
INTRODUCTION

Listening to the Voices of Women Leaders

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Listen to the women's voices. Listen to the silences, the unasked questions, the blanks. Listen to the small, soft voices, often courageously trying to speak up, voices of women taught early that tones of confidence, challenge, anger, or assertiveness are strident and unfeminine. . . . Listen to a woman groping for language in which to express what is on her mind. . . .

—Adrienne Rich

In describing their lives, women commonly talked about voice and silence: "speaking up," "speaking out," "being silenced," "not being heard," "really listening," "really talking," "words as weapons," "feeling deaf and dumb," "having no words," "saying what you mean," "listening to be heard," . . . We found that women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development, and that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined.

—Mary Belenky, Beth Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule

The silences I speak of here are unnatural; the unnatural thwarting of what struggles to come into being, but cannot.

—Tillie Olsen

The overarching theme of finding a voice to express a self-defined Black women's standpoint remains a core theme in Black feminist thought.

—Patricia Hill Collins

Adrienne Rich tells us of women's silence in the classroom, Belenky and her co-workers tell us of the development of self, Olsen tells us of literary history dark with silences that are "unnatural," and Collins tells us of the struggle of black women to find a self-defined voice. The concept of silence has become an important metaphor in feminist scholarship. Gerda Lerner documents women's silence in history (1979), Jessie Bernard in sociology (1973), Gilligan (1972) and Miller (1976) in psychology, and Tannen (1990) in language.

The twentieth-century struggle for women has been to find our individual and collective voice in order to proclaim our individual and collective significance. As the concept of "invisibility" was etched into our consciousness about African-Americans with Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1963), the concept of silence has been etched into the feminist consciousness of the twentieth century. As feminist theory has developed over the past few decades, the silence of women has been the metaphor for women ignored, not listened to, and women not speaking. Women's voices have been silenced, or not heard, because of the presumption that women's lives and work consist of the mundane and the ordinary, thus their stories are inconsequential. Too often women, too, believe they have nothing important to say, so they become silent.

The silence of women is especially true in education where women have dominated by sheer numbers since the late nineteenth century, but never dominated in recognized positions of organizational authority. Women have been the historically unheralded force in the public schools of America. Excepting for a few public educational leaders such as Emma Flagg Young, Catherine Beecher, or Margaret Haley, women have been invisible and silent in the unfolding drama of public education in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

In the last few decades, women's invisibility and silence as educators have been abridged with a new feminist consciousness. In education we have gained a new understanding of women who were important as leaders and teachers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century thanks to the attention of scholars such as Pauly Kaufman who documented women teachers on the frontier (1984) and Hoffman who wrote of the mundane and ordinary lives of teachers in the early twentieth century (1981). Today Grumet

(1988), Acker (1989), Freedman (1983, 1990), Weiler (1988) and Biklen (1987) provide us a portrait of the modern-day teacher. Since about 1970 there has also been a growing literature on women in administration by Gross and Trask (1976), Shakeshaft (1987), Schmuck, Charters and Carlson (1981), and Ortiz (1982), as well as on women's place in the international sphere (Schmuck 1987; Kelly and Kelly 1989). These books have been written to document and understand women's experience in schools and to explain why women have been underrepresented in school leadership posts.

This book goes further. The chapters document the day-to-day drama of how women lead, how they envision their roles, how they are socialized, what inspires them to go forward—or not—, how they cope with multitudinous demands, and how women teachers exercise leadership. The purpose of this book is to make women leaders visible and to hear the voices of women who lead in education; to tell the stories of women who aspire to leadership positions, of those who are in leadership positions, and those who exercise leadership in their positions as teachers in public schools serving students from kindergarten and pre-school to grade twelve, and women in higher education institutions.

These chapters tell us about the mundane and ordinary; they are about careers, conflicts, leadership crises, and the day-to-day chores of running educational programs and organizations. Yet these women's stories are consequential; it is through the daily mundane and ordinary events that leadership is exercised.

The chapters are written by academics, who are often educational leaders themselves, and by practitioners from their own experiences or through a study of women leaders. The collection reflects various methods of study; case examples, personal stories, qualitative and quantitative reports, assessments of existing practice and attempts to devise theory on women leading. It is an eclectic book necessary at this stage in the formulation of our thinking about women leading in education.

The book is divided into four parts. Each part represents women at a different stage in career development.

Part I. Preparing Women for Leadership: Conditions and Critiques

Gosetti and Rusch open the book with a critique of the theories of leadership and organizations which dominate the thinking in educational administration. Through the lens of feminist theory they explain how privilege has been an underpinning of administration theory and how those on the mar-

gins can offer a new perspective. Edson provides a unique ten-year longitudinal portrait of 142 women in the United States who aspired to become school principals. She tells us of their successes and failures, of dreams realized, unrealized, and changed. In a case study, Acker shows how one woman primary-school principal in England served as a career broker to inspire women teachers to be leaders; she shows us the importance of one woman's leadership to inspire women teachers to exercise leadership themselves. Romero and Storrs focus on experiences of women students in a graduate program in sociology. This chapter shows how a traditional program can ignore, and even exacerbate, silence and invisibility among women and people of color. Chaillé reviews the knowledge and training in a field that is almost exclusively a woman's field: early childhood education. She shows how the theory and practice in early childhood, a field overwhelmingly populated by women teachers and practitioners, is dominated by male theorists. The field, which is seen as gender neutral, not only disadvantages the predominately women core of teachers but female and male students as well.

Part II. Socialization of Women into Educational Leadership: Conditions and Critiques

Hart reviews socialization theory. She explicates the ways people are inducted into the arena of school administration and how women, who have been marginal as school administrators, require a new formulation and understanding of theories in organizational socialization. She shows, by case example, how the concepts of organizational socialization are enacted in the reality of women who are new principals. Pence describes formal and informal patterns of socialization focusing on mentorship programs for school administrators, one that focuses primarily on women new to school administration. Collay and LaMar, as third-party narrators, craft a story of informal socialization in a small rural school and the norms of gendered relationships. They tell of a male superintendent and a female head teacher through the lens of the traditional gendered family relationships; of the instrumental role of the father and the expressive role of the mother. They play out the "mom and pop" of organizational life. Worrall tells us her story in her own voice; she tells us of how and why she rejected the attempts to socialize her into the prevailing culture of school administration, and she agrees she is not "suitable" for promotion. Finally, McCall reviews the socialization of seven student teachers, and shows how the culture of administrative bureaucratic domination thwarts student teachers' attempts to build an ethic of care and compassion in the classroom. All these chapters

show us how the culture of schools socializes the entrants to the field—whether in teaching or administration.

Part III. Women Leading: Assimilation, Acceptance and Resistance

This section focuses on women who are in leadership positions. Schmuck opens the section describing the advocacy organizations for women in administration formed in the last few decades. She describes why they were formed, how they operate, what their agenda is and she includes a listing of state organizations for women administrators. Willi Coleman, an African-American woman, and Pat Harris, a white woman, tell their story in first person dialogue recounting their personal and professional struggles between ethnic studies and women's studies in a college. Their dialogue of conflict, miscommunication and distrust are representative of many stories of women and other minorities in higher education where multicultural interests turn into competition over scarce resources rather than into a story of cooperation and collaboration. It is perhaps all too familiar a story. Cooper analyzes the journal reflections of women administrators as they struggle with their identity as being female and administrators in traditionally male and hierarchical organizations. Through their journals we read how they resist male dominated bureaucratic procedures and find ways to be organizationally effective, yet remain true to themselves. Matthews, in a more traditional quantitative design, surveyed a state population of women superintendents, assistant superintendents, and high school principals. She investigates women administrators' commitment to gender equity issues in schools and classifies four orientations toward gender equity: isolationists, individuals, activists, and advocates. She tells us of women administrators who deny sex discrimination for themselves and for other females and who aspire to be "one of the boys," of women who identify themselves as feminists and actively work to support girls and women in schools. Matthews shows us that women administrators are not a monolithic ideological group; they have differing personal and political agendas and differing views about their responsibilities as women leaders to achieve equity. Schmuck and Schubert interviewed nineteen women principals, most of whom were not advocates for gender equity in their schools. The authors offer an explanatory framework for why women principals do not uphold a feminist agenda. Bell delves more deeply into the consciousness of women superintendents; she shows how women superintendents cope with their marginality in a male dominated field and how they reflect on their unique status. Scherr, also investigating the arena of the superinten-

dency, interviewed women assistant superintendents and argues that the “glass ceiling” may be invoked by women’s perceptions of the constrained roles of the superintendency. It is a rich description of women who have risen to the almost-top positions in the educational hierarchy but don’t want to rise any higher; she describes how these women portray the superintendency as it currently exists and why they reject this picture. They do not want to play the superintendent role as currently envisioned but see no alternative ways to enact the role. The women in this section are all caught between their roles as “insiders” in educational bureaucracies who are marginalized while they work for change.

Part IV. Shaping Alternative Visions of Leadership: An Agenda for A New Century

All the chapters in this section provide alternative models of women leading in education. Ford Slack and Cornelius in the “Red Road” show how the conceptions of traditional administration run contrary to the values and assumptions of the Indian culture. Ford Slack, a white professor, and Cornelius, a superintendent who is Ojibwe in a primarily native school, confront the paradigm of school administration and offer an alternative picture. Valentine focuses on a nursing hospital and demonstrates a female “culture” in which the norms work to support women’s role in the family, place high value upon children, and encourage collaboration among the teaching staff. Troen and Boles explicate examples of teachers in public schools who are leading important school changes. Their chapter addresses the recent movement to restructure schools by giving more power to teachers to influence school policy and practice. Hurty redefines the concept of power through a feminist lens; through her own experience as a principal she offers an alternative vision of power shared, rather than power as control. Regan, using the metaphor of the double helix, offers a feminist perspective on school leadership which confronts the traditional paradigm of administration. Dunlap summarizes many of the themes that emerge in the entire volume, and challenges us to develop a new research and practice agenda for the new century. This last chapter is a fitting end piece, giving promise to schools and colleges about women leading.

This is a beginning book, a collection of independent projects which should help us understand the wide range of leadership styles among women educators. It should inspire a more comprehensive approach to thinking about women leading in education. It is our hope that here are many ideas to encourage women leaders who, in Maya Angelou’s word, look to “cut herself a brand-new path” when the old ways won’t work.

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