

## CHAPTER VI. SUMMARY, INTERPRETATION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which these females behave while engaged in the role of high school principal. Because women have historically been underrepresented in the practice of school administration as well as in the research concerning it, studies are needed to validate and report the experiences of women as they administer in schools.

In an effort to provide direction to research endeavors, Shakeshaft (1986) charted six stages of research needed to integrate women's experience into a general theory of school administration (see Appendix B). This study focuses attention on women studied on their own terms in order to obtain a view of the (administrative) world from the female perspective (Stage 4).

The research approach selected was the participant-observation process, which allowed the women to describe and demonstrate their experiences as principals. Behaviors, undelimited by gender, were recorded and examined as observed, placed into categories, and arranged for presentation through two formats: case narratives (see Appendix C) and case reports (see Chapter III).

The case narratives provide detailed definitions and explanations of the behaviors observed, while the case reports order the categories to identify an administrative style<sup>1</sup>. Using findings from both the case narratives and case reports, a cross-case analysis (see Chapter V) presents common themes across the three cases.

Organizing research perceptions by using rubrics and categories captures and conveys the complexity of these three women's experiences in school administration. It also facilitates understanding, interest, and future reference. It may even stimulate introspection and provides readers with an opportunity to connect with parts of themselves as they compare and contrast how these women manage administrative affairs.

### Summary

This section summarizes the case narratives, case reports and cross-case report. The constructs and themes presented in the case narratives, case reports, and cross-case report, as well as their relationships to one another, are not exhaustive nor necessarily the only way to organize the data. Codifying and classifying traits and behaviors required that decisions be made about organization. This resulted in bringing some behaviors into sharp focus while obscuring others. This in no way diminishes the importance of this work, but rather attests to the challenge of researching and reporting women on their own terms.

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<sup>1</sup>The word administrative was chosen instead of the word leadership because the focus of this study was on descriptive behavior of the principal rather than on specific outcomes of that behavior on the school community.

### Case Narratives

The case narratives, identified by a descriptive title assigned to each principal, define and explain discrete behaviors. The narratives associate the behaviors and provide examples of the behaviors in context. The identification of values, beliefs, and symbols provide additional insight into the behavior of the principals and suggest beliefs about motivation and reward (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Descriptive Case Titles

Case 1	The Professional Principal
Case 2	The Guardian Principal
Case 3	The Constructive Principal

In-depth descriptions of each principal are located in the narratives (see Appendix C). Comparative lists of behavioral constructs are located in Appendix D.

### Case Reports

The case reports combine and reorder the behaviors presented in the case narratives rendering an administrative style description. Reordering facilitates the identification of a core category, which is the administrative strategy.

This administrative style is the principal's behavioral theme directed at accomplishing the school mission. At the heart of the administrative style is an administrative strategy, which is essentially an influence process (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Administrative Strategies

Case 1	Principled Marketing
Case 2	Steadfast Shepherding
Case 3	Benevolent Bestowing

The case report format was chosen for its ability to explain the relationships among and between categories and report those relationships in an interesting and meaningful way. In-depth case reports describing the style of each principal are located in Chapter III, Case Reports. Comparative lists of behavioral constructs are located in Appendix D, Meta-Matrix Charts.

### Cross-Case Report

The cross-case report represents an analysis of the combined case reports as well as the combined case narratives. The complete analysis is presented in Chapter V, Analysis and Findings.

## Case Narratives

The individual case narratives were analyzed for common categories. Two themes (creating community, improving the program) and their associated categories were identified (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Cross-Case Narrative Categories

Creating Community	Improving the Program
Presenting presence	Engaging vision
Facilitating relationships	Supporting operations

These categories are explained through a hypothetical cross-case description which is reported through a format similar to the actual case reports. This format was chosen to maintain consistency with the actual case studies. Dr. Helen Hunt, the humanistic principal, represents a composite of common characteristics and behaviors identified across the three case narratives and the case reports (see Appendix E).

## Case Reports

Using a paradigm logic model, the case reports ordered the categories for purposes of analysis and presentation. During the cross-case analysis of the case reports, several common constructs emerged across the ordered constructs.

Four of the constructs were reported as conditions: administrative context, vision, care, and equity. These conditions facilitated execution of the core phenomenon (administrative strategy). Two of the constructs were reported as outcomes of the strategy: mission and district support.

The largest common category across the three cases was care. It was combined with equity to form the context of care, a condition which influenced the administrative strategy. The eight characteristics associated with the context of care are reported in Appendix G.

## Interpretation

The study focuses on three principals who are identified by a specific style which they use to administer in their respective schools. At the core of the style is a strategy. This administrative strategy is not carried out in isolation, but is acted upon by external and internal forces. Some of these forces were identified during the analysis; however, most were not due to the limitations of this study.

This external context is easily pictured as a matrix of forces which not only act upon the principal, but also interactively act upon each other. The principals referred to this matrix as the "big picture". They felt that it was important to take these forces into account as they administered in their schools. Gayle explains this as she reflects upon a recent news report in Boston.

G: Sometimes because of what is going on around us, we get affected. We need to be aware, look and see how things are handled . . . in this case it was about a black man and a white woman. It seems basically like a hate crime.

The internal forces, which affect the principal, are best described as intrapsychic forces. They are accounted for through psychological and sociological theories about personality and sociocultural realities. Some of the forces and factors that affect principals are summarized below in order to frame the interpretation of the findings from this study (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Factors and Forces Affecting Administrators

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| <p>? The Eurocentric culture from which our country arose (its thinking and practices)</p> <p>? The Patriarchal culture which exists in the nation</p> <p>? The Androcentric thinking context within which school administration exists</p> <p>? The culture's notion of power and influence</p> <p>? The beliefs and practices of the school, district, state, and nation within which the school operates (policies, norms)</p> <p>? The beliefs and practices of the people who are an integral part of the organization</p> <p>? The beliefs and practices of the principal herself (intrapsychic influences)</p> |
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Although this study primarily focuses on the beliefs and practices of the principal herself, the principal cannot be extracted, with meaning, from the influence of the context (i.e., the "big picture").

The behaviors associated with each principal's style can be broadly abstracted as task and relations behaviors. Behaviors like these have been resolutely documented and reported through a variety of taxonomies, with differing levels of abstraction, since the 1950s (Yukl, 1998).

In the present study, the behaviors associated with each principal are arranged to create unique styles guided by a vision. At the heart of each style is an administrative strategy around which the other behaviors are ordered. This strategy is carried out within a context of care, which was identified as a common condition across the three cases.

As each administrative strategy is considered within the context of care guided by an explicit vision, it can be reconceptualized and abstracted into a broader category. Principled marketing can be abstracted to the broader notion of promoting, steadfast shepherding to protecting, and preeminent proffering to providing (see Appendix D). Considered together as a group, these constructs are sustaining processes which uphold and support people.

Each principal's strategy, conceptualized as a sustaining process, is in essence, a kind of power. It is, however, not the kind of command and control power typically associated with traditional leadership. It is rather a form of "effective agency" which Hillman (1995, p. 204) describes as "functioning each day to support our getting and doing".

Through the sustaining processes of promoting, protecting, and providing, the principals create an environment within which they nurture others in order to release an inert potential believed to exist in all things. Hillman compares this process to the natural philosophy of alchemy whereby the alchemist, working with natural forces, transforms matter into gold.

Hillman engages us to view the alchemical process as a viable way in which to think about each principal's application of power. It is an artful encouraging and releasing of the powers innate in members of the school organization, ultimately maximizing the potential of each member through discretion, rather than coercive direction.

This kind of power, alchemical in nature, and sustaining in process is not easily mapped, although its totality is more easily grasped through images and symbols rather than descriptive language. Demeter, the Greek goddess whose charge is children, provides an image that instructs us in the agency of care, sustenance, and empowerment. These are the influence processes employed by these three principals. Most commonly associated with the harvest and pictured with a cornucopia, Demeter reminds us of the "power of feasting in many non-Western societies, where the mark of prestige, authority and leadership, as well as the aim of ambition, is to give away to everyone all they can ever possibly eat" (Hyde, 1979)<sup>1</sup>

The outside forces are reflected in the complex bureaucratic organizational structures which surround and encase the women, while the forces within emanate from their own personality structures. The masculine qualities are demonstrated through their strength of conviction in creating an organizational climate that is fair, equitable, and just. The feminine qualities characterize these principals as women, who know, perhaps instinctively, how to nurture and care for others. As the principals make use of the forces located both within and outside of themselves, they exhibit a creative expression of "effective agency".

In blending the feminine with the masculine through their role as principals, the women in this study move from the Aristotelian style of logic characterized by "either/or" into a dimension of "both/and" where the dichotomies of life are resolved. No longer is there opposition between "the heart and the head". The polarities disappear giving way to the unity that arises from their synergistic blending.

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<sup>1</sup>Note. From Kinds of Power: A guide to Its Intelligent Uses (p. 205), by James Hillman, 1995, New York, NY: Currency Doubleday. Copyright 1995 by James Hillman.

This synergistic blending occurs as these women exhibit a style where their masculine qualities blend with feminine. This blending seems to free the principals from concern about stereotypical images. It allows them to expand their identities and honor all aspects of themselves.

A sense of order emerges from this visceral blend. This order seems to guide each principal's behavior. It facilitate their use of ideas, language, and care, what may, indeed, be the currency of power in the schools of tomorrow.

#### Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to document the female administrative experience in order to expand concepts of administrative theory, particularly as they are based in men's experience and men's thinking. Shakeshaft presents an ordered set of stages of research "essential in the evolution of a paradigmatic shift" in administrative thinking and theory (Shakeshaft, 1986, p. 12).

Stages 1, 2, and 3 document respectively the absence of women in administration, the search for existing female role models, and the reasons women are a disadvantaged or subordinated group within the field of school administration. Research on women's experience, such as this study, documents what Bernard (1985) calls the "female world" (Stage 4). Studies completed at this stage lead to challenging existing theories (Stage 5) which ultimately transform administrative theory (Stage 6) and complete the shift.

Women's ways of thinking, being, and doing cannot be extrapolated from men's behavior anymore than men's behavior can be extrapolated from an ape. There are similarities, but there are also significant differences. Studies such as this one require aggregation through meta-analysis in order to transform theory. According to Shakeshaft, this would result in the creation of a unified body of knowledge inclusive of both men's and women's thinking and experience in school administration. Research through stages 5 and 6 would honor differences and diversity rather than sameness and generalizations (see Appendix B).

Current descriptive studies of managerial work suggest that complementary behaviors are woven together creating a whole greater than the sum of the parts (Kaplan, 1986). Yukl (1998) advocates that future research efforts in the area of leadership focus attention on overall behavioral patterns rather than discrete behavioral components. Research should also include studies about the complex ways in which behaviors interact.

The research on the differences between men and women is inconclusive although there seems to be a substantial amount of evidence which differentiates men and women on the characteristic of aggression (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Currently, there is little evidence to suggest there is either practical or statistical significance associated with leader performance. More research is needed in this area to avoid exaggerated stereotypes about both men and women.

Changing our schools through school administration is inevitably bound up with changing ourselves. Noticing the feminine and masculine

aspects of ourselves is a positive beginning. However, research is needed to complement and expand what we know about self-management, which involves behavior and cognitive strategies to manage our reluctance as administrators, our reactions to others, the different ways we communicate, and how we consciously build self-confidence (e.g., interpreting a problem as an opportunity) (Sims & Lorenzi, 1992; Manz, 1992). What we learn about ourselves can then be used to encourage and facilitate self-management in staff members. (Manz & Sims, 1991) It is easy to see how self-managed members of an organization offer greater commitment to task and social relations.

This study suggests that there is a connection between psychological growth, as indicated by blending masculine and feminine behaviors, and role effectiveness. Further research documenting this is needed to reappraise organizational theory.

We must move beyond the either/or thinking that characterizes traditional educational theory into the both/and world of a new humanistic theory of school administration, which honors differences and diversity. The women in this study are humanistic principals guided by a positive model of human experience which recognizes the innate potential in every human being. Maslow (1954, 1987) posits that this approach honors the growth process, values feelings, desires, as well as emotions.

Motivated by these values, the principals in this study created a context of care within which they related to the members of their school organization. The context of care was a container for the sustaining process that honored the power within the individual.

May (1972) discusses two kinds of power which are associated with these sustaining and empowering processes. They are nutrient power and integrative power. Nutrient power is expressed through a concern for the welfare of a group for which, in this study, the principal carries responsibility. Integrative power, on the other hand, is power with another person. It is similar to the concept of empowerment and is the kind of power that can lead to growth and change for the individuals involved. These two kinds of power deserve further exploration for their possible contributions to administrative theory.

People through their ideas shape our lives; often this goes unnoticed. Mary Parker Follett, most notably a sociologist and social worker during the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was prescient in her notions of leadership and organization. It is only now at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century that her work is being recognized for its merit (Graham, 1994).

Follett's work is appealing because, like the effective agency of the principals in this study, it is supportive and inclusive. Follett (1924; Graham, 1996) favored integrated and democratic forms of management. She recognized that "power with" could be much more effective than "power over" because it honored people's need for meaning, dignity, and community in their work lives. She believed that genuine power was not coercive but rather "coactive", which would ultimately enrich and advance the human soul.

## Reflections

Initial interest in the topic of this study grew out of a desire to understand more fully the nature of educational leadership. Because of a significant difference in gender representation in public school principalships and my own interest in this career path, I decided to study this phenomenon. I focused on women, the group underrepresented both by position and by research interest.

Shadowing the three female principals, who were the subjects of this research, was a privilege. They graciously allowed me to enter into and become a part of their administrative worlds. This experiential venue for study significantly affected both my knowledge about and admiration for women who assume principalships. While my current position as assistant principal provided the perceptual acuity to understand the role, the analytic engagement provided an insight into administrative context and style that I had not previously been privileged to understand.

The dissertation process, as anticipated, proved to be a rigorous professional challenge. What was not expected was a concurrent personal challenge. As I analyzed the administrative behavior of the principals, I found myself intensely reflecting on my own behavior. As the course of study proceeded, I encountered aspects of myself that seemed to demand as much time and attention as the qualitative research task itself.

The story of *Psyche*, as adapted from the interpretations of Erich Neumann in *Amor & Psyche* (1971), Robert Johnson in *She* (1989), and Jean Shinoda Bolen in her national bestseller, *Goddesses in Every Woman* (1984), provides an explanatory framework for the qualitative dissertation process as I experienced it.

In this popular myth, the mortal maid and heroine of the story, Psyche, jostles with the great Goddess, Aphrodite, over Eros. Eros is both son to Aphrodite and husband to Psyche. In the story, Psyche loses Eros to Aphrodite. In order to win him back, Psyche is required to gain Aphrodite's favor by fulfilling four tasks.

On one level, this is simply a good story, fodder for a romantic novel or soap opera. On another level, it is a story about the feminine journey. Symbolically, the tasks represent psychological challenges that must be met in order for a woman to grow and mature.

The dissertation process, as I experienced it, is similar to Psyche's quest in that it is about achieving a goal through task engagement and approval seeking. Like Psyche, I fervently wanted to accomplish a goal (writing a dissertation) by accomplishing the research tasks set before me and garnering approval from my committee.

Like Psyche, I found the tasks required to achieve the goal daunting. They were overwhelming because, like those set before Psyche, they required the cultivation of aspects of myself previously undeveloped and even possibly unacknowledged.

The tasks, after all, were tasks assigned by the great Aphrodite, who surely represented some goddess aspect of myself oriented to achievement. Certainly, no mortal could possibly succeed in accomplishing them. I suspected that Psyche and I had undertaken more than we could

competently manage, particularly as we faced the first task with little confidence.

The first task required that Psyche render order to chaos. She was given the task of sorting and organizing thousands of different kinds of seeds. This was a monstrous task, which caused her to cry out in despair and fall into a depressed sleep.

Like Psyche, I despaired at the immensity of the data management process. The identification of a topic and subsequent collection and organization of so many different kinds of data (e.g., observations, conversations, interviews, and documents) caused a great deal of anxiety and consternation. I often felt overwhelmed, tired and anxious. For two years, I put off seriously dealing with this undertaking, which was metaphorically "sleeping" on the job. I allowed work and family obligations to distract me from the work.

It slowly became clear, however, that I must face the challenge of the first task or give up the study. Systematically and logically, I assessed and assigned priorities to the information (seeds) just as Psyche did in the story. This was a necessary step before I could face the second task.

Psyche's second task involved gathering Golden Fleece from the rams of the sun. Psyche feared this task because it required that she imperil herself traversing the fields where the fierce rams roamed. It was only there that she could secure their fleece. She absolutely had to face her fear.

Like Psyche, I was apprehensive about the enormous effort required to acquire the knowledge (fleece) necessary to prepare a dissertation. I had to read and comprehend a variety of disciplines associated with the research topic (e.g., school leadership, social psychology, gender differences, and acquire skill in grounded theory methodology and the use of technology (Ethnograph (1998) and MS Office (1997))). I knew very little, comparatively, about these disciplines so rigorous study was my only course of action.

I feared being overcome by the sheer volume of information much as Psyche feared being overcome by the rams. However, we were both resolved. Consequently, Psyche collected the fleece; and I filled my mind which became a reservoir of knowledge and understanding. The gains made in this second task, however, would be challenged in the third task.

The third task required the development of another important process, discernment. Psyche was required to dip into the heavily guarded River Styx to extract just the right amount of water to fill a crystal container. My task was to dip into my own newly acquired reservoir of knowledge to extract just the right amount of information to construct the dissertation. This was a formidable task that was constantly threatened by the fourth task.

The fourth task was the most challenging because it required the development of self-confidence, self-direction, and self-determination. Psyche's last task was to bring back a cask of aromatic beauty ointment from Persephone, Goddess of the Underworld; my task was to bring the dissertation to full and fragrant completion.

We were both required to ignore distractions and use a sharp sword of discrimination in responding to pleas from others for attention and assistance. Although this seemed antithetical to our feminine instincts, we both realized we simply must learn to say "no" in order to conserve our energy for our goals.

From the Goddess of the Underworld, Psyche received a cask, which appeared, by worldly standards, to be empty. It was, however, indeed full of the wisdom and insight gained from task engagement -- learning that is invisible to the eye and untouchable by the hand, but is acknowledged by the mind and valued by the heart. The cask symbolized the dissertation and represented the learning associated with achievement.

There was a sense of accomplishment and a sense of well being upon the accomplishment of the tasks. *Pleasure*, the daughter subsequently born to Psyche and Eros, was the affective outcome born of the quest.

It is important to note that in this story, Psyche did not act alone. She had helpers from the natural and man-made kingdoms. Symbolically these helpers represent the internal and external forces that come to the aid of heroes and heroines as they make their journey. In Watership Down (1972), the brave rabbits had Kehaar, the noisy gull; while the hobbits were assisted by Gandalf the Wizard (Tolkien, 1966).

Psyche's helpers facilitated her success. The ants assisted her in the first task, the reeds in the second, the eagle in the third and a tower in the fourth. Like Psyche, I looked to these same kingdoms for my own sustenance and support and found them right in my own backyard. The woods behind my house became my sanctuary where I retreated when I despaired.

The insects, birds, and vegetation became consorts in my dissertation quest. From the insects, I learned task persistence and from the birds, perspective. By observing the vegetation, I came to understand the will to grow. The river, which ran through the woods, provided the metaphor for flowing over and around obstacles that obstructed progress.

Just as Psyche had her tower, I had my deck which rose high above the ground to greet the branches of the trees surrounding it. The tower, which is man-made, symbolically represents the cultural legacy of our civilization (Johnson, 1989). In the story, it advises Psyche not to open the cask of beauty ointment from the underworld.

Psyche, however, disregards the instructions of the tower, the instructions that would keep her, and others like her, subordinated. Psyche opens the cask and ultimately is reunited with her husband. Symbolically through these events, Psyche comes into full recognition of her feminine identity. Her identity is strengthened through the reconciliation of the masculine and feminine aspects of herself symbolized in the story through the union with her husband.

The creative task, intrinsic to the dissertation process, was dependent upon the supports I found in nature, in music, and in the company and assistance of significant others (i.e., professors, cohorts, friends and family). Without them, the research effort would have been barren, devoid of passion, meaning, and insight.

Although from the professional perspective, the dissertation represents status and stature, it was the personal meaning derived from the process which (always) held the most interest and significance for me. Ultimately, I realized that the dissertation was the impetus for personal growth. Like Psyche, I felt compelled to pursue the tasks and achieve the goals at any cost. Like Psyche, I learned to question the status quo and challenge my own thoughts and feelings about the world around me.

The learning associated with each of the four tasks represents the professional and personal capabilities I developed during the dissertation process, which occurred over seven years. It was difficult to stay faithful to the process during such a long period of time. However, as I persevered, I grew in sensitivity and understanding. Confirming signs came in the form of "aha" experiences, which served as markers signifying insight and progress.

The rigors of the research process acted as developmental catalysts prompting the acquisition of organization skills, a vast amount of new knowledge, a measure of discernment, and a proclivity for inquiry. I find myself now enriched by the experiences and associations connected with this endeavor. And, despite the new title which bears witness to the completed work, I will remain a student (of life) en route . . . .

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

-T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding" in  
Four Quartets