Chapter 12
A Bricolage of Voices: Lessons Learned from Feminist Analyses in Educational Leadership

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I entered the educational leadership professoriate in 2002 as a feminist scholar who pointedly chose to make gender a "useful category of analysis" (Scott, 1987) in her mission to serve the field as a social justice researcher and teacher. I made this choice to be a feminist scholar and to engage in feminist teaching and research fully informed (*thanks to a great mentor because it always eases the blow of disappointment to know what your obstacles are going to be up front*) and with eyes wide open of the knowledge that the path I chose may be difficult; awards and grants might be scant or absent for research on women (*they were and still are*), reviews of my writing and research might be unfavorable (*some were…the most biting was the review I received stating my use of feminist poststructuralism was like a jelly and ketchup sandwich and the most ridiculous was when I was asked to change my feminist interpretation of a set of data to a human resource framework because of editorial discomfort with a feminist analysis*), and many might question the validity of studying women (*some did and still do*). Regardless, I entered this world of creating a purposeful presence of social justice in educational leadership at my own risk and, honestly, never looked back. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the lessons I learned from a decade of studying women in or aspiring to educational leadership positions and to determine whether gender has actually been a useful category of analysis. Have I learned my lessons well? How have I, personally, come to consciousness as a researcher? What story do the varying images and counter narratives of women educational leaders collectively tell? And how can I best express this story?

In art, collage is a technique of pasting materials together, a type of makeshift handiwork, that changes the nature of a creation as a whole. According to Stern (2008), collages have been used for centuries to "enhance the texture of their

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offerings" and have strong connections to other art forms that attempt to transform two-dimensional forms into three dimensions. In literature, collage, often referred to as bricolage, is a piece of work created from diverse sources and is the use of words as an artistic form of expression. Bricolage offers readers an assemblage of forms, or stories, that create a new whole. The weaving of stories together also facilitates a connection between the viewer (reader) and creator (writer). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), a researcher who brings together multiple perspectives is, herself, a bricoleur or quiltmaker (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) as she pieces together a body of perspectives that, together, help readers understand a complex problem that cannot be explained by one of the perspectives alone (p. 4). Hence, bricolage, because of its very nature, allowed me the creative freedom to piece together what follows as a type of literary art that has both practical and political significance.

Further, because this bricolage is also autobiographical in nature, as I discuss my own work and experiences as a feminist researcher, it allowed me to critically perceive the world in which I have immersed myself in the past decade and, thus, come to see this piece as a reality in process (Freire, 1993). According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing that makes the experiences of the researchers "a topic of investigation in its own right" (p. 733) and that "displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 739). It places the self within a social context, for the purposes of this chapter, feminist research in educational leadership, and allows the self (me) or selves (the participants of multiple studies) to serve as the vantage point (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Autoethnographers "ask their readers to feel the truth of their stories and to become coparticipants, engaging the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually" (p. 745). This chapter is a collection of the findings (stories, perspectives, voices) of the studies of women I have engaged in over a decade and is my attempt to transform them into a piece of art that is multidimensional, an autoethnographical bricolage, and that moves beyond perspectives from different studies in isolation to reflecting upon them as a whole and considering what significance they hold together. Uniquely, the readers themselves can also become part of the bricolage as they construct their own meaning-making of the content, much as art aficionados do when observing and discussing paintings and sculptures.

The Foundation upon Which the Pieces Were Laid

The foundation upon which an artist creates a masterpiece holds vital importance as it sets the tone for all that can imaginatively follow. Research that addresses biases experienced by women in educational leadership (or who wish to advance in educational leadership) (Bjork, 2000; Blount, 1998; Chase & Bell, 1994; Grogan, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Young & Skrla, 2003) framed my work for the past 10 years and, in essence, this bricolage. According to Tallerico and Blount (2004),

> These factors [biases] include ideologies about appropriate sex roles, social stereotypes about who looks and acts like a leader, the socialization of children consistent with such stereotypes and norms, the bureaucratization of schooling that was built on separate spheres for women (teaching) and men (leadership), the conceptualization of schooling and its leadership in ways that emphasize competition and authority (stereotypically masculine strengths) rather than collaboration and service, administrative employment practices that present higher barriers for women than for men, and the greater proportion of men than women earning graduate degrees in educational administration up until the mid-1980's. (p. 640)

While affirmative action policies (programs that seek to redress past discrimination) in the United States have spurred advances in career opportunities for women, gender conflicts have remained static for the principalship due to the expectations that women should perform to male standards of leadership while also continuing to be responsible for duties at home. Askari, Liss, Erchull, Staebell and Axelson (2010) explored young adults' (single men and women ages 18–41) expectations about future household and childcare chores and division of labor. Though both women and men reported egalitarian relationships to be ideal, their expectations of reality were more skewed and, in fact, gender imbalanced. Women reported believing that though they wanted to do fewer household and childcare chores than previous cohorts of women, they would ultimately end up being responsible for more chores than they wanted to do. Furthermore, Orrange (2002) found in a similar study that though men report wanting wives who are career oriented, they expect them to sacrifice their careers for children if needed. Simply put, women's increased entrance into the workforce (and, specifically, school leadership positions) did not transform expectations of gender roles at home (Hochschild, 1989) because the root cause of gender discrimination has not been addressed (Schor, 1991); the problem has been merely patched.

Changes in hiring practices and policies are not enough if unspoken rules warn women not to utilize family policies that have been implemented to protect them and if women, once gaining positions, are still expected to adopt the same working patterns as men and continue to be forced to choose between having a family and leadership aspirations. Furthermore, as expectations for school and district leaders have increased, the number of hours required to perform the job has increased (Read, 2000), creating second (Hochschild, 1989) and third shifts for women who must find the time somewhere in the hours of a day to carry out the duties of a principal, wife, and mother simultaneously. This "gendered time" (Hantrais, 1993) often weeds women out of the leadership applicant pool. Women often deny their differences and live double and triple days by assimilating and multitasking to survive because they have less social power (Marshall, 1993).

While many reasons exist in the form of both internal and external barriers for the lack of women in top leadership positions, I have spent much of the past decade trying to gain a deeper understanding of these factors and how they impact women in both similar and contrasting ways. Mentoring has been of particular interest to me as it seems that the act has potential for moving women forward in the field if studied and implemented in purposive ways that advance equity. Readers will note themes related to mentoring emerged often from the data I collected. Readers will also note that I consciously chose to promote a collaborative approach to the

scholarship I engaged in as my own way of "activating" feminism. The majority of works featured in this bricolage were co-constructed with other women. This choice was deliberate and the method I enacted to "pay it forward" to women was new to the field of educational leadership. Some of the projects were conducted with my own doctoral students, some were conducted with doctoral students across the country that I was asked to formally mentor, some were conducted with colleagues new to the field and who struggled to create research agendas and records of scholarship, and some were conducted with colleagues who were positioned to challenge me in my own growth as a scholar. In essence, this bricolage was formed from a network of methodological mentoring.

The intersectionality that young women and women from ethnic backgrounds experience has also been a source of inspiration for me as the literature on women's experiences from multiple backgrounds is more sparse than literature on women in general (White, middle-class women). My intent has been to add to the body of literature on women leaders with the specific purpose of providing as much new information as possible to move the field forward by questioning the processes and socialization embedded in the preparation of leaders and leadership practice and by giving voice to many who have been unheard.

The Laying of the Bricolage

As I considered how best to lay the pieces of the bricolage of the feminist analyses I have engaged in over the past decade, it seemed most natural to lay them piece by piece from the beginning of my career. I vacillated back and forth as I wondered whether it made most sense to lay them down in chronological order or by subtheme and finally decided that by providing readers with a chronological order of selected works, they would best see the development of my growing consciousness as a scholar. What follows is an accounting of these selected works. I begin the description of each body of work with a quote from a participant that represents a theme central to the findings.

The Bricolage

> I guess in a lot of ways it's [the reason I'm not perceived as a leader] because I'm a real soft person…Like my father, he was a natural leader. He was in the military and people followed and respected him without question. (Sherman, 2005, p. 729)

In 2001–2002, I conducted my first study of women in leadership as my dissertation research (see Sherman, 2005). As I dialogued with my dissertation chair about how I might make a contribution to the field, it became clear that while there had been a movement to understand the processes of informal mentoring in relationship to women in educational leadership, little was known about the processes of formal

mentoring. Thus, I focused my study on women's experiences with a formal mentoring program; one that was district-based and couched as a "grow your own" leaders initiative. The proposed major advantages of formal mentoring programs at the time were that a greater number of aspiring administrators might be reached and the needs of a more diverse population of prospective administrators might be met (Fleming, 1991). Informal mentoring had come under scrutiny because of the reproductive element attached to the process (ritualized behaviors to protect and maintain a status quo) (Darwin, 2000) and its reported inaccessibility to women and minorities (Mertz, 2004; Smulyan, 2000) leading to the reduction of their chances of attaining principalships.

I conducted a survey of men and women's experiences with one district's formal aspiring leaders program and, based on survey responses, followed up to gain a greater understanding of women's meaning-making through interviews. Findings indicated that the program promoted the district's (superintendent's) view of leadership, which according to participants was more hierarchical than collaborative in nature as touted by the district and the leadership program itself; women participants were more comfortable imagining themselves in curriculum leadership roles because these roles did not conflict with "female-appropriate" roles; and women had not negotiated new discourses or paths to leadership positions. I wrote:

> The majority of participants spent numerous years in the classroom before ever considering moving into administration. These women had not conceived of alternative routes to administrative positions other than continuing to "play the game" and following the traditional path to leadership positions. They struggled to gain concrete experiences considered to give them credibility with those in powerful positions while also fulfilling their responsibilities as mothers, wives, and teachers, even with full awareness that men are not always required to follow the same path. (p. 727)

Furthermore, women participants felt that they had to take the initiative to ask for admittance into the program, while men were tapped automatically and asked to complete the program as an "afterthought" because many of them were already in leadership positions in the district.

One of the most interesting findings surrounded the notion of networking. Many of the women interview participants who had not gained leadership positions after participating in the aspiring leaders program did not understand that networking when aspiring to an educational leadership position involves establishing key connections and contacts with current leaders who hold positions of power in the district. The majority of the women, instead, conveyed the misconception that networking means getting along with and working collaboratively with their colleagues. They were unaware of the connection between networking and power (because the discourse available to them was limited based on prior experience or lack of experience with mentoring) and lacked the understanding that the act of mentoring can sometimes be equated with the gaining of power.

Applying a feminist poststructural (Davies, 1994; Lather, 1992; Weedon, 1997) analysis of the findings allowed me to understand that socially produced assumptions guided most women participants to believe that they were best suited for curriculum leadership positions because these types of positions did not conflict

with the "nurturing" roles they had learned to accept and they could be "soft" leaders who were not expected to be "dictatorial" in nature. It was also apparent that a type of covert screening for the leadership program occurred as those people who were not informally mentored by current administrators in the district tended to be screened out of the process before they even began to think about participating in the program because they could not see themselves as true candidates for administrative positions in the first place and, thus, hesitated to participate in the program. According to Weedon (1997), common sense notions, or perceived "truths," such as the above (women are best suited to curriculum positions; leaders must be loud and militant), are constructed from social meanings that favor particular groups. This "fixed" wisdom in educational administration, based on the White male experience, left many of the women participants out as they questioned their fit in the aspiring leaders program, struggled to find leadership positions to no avail after participating in the program, and wondered whether they were suited to leadership positions in the first place while also being responsible for duties at home that were in conflict with commonsense notions of leadership.

Male Principal

I saw opportunities opened and doors opened for me to step into leadership positions – and I mean doors [really] opened – and I was very blessed to have had the types of mentors that I've had and I've applied for certain positions and I was able to obtain those. Before I knew it, I was in this [principal] role. (Sherman, Clayton, Johnson, Skinner, & Wolfson, 2008, p. 67)

Female Principal

I applied 14 times to be an assistant principal and felt I wasn't being looked at fairly for this role. I continued to ask if there was anything more I could do to improve myself and my understanding of the position… (Sherman, Clayton et al., 2008, p. 67)

Despite the body of literature that placed the act of mentoring under scrutiny, many practitioners and researchers agree that the benefits (or potential benefits) of mentoring are significant (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh, 2003, 2004; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Hubbard & Robinson, 1998; Mertz, 2004). And some have found that women leaders who identified mentors advanced to leadership positions more often than women who did not (Gardiner et al., 2000). Thus, the purpose of the next study I engaged in with several of my doctoral students at the time was to examine the experiences of both women and men principals across four different school districts related to their pathways to their leadership positions and to find out whether mentoring served as a critical brick on the leadership pathway for participants (see Sherman, Clayton et al., 2008). And, rather than focusing on formal mentoring alone, the focus for this study was on mentoring of any form.

Neither the men nor the women participants found participation in formal district-led mentoring programs to be helpful. In fact, both felt that participation in the program was more of an activity to check off a list of things they were supposed to do. In contrast, informal mentoring was described by both men and women as a significant step on the path to the principalship. Every male interviewed identified that he had been encouraged by a mentor (usually a supervisor) to begin a path into

administration. Mentoring, for the males, was unsolicited. However, women principals did not report any form of encouragement by supervisors that was unsolicited. Each described having to approach a supervisor to express an interest in future leadership positions. Throughout the interviews, women used language that indicated a frustration with the status quo and an unspoken requirement for assertiveness in obtaining leadership opportunities. This frustration spanned across the act of seeking a principalship to their tenure as principals. Men, however, chose words like "blessed," "opportunities," and "open doors" when they described their pathways to leadership roles. This contrast in discourse indicates that mentoring worked to the advantage of men participants and the overall lack of mentoring had caused a broken pathway to the principalship for women.

> If there is a crisis, I know I have had more than a few…what's really good, we call each other. Everybody kind of like, fixes it. And it's really cool because we might have all different kinds of perspectives and then we talk about it, collaborate, come up with solutions, and then we do it. All of us…it's not just…nobody feels like their own island…which, I really like. (Sherman & Crum, 2008, p. 115)

Some studies have shown that women hold more leadership positions in organizations led by other women (Chen & Addi, as cited in Addi-Raccah, 2006), that women who have advanced to leadership roles are more likely to have worked for women principals in their tenures as teachers (Riehl & Byrd, 1997), and that women empower other women (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993). Continuing to understand the strengths and the shortcomings of mentoring and to make sense of how mentoring (or the lack of) impacts women leaders, a colleague of mine and I studied the empowerment of women leaders by analyzing focus group conversations of the women leaders of a district that had a large number of women serving in leadership positions at the time (see Sherman & Crum, 2008). These women, of multiple ethnic backgrounds, served in numerous leadership roles at all levels and spanned in age from 26 to 61 years.

One of the most interesting themes that emerged from the data was the creation of networks of support that acted like mentoring "bodies" or groups for these women. One young African American assistant principal talked about mentoring in familial terms when she said:

> Funny that you say that [ask about mentoring] because I am sitting across from my little mentoring group and I always use to call them my aunties. They were very encouraging. Always encouraging. Still encouraging. Always saying, "You can do this. You can step out there. You can try to put your stuff out there." Sometimes it is not what you think. You may run into disappointments along the way…They were always there for the rebound saying, "You can pick yourself up. You can do it." And that was encouraging for me. And it wasn't just one person, it was a group of encouraging administrators. (p. 115)

The women participants in this study worked to lift one another up and, thus, took pride in one another's accomplishments. These women also had a keen understanding of networking, in contrast to women participants from other studies, and, furthermore, understood the visibility that having powerful mentorship afforded to them. Finally, due to the value these women placed on mentoring and networking one another, the act of "paying it forward" or creating a "pyramid effect" was critical to maintaining the foothold they had gained in leadership roles in their district.

But I think little by little we are finding a few women who do have that capacity to mentor. I think another thing is that we've never seen ourselves in those roles because we've never had the experience…because how can you mentor if you do not have the experience [because you can't get a leadership position]? So now, when I find myself with 33 years of experience, surely I should have something to offer. But do you have to wait to get all this experience [before you can mentor]? (Sherman, Muñoz, & Pankake, 2008, p. 251)

After studying the influence of mentoring on leadership trajectories, it made sense to try to understand more about the act of mentoring itself. Instead of studying women principals' perspectives, two of my colleagues and I decided to probe the experiences and thinking of women who had made it to the superintendency, reasoning that these women would have had ample time as they moved up their career ladders to top leadership positions to experience some form of mentoring (see Sherman et al., 2008). Not surprisingly, all of the women interviewed were able to identify mentors who had played significant roles in their career advancement. However, when probed, they struggled to describe them in concrete, action-oriented ways supporting the notion that women have less developed mentoring systems (Glass, 2000). In actuality, while the women talked about people who had encouraged them to seek leadership roles, they served more as "voices" of inspiration rather than individuals who were willing to take action for these women. Definitions of mentoring indicate that it is active and deliberate rather than passive, including descriptors of the process such as teaching, coaching, advising, promoting, directing, protecting, and guiding (Brunner, 2000; Gardiner et al., 2000; Grogan, 1996; Kochan, 2002) leading us to question whether these women were authentically mentored.

Additional themes that emerged from the data included the lack of women role models (the fact that men hold the majority of top leadership positions places women at a disadvantage for mentoring), the isolationism of women who hold top district positions (many were the only women superintendents in their areas), the importance of simple "confidence boosters" (while probing the women about mentoring, we learned that "hearing" about their worthiness was vital to these women to gain confidence), and the challenge of being denied access to critical information, as indicated by the following comment:

…Information is power and an organization that doesn't keep people [all people] informed or doesn't even want them to be informed, that is cruelty in first order. It shows that you don't trust them, that you don't respect them. If you really want to keep someone from growing or getting promoted, don't let them know what is going on. Keep the information away from them. (p. 251)

   I believe I lead differently than the traditional man that I replaced. I respect him greatly and we have really great conversations. But, I know I'm a different leader than he was. He is very physical with the kids…A very physical kind of guy who grew up in the hood and he's kind of rough and tumbles with the kids on a regular basis. That's the kind of thing I could never do as the 5 foot Asian woman that I am. The person I replaced used to stand in the hallway and on the streets with a bull horn just going nuts, you know…doing his thing. And, that's something I don't think I could do. He'd just stand over…and teachers say this with some measure of pride and love, he'd stand over in the middle of the hallway kind of surveying his plantation as they called it. And, that's something like, okay, that's not something I would do or feel comfortable with. (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008, p. 461)

After gaining perspective on women's pathways to leadership positions, whether through formal or informal mentoring opportunities (or sheer desire and willpower), and learning of common difficulties shared by women such as balancing home and work lives and building leadership confidence, I was compelled to learn more about practicing women leaders from varying ethnic backgrounds and to make sense of the intersectionality of gender and race. So, a doctoral student and I designed a study (see Wrushen & Sherman, 2008) to examine multicultural women secondary principals' experiences (Note: Identifying and locating secondary women principals was difficult enough. Adding ethnicity into the mix made for a difficult sampling process). For minority women, though the intersection of race and gender doubly complicated their leadership experiences, gender worked more effectively against their success as leaders for most of the women. They described difficulties with stereotypical comparisons between their styles of leadership and that of their predecessors based on gendered perceptions of how principals should look and act. They also indicated a discomfort with the power inherent in their secondary principalships. The women tended to disown their power and preferred to describe themselves as servant leaders, facilitators, and team players. This propensity for "power with" strategies rather than "power over" tactics (Brunner, 2000) resulted from the belief that power is contradictory to servant leadership and inhibited them from owning their power and using it to enhance the success of their schools.

While gender was more often the most prominent challenge for the women participants, several comments were shared that indicated race was, indeed, an added challenge for some. One of the African American principals put it this way:

> Being a Black female in a leadership role is difficult in itself. Every position that I went into it seems like I was always the first [African-American in that role]. I was paving the way and, based on my actions, whether or not the door would be open for anyone [coming after] me. To me that was added pressure to do a good job because I wanted to make sure that since I was the first, I would not be the last. (p. 462)

While this woman experienced a complicated intersectionality while serving as a principal, another described her intersection as one that took prominence at a much younger age and impacted the very idea of whether she would even be allowed to obtain an advanced degree:

> My dad was Lebanese and my mom is Hispanic, so I was raised in a culture that is very conservative…The understanding of my dad was not as receptive when it came to pursuing anything beyond my bachelor's degree. He thought, "why do you need to continue?" (p. 459)
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> I like to jump into classrooms and kind of co-teach along with the teachers and demystify some of the looks on kids' faces when they're not getting it. It's hard to go from that to demystifying this aloof leader that people want you to be. I do think as years go on, the principal role will be seen very differently. We all kind of grew up with this expectation of what a principal is supposed to be and I think that as we kind of change and smudge some of those edges, things will improve. Until then, people will struggle. (Sherman & Wrushen, 2009, p. 183)

So much data were collected from the study of multicultural women secondary principals that my colleague and I reported our findings in two separate articles (the one mentioned directly above and the one summarized here – see Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). The women unanimously described themselves as relational and

collaborative leaders who took caution not to abuse their power and, instead, used it to empower those that surround them. They were proud of who they were as leaders, but struggled to break traditional leadership molds. In addition, while all of the women shared beliefs of a "greater power" beyond themselves, the Hispanic and African American women described themselves as specifically religious and spoke candidly about prayer to ground themselves and make good decisions.

Unique to these women's perspectives was the operationalization of their mentoring experiences (counter to the Sherman et al., 2008, study). In our opinion, this validated them as more authentic. Even more distinct was their report that these relationships were experienced with other women rather than men. The women described themselves as continuous learners who were servant and collaborative leaders. They spoke of being members of larger leadership teams who took the time to develop caring relationships with their school communities. This "activist mothering" (Naples, 2003) existed for these women, across ethnicity, as part of their caretaking roles as mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives. According to Harding (1991), emotional work has been relegated to women because of historical divisions and separation of labor between men and women. While emotional work was expected of them because of the historical separation between men and women (Harding), the fact that these women actually embraced this notion and strove to be relational leaders revealed their attempt to push traditional leadership paradigms outside of traditional masculine styles of leadership.

Finally, most of the women reported roadblocks to their success as leaders. According to Harding (1991), feminist standpoints are derived from perspectives on daily life. For these women, these obstacles were part of the "dailiness" of their lives as secondary school leaders. Distinct to this study was the finding that these roadblocks consistently came from other women leaders. One principal put it this way when describing the obstacles she had encountered:

> Another thing is not giving up information. And, I'll tell you that is one of the things…that not sharing of information is, I think, one of the most destructive things to leadership and shared leadership and healthy environments where you have to work with a number of administrators. And, I think that is frequently a tool that women use against one another. I spent my entire time to undo, supervise, monitor, and correct that one person instead of running the school. It was a nightmare. (p. 188)

Her frustration with having to combat sabotage lodged at her from an assistant principal was apparent. In summary, the women's individual standpoints formed a collective whole in most instances, meaning their experiences as practicing leaders were more similar than different across instances of both gender and ethnicity.

Principal in Mid-30s

> After meeting me, the superintendent told my principal that he could not hire me because I was too youthful. My principal pointed out that I was the most qualified applicant and that the district had hired several APs at the high school who had been younger than me. His reply was, "But they were men." (Sherman & Beaty, 2010, p. 24)

In my continued research on women and attempt to understand women's experiences from a multitude of perspectives, it became apparent to me that it might be telling to study women leaders across generations. Therefore, my colleague and

I shaped a study to examine women's experiences in the principalship across generations in the USA to capture perspectives of participants who were born around the same time and share similar historical experiences and to compare these with women born around different times and social experiences (see Sherman & Beaty, 2010). We framed our understanding of the data with feminist phase theory (Tetreault, 1985) which had been previously used to study how feminist thought was integrated into curricula. We interviewed young women principals, middle-aged women principals, and veteran principals at varying levels of school leadership. Though we expected that their experiences would be captured in the stages of feminist phase theory according to their cohorts, we found that the ages of the women were not always prevalent, as indicated by the following quotes from women of all ages in the study:

> I am much more of a nurturer than I believe is appreciated at the secondary level. I have found that my style of leadership is much more valued at the elementary level—with regard to students and teachers—by the board and the community. (p. 25)
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> This job is very demanding. There are days that I don't get home until nine o'clock at night. My husband is very supportive but I can tell it is wearing on him. I have started going home by six so that I can be 'Mommy' through dinner, homework and bedtime and then I get out my computer or paperwork and it's back to business. Honestly, I don't sleep a lot anymore. (p. 30)
>
> My mother always wanted me to go to college but my daddy never really saw any value in that. It's not that he really cared if I went, he just did not see the need for me to do so. (p. 23)
>
> I graduated from high school and was set to attend [Research One University]—already had a room reserved. Then, for some reason, decided at the last minute to get married instead. After my first two children were born, I decided to go back to school. I loved math and wanted to major in accounting but my husband thought that education was a better choice for me because it worked better with the children's schedule. So that's what I did. I became an elementary math teacher. (p. 23)

We heard from veteran and middle-aged women that their husbands' careers dictated their career choices. We heard from all women the struggle to balance work and home expectations as women's role expectations have remained unchanged. And we heard very few instances where the women described making meaning of their leadership roles on their own terms. The women in this study, whether young or old, continued to struggle with stereotypical assumptions about leadership and balancing work and private lives indicating that while opportunities for leadership positions have increased, the expectation that women will perform to male standards has remained intact.

> I will tell you when I first started out, Dr. X used to call me little girl. I was like, "If she calls me little girl one more time…" I style my hair to look older, believe it or not, because my first secretary…they always thought she was the principal. Sometimes my looks will deceive people so I try to always have on a suit. (Sherman & Grogan, 2011, p. 16)

Women in educational leadership have been studied for years longer than the decade I have been in academia. The collection of literature that exists has helped us to better understand many of the challenges and motivations that define the work of women in positions that have been largely held by White men in the past. Yet, young women in these roles have not been well studied to date. In fact, the existing literature provides almost no data on young women's experiences in the principalship.

And the study I conducted on women leaders across generations yielded little difference in experiences with stereotypical assumptions and behaviors. With such a small sample of young women leaders in the study outlined above, I wanted to identify a larger group of young women principals to better understand how young women view the world and to look for any signs of a changing landscape in educational leadership. If young women see the world differently from their mothers and grandmothers, my colleague and I thought we might find some signs of differences in the way they go about the work of leadership, or at least some differences in what they hope to achieve with the power in that position. However, we also knew we might find that the discourse of educational leadership is so steeped in tradition that regardless of the way they see themselves, young women, like those women that have led schools and districts before them, feel the need to conform to certain norms and expectations that leave little room for self-expression or for putting their own stamp on leadership. Therefore, the purpose of this study (see Sherman & Grogan, 2011) was to seek out young women's experiences (40 years of age and younger) in the principalship in an attempt to understand and make sense of how gender impacts a new generation of women leaders.

At the time of the writing of this chapter, though my colleague and I continued to be immersed in data collection, several themes had begun to emerge. Women reported surviving the first years of their principalships only to emerge as stronger instructional leaders, community leaders, and models for other leaders in their districts, despite their young ages. Their community leadership was at an unprecedented level as they attended local churches and organizational meetings, served on the boards of the low-income housing projects that surrounded their schools, and established open-door policies for the parents of their students. Not surprisingly, they reported continuing to struggle with balancing their work and home lives. However, what we heard from these young women was that, unlike women leaders before them, the push to choose between having a work and home life (as experienced by many veteran women) was a nonissue. They reported having full knowledge of the difficulties that would face them and went full steam ahead and got married, had children, and sought leadership positions at young ages. They talked about the exhaustion they experienced because of juggling so many roles at once and, several reported significant health problems as a result of the stress.

One interesting theme that emerged from the preliminary data analysis was that all of the first six women we interviewed were African American women who were serving at-risk school populations. Furthermore, none of these women had experienced difficulty gaining their principalships despite their young ages, gender, and ethnicity. Instead, they served as "healers" in their districts and were moved from challenged school population to challenged school population, never having the chance to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Their mission was to "fix" one school and then move on to another. And this mission was forced upon them as the women reported exhaustion from this process and not being given the opportunity to turn down moves to multiple school environments (i.e., three schools in five years). As my colleague and I continued to identify young women principals and interview them for the ongoing study, simultaneous with the writing of this chapter, we knew

we would need to modify our interview protocol and interview process to better probe the thinking and understanding of women principals and to ask questions as a result of the first data we collected such as: Are there more young women principals who are African American than of other ethnicities? Are African American young women principals abused as they are required to move to multiple at-risk school environments that other leaders refuse to take on? What will be the implications for young women who have developed health issues in their early years as principals if they remain in the profession?

Giving Significance to the Bricolage

According to Stern (2008), collage, or, for the purposes of this chapter, bricolage, influences the perception of the viewer (reader), making the relationship between the observer and the piece of work more meaningful. Returning to the questions I posed at the beginning of the chapter: Has gender been a useful category of analysis (Scott, 1987) in my scholarship? And what significance does this collection of counter narratives hold? Without question, mentoring impacts self-confidence, leadership trajectories, and leadership practice (Note: The meaning I attempt to make here is bounded to the population of participants of the studies outlined in this chapter). Almost all of the participants of these studies recognized the importance of having mentors and validated the practice of mentoring as an important influence on the pathway to leadership positions. However, men and women experienced mentoring in different ways. Men were more often encouraged to apply for leadership positions and tapped as individuals to promote as principals. Women were not often encouraged to apply for leadership positions and suffered from an overall lack of women role models and mentors. Women struggled to identify mentoring that was action-oriented in most cases. Those who were the exceptions often spoke of mentoring as a network of "activist mothering" (Naples, 2003) that helped them pay it forward and, perhaps, negate competition among themselves by taking ownership of the success of other women leaders and aspiring leaders. This notion of "activist mothering" can be applied to the higher education setting by veteran women scholars taking ownership of the success of women new to the field, much as I have tried to do in my efforts to help women doctoral students and colleagues new to the field establish themselves through research endeavors (for more information on women's experiences in higher education, see Newcomb, Beaty, Sanzo, & Peters-Hawkins, 2013; Sherman, 2010; Sherman, Beaty, Crum, & Peters, 2010). In regard to formal mentoring, few participants valued these leadership preparation programs and were suspicious of their intentions, indicating that this form of mentoring has not escaped the weaknesses identified in informal mentoring processes. These programs fell prey to promoting the status quo and were not found to promote more women into leadership positions.

Being denied access to information was as detrimental as the lack of access to mentoring for women. Information is power. Whether women were denied

information/recognition (confidence boosters) about their potential as future leaders, whether they were never explained the hidden rules of the leadership process of a district, or whether they were actively sabotaged by others in their districts, the lack of access to knowledge was effective at keeping the numbers of women in leadership positions down. One of the most concrete examples of the lack of access to information was the misunderstanding that many women had of networking. The fact that men knew how to network for power and positioning with those in leadership positions in districts (and had, indeed, been networked themselves) and, instead, women spoke of networking in relation to getting along with fellow teachers spoke volumes about hidden rules that kept women aloof from pathways to leadership positions.

Without a doubt, women of all ethnicities and ages struggled to gain a balance between their work and home lives. They worked their first shifts as school and district leaders and then took on second shifts when they got home and filled gendered expectations for their roles as wives and mothers. The women wore multiple hats to demonstrate their capabilities as future and practicing leaders and practiced a "never let them see you sweat" mentality. However, behind closed doors, the women admitted exhaustion from their daily efforts to be "superwomen" and described consequences such as broken marriages and poor health.

Curriculum leadership was a strength for the women, and, for the most part, they embraced relational work – and were good at it – by making connections with students, parents, teachers, and their surrounding communities. However, many of the women expressed explicit discomfort with the inherent power of their leadership positions and struggled with the binary oppositions that held their roles as leaders and wives/mothers in competition. They expressed desires to change notions of power and to associate new language with their leadership styles such as "collaborative" and "servant." For women in the university setting, this means creating research networks with other women scholars across national and international settings and empowering one another through collaboration (collaborative power being more comfortable for many women rather than singular power).

While intersectionalities between ethnicity and gender complicated many women's experiences as leaders, biases related to gender were recognized and described as most prominent by these women. Some women failed to recognize biased behaviors when asked about their experiences with them, but, in deeper discussions with me, described instances where they had been explicitly impacted by stereotypical assumptions and behaviors. Sadly, across generations, women's descriptions of their leadership experiences varied only minimally, indicating that policies sometimes failed to bring about changes in practice (and certainly not changes in beliefs or assumptions). And, at the time of the writing of this chapter, data that were collected on young women leaders pointed toward serious health consequences from holding principalship positions for young African American women who may have been abused by their districts as they were expected to reform the most difficult of schools repeatedly.

In short, gender has been, and continues to be, a useful category of analysis for myself and for other feminist scholars. Countless voices have been added to the

leadership "story" that may have remained silent without this work. These women's counternarratives have both practical and political significance for those of us who hope to move the study of women forward for the purpose of increasing their numbers and successes in educational leadership roles. We know a good deal about women's ways of leading from existing research. We have less information on how collaborative and relational leadership is linked, through empirical studies, to student achievement and school success. And it is not clear how we can move beyond the "gendered" language of leadership to that which focuses on best practice rather than "feminine" and "masculine" styles of leadership. We must expand our ideas of what leadership can and should look like and promote these reconceptualizations of leadership in our preparation programs so that when our graduates move into practical settings, leadership practice and notions of leadership will be transformed.

We know that women have struggled, and continue to struggle, balancing their home and work lives. This has not changed across time in the literature on women leaders. Why are we still talking about this? Because nothing has changed. And why has nothing changed? Because the reconceptualization of men and women's societal roles have, largely, remained unchanged. It is difficult to transform leadership practice and role expectations in education when resocialization is needed on a more global level. Can gender and leadership be redefined without social restructuring? Until such a time, we might work smarter and more diligently toward investigating notions of job sharing in school leadership (i.e., coprincipals) as well as forcing policies that make on-campus childcare a mandatory option for women principals who are also primary caretakers of their children. At the very least, we need to know more about how affirmative action and family policies have been implemented and how they have or have not been useful.

We know that many women have been left out of both formal and informal mentoring opportunities. We must now take this knowledge and work specifically to actively promote and recruit women into top leadership positions (in both K-12 and university settings). We must make ourselves and the women we study active participants in an agenda for change. We can and should create networks of support for ourselves, both feminist scholars and practicing women leaders, if for no other reason than to ensure our own survival! This requires specific efforts toward mentor pairing between prospective/new and veteran women leaders, professional development for those who will be engaged in the work of mentoring and for districts needing to operationalize best mentoring practices to "grow their own," the study of expanded notions of mentoring through greater networking actions, the promotion of mentoring practice by those who are involved in leadership preparation at the university setting (mentoring should be included in course/program content so that graduates can enter leadership positions ready to mentor and bring others along the leadership continuum), and pointed efforts at feminist research collaborations between women scholars in the university.

Finally, we should ask whether our research methods have best accommodated women and their stories. Are these same methods best for understanding the experiences of a new generation of women leaders and how they make sense of and define leadership? Do young women make meaning of leadership the same way their mothers

and grandmothers did? Do we need to expand our methods for understanding? Are we asking the right questions so that our investigations yield a new history (Scott, 1987)? Should we look at old questions from new perspectives or frame new questions for new perspectives? Should we continue to look across our work and create larger bricolages? Perhaps we need to continue our efforts in some cases but expand our "samples" of women to better gauge what women's experiences are from an increased multicultural and global perspective. Perhaps universities should reconsider tenure structures than value single-author research over collaborative efforts at research. Furthermore, the fight for equity is much more advanced in the USA when compared to many other countries that are still struggling to make the education of girls a possibility and priority. How can we, as US feminist scholars, become more politically active to expand our fight for social justice to ensure the survival of girls and women worldwide?

It was my hope that the words of the women participants of my studies would give voice to many who have not been heard and inspire additional research on women leaders. It has also been my hope that more women will learn to claim rather than receive their leadership roles (Rich, as cited in Martin, 1985) and, eventually, help the field of education lay claim to best leadership practice through consciousness raising, the setting and attainment of new goals, and the integration of new scholarship (Martin, 1985). Much has been left unheard. And, as long as more is to be learned and the devaluation and exclusion of women in leadership continues, an appreciation can be gained from women who have managed to achieve and thrive in school and district leadership positions (Harding, 1991). We must now be more pointed in our research on women and build upon that which we already know. We need to identify where change can be initiated and take place. Our work must now be politically directed toward change, and figuring out how best to do this is the challenge for the next generation of feminist scholars working side by side with veteran women scholars.

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