

## TAPPING IN TO FURY AND PASSION

By Catherine Marshall

### Simmering Furies

The graduate student, excited that there are theories of leadership that engage spirituality and caring, smolders over warnings from her good old boy internship supervisor about being *too female and too Black*. Two women assistant principals, drinking after hours, douse their anger while sharing sexism stories — one is furious at being called *our principal-maker*, (supposed flattery to placate her being pushed aside as males move up ahead of her), and the other is steaming, knowing she must keep quiet about blatant Title IX violations. The quiet girl, hunched at the back of the class, cannot imagine her teachers having any understanding of her troubles with an abusive stepfather. At the high school basketball game, the pregnant teenager whose anger is subdued by drugs, whispers obscenities to herself while witnessing the pretty cheerleaders' parents' and teachers' joy as her ex-boyfriend scores the winning basket in front of college scouts.

Such confusion and furies present themselves as counternarratives about schooling. Rather than treat them as situations for educational administrators to manage or evade, I propose we use these counternarratives to fundamentally reframe educational leadership to be a profession proud of and skilled at interventions for social justice. Research and leadership generated by these avoided, marginalized, and suppressed truths will be powerful and energized by unbounded transgressive fury.<sup>1</sup> The *Journal for Research on Leadership Education*, eliciting "boundary-crossing" and "conversations," can tap into this power.

### Integrating the Most Sensitive, Avoided, and Evaded Issues

Bureaucratic eunuchs, administrator harems, compulsory heterosexuality, male leaders' homosocial behavior — do I have your attention yet? Such strange terms are known to scholars who use feminist literatures. But few *mainstream* scholars and few educational administration students are ever exposed to terms or literatures involving sexuality, gender, sexism, homophobia, and most importantly, the powerful politics of knowledge control that maintain the profession's silence and avoidance.<sup>2</sup>

Where to start? Do we situate agendas historically, tracing how patriarchy intertwined with the creation of the power hierarchies in our economic, political, and social

institutions, informing and forming Grandfather Ellwood Cubberly's definitions of school leadership? The work of Tyack and Hansot (1982), and then Blount (1997), are a start but frequently are used only in programs that do not treat history as a frill.

Do we start with the dilemmas encountered by women as they learn that being a professional in education involves *making do*, suppressing anger, getting by, and keeping quiet in spite of unfairness, stupidity, and persistent dilemmas? Some educational leaders know that to be labeled as a troublemaker is to doom one's career. They know, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton once said, "Great is the power of the enemy of change: custom."

Do we start with critiquing the fifties-generated white male career norms of a stay-at-home wife and mother which liberated the administrator from the tasks of relationship and family? Now, both male and female administrators encounter dilemmas when the career demands 16-hour days. Yet women put off administrative career aspirations, alter career choices, and drop out. Men who want more involvement with their family lives face equally harsh choices.

Should we start strategically, with organization theory and leadership courses as the launching point for including the feminist critique of bureaucracy? Then Kanter's (1977) and Ferguson's (1984) identification of leadership-stifling, agenda controlling, and opportunity positioning could be part and parcel of educational administration studies, rather than just viewed as intimidating feminist insights.

Shouldn't educational administrators know how the social constructions of gender serve to reinforce bullying, sexual harassment, and adolescent anorexia? Should they know how quick fixes are only band-aids for teenage pregnancy and STDs? Should they understand how curricula and extra curricular programming continues to confine both girls and boys to traditional career pathways?

What about passion and sexuality? Part of educators' professional training prepares them to hide all but a Cleaver Family model. Desire, delight, sensuality, joy, and passion are eccentricities that get even the art and music teacher into trouble. Women educators learn they must avoid clothing and behavior that might be perceived as accentuating desirability. The gay administrator learns to create a fake marriage. The boy, whose guidance counselor *outs* him to his horrified parents, commits suicide. Desires and orientations are confined within narrow heterosexual, professional, and proper norms. The teacher whose social

activism includes fighting for abortion rights, or the single woman who likes to belly-dance or ride motorcycles, quickly learns to hide such suspect propensities. Schools' bureaucratic rules, professional standards, and codes of ethics only lay a soggy paper towel over the realities emanating from repressed and silenced sexuality and passions. So much is lost when educators cannot show love, caring, engrossment, and delight with the children and adults they see daily. All educators, but especially men, learn they must never show anything but mild interest in any child lest it appear predatory. Some educators are inspired by Nel Noddings' (1984) ethic of care. Very few though, hear of bell hooks' (1994) expositions on Frierian, transgressive, and joyful teaching. Few of such feminist scholar's ideas appear in the doctoral programs or practices of educational administration. Caring, the energies of passion, joy, and desire are sanitized and obliterated by professionalism, standards, and regimentation. Children learn this lesson in kindergarten and adult educators get advanced lessons in teacher training, internships, and assistant principalships.

#### A Modest Proposal

Gender and sexuality issues play out in the lived realities in educational institutions every minute of every day. They will still be there when we no longer speak of NCLB or accountability or charters. Yet for decades, the theories, scholarly work, and social activism on gender and sexuality have been marginalized. Most educational administration professors, professional journals, licensure boards, selection committees, and practitioners do not see these as proper and essential knowledges. The modest proposal that follows is based on research applied to practice in a leadership program.

Deans and professors are best situated to assert and lead a realignment of Masters and doctoral programs to prepare administrators for this reality-embracing leadership. Professional associations cannot. The North Carolina State Superintendent and I conducted research asking national leaders of professional education associations about how to approach training for social justice issues (Marshall & Ward, 2005). Respondents said that sexism, religious intolerance, language minority, and especially GLBT social justice concerns would be a low priority or not even on the agenda of social justice for some policymakers. "I think in many cases it becomes easier to avoid those issues," said one interviewee, "I mean there are so many things we can pick and choose to deal with, and often, we pick the issues that are less controversial." The professional associations for administrators are dominated by suburban and small town administrators who, as one respondent said, are not comfortable with "community activism," are not trained for it and find "the school boards and realtors don't like to have this conversation."

All educational administration programs need to have a critical mass of feminist scholars along with forceful and coherent programming. No, the 30 minutes in School Law will not do. No, making sure you have lots of women students will not do. Token women who avoid using feminist literature and feminist practice will not do. A lone marginalized feminist scholar with her two students will not do. A lone elective course will not do. With such token gestures, gender and sexuality will remain scary and marginalized topics, pursued without support by risk-taking scholars and students who are labeled as inappropriate, incompetent, impractical, chip-on-the-shoulder, and queer or feminist. A forceful thrust sponsored and supported by deans who push aside barriers and proffer funds for new faculty and program innovation, can lead to the needed changes.

Programmatically, a three-semester sequence of courses would be a good start.<sup>3</sup> First, I propose a new and different Politics of Education course, which includes politics from the margins. Students must be required to demonstrate how to analyze, understand, and work, not only with the power elite, but also with the counternarrative energies, furies, and social capital of the marginalized. Second, I suggest a course on critical feminist and queer theory; the intertwining of issues regarding race, gender, class, abilities, language, ethnicity, immigrant status, the barriers to women in leadership, and ways to re-frame leadership. The third capstone course would be a Social Justice Leadership course. This course would examine the range of educational inequities, the formal and informal curricula, and the range of approaches, policies, programs, leadership stances, and interventions that can be used to create equitable school environments. Each course would end with increasingly real, activist, collaborative, and social justice change agent projects that build upon themselves. Thus, the critiques of bureaucracy and androcentric leadership, and the gender and sexuality issues would be integrated within the curriculum.<sup>4</sup> Future educational leaders would think and work differently. For them, social justice leadership concerns would be approached as responsibilities and challenges that educational leaders view within political frameworks. Furthermore, through this sequencing, students would build skills, aptitudes, and collegial support so that their strong sense efficacy and solidarity for the social justice mission would lead to sustained, proud (not marginalized, lonesome, and career-ending), leadership. From this strong base, potential administrators' abilities for reframing school and societal practices can take root.

1. The first year teacher's carefully indoctrinated professionalism holds back her outrage on hearing two parents say "all I really care about is getting my kid in the best class and, frankly, I don't care about all those other people's children." The regional NAACP liaison fumes, after getting nowhere in trying to coordinate with central office officials' task force on gangs. The passionate commitment of the Hispanic community group fizzles when the principal takes over managing the day care center they created. The doc student is confused and angry after the reading assignments of critical theorists writing about schools' powerful role in dispensing valuable property in the form of credentials and letters (and other forms) of recommendations. He wonders, have his years in teaching been just to support individuals' property rights, to myths of individuals' social mobility through meritocracy, and myths of the efficacy of bureaucracy/division of labor/standardization; these myths that support socially mobile families' accumulation of cultural capital through schools? Has he been supporting schools' hierarchical work arrangements, curriculum efficiencies, and student-sorting and undermining collaborative, cultural engagement and community-building? Has he perpetuated the meritocratic myth, schools' labeling and categorizing just easing any societal responsibilities for dropouts, achievement gaps, imprisonment gaps, income disparities and so on (see Kahne; Labaree). For every issue foreshadowed above, and in my text's introductory paragraph, we already have theory, research, and methodological approaches for engaging with, not evading or managing these issues. I chose to focus on gender and sexuality issues in this essay, in my limited page numbers, since a) these are issues I have engaged with for thirty years of scholarly inquiry and for sixty years of lived realities, and b) others will speak with more intimate knowledge of other social justice issues. Reframing Educational Politics for Social Justice is a text book designed to provide the skills and desire to take leadership in politically strategic ways so educational administrators become the ones defining the issues, based on their search for, and understanding of the marginalized voices and counternarratives. What we lack is the political stance and political will to veer from tradition.

2. Educational administration training, whether from university programs or from inservice and mentoring, usually builds its theoretical grounding from existing practice, which is constrained by traditional, hierarchical and bureaucratic and White Anglo-Saxon male realities (English, 2003; Marshall, 1995; Bogatch, 2002) which disallow or discredit alternative modes and stances for leadership or push heroic models. The programs usually uncritically mold women leaders to fit into male-normed leadership models.

3. I actually teach three such courses, and have published books that work for these goals. However, the politics course is the only required course, and therefore there is no sequencing, build one upon another, and most students avoid the gender course. Besides Education Policy and Politics, the other courses are Gender Policy and Leadership in Education, and Social Justice Leadership. Beside the abovementioned politics book, I use Feminist Critical Policy Analysis, and Leadership for Social Justice. I also use a class-pak and handouts full of additional materials. One could construct a decent Gender Seminar by simply compiling selected publications of previous Willystine Goodsell Awardees, who were

selected by the American Educational Research Association for their scholarship and advocacy on issues for women and girls.

4. University professors of educational administration are the only creatures with the freedom to lead this cultural critique. Chancellors, superintendents, school board members, legislators, credentialing boards, etc. all depend for their livelihood on maintaining prevailing societal norms. But universities are for knowledge-creation and problem-finding. Their missions in developing technical fixes and in professional training are to be offshoots, built upon theory and research. Schools of education, where the research, theory, teaching, and most credentialing work are based, have become captives of credentialing forces wherein administrative coursework is regulated by credential-board-created standards. Too, they are captives of funding agencies; foundations and state and federal RFPs and contracts emphasize *best practice* ways to fix predefined problems, not basic research. My proposal would defy these realities.

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