male departments of educational administration would seem to fit right into this interest. However, the reader might well question whether these women were truly firsts. After all, women have been ubiquitous in schooling, have they not? Well, yes and no. While females have long been associated with education, their history in education shows a somewhat different picture. And more to the point, while in the past there were women who served on faculties of education helping prepare professionals for service in schools—for example, teacher education, counselor education—they were absent from departments of educational administration. That field was almost exclusively male, and had been since its inception. Thus in a very real way, the first females to break into this all-male preserve were pioneers, groundbreakers who dared, and, in so doing, broke into the preserve. To appreciate the legitimacy of these firsts and of the task they faced, it is important to consider the complex history of the field of educational administration. It constitutes the background and context in which and out of which these firsts emerged. This chapter examines that background and context and then goes on to discuss the purpose of the book and why preserving the stories of these firsts is so important. It concludes with an explication of the organization and structure of the book.

Background and Context

The history of university-based programs in educational administration is inextricably linked to the history of schooling. While focused primarily

on the superintendency, Blount's book, *Destined to Rule the Schools* (1998), provides an intimate look into the gendered history of schooling and to the emergence of a separate, male-dominated field of educational administration, which in turn spawned exclusively male departments of educational administration to prepare school administrators.

While teaching in schools has long been associated with females, from the very beginning, males were preferred for the job and dominated its ranks. Females entered the profession in the 1800s because the unprecedented growth of common schools across the United States required more teachers. The demand outstripped the number of males available and willing to work for the low wages being paid to teachers. By 1900, men had largely deserted teaching for other occupations, and women made up 70% of the teachers. The trend continued, and by 1920, women constituted 86% of the teachers.

The nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable transformation in the demographic characteristics of teachers. While at the start of the century, men accounted for virtually all teachers in the country, one hundred years later women held the majority of positions. (Blount, 1998, p.36)

School administration grew out of this gender transformation of schools. According to Blount (1998), the increasing "feminization" of the profession, in consonance with societal beliefs and norms about the abilities and place of women, led to the creation of a domain for men, school administration. "School officials (i.e., lay boards) lauded the notion of paid male administrators who could monitor female teachers and keep them from getting out of line" (p. 26).

The gendered worlds of teaching (largely female) and school administration (overwhelmingly male) remained the prevailing situation through the 1970s, except for one period in time. World War II left schools short of administrators. As males in large numbers entered the military, females had the opportunity to move into line administrative positions in schools. Their ascendancy, however, was short-lived. Postwar, "throughout the ranks of school administration, women quietly slipped away or were pushed out" (Blount, 1998, p. 128) and systematically replaced by males. Between 1950 and 1970, the hegemony of males was reestablished in school administration (Blount, 1998). The percentage of female superintendents declined from 9% to 3%. Similarly, female elementary principals declined from 56% to 4% in the same time period.

While the earliest university-based programs in educational administration date back to the 1900s (McCarthy, 1999), coincidental with the

reestablishment of male hegemony in school administration, programs for preparing school administrators increased and flourished between 1950 and 1970, as the numbers of schools and the need for school administrators grew. There were approximately 125 university graduate programs for the preparation of school administrators in 1950 (Silver, 1982), but the number of programs tripled by 1970 (Peterson & Finn, 1985).

Pressure to legitimate the field of school administration and ground it in the growing scientific movement nurtured the growth of university-based programs to prepare school administrators, school superintendents in particular (Blount, 1998; Campbell, Fleming, Newell, & Bennion, 1987). From their inception, such departments were almost exclusively male, mirroring their administrative counterparts in schools. Indeed, faculty for such programs was drawn largely from the ranks of school superintendents. But the professoriate was even more tightly gendered than its counterpart in the schools, and exercised a level of control not only over its own makeup, as was common to all fields of study in higher education at the time, but of the makeup of school administration. With few trained administrators and a growing need for school administrators post-World War II, professors of administration could and did control not only who studied school administration (was admitted to programs) but, in many cases, who was recommended and subsequently hired to be administrators in schools. Professors of educational administration taught and then joined their former students in projects and organizations developed for school administrators, forming a neat, companionable network of knowns, a proverbial "good old boy network." "It is through these university-based academic programs that members of the profession are selected, prepared, and launched or re-launched into their careers" (Campbell, Fleming, Newell, & Bennion, 1987, p. 171). This circle of control was tightened as the selfsame network pressed for and secured state credentialing for administrators, mandating study in university-based administrative preparation programs for holding administrative positions in schools.

Females were largely excluded from this network. They could and did become staff (versus line) administrators in schools and serve, albeit in smaller numbers, on university faculties preparing teachers and supervisors, but the closed network in school administration effectively limited female participation in school administration and in administrator credentialing programs. "Not only was it difficult for women to gain admission to these administrative preparation programs, but professors sometimes made it difficult for the few women who were admitted to finish or receive their necessary blessing in the job search" (Blount, 1998, p. 58). Discouraging women from seeking admission to administrator preparation programs was often masked in the guise of helping them, of being realistic. I well remember

being told I did not really want to enter an administrator preparation program because I would never get a job as a high school principal. This was in the early 1960s, at a premier institution for the preparation of educators at the time: Teachers College, Columbia University.

In 1972, when women constituted 88% of the elementary school teachers and 49% of the secondary school teachers, they were .01% of the superintendents, 6% of the deputy and associate superintendents, 5% of the assistant superintendents, 2% of the high school principals, 3% of the junior high school principals, and 20% of the elementary school principals in the nation (National Educational Association, 1973a). Concurrently, the University Council for Educational Administration reported that 98% of the faculty of educational administration programs was male, and 92% of the recipients of degrees in administration were male (see Blount, 1998). Campbell and Newell (1973), who conducted the first comprehensive survey of the professoriate in education administration, described it as “overwhelmingly male, Caucasian, Protestant, and of rural origin,” and went on to note that “few were concerned about the conspicuous lack of women and minorities in their ranks” (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997, p. 16). However, in 1997, when McCarthy and Kuh replicated the study, they found that between 1972 and 1994, “the percentage of women (had) increased tenfold, from 2% to 20%” (see McCarthy, 1999, p. 130). Indeed, McCarthy and Kuh (1997) identified the increase in female faculty as the most significant change in the field since the 1970s.

How did this happen? How did the field go from an almost exclusively male presence in 1970 to a 29% female presence in 1997, with 39% of new hires going to females (50% in research institutions) (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997)? What accounts for the fact that the number of female faculty increased at the same time that the number of faculty in educational administration decreased (McCarthy, Kuh, Newell, & Iacona, 1988)? What was going on to promote the opening of the door to females of the all-male club?

A confluence of factors led to unlocking the door and setting the stage for women to move into the club, in schools and into the ranks of faculty of administrator preparation programs. The civil rights movement of the 1960s spawned an era of concern for equity in education and a spate of federal laws and regulations designed to realize that concern. At the same time, it provided the medium for the renaissance of the women’s movement of an earlier era. Mounting a persistent political campaign to make legislators aware of the compelling evidence of sex discrimination, women’s groups pressed for inclusion of gender as a category in nondiscriminatory laws and urged the passage of laws to specifically protect women from sex discrimination. Legislation such as the Equal Pay Act of

1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, and Executive Order 11246 as amended by Executive Order 11375, set the stage for women to argue for their rights in the workplace at large, including education. But it was Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, along with its implementing regulations, that focused exclusively on education and comprehensively attacked gender discrimination in all aspects of education for institutions and organizations receiving federal financial assistance.

To suggest that such laws produced immediate or far-reaching changes in the representation of females in administration, or in the attitudes toward women in administration, would be misleading. Indeed, the effects were and are uneven and incomplete. Yet change did occur in the wake of Title IX. In prohibiting discrimination in admission to programs and activities, Title IX opened the door to admission to administrator preparation programs, and women moved into such programs in increasing numbers. In 1972, women earned 11% of the doctorates in educational administration. By 1982, they earned 40% of the doctorates, a 400% increase (Blount, 1998). By the early 1990s, women constituted more than 50% of students in educational administration programs (Millstein & Associates, 1993; Murphy, 1993), and in 2002–2003, females earned 61% of the master's degrees and 63% of the doctoral degrees in the field (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

While far less spectacular, changes occurred in the tightly gendered world of schools and universities in the wake of Title IX. In a longitudinal study (1972–2002) of gender in line administrative positions in the largest (school population) school districts in the country, Mertz (2006) found significant increases in female representation in all positions save that of superintendent over the thirty-year period. Indeed, females dominated or were approaching parity in all of these positions except superintendent. While the pattern of increases varied considerably with respect to kind of school district (urban, suburban, rural, small city) and particular position, the advancement of women into line administrative positions was apparent. This was not true of the position of superintendent, which remains persistently male in spite of what has happened with other line positions (Bell & Chase, 1993; Bjork, 2000; Blount, 1998; Glass, 1992; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1999).

The number of females moving into and up through the ranks of faculty in colleges and universities has also increased. In 1972, females were 19% of the faculty of four-year institutions (National Education Association, 1973b). At the same time, females were 3% of the presidents of institutions of higher education (Vetter & Babco, 1975) and 9% of the academic deans, overwhelmingly deans of nursing and home economics (Astin, 1978; National Education Association, 1973b). By 1999, they were

37% of the faculty and 21% of the college presidents (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2003). And the tightly gendered world of departments of educational administration changed as well. Females constituted but 2% of the professors of educational administration in 1972. By 1997, they constituted 29% of the faculty of those departments (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997). As late as 1989, however, of the departments that had women, none had more than one (Short, Twale, & Walden, 1989).

This was the context framing the entrance of the first female faculty into departments of educational administration; a context and culture with norms and values for operating determined and defined by males and reinforced by the long history of male domination. What happened when they entered the hallowed precincts of this culture in university departments of educational administration? Did they find the culture and context compatible or hostile? Were the members of the club welcoming or resistant, as has been documented for other female firsts (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Hartmann, 1976; Schroedel, 1985)? Was their full and equal participation in the department readily embraced or resisted? How did these females affect the culture of the department and how were they affected by it?

The stories that follow speak to these questions, implicitly and explicitly, and share the experiences of a group of firsts from their perspective and in their own voice. One might expect the stories of these groundbreakers to be filled with tales of irritations, rejection, and discrimination, much as Aileen Hernandez, a NOW leader, related in speaking about pioneering feminist leaders: "To pave the way, there were the people who took the slurs, and all the slings and arrows" (see Astin & Leland, 1991). While there are certainly examples of these in the stories, the stories also tell of incredible kindness, encouragement, and support. Indeed, the reader may well be surprised at the diverse experiences and realities these female firsts have to share. In their stories, some authors identified the institution at which they were a first and even their colleagues. Other authors chose not to name the institution or colleagues for a variety of sensitive reasons.

Organization of the Book

In terms of the organization of the book, following this introductory chapter, the fourteen stories are presented in more or less chronological order according to when the storyteller joined the department of educational administration. Thus there are two decades of stories, from the 1970s to the 1990s. There is nothing sacred about the order chosen; rather it was a convenience decision and one that could conceivably highlight differences among the experiences of the firsts relating to the time and timing

of their entrance into the department. Readers are encouraged to read the stories in any order that appeals to them. It will not detract from the potency of the narratives or from what may be gained from reading them.

The concluding chapter is designed to look across the individual stories and make sense of the experiences and perceptions shared in a more holistic way. The stories are analyzed and discussed in terms of common themes that emerged as well as advice and lessons to be learned from the experiences of these groundbreakers.

One Last Word

Why a book about the first female faculty in departments of educational administration? If the foregoing has not convinced you that these women were unique and faced unusual challenges and circumstances that the existing literature in the field has ignored or masked in the voices and his-story of males who dominated and continue to dominate educational administration, it may be that nothing I can say will be convincing. However, let me add one or two notions to what has already been written.

Much has been written about the need to gain insight into the experiences of women (Grogan, 1996; Lincoln, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000); to study women “on their own terms” and “understand the way they think and speak about their worlds” (Shakeshaft, 1989, pp. 327, 335) from their perspective (Biklen & Shakeshaft, 1985). As Shepherd (1993) has noted, “What is absent is women’s testimony about themselves” (p. 22). The stories in this book allow insight and entry into the experiences of these women and provide an intriguing glimpse into the world of work they entered. Publication of this book denotes “acceptance of the principle that at all times, in all arenas of human action and intercourse, women are actors upon the historical stage and their actions must be examined, analyzed and explained” (Berkin, 1995, p. 108).

Further, their stories help build a more inclusive history. As Arthur Schlesinger noted in the introduction to *Pioneer Women*, “Women have constituted the most spectacular casualty of traditional history. . . . The forgotten man is nothing to the forgotten woman” (see Stratton, 1981, p. 11). The stories of first-generation women in departments of educational administration help fill the void in the historical record and preserve the “historical memory” (Berkin, 1995, p. 109) of their entrance and presence in the field. It also allows us to celebrate their spirit, courage, and contributions, and to better understand how we came to be as a field, something historians have long identified as a key to understanding the present (cf. Stamp, 1956). “History is who we are and why we are the way we are” (McCullough, 1984).

With all of the books about pioneers, there are few about the experiences or in the voice of women in higher education. Since the history of higher education is largely a history of a male-dominated institution, this book about firsts in a historically male-dominated department provides a glimpse into the larger phenomenon of women who are firsts in higher education. As Lincoln (1993) has suggested, “Until we have . . . a literature from the silenced, we will probably not have a full critique of the social order from their perspectives. Nor will we have . . . the means of sharing their daily worlds” (p. 44).

Similarly, this book provides a glimpse into the effects of a significant societal change as seen and experienced from within, by persons both intimately involved and affected by the change. It allows us to identify and question the “taken-for-grantedness of many of the assumptions that have informed traditional research and practice” (Grogan, 1996, p. 28) and to consider how gendered (male) dominance was “embedded in social institutions and individuals . . . and perpetuated in . . . institutional arrangements and everyday decisions and interactions” (Stockard & Johnson, 1981, p. 236).

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