

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The United States--indeed the world--finds itself facing change in every direction as new economic, political, cultural, ecological, and technological realities emerge. The opening of the Berlin Wall, the democratization of Eastern Europe, the ending of the Cold War, and the restructuring of the Soviet Union are just a few examples of the impact of global changes upon American society. With the vast changes in the world's economic and social structures and an expanding global orientation, American institutions must acknowledge and respond to the shift from nationalism to globalization.

Changes in the governance structures of world community nations from authoritarian to democratic continue to create a solid foundation for increased economic growth and free trade. This is resulting in economic interdependence among countries and the creation of a world economy. U.S. companies create and sell 81 billion dollars worth of goods and services in Japan. Which economy is that a part of--the United States or Japan? (Naisbitt, 1990).

The United States, with five percent of the population, continues to be the world's dominant economy producing one fourth of the world's national product. However, the basis of the economy has changed from one of industrialization to one of information. This has caused the creation of a new society; Drucker (1989) refers to it as the "knowledge society".

Knowledge work began to expand rapidly during the twentieth century. Worker status and allegiance changed consequently. Workers became "masters" in their own specialty area. This expertness created superiority, as knowledge workers knew more about their specialty area than did their bosses. Knowledge was transportable from one business to another, displacing worker allegiance from the institution to themselves and their personal expertise. Changes in the character of labor and work forced management to also change.

Traditional organizational hierarchies are no longer effective in providing the appropriate culture for knowledge work. The need for information created interdependence. Communication and relationships became paramount to productivity and profitability and created the impetus for new models of organization in American business (Drucker, 1989).

Because of the shift to an information-based economy, large companies are downsizing and including workers in management decisions. A shift away from bureaucracy towards democratization is subtly occurring as hierarchies, which have tended to divide and isolate workers, are flattened to accommodate the increased need for communication and cooperation.

In addition to the type of work and organizational changes occurring, the character of the work force is changing. Women and minorities comprise 89% of the civilian labor force, an increase of 38% over the past decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 1992, p. 381). Entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly popular particularly among women. The 1980s marked the first time more women were in the work force than at home and the 1990s have been hailed as the decade of administration for women with more than 5 million

women leading small-to-medium size growth businesses that will become top companies of the future (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992).

Political and economic shifts are causing profound changes in the nature of society. There has been much discussion, particularly in the media, about the dissolution of community. The forces of industrialization separated work and the family: factories fractionalized society while consumerism consumed it. Households once headed by two biological parents are today redefined in a variety of ways: nuclear families have replaced the extended family; single parent families have replaced two parent families; and, unfortunate as it is, zero-parent families are social realities. Small towns are disappearing into the fabric of metropolitan conglomerates connected by super and even "smart" highways that provide citizens with the increasing ability to move away from their neighborhoods.

Increased use of technology--particularly the computer--has fractionalized the work force. Workers no longer need to work together physically as they are easily connected now by sophisticated video-screen telephones, photocopy machines, facsimile machines, and computers, all of which are tied together in a complex network of telecommunication systems. Entrepreneurs, the largest growing segment of the business economy, can conduct business on a global scale without leaving their homes.

Public Education in the United States

One American institution that has been built upon the status quo is public education. It is traditionally organized to prevent cultural change (Joyce, 1990). It is predominantly characterized by bureaucratic notions of dominance, hierarchy, and individualism at the local, state, and federal level (Tye, K. A., 1990). Institutionalism of this magnitude calls for "deep structure" change which goes beyond "restructuring" to creation of a new educational paradigm (Tye, B., 1991).

The mission of American education has traditionally been to preserve the American cultural heritage through equity and excellence. Access to education is hailed as the "great equalizer," an agent of social mobility allowing lower classes to rise into gentility and social position. Currently there is an emphasis on high standards perhaps best epitomized by America 2000 (now Goals 2000)--a national strategy for moving America from a "Nation at Risk" to a "Nation of Students".

"A Nation at Risk" was a landmark report released during the early 1980s on the state of American education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). It was an indictment of public education and initiated a critical debate about the need for school reform. Cultural literacy, student mastery of basic skills, rising dropout rates, diluted curricula, teacher preparation, student discipline, parental responsibility, teacher professionalism--this report addressed it all.

What is the current state of affairs in public education? Although many claim the U.S. continues to lose its educational world standing, one wonders if this is rhetoric for change rather than truth. Sandia National Laboratories (Huelskamp, 1993) recently completed an extensive study aimed at putting the United States educational system in proper perspective. Looking at the data over time, Sandia found that on nearly every measure, trends were steady or slightly improving. Nine measures were compiled: dropout/retention rate, standardized tests, higher education, spending,

international comparisons, status of educators, skills of the work force, changing demographics, and national education goals. Of these measures, accelerating demographic changes are believed to have the most profound effect on future educational requirements. Immigration was higher in the 1980s than any other decade except the first, and it is expected to be higher during the next two decades as well. Low native-born birthrates coupled with increased immigration will significantly change the character and composition of America's student body.

The Call for Educational Reform

As mentioned above, the cry for educational reform resounded loudly during the early 1980s. Most recently, it is called "restructuring". This term has come to mean many different things. Teacher unions see restructuring as empowerment and decentralized decision-making; legislative reformers see it as an opportunity to reduce bureaucracy particularly in school/community relations; school board members see it connecting school and home giving parents more stake in governance; and think tank experts believe restructuring will create more socially relevant schools.

It has been argued that societal forces have forced American business institutions to change; and, likewise, the institution of education must keep pace with the changing needs of an information-based business economy. In a knowledge society, information is constantly changing and becoming more abundant. Education is the passport to good jobs and career opportunities.

American public education, in all of its bureaucratic glory, must be reconceived to accommodate the changing economic and social needs of a nation in the global community. Reconceptualization of public education requires reorganization beyond changes in programs and practices. It requires a redefinition of educational values, which manifest in a philosophy to undergird and shape American school culture.

School Leadership

School administration is a logical place to begin inquiry about educational change. Existing knowledge, theories, assumptions, and practices need to be examined for their relevance in providing direction for the change required to improve American education. Educational administrative theory has traditionally been guided by business management theory and formulated using an androcentric conceptual framework. Androcentrism views the world and the shaping of reality from a male perspective. This probably occurred for two reasons.

The first reason is the predominance of androcentrism in social science research. Bernard (1979, p. 268) posits that human knowledge has been viewed through a "male prism" which means that it has been predominantly male in subject matter, in assumptions, in methods, and in interpretations. Adherence to an accurate portrayal of human legacy requires that this be corrected in order that the "lacunae be filled and distortions corrected".

The second reason is that women have traditionally been under-represented in the field of school administration. Ninety-six percent of the superintendents and 76 percent of the school principals were men in the 80's (Feistritz, 1988). This occurs despite the fact that research indicates that women administrators are as capable as men and frequently better

(Barnes, 1976; Cirincione-Coles, 1975; Fishel & Pottker, 1973 and 1975; Grambs, 1976; Hulett, 1977), particularly in the elementary school principalship (Meskin, 1974); and this evidence has existed for many years (Frasher & Frasher, 1979). As the under-representation persists, it would appear that the data supporting the value of women as school administrators has been ignored or treated with skepticism (Frasher & Frasher, 1979).

Statement of the Problem

Upon examination of the literature on the experiences of men in administration and the literature on the experiences of women, it is evident that women experience the world of school differently from men and utilize styles of administration different from those of men (Shakeshaft, 1987). Research attempting to explain the effectiveness of female administrators--principals in particular--has suggested that perhaps unique, culturally-ingrained "feminine" characteristics are at work (Grambs, 1976; Frasher & Frasher, 1979).

Although much has been written about the history of women in school administration, women's career paths, and barriers to advancement, there has been little research documenting the female experience in educational administration through a cultural lens (Shakeshaft, 1987). This study is designed to generate knowledge about the administrative practices of the female administrative culture.

Purpose of the Study

The specific purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which three selected female administrators behave in the role of principal. This will be accomplished through an identification and analysis of the culture of female administrators. A cultural examination focuses upon the basic values, beliefs, and assumptions of female administrators as well as the resultant behavioral patterns and symbols. Shakeshaft (1987) characterizes this area of inquiry as the fourth stage of research on women in administration (see Appendix A). She urges further inquiry to document the feminine leadership style. It is only after this body of knowledge is formulated that work in stages five and six can properly proceed. The work in stage five is characterized by expanding educational administrative theory to include women's experience. Stage six then transforms existing theory. It reconceptualizes theory to include experiences of both men and women to form holistic theories of human behavior in educational organizations. See Appendix A for an explanation of the stages of research on women in administration.

This study is oriented by the concept that female administrators exhibit both traditional and "feminine" leadership behaviors. However, the degree, frequency, and circumstances under which these behaviors occur vary. Thus, with respect to three female high school principals, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. Under what circumstances and to what degree do feminine and masculine characteristics manifest in these three principals?

2. What values and beliefs motive the leadership behavior of these three principals?

3. What symbols are associated with each principal's behavior?

Significance of the Study

Changing the educational paradigm to meet the needs of a global society requires effective leadership from within the educational ranks. Current administrative theoretical frameworks are inadequate because they do not account for the female perspective, but rather generalize from research based upon male behavior. The underlying assumption, of course, is that male behavior generalizes to the female experience. Research in the social science disciplines has challenged this assumption and suggests that theories based upon this assumption are inadequate for explaining female behavior and ultimately render the female experience irrelevant (Daniels, 1975; Eichler, 1980; Miller, 1976; Parker & Parker, 1979; Parlee, 1979; Sherif, 1979; Slocum, 1980; Smith, 1979; Smith-Rosenberg, 1983; Spender, 1981).

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to an inadequately developed body of knowledge on the culture of female administrators. As long as the body of knowledge about females in administration is underdeveloped, theories of educational administration will remain impoverished.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based in gender theory with a focus upon an emerging body of knowledge currently referred to as the "female culture" or "female world" (Bernard, 1981; Ferguson, 1984; Gilligan, 1982; Lenz & Myerhoff, 1985; Lyons, 1983, 1985; Noddings, 1984). The female culture can be distinguished from the "male" culture by contrasting "style of life, set of values, as well as activities, relationships, and cognitive and emotional predilections that are present among women but absent when men and women are together or when men are together" (Lenz & Myerhoff, 1985, p. 7).

A broader definition of culture borrows from the recent literature on behavioral characteristics of organizational systems: "The culture perspective has focused on the basic values, beliefs, and assumptions that are present . . . the patterns of behavior that result from these shared meanings, and the symbols that link values, assumptions, and behavior" (Denison, 1990).

Assumptions

This study is guided by the following assumptions:

1. Administration and teaching are separate professions with unique identities that create distinct cultures.

2. Cultural reality is socially constructed.

3. The female administrative culture is part of a larger school administrative culture.

4. Females in school administration exhibit both feminine and traditional leadership behaviors.

5. Stereotypical notions of gender influence culture.

Delimitations of the Study

This study is confined to an in-depth examination of the way three female principals behave in their high school organizations. These schools are located in an urban and a suburban geographic region of the country.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of case study research should be cautiously generalized to other populations, particularly women. The value of this study lies in its ability to contribute information pertinent to a wholistic understanding of the way female administrators behave and valuable to how "feminine" values manifest in leadership behavior.

Definition of Terms

Administrative: management and direction of a school.

Behavior: observable activity; aggregate of responses to internal and external stimuli.

Case study: a systematic way to investigate a phenomenon or social unit within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence.

Feminine values: those attributes typically associated with the female gender (e.g., caring, connectedness, cooperation, creativity).

Feminist style of leadership: rational and intuitive set of actions directed at organizational goals as well as individual self-development. Rooted in the socialized role of women, this leadership style encourages participation, shares power and information, and builds community.

Grounded theory: theoretical reality inductively derived from the study of a phenomenon. It is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through inductive analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Leadership: rational set of actions directed at the accomplishment of organizational goals.

Traditional style of administrative leadership: rational set of actions directed at clearly focused and well-defined objectives accomplished through command and control.

Value: abstract concept of what is right, worthwhile, or desirable.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into six chapters, references, and eight appendices. Chapter I establishes a statement of the problem, conceptual framework, significance of the research, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and definitions. Chapter II presents a comprehensive review of the literature related to the guiding questions in the following areas: leadership and gender differences in leadership. Methods of research, including a discussion of the population and sample, the instruments, research procedures, and analyses are explained in Chapter III. The individual cases are presented in Chapter IV. The cross-case analysis is presented in Chapter V along with comments about the research questions. The study concludes with Chapter VI, which includes a brief summary, interpretation of the findings, recommendations for further research, and personal reflections. The references provide direction for further reading.

The Appendices provide supporting documentation for the information presented in the chapters. Appendix A and B provide supporting information that justifies the inquiry. Appendix C contains individual descriptive narratives about each principal. These detailed behavioral descriptions provide data and direction for the case reports found in Chapter IV. Appendix D contains the explanatory framework for the case narratives and case reports. Appendix E presents a description of a hypothetical principal constructed from the cross-case analysis of the case narratives and case reports. Appendix F presents the explanatory framework for each of the case reports. Appendix G presents a detailed description of the common constructs identified across the cases, the context of care. Appendix H is the last appendix; it contains samples of the original interviews and field notes organized and coded in Ethnograph.