ED 373 440   EA 026 050

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TITLE   Emancipatory Research: Support for Women's Access to
                Power. Draft.
PUB DATE   Apr 94
NOTE   28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
                American Educational Research Association (New
                Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994).
PUB TYPE   Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports -
                Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *Critical Theory; Elementary Secondary Education;
                *Females; Hermeneutics; Inquiry; Leadership;
                Leadership Styles; *Power Structure;
                *Superintendents; *Women Administrators
IDENTIFIERS   *Postmodernism

ABSTRACT
        This paper presents findings of a critical
ethnography that examined the relationship between gender and the
definition of power, and its use in the politicized role of the
superintendent. Based on Stewart Clegg's (1988) conceptualization of
power relationships as "circuits of power," the ethnography was
conducted in a larger metropolitan area headed by a female
superintendent. Data were obtained from nonstandardized interviews
with those in male circuits of power, those in female circuits of
power, and those related to the superintendent either directly or
indirectly. Other data sources included document analysis and
nonparticipant and participant observation. Findings indicate that:
(1) women define power differently than men; (2) when women operate
according to the female concept of power (viewed as "power to" rather
than as "power over"), their chances to acquire positions of power
increase dramatically; (3) women who attain positions of power are
most successful when they adopt female approaches to power that
stress collaboration, inclusion, and consensus-building; (4) to
become powerful, women must become culturally bilingual (speak the
language of males while remaining feminine); and (5) women are
normally excluded ᵣom the male circuit of power. Contains 70
references. (LMI)

EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH:
SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S ACCESS TO POWER

by

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DRAFT

A paper presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research
Association: New Orleans, 1994

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> In the jargon of modern American committee life and of general responsible social relationships, a phrase has crept in in the last few years, "from where I sit." It is often said half-jokingly, and yet it implies a total change in point of view. As one adds with a grin, or a half-smile, or perhaps a little rueful twist to the mouth, "from where I sit," this is an admission that no person ever sees more than part of the truth, that the contribution of one sex, or one culture, or one scientific discipline that may itself cross both sex and cultural lines, is always partial, and must always wait upon the contribution of others for a fuller truth. (Margaret Mead, 1949, p. 39)

It is time to emancipate silenced voices through research. It is time to move the center of the discourse to the margins in order that voices "from where I sit" are new, previously unheard utterances. It is time to listen to the opinions that women hold surrounding the issue of power--to hear their definition of and to observe their use of power. For these reasons, emancipatory research methods demand our attention. These emanicpatory methods draw our eyes away from an androcentric or male defined worldview, a male defined version of power and its use, to a world of multi-defined views, multi-truth realities described and seen by those other than white men-- a necessary view when seeking a fuller truth surrounding the concept of power.

This fuller truth insists that I as researcher own my position in my research in order that the sounds "from where I sit" are at least somewhat honest in revealing the biases I embrace. It is after all my view--as a white female educational administrator--which becomes privileged in this study. It is my view which narrows the raw data from the field. It is my view which dictates which part of the narrative to make available to the reader. I as researcher play god in this study making decision after decision unattended and unaided by anyone--not even those researched. And, thus, even as I make use of what I refer to as emancipatory methods, I fail to truly emancipate anyone or anything. Although my efforts are weak, I must at least make an effort to share that "fuller truth" which has been completely overlooked in the past in favor of the androcentric worldview which is so comfortable and familiar that we have come to believe it is "the" Truth.

In order to understand the limitations of a male-defined or androcentric worldview, and more specifically the limitation of a white male articulation of the definition and use of power, one must acknowledge that all research reflects a set of shared beliefs and values. Damage is not done so much because of a particular worldview, but because that particular worldview has been the only lens through which researchers have observed human behavior. The study of male behavior, particularly white male behavior around the use of power, only becomes a problem when the results of studying male behavior are assumed appropriate for understanding all behavior (S..akeshaft, 1993, p. 94). It is appropriate, therefore, to do research which includes a female-defined worldview--a female articulation of the definition and use of power.

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Methods of Study

The method employed in this study, critical ethnography, is rooted in post-structuralism and feminism, and its approaches have developed in political science, sociology, anthropology, and ethnography. [1] Such methodology is used because of the need to hear previously marginalized voices; voices marginalized because of the limits of androcentric positivistic research.

As the primary need of this emancipatory project is to understand a complex human experience surrounding the concept of power, positivistic research methods will not be employed. A definitive critique of positivism which finds it inadequate in the face of the complexities of human experience has been established in the literature (Kaplan, 1964; Cronbach, 1975; Bernstein, 1976; Mishler, 1979; Giroux, 1981; Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Feinberg, 1983; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Foster, 1986; Smith and Heshusius, 1986; Van Maanen, 1988; Cherryholmes, 1988; Clegg, 1989; Fraser, 1989; Barone, 1990; Eisner, 1990; Guba, 1990; Scheurich, 1990; Apple, 1991; Lather, 1991; Brunner, 1993, etc.).

We live in a time of tremendous change in our understanding of the limitations of scientific inquiry (Kuhn, 1970). The processes of scientific inquiry which make everything knowable through the supposedly impersonal norms and procedures of "science" have been radically questioned (Apple, 1991). Although the dominant positivist paradigm, with its "fundamental tenets of science, including objectivity, researcher-object/subject separation, empirical verification, cause-and-effect order in the world,..the unity of sciences," and the search for the "Truth," retains its central position in practice[2], its theoretic position has been disrupted and displaced by interpretive and critical paradigms, which, broadly defined, are epistemologies based not on "objectivism but on subjective perception and meaning making" which allows representations of multiple-truth social realities (Scheurich, 1990, p. 2; Lather, 1991). These representations of multi-truth social realities are important because the dominant group's view is "partial and perverse" in contrast to the subordinate's view, which has potential to be more complete" (Nielson, 1990, p. 48). This completeness provides access to those subordinate views/definitions of power which previously have been unrecorded in power research.

Ways of knowing, seeing, and perceiving are culture-bound. Researcher values and position in culture, their own discursive practices, permeate the inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Fraser, 1989; Lather, 1991). The inquiry, then, becomes an interpretive act that occurs with the writing of texts, and as with any form of writing, certain constraints partially determine what is written (Van Maanen, 1988). A few general difficulties, asserted by Van Maanen in Tale of the Field: On Writing Ethnography (1988), follow.

First, inquiries [ethnographies] are experientially driven, in that researchers draw directly from their own experience in the field. This establishes instrumental or critical limits to what a given researcher can or cannot learn in a given setting. For example, Warren (1988, p. 10), a prominent feminist ethnographer, has written: "Just as all knowledge--even language itself--is political, reflecting power relations (Foucault, 1978), all knowledge is gendered." Warren shows how ethnography is highly influenced by the researcher's gender, the informant's gender, and the relation between the two. Much has been written on how personal characteristics open doors for some while closing them for others.

If uninfluenced objectivity is unattainable, an alternate methodology is compelling. When using the tools of ethnography a researcher may choose to take a position of critique. This critique may be designed to advocate a position of social justice in order to avoid being

blindly prejudiced, purposely limiting the inquiry. [3] This particular limitation-- a position against racism, classism, and sexism--is viewed by many as the legitimacy of postpositivist research (Lather, 1991).

Second, inquiries are politically and personally connected. In the world of budgets and academic sponsors, particular agendas attach themselves to the fieldworker. Many times, in order to facilitate the completion of her research, the fieldworker will operate under the thumb of or be directed by these particular agendas, even when these agendas are outside the interest of the fieldworker. These types of political constraints may alter the nature and original intent of the research. In addition, the fieldworker brings her own personal agendas to the field. As is true in any interaction, the researcher influences participants in a way that further limits or changes the study--in fact, in a way that changes the participants (Van Maanen, 1988).

Third, inquiries are shaped and determined by the disciplines in which they are grounded. Institutional materials absorbed by the fieldworker drive her interests and assumptions and eventually impact the outcome. General intellectual trends and debates also impact the final product (Van Maanen, 1988).

Characteristics of Ethnography as an Alternative Method

The writing of an ethnography has inherent characteristics which affect the research. First, the way the writer of ethnography expresses herself in writing shapes the work. Style is a matter of choice for the writer and may fall within the range of traditional factual reporting, or may be closer to the controversial literary style. "Some styles are, at any given time, more acceptable in ethnographic circles than others. These are the ones that most powerfully fix our understanding of what a culture is and what it is not--our own and others'" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 5).

In addition, the practice of ethnography in a traditional sense is constantly changing. What has been accepted practice in the past may be unacceptable in the present. New participants in the field, funding patterns, problems of interest and any number of pieces which can and do alter over time, create a new definition for what continues to be referred to as ethnography (Van Maanen, 1988).

The Possibilities of Critical Social Science

Because this study is focused on the relationship between gender and the definition of power and its use in the politicized role of the superintendent of schools, the use of critical ethnography--a post-positivist and value-laden method of researching about power, economy, history and exploitation (Van Maanen, 1988)-- has great possibilities. Anderson (1989) refers to "critical ethnography" (p. 254) as having the potential for "unmasking dominant social constructions and the interests they represent, studying society with the goal of transforming it, and freeing individuals from sources of domination and repression..." (p. 254).

If a reader feels the necessity to categorize this particular study, it would fall most easily into the category of "critical ethnography." It must be noted, however, that this categorization is in direct opposition to the goal of deconstructionists. "The goal of deconstruction is neither unitary wholeness nor dialectical resolution. The goal is to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal" (Lather, 1991, p. 13).

<u>The Need for Empowerment.</u>

A critical ethnography or social science must be based on research methods which empower those involved to change as well as understand the world. Lather (1991, p. 4) uses empowerment to mean "analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives." In fact, this collaborative critical inquiry is needed to empower the researched as well as the researcher. It is the collaborative approach to the inquiry which puts the researched and the researcher in the position to empower themselves.

It is this emancipatory, empowering research which supports women's access to power by: 1) allowing previously unheard voices to participate in the definition of power; 2) arguing that alternate views of power are useful in current society when all sectors are calling for a leveling of hierarchical power, for leadership styles that are collaborative in nature, for a valuing of all voices, and for a healing of diversity.

Need for the Study

Currently the canon in educational administration asserts a desire to attract the best candidates for administration positions in education (The National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1989). This canon is asserted while tremendously capable women are not being hired. The overwhelmingly prevalent practice of hiring men rather than women for administrative positions is a common event. ⁢ is regular practice of hiring men rather than women is based on shared beliefs and values which are taken as given--not questioned. There is a need, then, to reexamine and rethink this seemingly nonproblematic practice and the discourse surrounding it. As Hochshild (1981, p. 1) points out, "...when evidence leads us to expect something that does not happen, an investigation may be warranted." It is this thought that drew me to a discrepant event, one which does not happen with any regularity--that : , ʰe selection of a woman as superintendent of schools in a single community.

Theoretical Perspective

When faced with the fact that around n. ⁢y-seven percent of superintendents of schools are men, the obvious question is "why?" (Arnez, 1981; Ortiz, 1982; Edson, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989). Although experience as a building-level administrator is not always a requirement for superintendency credentials, at a practical level it certainly is a pre-requisite. Thus, the low number of women as principals--a fact which is difficult to explain when the vast majority of the pool from which building-level administrators are hired is female--would be an obviou⁢ reason for the low number of women in the superintendency. Other rationales such as lack of support from network/mentors, lack of role models, and family demands have been offered as explanations (Schmuck, 1975; Shakeshaft, 1979; Tyack and Hansot, 1982; Marshall, 1984; Yeakey, Johnston, and Adkison, 1986; Edson, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Whitaker and Lane, 1990; Lynch, 1990; Campbell, 1991). In my judgment, however, these rationales are insufficient to explain the low number of women in the superintendency.

A neglected but important theoretical perspective suggests that cultures, communities and "professions are constituted by what is said and done in their name" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 1). This perspective suggests that the hiring of superintendents of schools can be explained by examining the regularities in what is said (discourse) and done (practice) in the community power network or "circuits of power"(Clegg, 1989).

[Clegg defines circuits of power as rings of social integration complete with normative rules which fix relations of meaning and membership.] Further, because there is evidence that women "see, value and know" their world differently than men (Della Costa, 1972; Sexton, 1976; Ortiz, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986; Edson, 1988; Minh-ha, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Vianello, Siemienska, Damian, Lupri, Coppi, D'Arcangela and Bolasco, 1990; Lather, 1991; etc.), I will investigate the possibility that communities contain both a "male circuit of power" and a "female circuit of power" accommodating different normative rules, understandings, and conceptions of power and its use.

The educational administration profession or community can be viewed as one circuit of power, and it is a male-dominated circuit of power. Cherryholmes (1988) states that "professions are constituted by what is said and done in their name." He continues by adding that consistencies in what is said and done are based on shared beliefs and values. Large areas of agreement about how to proceed in education become the basis for conflict resolution. The rule of thumb is to ask: How was this done before? Areas of agreement about how to proceed in educational practice include: "...structured use of textbooks in classrooms, instruction based on learning objectives, educational practice guided by research findings, standardized approaches to research design and program development, learning as acquisition of a positive body of knowledge and skills" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 24), and the hiring of school personnel according to written and unwritten standards. To the extent that beliefs and values that establish those standards are male-defined or androcentric, the educational administration community is dominated by a male circuit of power.

The broader community served by professional educational administration can be viewed as another circuit of power. Such communities are also constituted by consistencies in what is said and done [discursive practices]. These consistencies in what is said and done are based on shared beliefs and values--and comprise the political culture of the community. There is both overt and covert agreement in a given culture about how to proceed in all the activities of daily life. Areas of conflict many times are resolved by reflecting on what was done before. Areas of agreement may include notions of what church is socially acceptable, what neighborhood is the "best" one for residence, which group of people is "the" group at the top of the community, which character traits are valued for parenting, and which characteristics are seen as appropriate for the superintendent of schools. Although a simplified example, it is apparent that when a newcomer moves into a community, if they are to be accepted, they must pay attention to the normative values and discursive practices of that community. Certain social skills which include the ability to be sensitive and adaptive to an environment are important as people move into any setting or culture as a newcomer.

The dominant circuits of power within both the educational administration profession and the local communities normally are dominated by the values, norms, and understandings of white men. Because traditional patterns of discourse in the "male circuits of power" restrict access, women who do become part of those networks--usually in relatively subordinate positions--must initially become familiar with ongoing practices. A woman whom I interviewed said it this way:

I learned a long time ago that when you go into a new area you get acquainted with the woodwork before you change much...don't make any big moves.

Getting "acquainted with the woodwork" is another way of saying that a person wishing acceptance by a community or culture must learn the written and unwritten standards of that culture and act within them. Knowledge and practice of shared beliefs

and values allows one to belong to a culture or community and attain access to its dominant circuit of power. An ability to articulate common discourse in a way that is familiar to those of a particular culture can provide access to that culture. The male culture of educational administration has its own peculiar "woodwork." Women wishing access to that male culture and the male circuit of power must learn the discourse common to that community. But access for women into the male circuit of power is complicated by the fact that female aspirants most often come from backgrounds having different norms, values, and understanding; they have developed different discursive practices that constitute the "female circuit of power."

The female circuit of power has its own set of consistencies in what is said and done. These practices are ones which women have been socialized to embrace. Their practices include comfort with subordination, something unheard of in the male circuit of power. It would appear, then, that the two circuits of power are incompatible. For a woman to move from a female circuit where she is comfortable with subordination, into a male circuit which sees subordination as a weakness seems an unlikely event. It is this unlikely, discrepant event which is the focus of this study. A close examination of such an event in one setting may reveal the transformation which a woman must make when moving from the female circuit of power to the male circuit of power, or it may uncover the circumstances which allow this event to occur. In research, then, we should be "...encouraged to search for conflict, dissensus, contradiction, resistance to power, and the possible benefits derived from such a search" (Capper, 1993, p. 24).

In addition, it is important to adopt a theoretical perspective which recognizes multiple realities and is open to the possibility that certain types of discourse and practice can overcome the common constraints that block women's mobility into supervisory roles. That is, while such explanations as "lack of support from networks/mentors, lack of role models, and family demands" explain only the underrepresentation of women, a perspective that examines various discursive practices and power networks recognizes that, while predominant discursive practices and power networks constrain women's opportunities, other discursive practices and power relations can make women's access to positions of authority possible. Thus, my research question asks not only about the constraints on women but also what it is about the regularities in discourse and practice in relationship to power in a particular community that would allow a woman to be selected for the position of superintendent of schools when around ninety-seven percent of the time a man is selected.

With this question established, it is hypothesized that the definition of power is gender specific. That is, that women define power as "power to", as collaborative and inclusive in nature, while men define power as "power over", as a form of domination which insures that one person can cause another to do whatever the dominant person desires. The "power over" model remains in place in most communities because it insures that the power hierarchy will remain in place. Those in power will remain in power and the commitment on the part of those in power to remain there is great for obvious reasons--the greatest of which is wealth.

Further, it is hypothesized; that *circuits of power* exist in the world of men and in the world of women; that the definition of power in the male circuit of power is "power-over", while the definition of power in the female circuit of power is "power-to" (Clegg, 1989); and, that the discursive practices of men and women in their separate circuits of power are different just as the languages from one culture to another are different. The experiences of women in their circuit of power train them to "sound" a certain way, to view power a particular way, and to interact in relationships in a specific way. As anyone placed in a foreign culture does not "fit", a woman placed in an unfamiliar circuit of power (male)

will not blend unless she makes radical adaptations in the way she sounds, perceives, and interacts. Therefore, it is finally hypothesized that if a woman is co-opted into the male circuit of power giving her access to positions viewed as powerful by a white male-dominated culture, she must abandon her own circuit of power, and adopt new discursive practices surrounding the concept of power. The test of these hypotheses is not a traditional experimental design but was a critical ethnography of a single site--a particular educational community /culture and the fuller community/ culture in which it is embedded, where a woman has become superintendent of schools. The framework used for this critical ethnography is a conceptualization of power barrowed from political science power research, in general, and, in part, more specifically from the work of Stewart Clegg, Frameworks of Power (1989).

Power Research

From the earliest times there have been inquiries into the nature of power and the ways it is acquired, retained, wielded, and lost. Philosophers since Plato have pondered questions of who should have power and to what ends it should be employed. Historians since Thucydides have recorded acts of power. The diverse and complex discourse on power has, in the main, been one articulated by white male intellectuals. It is a discourse that lacks consensus. The term power is viewed simultaneously as positive and negative; therefore, confusion arises over the part it plays in human social relations.[1]

Stewart Clegg (1988) and Thomas E. Wartenberg (1990) divide the literature on power along two trajectories which represent its dualistic nature. One trajectory defines power as the ability to do something or the "power to." The other trajectory defines power as control, command or dominion over others, or the "power over." Hannah Pitkin (1972, p. 276-77) agrees with this division when she states that the idea of power in "power to" is significantly different from the idea of power in "power over."[2]

It is the "power over" definition of power which has dominated the discussion by political scientists and sociologists of power in communities (see Hunter, 1953; Domhoff, 1978; Dahl, 1968; Peterson, 1981; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; and Lukes, 1974). Theories grounded in the belief that power is defined as domination involve a specific type of relationship between human beings, one that is "hierarchical in virtue of one person's ability to affect the other without the other's being able to reciprocate" (Wartenberg, 1990, p. 18). Theories that fall into this category include: elite theory (Hunter, 1953), pluralism (Dahl, 1968), and economistic theory (Peterson, 1981). However, this traditional, dominant discourse by political scientists is slowly being replaced by current literature which asserts that power be conceptualized as "power to"(see Stone, 1989; Elkin 1987; Clegg, 1989; and Wartenberg, 1990).

One effort to synthesize the various conceptions of power and alternative theories of power that have emerged in political science and sociology is that of Stewart Clegg (1988). Clegg ᵢ `ers to power relationships as *circuits of power*. This conception of *circuits of power* is fully developed in his book Frameworks of Power (1989). It is a concept designed to include the voices of the marginalized and, thus, is useful for this study.

Clegg states that a radical theory of power must identify the strategies and discursive practices "whereby...agents are recruited to views of their interests which align with the discursive field of force that the enrolling agency is able to construct. The view of power is of a far less massive, oppressive and prohibitive apparatus than it is often imagined to be. Certainly, such effects can be secured by power, but nowhere near as

easily as some 'dominant ideology', 'hegemonic' or 'third dimensional' views would suggest. Power is better regarded not as having two faces or being layered into three dimensions but as a proces., which may pass through distinct circuits of power and resistance" (p. 17).

Clegg continues in describing *circuits of power* as rings or circles of social integration which are complete with normative rules which fix relations of meaning and membership. These rings have several loops or circuits which include exits and entrances referred to with terms such as empower/disempower, facilitate/restrict, and control/contest, among others (p. 214). These rings or circuits of power are not singular, but overlap each other in varying amounts and degrees. Because of this overlapping, each circuit impacts many others. Any person or organization of power may belong to several circuits, in fact, probably cannot avoid being part of many.

Clegg is quick to point out that power which makes only one circuit, if that ever happens, has no need to struggle against relations of meaning and membership and is extremely efficient. He categorizes the classical definition of power, A getting a B to do something that B would not otherwise have done [This definition is most overtly found in the writing of Robert Dahl.], as a view of power which makes only one circuit. His implied definition of power, then, is much more complex and inclusive than that of Dahl. This inclusive nature lends itself to the possibility of a new or previously excluded definition of power--that is a "female" definition of power which would be found in the female circuit of power--and more, it is a perspective which further shapes the critical methodology.

Clegg's fluid concept of power as a process which passes through different circuits is particularly open to the differences in discursive practices which are found in various cultures. Further, because this study is designed to discern not only the differences between a male definition of power and a female definition of power but also between a male circuit of power and a female circuit of power, the openness of this framework is important.

The development of a female circuit of power follows the thinking of Nancy Hartsock (1987) when she calls for a theory of power for women--a theory which begins from the experience and point of view of the dominated. "Such theories would give attention not only to the ways women are dominated, but also to their capacities, abilities, and strengths....[These] theories would use these capacities as guides for a potential transformation of power relationships--..... is, for the empowerment of women" (p. 158).

As has been the case throughout the study, the limiting of the discussion to only two circuits of power is not true to the philosophy of poststructuralism which seeks the expression of multiple realities. An implied assumption that only two circuits of power exist is erroneous, and to label them "male" and "female" develops almost a "Barbie-doll" discourse. This study in its small effort to be more inclusive is a very limited explanation of a very limited project. It is a collection of numerous single snap-shot views, by one person who has photographed those directly involved over a short segment of time, and collaboratively discussed the meaning of each picture in an effort to hear previously silent voices.

Research Objectives

The literature on women in the superintendency is clear (Shakeshaft, 1989). If a woman wishes to be a superintendent of schools, her chances are poor. Some studies offer rationales such as lack of support from networks/mentors, lack of role models, and family demands for the fact that so few women become superintendents of schools (Schmuck,

1975; Tyack, 1982; Edson, 1988). It is the judgment of this researcher that none of these rationales are sufficient to explain this dilemma. A need appears for a fresh description of this aged problem.

Such a perspective should accomplish the following:
1. The development of a male "circuit of power" and a female "circuit of power" in a community/culture where a woman is the superintendent of schools.
2. The establishment of a definition of the concept of power, and a description of the discursive practices related to the concept of power by men in a male "circuit of power" and by women in a female "circuit of power".
3. The establishment of the definition and use of power by one woman in a superintendency.

Critical ethnography is the principal method employed in the research to accomplish these objectives. An ethnography ties together fieldwork and culture (Van Maanen, 1988), and a critical ethnography ties together fieldwork and culture while taking the critical position against racism, sexism, and classism. This particular study takes a critical position against sexism. In that vein, all assumptions and guidelines set forth in the previous sections will be followed as closely as possible during the study.

Data Collection

Three primary methods of data collection were utilized for this critical ethnography: nonstandardized interviews; nonparticipant and participant observation, and document/record review and analysis. Document and record reviews and interviews have complementary strengths and weaknesses and served to strengthen each other. In addition, nonparticipant and participant observation were employed when possible to serve as triangulation.

Field Site

The most important criterion for the selection of a site for the study was to find a school district where a woman had been a superintendent of schools for a few years. The "number" of years in the position of superintendent was of concern. It was noted that if she was in the position too long, her recollection of events and feelings would be altered because of the passing of time. On the other hand, however, in order that her discursive practices be solidly in place in what would be considered a white, male power position, it was felt that some time in the position was important. Therefore, a site in which a woman had been superintendent for more than two years and less than seven years was selected.

In proximity to a larger metropolitan area referred to as "Welton", the site selected will be known as "New View" throughout the telling of the story. The woman superintendent will be referred to as "Dr. Mary Osburn." All names are fictional in an effort to conceal the identity of people and places in the study.

Establishing Samples

Floyd Hunter's (1953) *reputational method* was used to establish part of the samples used in the study. A definition and discussion of the method follow.

Floyd Hunter's reputational method defined. A new phase in the search for community power began in 1953 with Floyd Hunter's publication Community Power Structure. Hunter's lasting contribution to the study of community power was his development of the *reputational method* which enabled him to identify the most powerful

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people in Atlanta, so he could interview these powerholders to learn about their hierarchical structure and their interrelationships.

The use of the reputational method. The *reputational method* was used to establish part of the samples. Two lists of powerholders were generated in the initial stages of the inquiry by asking community members and educators to make two lists of names--one list of the powerful women in town and the other list of the powerful men in town.   If anyone's name was reported by three different people, that name made a final list. The names of men on a final list became the "male circuit of power," and names of women on the final list became the "female circuit of power." There was no use of judges as in Hunter's original approach, nor was there an effort made to rank order the names from most powerful to least powerful. Because of the size of the community, it was apparent that the names offered most often tended to be the most powerful.

People in positions directly connected to the superintendent, such as the assistant superintendent and board of education members, had the additional task of listing people who knew the superintendent. They were asked to help in the generation of all three lists-- the "male circuit of power," "the female circuit of power," and the names of people who knew the superintendent.

The list of people who have followed and been acquainted with the woman central to the study, the superintendent of schools was necessary in order to verify perceptions and historical information surrounding the superintendent. These people were not sought because they were powerholders, but because they knew the superintendent for many years. An effort was made to include a variety of people whose relationships with the superintendent were diverse.

The people on the final three lists were treated somewhat differently. First, those related in some way to the superintendent were interviewed with the intent to validate and triangulate the interviews with the superintendent. Second, those listed in the "circuits of power" were interviewed with the intent to establish discourse and practice surrounding power.

Confidentiality was assured at all stages of the inquiry. In addition, it was stressed that the focus of the study is the process of power, rather than the naming of people in power.

Interviews

Three groups were interviewed: 1) those in the male "circuits of power," 2) those in the female "circuits of power," and 3) those related to the superintendent either directly or indirectly [past employers; board of education members, past and present; co-workers, past and present; employees; and friends]. In addition, multiple interviews were held with the superintendent.

Since the study was concerned with discovery rather than verification, the interview approach was the nonstandardized interview (Dexter, 1970). The nonstandardized interview is defined by a free-flowing and spontaneous movement guided by cues from the interviewee which enable the understanding of multiple realities and inner perspectives of the participants (Patton, 1980; Guba and Lincoln, 1981). In addition, guidelines established by Patti Lather (1991) for postpositivist critical inquiry were followed. Those guidelines are:

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Establish reciprocity. "Reciprocity implies give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power. It operates at two primary points in emancipatory empirical research: the junctures between researcher and researched and data and theory" (Lather, 1991, p. 57). What is suggested is that we consciously use our research to help participants understand and change their situations. More specifically, this reciprocity can be established as follows:

> —Interviews are to be conducted in an interactive way which requires self-disclosure on the part of the researcher. The goal is a relationship in which every teacher is always a student and every student a teacher. This practice is opposite mainstream interview practice where questions about the interviewer's own life remain unanswered.
> —Interviews of both individuals and small groups must be se ential in order to facilitate collaboration and a deeper probing of research issues.
> —Meaning must be negotiated by the researcher and the researched.
> —The researcher must be ever vigilant in looking for research designs which allow the maximum amount of reciprocity in order that those being researched become free to critique the meaning of their lives. With this dialogue and further self-reflection, research designs will become more completely emancipatory (Lather, 1991, p. 60-61).

Replace theoretical imposition with collaborative theory building. Alliance with the lived concerns, fears and aspirations of those researched, puts emancipatory theory in the position of a catalyst for change. The goal, then, in critical inquiry, is to "...search for theory which grows out of context-embedded data, not in a way that automatically rejects a priori theory, but in a way that keeps preconceptions from distorting the logic of evidence" (Lather, 1991, p. 62). Lather goes on to say that self-reflection on the part of the researcher and the researched is necessary in order that theory be generated from context-embedded data. Ways to operationalize this reflexivity in critical inquiry, which advances a more equal world, are scarce in the literature. There is a small body of literature from which Lather draws a few suggestions.

First, critical inquiry must develop an understanding of the world view of the research participants. Second, critical inquiry must focus on fundamental contradictions in behavior which inform the researched about their previous normative/cultural behavior (Lather, 1991). In this particular study, an effort will be made to discover the hidden practices surrounding the definition of power which creates certain normative/cultural behavior.

Third, critical inquiry must go beyond obvious reciprocity. The inquiry must be committed to inviting participants' reactions to particular theories offered as the reason why they should change their self-understanding. The point is to provide an environment in which participants' critical reactions to the researcher's accounts of their worlds are invited, even to the degree of complete rejection of the researcher's accounts. Because this rejection of theory may become part of the participants' response, the researcher may need to change the research hypotheses and design. Lather (1991) cites an example of this type of eff rt in the research of Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1983). In their research, they reveal their need to change their original categories in response to their participants' rejection of their ideas.

The guidelines outlined above establish the process followed in a critical inquiry. In the words of Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 100): "An interview is said to be a conversation with a purpose, but...[i]n a very real sense...investigator and respondent together *create* [their emphasis] the data of the research. Each influences the other ...Each shapes the other and is shaped by the other."

Interviews which followed these guidelines as much as possible were accomplished. Interviews were: 1) interactive with self-disclosure on the part of the researcher, 2) sequential as suggested by respondents in order to facilitate collaboration, 3) open to negotiation of meaning-- respondents were asked to interpret the meaning of common responses in addition to the interpretation of their own monologue, 4) done at least twice with each respondent [and as many as six times] in order that reciprocity occur, 5) done with a researcher [I] who had been impacted by the knowledge of these guidelines and consequently changed so that the shape of the interviews also changed, and 6) triangulated with other interviews, records, documents, participant observation and non-participant observation. Field notes were made of all interviews, and the interviews were taped with respondents' permission. Field notes were expanded as soon after the interviews as possible and were checked against tapes if those were available. While a protocol was consulted in order to insure that all relevant areas of inquiry were discussed, interviewees were encouraged to diverge from the protocol in order to add their own perspectives and constructions.

The order and number of interviews was determined by both logic and logistics. The final number of interviews was not predetermined. Guidelines established earlier in this document were used to determine the number of times a given interviewee was interviewed. The issues of reciprocity and collaborative theory building versus theoretical imposition were a focus in these determinations (Lather, 1991).

Nonparticipant and Participant Observation

Nonparticipant and participant observation were used as a supplemental procedure where possible. Observations made were recorded as field notes as soon after the event as possible. Nonparticipant observation included city council meetings, board of education meetings, administrative team meetings, planning commission meetings, chamber of commerce meetings, local coffee house gatherings, and local political meetings. Participant observation included working on a project involving the construction of an evaluation instrument for administrators which was to be aligned with the concept of site-based management.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis occurs several times in qualitative research. It is a continuous process which occurs at many levels for different reasons. As one of the goals of this study was to empower those involved, the analysis of the data was a shared activity at every level. Respondents were made aware at appropriate moments of the researcher's position and vested interest in the data. In addition, during reciprocity respondents were asked to analyze their own positions as well as the resulting collection of ideas and theories of other participants. Suggestions from the respondents for further direction in data collection were followed.

Although there was a desire on the part of the researcher to write in such a way that meaning is clear to the reader, it is acknowledged that it is impossible to establish meaning clearly in the mind of another person. Each reader will bring experiences and preconceptions to this text and thus find the text meaning something different than any other reader. In addition, since the data analysis occurred at different stages of the study, the data was literally interpreted by a researcher who changed during the research process and was, therefore, doing analysis from a new perspective each time it was done. Obviously, input and collaboration with the participants increased the degree of change in the researcher.

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"From Where I Sit"

This paper was written from the standpoint of a white woman of middle age, of an American, and of an educational administrator. It must be acknowledged that as a white American female educational administrator, I am privileged and powerful when compared to most women. I have been educated by and later co-opted into the basically white male world of educational administration so that "where I sit" has been altered over time and should be held suspect by those wishing a "woman's point of view."

As a white woman author, a woman of privilege and power as compared to most women, I have used a language which, as Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) points out, is part of the "white-male-is-norm ideology" (p. 6), and which is used predominantly as a way to reify established power relations. This dilemma was intensified when I found myself writing uncritically and thus putting myself in a dominant position in relationship not only to those who participated in the study, but also in a dominant position in relationship to the reader. The narrative represents an earnest but necessarily incomplete effort to establish a degree or equity for those who participated in the study. These raw voices that yelled, whispered, calmly spoke, or in other ways communicated with me from the field are vivid and much more alive than any other part of my research experience, and thus, my "narration is never a passive reflection of a reality" (Minh-ha, 1991, p. 13). I still hear the voices in my mind, waking and sleeping. I doubt they will ever allow me undisturbed rest. Hear them...

> Q.   If you were to advise women who wanted to be superintendents of schools, what advice would you give them?
>
> A.   *[quietly] I don't know....*
>
> Q.   Are women disadvantaged?
>
> A.   *YES.!....they can hardly get the jobs..my girlfriend has tried! [with exasperation]*
>
> Q.   Why not?
>
> A.   *[almost shouting] BECAUSE THEY ARE <u>WOMEN</u>...!! THERE'S LOTS OF THEM OUT THERE..THAT HAVE ADMINISTRATIVE DEGREES....*

My own life history, in fact, includes several attempts to become either an assistant superintendent or superintendent, including being a finalist in the selection process. As of this writing, I am neither, and it is my hope that this research will be helpful not only to me, but also to other women seeking the position of superintendent of schools. My research, then, was altered by my own desires and aspirations, and even though it is full of the voices of others, it is my study, my understanding of other voices, and the reflection of what I have decided to share with the reader.

What is Power?

It is the more inclusive definition of power which I believe makes "New View" receptive to the idea that placement of women in positions of power is appropriate. In order to determine whether an inclusive definition of power is necessary to allow women into the circuit of power typically constructed solely of men, I spent hours in interviews listening to definitions and descriptions of power. The goal was to determine whether women in the female circuit of power define power differently than the men in the male circuit of power.

Women Define Power

After establishing a list of women who were considered powerful in New View, I asked each one to define power. The answers are in many forms, but most stated that it is the ability to get things done. Elaborations on that statement were made when I asked participants to talk about how things get done. Those elaborations include: "...getting things done through consensus building." "...through someone who empowers others." "The ability to find the people who can help get it done." "I always think about who will work with me to get something done." "I stay in the background to get things done...to start things... motivate." "In order to get things done, I believe you have to be a servant."

All respondents in the female circuit of power viewed power as an active term. In addition, they described the action as collaborative and inclusive in nature. None of them perceived themselves as powerful in their own right. Most expressed surprise that their names appeared on the "circuits of power" list. They could imagine that people appreciated their work or the time they spent in community service, but they did not view themselves as powerful. Comments that expressed these themes follow: "I don't see myself as a power person, I see myself as a popular person." I don't think about power that much. I don't think about power over someone else or influencing anyone in my day to day life." "I think more of the responsibility of my position rather than the power of it."

Many of the women talked about negative power, something they did not want to experience. They called it "control over," "power over," "force or violence," "when a person uses their position for their own benefit instead of for others." "Some people do it all themselves, keeping more of the action to themselves..." "Some people want you to do everything through them."

Leading women in the educational system sounded very similar to the women in the community female circuit of power. They, too, defined power as the ability to get things done with the help of other people. Definitions included the following phrases: "Power doesn't reside within a person, but needs others." "You don't get it, someone gives it to you." "It's teamwork." "...it's letting people know that they are important. What we are talking about here is interaction." "...empowerment..."

When talking about how they get things done the following statements were made: "I never ask someone to do something that I wouldn't do myself." "I like to include people in the decision process even when the decision doesn't go my way." "I use consensus building." "I build respect with whomever I am working with, by letting them know that they are important...there should be communication, sharing--the difference is caring--we must value their experiences. How others feel is important. The knowledge that they already have is good and we need it." "If you are secure you don't rule with an iron hand."

Another facet of the same question involved having participants in the female circuit of power describe characteristics that they possess which caused others to think of them as powerful. In other words, to tell me the reason they were listed as powerful. Responses follow: "I think you have to be a good listener so you can hear what people need and want. Then, you try to do it." "You are powerful because you get things done...You've paid your dues." "I was raised that you give back to people, you just don't take. I was raised to be a giver not a taker." "I get things done. I love to be patient." "I am independent, self-motivated. You have to get the job done. You must follow-up and make certain that it happens...must be task-oriented--everyday keeping track of yourself."

The women in power positions in the educational system shared their characteristics which they believe allowed them their jobs: "I am creative and innovative." "...a hard

worker, involved, tenacious. I am willing to make sacrifices to meet the demands." "I am collaborative. I seek multiple inputs." "I hope I provide enough knowledge or help the people find enough knowledge to make a good decision and set well-reasoned goals." "I am quietly persistent. All of my colleagues were the good old boy type of males. That was the way to get an entry--was to attend the meetings and sit and listen. Then, I would quietly persist in getting my point across--then persist on through the meetings. For example, I would say, 'We talked about doing so and so and if we would...' and I would repeat what I wanted to say persistently to pursue what I thought was important. It is a case of choosing your wars carefully and staying out of battles."

Men Define Power

After establishing a list of men who were considered powerful in New View, I asked each one to define power. The definitions they offered most often included the concept of influence. When asking respondents how they influence others they replied: "...you influence by gaining authority, getting into a position of responsibility." "...if someone is so good that everyone is afraid he will go somewhere else. It's okay to be an SOB if you are right 100% of the time, but you better be right." "There are people who grab the reins of a project and push it and keep pushing it till it's done. They are more or less consensus people until they reach a certain point. They finally reach a level of frustration where they say, 'Hey, I'm tired of sitting around here talking about this thing. Let's get it done.' Then he is sort of like a bull and others follow." "My power and influence come from my position." "...the application of knowledge through political connections...you influence because you work hard and know more than other people. Knowledge is power. That's all it is. The person who works hard is going to override people who sit on their butts...it must be a broad knowledge base--a cross-section of everything." "You persuade by explaining your position, by talking others into going along so they want to take part and believe in what they are doing. Hopefully, you don't have to tell them they have to do it because they only do it halfheartedly." "...power has to be there...in terms of how we're going to do something. There must be a sharing of information. Information is power, too. If I have information and you don't, I have more power in that particular area." "[You can influence if] you are in a position to make decisions that affect others."

For the men in the male circuit of power, being informed was the most common method of influence. Information and knowledge elevate people to privileged positions-- positions in which they are able to convince others of their own leadership. There was much less discussion from the men about getting things done. It was implied that something happens after someone is established as the leader--that others follow the leader. Only one of the men talked about collaboration, but interestingly, he did not see collaboration as powerful. Another man asserted that "effective influence is never singular...there is no one who by themselves could make something happen or keep something from happening." And yet, the same individual states that the sign ordinance [An issue of concern in the community at the time.] battle would never have occurred if he [alone] had been consulted.

A few of the men talked about the negative aspects of power. One man stateed that in order for power to work it has to be focused. He felt that fragmented power is harmful. I am not certain what this implied--whether he was insisting on a power elite because of his discomfort with pluralism, or whether he just felt things do not happen unless people are going in the same direction. He talked often about "common dreams." Another man asserted that if you cannot persuade people to do what you want then you use chain-of-command and make them do it. He believed that use of chain-of-command should occur only when absolutely necessary.

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A third man confided that if someone is an "SOB" then that person has to be right all of the time. It was obvious that he feels negative about such a person. However, it was clear that he thought someone should take the lead in any project. Still another man referred to the negative effect power has when it "goes to someone's head." He asserted that when power goes to someone's head, it is less likely that s/he will listen to others and as a result s/he will make decisions alone. Decisions made in a person's own self-interest were also seen as the result of negative power. The implication was that it is possible for the person in power to make decisions for the good of all.

Powerful men in the educational system defined power as the ability to make decisions, and the authority to make certain that they are implemented. As with the powerful men in the community, they generally viewed decision-making as a lonely activity. Definitions included the following comments: "It's the ability to establish something you want to accomplish--then you work with people to help you get there. It could be me dictating what I want to have done, but that would not be successful power. People must want to do what *you* [my emphasis] want accomplished." "There are two segments of power. One is authority or organizational permission to make certain decisions. The other is influence or personal power. I believe that personal power is more powerful. Relying on positional power alone gets perfunctory compliance. Personal power convinces people that they should follow." "...[power] connotes that someone has the ability to make decisions." "There are two types of power. One is position power which is inherent, and the other is personal power which is earned." "...one who has the ultimate responsibility to make final decisions and to make certain the final decisions are carried out." "[Power] is to do with an individual's ability to structure events and activities to accomplish their desired outcome." "...the ability to accomplish and do things that need to be done."

When discussing how they get things done the powerful men in the educational system made the following statements: "First, I share my idea with the staff and let them know what the problem is. I must be accepted and trusted. They look to me as someone they can trust. They have reason to believe that I know how to get it done so they trust my decision." "I provide them with what the goal is and why. I let them be part of the final goal and make sure that they have the tools to be successful." "In the initial stages I get input from people who will be impacted by the decision. I check policies and guidelines. I check to see who will most benefit and who will least benefit. I think all decisions are made eventually in isolation..." "I must work with others to get things done... things are not completely in my control. But I push in that direction. I don't accept 'no.'" "You can compel a result by the ability to persuade others, barter, negotiate or manipulate others. They could be convinced that the decision being made is in their own best interest...or by being the person to whom one has to come for financial backing or support--or a party who could persuade others--being in a privileged position."

As with the respondents in the female circuit of power, I asked the participants in the male circuit of power to share their own characteristics which they believed made them powerful. Their responses follow: "On the council, I am a consensus builder until it gets to the point of being intolerable--then I move on it." "I feel like I could talk with anyone about anything." "I try not to dominate. I bring people together and do the right thing...I run with something until I get what I want. I go back and I go back until it happens." "I am the one who brings an idea to the group and then attempt to get consensus. I wait for a while, then, when results are not forthcoming, I take off running." "I'm an initiator--a starter--not interested in finishing."

While talking with the men in power positions in the educational system I ask them to share their characteristics which make them powerful: "I am a good facilitator. I could

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manipulate...but I choose to facilitate change." "Salesmanship can be important." "I like to be in a situation where I can control what is going on. I was already successful. I have communication skills."

Dr. Osburn Defines Power

When asked to define power Dr. Osburn replied with a definition of action, "Power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes. It is executed in a number of ways. I would say it is situational, not autocratic or conciliatory." When asked to elaborate on ways she achieves desired outcomes she continues, "I have the ability to organize people in a manner that achieves desired goals--that manner being the ability to lead people to consensus...I bring together the people who will be affected by the decision and say, 'Here is the perceived problem--is this really the problem?' You may find that it is not the real problem, so you come to consensus about what the real problem is. Then you discuss many solutions to come up with a solution which benefits the most people--especially who is affected by it. It needs to be for the greatest good."

Obviously, as was true for other women of power, Dr. Osburn had a collaborative, "power to" definition of power. Clearly, she took her definition into practice. Her practical application went to the extreme of consensus-building even at the level of determining the nature and articulation of the problem. In addition, Dr. Osburn was similar to other women in the study when she added, "It is difficult for me to say that I have power." This perception of self may be necessary for a person to be truly collaborative. One who views self as powerful more naturally believes other input as less important than one's own. True collaboration occurs when all participants are viewed as equally as possible.

Dr. Osburn shared her views of collaboration: "I've always believed that we win when we quit worrying about who gets the credit. I want the project complete. If it happens by a coalition then great. I am not interested in seeing Mary Osburn did such and such. I think as women we have always known that we have to work with people to accomplish anything. Just as a mother running a household doesn't always get the credit for what the children accomplish, but it has been the preparing and planning which helps it happen. I always think of myself as the vehicle in the snowstorm who goes out and moves the snow so that other people can operate. I think that it is important that we do that." She continues, "I don't want to be seen in the position of supervisor ... You must give people the tools to do the job, but you can get out of the picture if you train people and give them the tools."

Dr. Osburn's commitment to collaboration was vividly revealed when she shared, "One of the harder things to do is to support a decision that you wouldn't have made yourself but have given someone else the opportunity to make it so you need to support it...I think that the decision I make is the decision to make a decision collaboratively. Then I give up the right to the final decision. I must support whatever is decided."

There were those in the study who believed that collaboration or "power to" was a sign of weakness, an inability to lead. When asked if she was concerned about this perception, she replied, "No one has said that directly to me, but I have had that feeling because of some comments made. Well, one of the first jobs I had, one gentleman said to me, 'As quiet as you are, why do you think you will be successful at this job?' Comments like that. Some have said, 'If I had this situation, I would have done such and such.' They were kind of like correcting me for being as collaborative as I have been. They said, 'You should have just told them, and then you would have moved forward on it.' And I take that as being somewhat critical of me. Yet my own belief in terms of leadership is that

it is collaborative. Even our instruments that supposedly measure leadership do not measure collaboration."

Dr. Osburn referred to knowledge when she reflected on the nature of power, and as the men in the study, she acknowledged its importance. Unlike the men in the study, however, she spoke of the need to share it with others in order that they make the best decisions. "You should never withhold information. People need all of the tools with which to come to a decision."

Others View Dr. Osburn's Use of Power

It was apparent when talking with people around Dr. Osburn that she was accurate in her reporting of her own use of power. Each person interviewed, from the community-at-large or from the education community, male or female, referred to her as a collaborator/consensus-builder. Responses included: "Dr. Osburn wields power through other people. She is a very capable leader." "She is less than direct--more of a background substance that she possesses that is not confrontational, not frontal. She uses her people be they volunteers or professionals, very effectively in that sense. Mary is a real good leader. She resisted the temptation to take the front position and recognized that the win had to be in a plurality...She listens, collaborates, gets the best out of the people who are available to her." "I have rarely seen someone work as effectively as she does in two areas: 1) building consensus and laying the foundation in moving things in the direction that she wants them to move, but one step at a time, and 2) in her delegation of authority to cause the people who work for her to be highly motivated..." "She is quietly persistent....I've seen this quiet persistence on committees, etc. I don't know how she describes herself. She is a collaborator." "Mary is a quietly powerful person. She does not wield the power."

The comments continued: "She is collaborative. She gets information from both sides...she tries to get as much input as possible." "She is powerful in that she uses a team approach. She operates with one vote most of the time. Even when hiring central office staff. She shares authority and empowers others." "She gets a lot of input for decisions, and that input remains there. She goes out to the public and staff and works hand in hand with them and lets them help with the management." "Mary is comfortable with dictating if she has to, but I don't think she prefers to do that. She has challenged herself on our decisions by asking 'Should we be making this decision?'" "She seeks input. She gathers information. She is collaborative." "...more process oriented." "I don't see her using power, per se. She represents it in her position. She's not aggressive. She is very organized with lots of qualifications. She defines power differently than men." "She always asks if this is a decision we should be making, meaning that we should get more input." "I call her a super woman. She does things so quietly. She is so capable, always has time for people--she's a listener, collaborator, doer. She has vision and can see the potential that people have, unknown to themselves." "Whenever you attend any meeting, she is always prepared. She doesn't fit in group one or two, because she doesn't start with a consensus then run with the ball. She follows the process all the way through. She is leader all the way through and presents both sides of the story. She is a collaborator, a new category of leader." "The amount of involvement she allows is great." "She's a good listener." "She works behind the scenes."

The validation that Dr. Mary Osburn defined power philosophically and in practice as "power to" was convincing. In addition, these responses were all positive in feeling tone. Dr. Osburn was strongly supported by the community and the public education system of New View largely because of her definition and use of power.

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Dr. Osburn did not believe that her use of power has changed over the years of her career. She reported that she was collaborative when teaching. "When I was a classroom teacher, I had students help establish how the classroom ran. When accomplishing a task I was a collaborator. You can accomplish change if you involve people in that change process."

People who knew or worked with Dr. Osburn agreed with her assertions. "She hasn't changed. She has changed her focus because she has to consider the whole district." "No, she hasn't changed. When she made decisions as high school principal she got input and background before making decisions. She has an open door even as a superintendent. She hasn't changed."

From Where I Sit Now:
Coming Full Circle

As is fully recognized in the critical ethnography methodology, I [the researcher] changed significantly during the research process and "from where I sit" altered sometimes minutely, sometimes dramatically since the day my research began. The contributions of the voices of the field brought me full circle, to a new level and breadth of understanding. This new level and breadth of understanding is emphatically _my_ understanding, and although one goal of my research is to express the "realities" of those studied, this final section will express my construction of the studied "reality" as I see it.

In the preceding sections I attempted to give the reader a "feel" for what those in the circuits of power in a given community and its education system thought about power, its definition and application. I wanted to provide a vicarious experience for the reader of "li ning in on" the interviews and meetings in which concepts of power were discussed. If I am successful in providing a "thick description," the reader will have some familiarity and understanding of the issues, concepts, and concerns of the people who expressed them.

This final section is my reaction to the study, my comments and thoughts about what is presented in the preceding section. I recognize that my perception of reality is not necessarily connected to the thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of participants in the study. I expect that the reader will draw conclusions from the reporting of my perceptions.

Reactions to the Study

Reaction Number One:

Power is defined differently by women than men.

This is my most profound reaction. The basic definition of power strongly tends to differ dependent upon the gender of an individual. Women in circuits of power, in a given setting, define the concept of power differently than men in circuits of power of that same setting. In addition, women in positions of leadership in a given educational setting define power differently than men in positions of leadership in the same educational setting.

Women in circuits of power and women in positions of educational leadership in a given setting define power as the ability to get things done through collaboration and consensus building, while men in circuits of power and men in positions of educational leadership in a given setting define power as the ability to influence or lead others by

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having information and knowledge beyond those around them. Women define power as "power to," that is, as the ability to empower others to make their own decisions collaboratively and to carry them out through a collective, inclusive model. Men, on the other hand, view power as "power over," or the ability of one to convince others to do as he wishes through any means possible.

When men discuss the different means through which others become compliant and willing to do as they ask, they include the concepts of positional and personal power, the need for superiority through information and knowledge, and the need for dominance through economic means. In contrast, women view the means to accomplish goals as embedded in viewing others as equals or even as more important, in accommodating as many needs as possible in the setting, and being willing to work harder than anyone else.

The two different definitions of the concept of power fall consistently depending upon gender across virtually all interviewees, and, thus, produce a "male definition" of power as "power over" and a "female definition" of power as "power to."

Reaction Number Two:

When women operate according to the female concept of power their chances to acquire positions of power increase dramatically.

Since using the reputational method resulted in lists of people viewed as successfully powerful, my impression is that the female definition of power as "power to" is the one which allows women success and access to positions of power while the male definition of power as "power over" is the one which insures men success and access to positions of power.

It is my impression that women who define power as men define it are not successful in their positions, or are even fired from them. It appears that our culture insists that women continue to define power as "power to" if they wish to remain in positions of power. Men, on the other hand, are viewed as less powerful or not powerful if they are fully collaborative or define power as "power to."

Dr. Mary Osburn, the central woman of the study, certainly reinforces this impression. Her definition of power throughout her career has been "power to." In addition, in practice, she is fully collaborative even as a superintendent of schools. She shares that she has been viewed as weak by some because of her definition of power, but defends the definition because it works for her and for other women whom she knows. She, in fact, tells stories of women who define power as "power over," who act like a man, who are not seen as successful, are hated, or are fired. Her definition of power as "power to" is important for her success. Other women in the study affirm this belief as they share their stories.

Reaction Number Three:

Women who attain positions of power are most successful when they adopt female approaches to power which stress collaboration, inclusion, and consensus-building—models based on the belief that one person is not more powerful than another.

Women in power do not view themselves as powerful. They are surprised to be referred to as powerful and often shocked when they find themselves in positions which they view as powerful. Again, Dr. Osburn fits the mold when she says, "It is difficult for

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me to say I have power. I would rather say I have the ability to organize people in a manner that achieves their desired goals."

Women who are successful in powerful positions define power as "power to" get things done with others, something more easily done for women than for men because women do not view themselves as powerful. They work using a collaborative, inclusive, consensus-building model with their own voice being used in concert with the others rather than in authority over or dominance over others. Dr. Osburn, as established earlier, is a master collaborator using her employees as team members in a team model which gives everyone the opportunity to build consensus or if consensus cannot be gained, everyone, including herself, is given one vote.

Reaction Number Four:

To become powerful, women must be culturally bilingual.

This reaction to the study is one which is my peculiarly personal observation of the women with whom I spent time. The women in the study are what I call "culturally bilingual." They are able to speak the language of those in the male circuit of power while remaining feminine. In fact, this ability struck me as one of necessity. Because women are expected to remain feminine, they must remain feminine in order to be accepted. Therefore, they make it a habit to be "quietly persistent" in order to have an impact without being labeled a "bitch". In addition, they must speak the language of the men with whom they work or they are not understood. Generally, they are extremely articulate while exercising caution in expression.

Becoming culturally bilingual is enormously difficult and takes years of intelligent, sensitive listening. Without the development of this skill, however, a woman remains isolated and without support. In fact, almost every respondent had at least one horror story to tell of a woman who didn't know how to "behave" in a position of power and was either hated or fired. Successful women of power must know how to remain feminine while speaking the language of men. I know of no class offered in any school at any level which teaches women this necessary prerequisite for success in powerful positions.

Reaction Number Five:

Women are normally excluded from the male circuit of power.

It is clear that women lack access to particular social settings which men accept as part of their normal routine and daily life. This lack of access as part of the socialization governing roles for men and women is a common topic in the literature on gender differences (Poole and Zeigler, 1985; Vianello, Siemienska, Damian, Lupri, Coppi, D'Arcangelo, Bolasco, 1990; Lorber and Farrell, 1991; Radich, 1992). Men meet regularly in informal settings such as coffee houses to share information and ideas surrounding current issues of interest to the business/power circuit. Women do not attend these gatherings because they are so overtly a part of the "men only" culture. Other social gatherings occur which exclude women such as golf engagements, card games, etc. Women miss important information and knowledge and thus their ability to influence others when they are excluded from these informal gatherings.

It is this information and knowledge that is available to men which directly impacts the economic/financial well-being of the men in the power circuit. For example, for a man in real estate development to know that a highway will be constructed through a certain

section of property enables him to purchase land quickly which has otherwise been of no interest to anyone. The possible purchase has the potential to make him a great deal of money. Thus, the first to know is in a privileged position in society due to their increased ability to prosper financially. The power of the wealthy to direct action is clear to even the most naive. This knowledge loop which is available to men and unavailable to women perpetuates the already powerless position of women in society.

Notes:

1.   I feel the need to acknowledge to Patti Lather any misunderstanding of her highly complex work. I plead, from the position of the interpreter rather than the marginalized, that I have read her work and, then, correctly or incorrectly claimed my own voice and spoke my mind.

2.   Cherryholmes in *Power and Criticism: Poststructural Investigations in Education* (1988) makes several suggestions as to what his critical pragmatic approach would mean for practice in education.

3.   Lather (1991) reminds us that the "concept of advocacy research remains as oxymoron to the many who take scholarly objectivity as both a possible and desirable goal in the human sciences, the mantle of objectivity which largely shielded the sciences from such questions has been irreparably rent. Contemporary history and philosophy of science, sociology of knowledge, and movement in science itself, all have combined to impress upon us the interdependence of method, theory and values " (p. 14).

4.   Hunter was accused of being a Marxist because of his membership in the Progressive Party in Atlanta in the late 1940s. He never was a full-blown Marxist, however (Domhoff, 1980).

5.   Scheurich (1991) warns that it is not possible to represent reality in any stable or reliable form. This conclusion, he states, has serious consequences for questions of validity. In fact, he refers to validity as a nonsense assumption (p. 3).

6.   Although triangulation is a term used in interpretive inquiry, its use in critical inquiry does not imply that the two types of inquiry are synonymous. A central challenge posed to the interpretive paradigm by the critical paradigm is the argument that reality is more than negotiated accounts---that we are both shaped by and shapers of our world. Because as critical researchers we shape our world, we must work to maximize ourselves as "mediator[s] between people's self-understandings and the need for ideology critique and transformative social action *without becoming impositional*" (Lather, 1991, p. 64, original emphasis).

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