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ABSTRACT
                This paper examines how some women successfully manage
gender, power, and authority. It opens with a brief description of useful
theoretical frameworks and the study design. These are followed by a section
that presents and analyzes preliminary findings. The findings begin with a
description of the political and personal context of the superintendency for
two women superintendents. The paper focuses on the complex and fragmented
constructions of identity, and their intersections with leadership in
exemplary women superintendents, as manifest in the superintendents'
resolutions of "border issues" inherent in crossing boundaries between the
public and private spheres. Data were gathered by interviewing two exemplary
women superintendents, their staffs, and other stakeholders in the education
community. Information was also obtained through written records, field
notes, drawings, journals, and theoretical memos. The findings show that both
women adopted a professional discourse that indexed power and authority. The
political and conflictive nature of the superintendency requires that those
who assume the role adopt the socially expected norms of professional
discourse that indexes the stereotypically masculine qualities of toughness,
aggression, and coolness under pressure. Both women strategically deployed
these constructions to exercise power and authority. (Contains 37
references.) (RJM)

Constructing Identity through Power and Discourse

In Exemplary Women Superintendents

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Constructing Identity through Power and Discourse

In Exemplary Women Superintendents

Spring is a time for hope and renewal that is echoed in the rituals of graduation for high school students. Parties are held to celebrate the rite of passage from childhood into adulthood, as children prepare to leave home, many for the first time. The party that evening in a small community in east central Texas was no different from many that occurred on that same evening in cities and towns across the country; while parents were there, kids were rowdy but well-behaved. But a few hours into the party, the parents left, and the kids began drinking. Four home-town heroes—popular, powerful young athletes, who had brought football and baseball glory to the small town—took a thirteen-year old girl, giggling and giddy with Jell-O-shots, to the country club golf course, and raped her.

After a time, parents, city, and school official learned of the evening's events. The criminal code in Texas is clear: a thirteen-year-old girl is not legally capable of consensual sex. The education code in Texas is equally clear: a student who commits an off-campus felony crime must be removed from his or her regular campus and assigned to an alternative education facility as soon as school officials have knowledge of the offense, even if this knowledge comes prior to the student's arrest, prosecution, and/or conviction for the crime in a court of law. Eleanor Randall,[1] the superintendent for the district in which the students were enrolled, conducted an investigation of the events, removed the boys from their high school, and assigned them to a disciplinary alternative school. High-powered attorneys descended upon the community to conduct the legal defense for the boys, which eventually resulted in a deferred adjudication sentence. But removing the boys from their high school represented a punishment

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[1] The names of the superintendents and their districts have been changed to honor the anonymity of the participants.

and social demotion that was unacceptable to the parents and many people in the community. Dr. Randall's act of placing the boys into an alternative educational facility became a lightning rod for the storm of controversy that surrounded the incident, which in itself became a modern morality play that reflected the shifting values and diverse attitudes that constituted the social structure of the community. The parents of the boys appealed the superintendent's decision to place their sons into an alternative educational facility to the board.

The incident divided the community into two camps, those that supported the boys and their families, and those that supported the girl and her family. Both the girl's and the boys' families were well established, middle-class, and part of the power structure of the community. Between the camps stood the superintendent, a woman whose authority to make the morally and legally correct decision was being challenged. The pressure on the board to reverse her decision was intense; supporters of the boys' families offered one board member a bribe; newspaper articles criticized the superintendent for her decision; and threats, both explicit and subtle, were made to board members, administrators, teachers, and the superintendent herself. Yet, despite the pressure, the board supported the superintendent's decision, and the appeal was denied.

Today, three years later, the community remains torn by the incident. Part of the town's power structure continues to support the superintendent while others work to actively undermine her actions in retaliation for her decision. Two new board members, who were successfully elected with the backing of the boys' families, question her leadership at every board meeting, disrupt her authority, and foment opposition with parents and teachers at every turn. The newspaper editor still will not speak to the superintendent, which poses an extremely difficult situation as the superintendent attempts to repair the community and shape positive public perceptions of the district. Every time Eleanor Randall walks into a meeting, a social occasion,

the grocery store, or a campus, she knows that she will be met with silence or perfunctory remarks by half of the people who are present. Yet she continues to function and succeed, despite the wall of hostility that greets her daily.

Those who are familiar with the role of the superintendency will recognize this story as one that varies only in degree for most superintendents. The political nature of the job consumes the time and energy of superintendents as they manage and lead change in an era of educational reform (Blumberg, 1985). Superintendents exist in a fishbowl, where decisions are questioned, diverse groups with varying political agendas must be addressed, and the litigious nature of society must be contended with. Although both male and female superintendents are subjected to the endless drama of the political arena, it is female superintendents whose power and authority is more frequently questioned. In a western society, power and authority are socially constructed as "natural" attributes of the masculine, but not the feminine. When females project authority, they disrupt socially constructed norms of what is acceptable.

In the opening story, Eleanor Randall represents the authority figure who unwaveringly enforces the law. The level of hostility directed against her, its duration, and the ongoing efforts to undermine her authority clearly demonstrate that many cannot forgive her. But I propose that what cannot be forgiven is that, as a *female* enforcer of the law, Eleanor violates socially acceptable gender norms. Yet she remains effective in her district and on the state scene. My research into this phenomenon began with wondering why some women superintendents survive politically explosive situations while others do not? How do they contend with challenges to their power and authority? How do they cope with the overwhelming demands of the superintendency? And how does their gender impact their lives?

The incident connected with Eleanor's superintendency comes from a larger study that I am conducting on exemplary women superintendents. This paper will explore some preliminary findings from that study that present my understandings as to how some women are able to successfully manage gender, power, and authority. I begin with a brief description of useful theoretical frameworks and the study design. These are followed by a section in which I present and analyze preliminary findings. These findings begin with a description of the political and personal context of the superintendency for two women superintendents, after which I discuss the construction of identity through the acquisition of a professional discourse in the public sphere, explore the construction of female identity in the private sphere, and outline the role emotion plays in these constructions. Finally, I present my conclusions.

Review of Literature

My search for answers to the questions listed above quickly led me to realize that the final question about gender was the most salient. For women enter the superintendency not merely as women but as subjects in an institutional world that is ordered, shaped, and regulated by a set of practices, or discursive fields, that define notions of what is expected and normal. These discursive fields are revealed in a number of ways, including through language that superintendents use when talking about their identity as professionals and as women. For example, a successful superintendent is characterized as decisive, competent, powerful, authoritarian, and task-oriented, which are stereotypical constructions associated with the male gender (Skrla, 1998). According to Banks (1995), the subtle yet complex relationship between sex-role stereotypes and leadership remains undefined, but extremely important as these stereotypes are integrated into the self-concepts of men and women. Masculine traits are more highly valued than feminine traits; women are constructed as a "lack of": that is, less competent, independent, logical, and objective. But when women display highly-valued stereotypical

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masculine traits, they may be perceived negatively, resulting in the classic "damned if you do, damned if you don't" double bind (Banks, 1995; Koonce, 1997; Korabik, 1990; Nichols, 1993; Tannen, 1994). In other words, women must display behaviors that are associated with the role they have assumed; yet when they assume these behaviors, they are viewed negatively and their effectiveness is questioned.

Yet when entering a profession that is highly associated with the masculine gender, a certain amount of adaptation and adoption of social norms *must* occur in order for women (and men) to be successful (McElhinny, 1996). Therefore, for women to succeed, they must not only adopt the behaviors and attributes associated with the masculine gender, but also simultaneously not disrupt the expectations associated with the female gender. Women must strike a delicate balance between the polarities of toughness/femininity, risk-taking/mistake-free, ambitious/not expectant of equal treatment, and taking initiative/being responsive to the advice of others (Curcio, Morsink, & Bridges, 1989). Again, these expectations place impossible conditions on women.

That women superintendents adopt behaviors associated with the masculine gender is revealed through a professional discourse that presents their identities as competent and successful (Chase, 1995; Grogan, 1996). The adoption of these behaviors, however, is not so much an act of agency as it is constitutive of the available strategies that are socially and culturally constructed mechanisms. That is, although the choice to discursively align their leadership style and attributes with masculine stereotypes may be a conscious strategy by women superintendents, a narrow range of options that are available to them defines that particular choice. These discursive fields are bound in the workplace, by the arrangement of business, the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy, and practices that reinforce detachment, rationality, compartmentalization, and order. Dorothy Smith (1989) argues that although these orderings are

presented as gender-neutral, they are based upon an institutional knowledge constituted by patriarchal assumptions, language, and patterns of relating that reproduce and reinforce gender polarization, and hence, inequality.

Furthermore, women coexist in a private sphere of relations that is ordered by a different set of discursive practices and expectations. The gender socialization of females requires that they respond to behavioral expectations in this arena as well, but the skills and attributes required to successfully meet these expectations require a different sort of consciousness than the public world described above. It is a world of the "local and particular" (Smith, 1989, p. 6), a world in which women attend to endless details of home. Women, then, are subjects located within both of these discourses, which require a bifurcation of consciousness.

I do not mean to imply that women have two simple identities set in the public and private sphere. The boundaries between these discourses are fluid rather than solid, and passage between the two is not easily navigated. For nestled inside, between, and beyond these spheres are multiple constructions of identity that are located historically and socially. These constructions within and the passages between these realms are marked with ambiguity, resistance, and dissonance (Morris, 1995). Identities that are constructed in these realms result from repeated acts, either in resistance to or in compliance with local expectations (Butler, 1993; Cameron, 1996). These repeated acts give the (false) semblance of gender identity as a unified subject.

Therefore, as Butler (1993) suggests, gender becomes *performative*; it is an act that is both purposeful and contingent upon shifting meanings that are socially and historically constructed through discourse. This way of thinking about gender "focuses not on dichotomous differences expected under polarized, categorical roles of feminine and masculine, but on the

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fluid enactment of gender roles in specific social situations" (Bergvall, 1996, p. 175). In other words, the actions of the women (and men) do not spring from who they are, but rather who they are depends upon their repeated performance of acts over time that constitute their identity.

If we accept this performative, socially constructed, and changing nature of gender (Butler, 1993), then we must also accept that identity is fluid, boundless, and fragmented. Irigaray (1985) depicts women as indefinite, unbounded, ever-changing, existing in a patriarchal world that represses and denies their identity. The interior, fluid identity of women, located in myriad zones of eroticism within the female body, contrasts sharply with the stolid, armored, mechanical boundary of male identity. Theweleit (1977), similarly, constructs the male body as bounded, and roots misogyny in the fear that the boundary of the male body cannot contain the interior floods, masses, fluids, and infiniteness of the feminine within their psyches. This boundlessness associated with the female body is reflected in the fluidity of their identities as they cross the psychic borderlands of the "masculine" private and "feminine" public worlds.

The tensions inherent in the process of border crossing and plurality of identity construction are revealed through language. The framing of identity and experience in language is particularly helpful in locating discursive fields, such as professional discourse. However, linguistic analysis also "entails breaking apart apparently unified categories or secure dyads to allow differences and tensions within them to emerge" (Ferguson, 1993, p. 123). An analysis, then, of the linguistic production of gendered leadership, allows us to problematize unified constructions of identity that propagate gender polarization and thereby reproduce inequality.

Study Design

My initial interest in this project was framed around understanding the survival strategies that women use to successfully manage the superintendency. As the study progressed, I became

interested in delving below the surface to observe the complex and fragmented constructions of identity and their intersections with leadership in exemplary women superintendents, as manifested in their resolutions of "border issues" inherent in crossing boundaries between the public and private spheres. Since western capitalist society goes to great extremes to divide and maintain its population as male and female (Bem, 1995; Foucault, 1990), one cannot study social constructions of leadership without understanding its intersection with gender. Finally, I had no interest in generalizing to the population of women superintendents. With these goals in mind, I chose methods for this research that are qualitative, emergent, and informed by feminist perspectives (Olesen, 1994; Reinharz, 1992; Weedon, 1997), the purpose of which is to put the "social construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry" (Lather, 1992, p. 91).

Selection of the Two Women.

The social construction of gender has been studied in aspiring (Grogran, 1996), sitting (Bell, 1988; Chase, 1995), and exited (Skrla, 1998; Tallerico, Poole, & Burstyn, 1994) superintendents. I wondered if *exemplary* superintendents would display the same fragmented constructions of self that emerged in these studies, particularly as located in the adaptation of a professional discourse. I spoke with people at the state department of education, professors in educational administration, and staff of the state-level administrators' organization to identity potential participants. The exemplary status designation of the women superintendents is based upon their having been a superintendent for a minimum of five years; having served as a superintendent in an academically acceptable school district; and having been selected by their peers as representatives for service in state-level administrative organizations. From a very short list of about nine women, I selected two, both of whom are serving in their third superintendency. One is the incoming president of a state-level organization for administrators.

She is the first female to serve in that position. The other superintendent serves on several elected state boards.

Data Collection and Analysis.

I spent eight days in the two districts, during which I interviewed the women superintendents, their staffs, parents, teachers, principals, community members, and board members. Both women generously allowed me to shadow them throughout their days, which typically began around 7 A.M. and ended far into the evening. I observed the superintendents at board meetings, social occasions such as dinners with the city council, parent-teacher meetings, cabinet and council meetings, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce committee meetings, regional board meetings, and interactions with community members, parents, principals, and board members during the course of their days. Artifacts in the offices of the superintendents gave me a window into their personal and social lives, and district documents such as board minutes, memoranda, and the district strategic plan furnished a context for the workplace of each superintendent. Monthly/weekly columns written by the superintendents provided insight as to their concerns and priorities, and newspaper and magazine articles written about the women provided a historical context of their careers. Finally, I established an e-mail correspondence with the women subsequent to my district visits. I wished to know what effect the research had on their views of gender issues and the superintendency. I also kept extensive field notes, drawings, journals, and theoretical memos, which, along with the interviews, were transcribed and subjected to content, discourse, linguistic (Goodwin, 1990), and sociolinguistic analysis, paying particular attention to gaps, silences, and inconsistencies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Building Rapport.

The reluctance of women to discuss gender issues has been well-documented (Bell, 1988; Chase, 1995; Smulyan, 1998); therefore, establishing an atmosphere of trust was critical, not only with the superintendents, but with their staffs, some of whom saw me as threatening and potentially harmful. I was able to overcome these barriers with all but one assistant superintendent, who remained extremely suspicious of my motives. Each staff interview lasted approximately one and ½ to two hours; I spent the first part of the interview to establish connection and build rapport. Consequently, all participants but one spoke freely and honestly with me about their views on gender issues and the superintendents.

I did not interview the superintendents until I had shadowed them for several days. Thus, I spent about 20 hours engaged in informal conversation with each woman before our formal interview. This allowed me to make connections between their lives and mine, establish trust, and explain my motivations for the research. By the time we sat down to each three-hour formal interview, I felt we were, if not friends, at least colleagues bonded by our concern for the education of children.

Preliminary Findings and Analysis

I begin with a brief description of the women that sets a contextual background upon which constructions of power are landscaped. Both Eleanor Randall and Jacqueline Broussard are fifty-something White women who possess terminal degrees and have been in the superintendency for at least ten years. Although both women are in their third superintendency, their career paths were divergent. Eleanor arrived via the slow track, entering the superintendency only after leaving a district where she had worked for seventeen years in almost every conceivable campus administrative position. After a stint as an assistant superintendent in a district that served 38,000 students, Eleanor entered her first superintendency in a small district in central Texas. Jacqueline's ascension to the superintendency was meteoric; she was promoted

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into positions of increasing responsibility in North Plains ISD, despite the fact that she had no experience or formal training. She served her first superintendency when she left North Plains ISD to escape a sexual harassment situation, served a second superintendency in a neighboring district, and in due course was wooed back to North Plains as its superintendent. Both women are intense and driven; they possess a strong presence, a quiet air of competence and confidence, and enormous energy. Both women are generally held in high esteem by their staffs, boards, and constituencies for their intelligence, resilience, political shrewdness, and strength. Yet they are also problematically viewed by some of their female colleagues as aggressive, cold, aloof, insensitive, and uncaring.

Context of the Superintendency

Results from studies of female principals and assistant superintendents are often generalized to superintendents. Yet principals and assistant superintendents are more accurately described as middle management positions in which facilitation skills and the ability to broker understandings between subordinates and superordinates are highly prized ((Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). These skills are more congruent with stereotypical notions of gender socialization; therefore, women in these positions are not viewed as problematically as women who occupy the highest position of authority and power in the organization. Eleanor and Jacqueline were highly cognizant that the superintendency is a unique position. As Eleanor said, "it's another world you enter when you enter the superintendency, and it's not like anything else that's out there. It's not being an assistant superintendent, it's not like being a principal. It's just different."

Indeed, the superintendency represents unique challenges to those who occupy the position. In this era of reform, superintendents are expected to manage change in uncertain times, reckoning with outside influences and internal discord as well. In the process of

restructuring, conflict inevitably occurs. Politics and conflict, and the ability to resolve them, are inextricably linked to constructions of power and authority. Since the exercise of power is constructed as a male prerogative, an authority figure that is female becomes problematic in the eyes of the school and public communities when she attempts to exercise authority. Both women superintendents reveal that successfully coping with power, conflict, and authority issues, both internal and external, is critical to their survival:[2]

J: The school superintendency is a political balance, not only with the seven board members that you have because they all want different things, and you have to try to juggle that and keep them satisfied. But then the public also wants different things, because there are so many special interest groups.

E: If you are going to make a difference as a superintendent you are going to lose your job... because the children that you have to make the difference with are *not* the children that the power structure values. When you help those children, you inevitably alienate yourself to some level from the power structure by meeting the needs that your conscience and your intellect and your moral responsibility tell you *must* be met. If you look out and see a district where there's a lot of student success, too often you see a superintendent under siege or in the process of losing their jobs because the things you do to get students to a high level of success are not popular with the people who elect boards, and that's sad.

But they also reveal that the greatest challenge is balancing the enormous demands of their professional life:

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[2] Although I completed a linguistic analysis of the superintendents' transcripts, for the readability of the quotes I use the standard mode of reporting text. However, their emphasis on certain words is italicized.

J: I get depressed occasionally, and that depression is not truly as much job related as it is job-related, wife-related, family-related, finance-related...all those multitudes of things, and *that* is the depression more than anything. It's just if I have all cylinders going wrong, then sometimes I think what are you doing, and I really get depressed and say can I, do I want to do this, and do I really understand this.

E: It is the emotional drain of the superintendency that I think would add the complexity...it's the intensity and complexity of the issues that you deal with.. They're deeper and harder, I mean that's why the job is the harder job and the bigger job and the tougher job, because there aren't easy answers. If they are easy problems, they don't come to you; if they are tough, unsolvable, gut-wrenching, that's what comes to the superintendent.

J: In command means being responsible for everything; you are on duty twenty-four hours a day, and it means I have to be concerned with every part of this district...when you have the total system to look at, and things in the system can go wrong at any moment, then the responsibility for that is much greater. It's just the sheer magnitude of the job.

The superintendency, with its conflict and vociferous demands, forms a backdrop upon which constructions of identity and gender are landscaped.

Bifurcated Consciousness

Women demonstrate two types of consciousness, one associated with the public world of the superintendency and one associated with the private world of the home. Although both types of this consciousness may coexist in one person, and may struggle for dominance at any

given time, crossing the borders between the two requires a shift in thinking (Smith, 1989). These discursive tensions were evident in the discussions about the public and private spheres of both women superintendents.

Both women superintendents I studied frame their public life in a professional discourse that adopts masculine behaviors associated with successful leaders, and employs linguistic and paralinguistic features that reinforce constructions of themselves as authoritarian. In the minds of the women, this discourse is constructed as gender-neutral. Yet neutral discourses are constituted as male. De Beauvoir first identified that males were the only ones who could lay claim to both the masculine and the universal principles of these discourses (Smith, 1989). Although feminists may not wish it to be so, entry into heavily-dominated male professions, such as police work, the military, or the upper echelons of management, requires that women adopt and adapt some of the social norms of the occupation that are indexical to the masculine (McElhinny, 1996). That is, the linguistic features of language index social meanings that are associated primarily with men or women (Ochs, 1992). These indexical meanings are not direct, but linked through social norms to masculine behavior. Hence, this language is available to women to co-opt for their use. That is not to say that the discourses that constitute social norms are not locations of resistance as well. But embedded in the speech of these exemplary women superintendents are words and phrases that index the highly-valued masculine qualities of competency, assertiveness, decisiveness, and rationality.

For instance, both superintendents resolve conflict in the district "calmly, calmly," and stay focused on "what the object is...to improve the school district." They meet conflict and challenge to authority "head on." Jacqueline's strategy in dealing with dissidents is to refocus them on the goals and expectations that she has set for the district. This strategy is not always

successful since many people who function as trouble-makers in organizations do so out of desire for their own sphere of power. However, access to information is the life blood of power. If these noncompliant employees persist in their behavior, Jacqueline severs the lines of communication. When individuals fall back into line, she brings them back into the circle of power by resuming communication.

Another behavior that both women saw as a prerequisite for survival in the superintendency was toughness. Eleanor refers to a shearing away of her emotional side as "I had insulated myself [so that] I could deal with situations…a part of me was very sad because I felt like I had lost a certain level of empathy, and that was a loss." Yet she justified her mental shift by comparing herself to a physician: "it can't be unlike what a doctor has to do…when you help them they are going to have to suffer…you can't help them by just leaving their pain…you cannot help people and make it easy at the same time." Although Eleanor viewed this control of her emotions as critical to her success, many of her colleagues thought she was unfeeling and unsympathetic.

The subordinates of both women remarked on their lack of emotion and ability to control themselves in adverse or difficult situations. Coworkers viewed the women as occasionally frustrated, never out of control of their emotions. Eleanor even remarked that "I don't know what people expect you to do…did they think you would just lay down in the floor and collapse and start sobbing and crying? Did they expect me to fall apart…I wasn't raised that way…here's the job: you just do it." Jacqueline told the story of a disgruntled parent who came to every board meeting for a year to participate in the public remarks, where, during her allotted time, she castigated the superintendent. Jacqueline maintained her composure by scripting every speech that the parent gave, and not verbally or emotionally responding to her criticisms.

Finally, both women adopted assertive, and sometimes aggressive behaviors, especially in resolving conflict. Interestingly, the men in both districts saw their behavior as assertive and positive, and the women, for the most part, as aggressive, tinged with negativity. Eleanor realized that she was criticized:

I don't really see myself that way [as aggressive]…but people criticize you and you look at it…I think that sometimes the part of me that's very aggressive and assertive has done some very good things…so maybe they don't like it, but I happen to value it, so that's okay.

Jacqueline saw herself as enormously aggressive—"I'm not afraid to go after the devil himself"—and related a story about a debate between a male superintendent and her:

I was at the Center for Creative Leadership…and I was the only woman, and they [the men] kept asking me how uncomfortable I was, and I said, "I'm not at all uncomfortable"…when I became *very* assertive to a couple of men who were just doing some incredibly stupid things, they didn't know how to take it, and they came back to me and said , "You need to not be that assertive, you're coming on way too strongly" and I would say, "If a man told you that, what would you do?" "Well, I'd probably slap him or knock him down," and I said, "So you're allowing me to be a lot tougher on you than you would another man," and they both said yes, and that you hurt us because you were a woman…I was surprised by that and I learned something from that, I really did. I thought, you know, I am a very assertive female, and I'm not afraid to go after the devil, and if I see something that I think is wrong, then I'm going to tell you if I think you can handle it. I never go after someone that I don't think can handle it, and I thought those men were pretty strong…very aggressive, very boss management, very tough, and so

when I went after one...I calmly turned to the guys and said, "You want that person because he's just like you and that is not the best leadership style for this situation"...we got into a pretty strong conversation [and] volleyed back and forth, and I thought great, great conversation. I felt very good. I'm not afraid of conflict, and I thought that was a terrific interchange...he told me that he felt such a strong presence from me that he thought we were either going to get into a battle or fight or he was going to have to acquiesce or whatever...they see me as strong. I'll tell you how men see me...they think I make them look bad...they see me as a creature from another world.

In this passage, Jacqueline locates herself in a discourse of aggression, not as someone who merely adopts an assertive style, but as someone who backs down even the most aggressive men. She speaks of "going after him," "I'm not afraid of conflict," and "I'm a very assertive female" and frames the exchange in a sports metaphor—"we volleyed back and forth." Yet she maintains her cool—"I calmly turned to him." The identity that emerges from this passage is constructed as one that cannot only hold her own with the best, but beats men at their own game: she "outmans" the men through superior competence and aggression. Ironically, she locates her superiority in gender as well as a professional discourse: a source of her strength lies in the surprise others express at an extraordinary coupling of the female gender and aggression. While she co-opts the masculine behavior traits of aggression and competency for her own ends, she also locates herself in a realm beyond the understanding of men. She is simultaneously male and female, and neither male nor female: she is alien, "a creature from another world."

The transcripts of both superintendents reveal other linguistic features that forward this professional discourse. The cultural difference model of gendered speech has grown into a cottage industry, beginning with Tannen's work on speech differences between men and women,

and culminating in works such as *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Certain speech patterns are indexical to the female gender, such as hesitation, tag questions, and lack of interrupters; conversely, speech patterns are indexical to the male gender, such as forceful speech and lack of questions and pauses. However, recent research has shown that these "gendered" ways of speaking reflect topic and location rather than gender-linked differences. For example, Freed (1996) found that males and females in conversations about friendship equally used "female" patterns of speaking. Different ways of speaking, then, are associated not so much with gender as expectations held for the speaker within a certain context. "Gendered" talk in the context of a relationship does not originate in the female gender, but is located in socially constructed expectations of speech patterns congruent with the role of wife, mother, lover, or friend. A position of power and authority, such as the superintendency, produces expectations of "power" speech.

Unsurprisingly, the speech patterns of Eleanor and Jacqueline reveal that they are cognizant of these social expectations with different audiences, and make conscious, strategic choices of speech and discourse style. Both women speak with emphatic authority, which is accomplished through few pauses or hesitations, even at the end of sentences, where typically one draws breath to signal a conversational turn. The lack of pauses linguistically signals a speaker in control of discourse, while the lack of breath is a floor management strategy that maintains control of a conversational interaction (Greenwood, 1996). Both Jacqueline and Eleanor emphasize certain phrases through repetition or stress, and use a calm, measured cadence that again reinforces the perception of their emotional control. I observed the superintendents in countless situations—before staff, board members, teachers, parents,

community leaders, socially, and in one-on-one meetings—and my notes and transcriptions indicate that the women use these speech patterns with great consistency.

This linguistic production of gendered leadership parallels the paralinguistic cues that the women employed. Their body comportment reinforced their position of authority. For example, whenever possible, they placed themselves at the head of the table—the seat of authority—in meetings. In conversational interactions, eye contact and gaze established the women as dominant; they both initiated and ended the contact. Further, their conversational partners adjusted their position to the superintendents; that is, they would inch their chairs around until they were facing the women, thus signaling readiness and accommodation to the dominant status of the women. Finally, women typically maintain themselves within a small space; Eleanor and Jacqueline filled their space, and sprawled beyond into the spatial territory of others, without impunity.

However, Jacqueline and Eleanor are not emotionless "Stepford" superintendents, controlled, lifeless, and cold. They speak with great passion about their vision for the education of all children, which they believe it is key to preserving democracy and this country. Their descriptions of the superintendency as a difficult occupation are peppered with emotional words and phrases: depression, overwhelming, gut-wrenching, and intensity. But those expressions of frustration and fear are revealed in the private realm of discussion with me as researcher, not the public sphere of the superintendency. The emotion expressed in the public sphere is connected to their passion, commitment, energy, and urgency for the well-being of children. This emotion, however, is linked with vision for children, not competency, and regardless of how deeply it is felt, is strategically deployed to drive the internal politics of the district, and is subdued when

manipulating the external politics that are controlled by the power structure of each community. This passion, then, is controlled and purposeful.

The quasi-emotionless world of the superintendency stands in sharp relief to their emotional world of home and family. In particular, Jacqueline, who has two adolescent children, reveals the emotional nature of this private sphere. She talks of enormous guilt, which is eased by a "corporate husband" who is available to help with homework, attend athletic events, and address the basic needs of her children. The children's attitudes toward their mother are ambivalent; on the one hand, they recognize that working is a necessary outlet for Jacqueline's energy, talent, and intellect; on the other hand, they must deal with her physical absence and the inevitable, public, and sometimes unpleasant criticisms of her that cause them a great deal of pain. When talking about her relationship with her children, Jacqueline uses a discourse charged with emotion. She speaks of "argumentative meals," where anger, disagreements, and frustrations explode, but issues eventually are resolved; she also details conversations with her daughter, who advises her to "calm down, Mom, it's no big deal, you are blowing this way out of proportion." Her family accommodates and supports her superintendency; yet when I asked what accommodations or sacrifices were made by her workplace for the family, she replied "none." I asked, "So your family came second, basically. Was that the source of your guilt?" "Yes," she replied. "Yes." Later she repaired her initial statement: "It isn't so much that my job came before my children. It was that when I'm here, I give 150% and when I'm with my kids I try to give that too...at a cost to me." Eleanor, whose children are grown, frames her home life as a space in which the pain associated with the superintendency is too great to discuss with her husband; instead, the pain can only be endured silently, miserably, through restless nights, self-doubts, second-guessing, and turbulent thoughts.

This discourse contrasts sharply with the neutralized discourse of the professional. Emotional speech is gendered as female, "typically viewed as something natural rather than cultural, irrational rather than rational, chaotic rather than ordered, subjective rather than universal, physical rather than mental or intellectual, unintended and uncontrollable, and hence often dangerous" (Lutz, 1990). Emotions are construed as both weak and powerful; on the one hand, emotion is perceived as some sort of character defect to rise above (as "getting a grip on one's emotions"). Alternately, emotions are the source of great passion that "fires people up" and charges them to act beyond the ordinary. These are the "good" emotions connected with Jacqueline and Eleanor's commitment to children. But generally, both superintendents regard emotions, even the "good" ones, as something to be controlled, handled, or dealt with. They relegate "dangerous" or "uncontrolled" emotion to the private sphere, and use a rhetoric of control when discussing emotion in the public sphere. The rhetoric of control is a reproduction of women as in need of control, a discourse that governs the bodies of women as Foucault's (1990) discourse of sexuality, and establishes a boundary within which emotion is contained. This inner boundary—which corresponds to the interior lives of these women—establishes an edge, a location within which emotion can be safely located. Further, "a discourse that is concerned with the expression, control, or repression of emotions can be seen as a discourse on the crossing back and forth of that boundary between inside and outside" (Lutz, 1991, p. 73). The relegation of emotion to the private sphere results in an identity construction that allows these women to be perceived by others as "genderless." Because they express themselves through a rhetoric of control, they co-opt patriarchal organizational discourse as their own, and through consistent and repeated practices, linguistically and paralinguistically, effect a

genderless identity which forms the bedrock of their acceptance by others as persons of power and authority.

Conclusions

The second wave of feminism in the 1960s was accompanied by an outpouring of literature that brought women's ways of knowing from the margin to the center. In countermanding simplistic stereotypes, oppositional constructions were erected that essentialize women's experience as relational or collaborative. But the women in this study employed complex gender identities that cannot be explained using difference, deficit, or dominance models. Butler's theories of gender as performative present a powerful conceptual framework from which to problematize reductive explanations.

In many ways, these women superintendents did not disrupt gender expectations. They are wives and mothers, but they are also superintendents, which is the ultimate position of power and authority in a school district. These women adopt a professional discourse that indexes power and authority. This notion is not new; androgyny theory notes that successful female leaders often display a task orientation. But there is an enormous difference between a focus on competence and task completion and wearing the mantle of power comfortably. The political and conflictive nature of the superintendency requires that those who assume the role adopt the socially expected norms of a professional discourse that indexes the stereotypically masculine qualities of toughness, aggression, and coolness under pressure. Emotion is relegated to the private sphere, or to personal conversations. The women I studied are not only aware that these expectations must be met, but strategically deploy these constructions, with stunning virtuosity, in order to exercise power and authority.

Since they use power in ways that are expected of superintendents, reinforce their authority linguistically and paralinguistically, and perform the role of the superintendent through repeated acts of authority, they appear "genderless" to those with whom they work. The individual, fragmentary constructions of power, femaleness, and genderlessness are hidden, congealed in an amorphous mass that resembles a unified identity, achieved by an incredible sleight of hand.

Yet their success comes at a price. Navigating the fluid boundaries of these multiple constructions of identity has resulted in great anguish, exhaustion, isolation, illness, guilt, and sacrifice. The greedy demands of the superintendency produce intense emotion, which spills over into and consumes even the private lives of Jacqueline and Eleanor. The discursive field of emotional oppression is written upon their bodies and revealed through low-pitched conversations about their struggle in exuding this rhetoric of control. I will forever carry in my memory the sense of courage and bravery of these extraordinary women as they successfully stare down a hostile and demanding world. I take inspiration from their lived experience. Eleanor's final words to me reveal her ability to (re) create her persona as one of power. In this segment of conversation she talks about discrimination. One reading might be that she is her own oppressor, colonized by patriarchy. Well, yes. But one might also see her determination to push through the weariness; and in the final analysis, her triumph over discrimination by the discursive creation of her personal realm of power:

> I've felt...this huge responsibility on your shoulders for all these other women—you've got to go forward and do this—[sometimes]...I have just literally said, "I *can't do* this for everybody, I can't," I just can't keep being the person out here carrying this load for all these other women...I have known people who resented opportunities coming their

way because they were a woman, and...previously...I got things because I *was* a woman, because there were no women out there and...there was political pressure...doors were open for women to walk through, and *I was the woman standing there to walk* through. I never for one minute resented the fact that I got to go through that door because I was a woman, because *I got to go through that door*, and my thinking was, I walk through that door and they may *think* they are doing it for a token reason, but I'm *through the door*, and I'm through that door for every other woman. Now just *let* them try to close it behind me because you *can't* close it...I'd hate to think you've paid the price, and what you've done isn't worthy; but to me what could be more worthy than making a difference for kids...you can't wear your feelings on your shoulder. I am almost *impossible* to offend ...I just don't carry my feelings on my sleeve...sexist remarks just roll off me like water. I barely know they've gone by. Sometimes I worry about that. I think I should be more sensitive, I should be more aggressive about those things. I'm not one of these people who's going to say, "How dare you call me honey," it's just going to roll off of me. *Because I'm in charge of the meeting, babe...I'm still in charge of the meeting.*

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