LEADERSHIP AS STEWARDSHIP

"WHO'S SERVING WHO?"

Thomas J. Sergiovanni

Many school administrators are practicing a form of leadership that is based on moral authority, but often this practice is not acknowledged as leadership. The reason for this problem is that moral authority is underplayed and that the management values undergirding this authority are largely unofficial. When I asked Larry Norwood, principal of Capital High School, Olympia, Washington, to participate in one of my studies on leadership, he responded, “I have wrestled with this—and finally decided to pass. First, because I am so late in responding and, second, I can think of nothing of literary significance that I have achieved (in the way of leadership) in the past twenty-two years. My style is to delegate and empower, and my successes have been through other people. If I have a strength it is as a facilitator—that doesn’t make good copy. Sorry.” Larry Norwood is a successful school administrator. Although he does not think of himself as a leader, he is one.

I suspect that one of the reasons for Norwood’s success may be that he implicitly rejects leadership, as we now understand it. The official values of management lead us to believe that leaders are characters who single-handedly pull and push organizational members forward by the force of personality, bureaucratic clout, and political know-how. Leaders must be decisive. Leaders must be forceful. Leaders must have vision. Leaders must successfully manipulate events and people, so that vision becomes reality. Leaders, in other words, must lead.
From time to time, there may be a place for this kind of direct leadership. But it is only part of the story. The leadership that counts, in the end, is the kind that touches people differently. It taps their emotions, appeals to their values, and responds to their connections with other people. It is a morally based leadership—a form of stewardship. Greenfield (1991) found this to be the case in his study of an urban elementary school. The moral orientation of its teachers was central in fixing their relationship with the principal and with each other. Greenfield comments, “Their persistence in searching out strategies to increase their colleagues’ or their personal effectiveness in serving the needs of the school’s children was motivated not by bureaucratic mandate or directives from superiors, but by moral commitment to children, rooted in their awareness of the needs of these children and their beliefs about the significance of their roles, as teachers, in these children’s lives. Much of the principal’s efforts to foster leadership among the teachers ... was directed to further developing and sustaining this moral orientation among teachers” (p. 3). To those teachers, shared ideals and beliefs became duties to which they willingly responded. These findings parallel those of Johnson (1990). Morally based leadership is important in its own right, but it is also important because it taps what is important to people and what motivates them.

Stewardship in Practice

Implicit in traditional conceptions of leadership is the idea that schools cannot be improved from within: school communities have neither the wit nor the will to lead themselves; instead, principals and teachers are considered pawns, awaiting the play of a master or the game plan of an expert to provide solutions for school problems. In his chronicle of Madeline Cartwright, principal of Blaine School, Philadelphia, Richard Louv (1990) points out that too many teachers and administrators doubt the power of determination and the ability of schools themselves to make a difference. “It just won’t work,” they maintain, or “The central office won’t let us,” or “We can’t do that because ...” Madeline Cartwright is one principal who thinks differently. For her, being a school administrator is a form of stewardship, and the responsibilities of stewardship simply require that obligations and commitments be met, regardless of obstacles. “I tell my staff don’t tell me what I can and can’t do. I can do something if I want to. It can happen. It’s like people say to me, ‘You cannot wash this child’s clothes, put ‘em in the washing machine and give him some clean clothes to put on.’ I can do that” (p. 75). And that she does.

Shortly after becoming principal at Blaine, Cartwright organized a raffle to buy a washer and dryer for the school. They are used every morning, to launder the clothes of many of the children. Cartwright often does the washing personally, believing that this is the only way many of the children know what it is like to have clean clothes. In her words, “This is one of the things you can do to bring about a change. My kids look good” (p. 63). When Cartwright arrived at Blaine, she found a school that was “black as soot.” She told the parents, “This place is dirty! How can your kids go to school in a place like this? We’re going to clean this building this summer. Raise your hands if I can depend on you. Keep your hands up! Somebody get their names!” Eighteen parents showed up and began the work. “We cleaned it, and cleaned it good. I made these parents know that you don’t accept anything less than that which is right because you live in North Philadelphia” (p. 66).

Parental involvement at Blaine is high. Parents help supervise the yard in the morning and the hallway during the day. They work in classrooms, help prepare food, and decorate the school. “Everybody is involved in the washing” (p. 67).

What kind of leader is Madeline Cartwright? She is one who will do whatever it takes to make Blaine work and work well: “If a child isn’t coming to school, I’ll go into a home and bring kids out” (p. 74). On one such venture, Cartwright and a friend walked into an apartment she describes as follows: “This place was cruddy. I mean, beyond anything I could ever imagine for little children to live in. The kitchen was a hotplate sitting on a drainboard. I saw no refrigerator. There was no running water and no electricity. There were dirty dishes, food caked in piles. The bathroom had a bedspread wrapped around the bottom of the toilet and the toilet was full to the brim with human waste. To the brim. And the little girl had one foot on one side of the toilet, and one foot on the other and she squatted over this toilet while she used it, and it was seeping over the sides.” She sent one of the persons in the apartment off to get a snake. Then, using a plastic container and buckets from the school, “we dug this mess out ... While we were in the apartment, we scrubbed the floors, took all the dirty clothes out, all the sheets off the beds, brought them back to the school, washed them up. And we left food for dinner from our school lunch. The mother came home to a clean house and clean children. This lady had gotten so far behind the eight ball she didn’t even know where to go to get out” (p. 74).

Some experts on the principalship might comment, “All well and good, but what about Cartwright’s being an instructional leader? What about her paying attention to teaching and learning, to charting, facilitating,
and monitoring the school's educational program?” Cartwright does that, all right, and with a flair. As Louv points out, Cartwright maintains that there are two types of principals, “office principals” and “classroom principals,” and she is clearly the latter. She is in and out of classrooms regularly, often taking over the teaching of classes. She not only communicates high expectations but also demands performance from her staff. She is a no-nonsense disciplinarian, as well as a devoted and loving one. But all this “instructional leadership” just is not enough to make this school work. What makes Blaine work is that Cartwright practices leadership by washing clothes, scrubbing the building, and, yes, cleaning toilets (one of the chores that Mahatma Gandhi cheerfully claimed for himself as part of his leadership in the Indian independence movement). Both Cartwright and Gandhi were practicing something called servant leadership. In the end, it is servant leadership, based on a deep commitment to values and emerging from a groundswell of moral authority, that makes the critical difference in the lives of Blaine’s students and their families. As Louv explains (p. 74), “Maybe Madeline Cartwright’s dreams are naive, maybe not. But they do make a kind of mathematical sense: one safe and clean school, one set of clean clothes, one clean toilet, one safe house—and then another safe school . . . and another . . . and another. ‘I’m tellin’ you, there’s things you can do!’”

The Many Forms of Leadership

The practices of Madeline Cartwright and Larry Norwood demonstrate one of the themes of this book: leadership takes many forms. Further, as has been argued, today’s crisis in leadership stems in part from the view that some of these forms are legitimate and others are not. For example, a vast literature expounds the importance of practicing command leadership and instructional leadership. Both kinds provide images of direct leadership, with the principal clearly in control—setting goals, organizing the work, outlining performance standards, assigning people to work, directing and monitoring the work, and evaluating. This kind of direct leadership is typically accompanied by a human relations style designed to motivate and keep morale up.

Command and instructional leadership have their place. Heavy doses of both may be necessary in schools where teachers are incompetent, indifferent, or just disabled by the circumstances they face. But if command and instructional leadership are practiced as dominant strategies, rather than supporting ones, they can breed dependency in teachers and cast them in roles as subordinates. Subordinates do what they are supposed to, but little else. They rely on others to manage them, rather than acting as self-managers. This is hardly a recipe for building good schools.

Command leaders and instructional leaders alike are being challenged by the view that school administrators should strive to become leaders of leaders. As leaders of leaders, they work hard to build up the capacities of teachers and others, so that direct leadership will no longer be needed. This is achieved through team building, leadership development, shared decision making, and striving to establish the value of collegiality. The leader of leaders represents a powerful conception of leadership, one that deserves more emphasis than it now receives in the literature on school administration, and more attention from policymakers who seek to reform schools. Successful leaders of leaders combine the most progressive elements of psychological authority with aspects of professional and moral authority.

Servant Leadership

Virtually missing from the mainstream conversation on leadership is the concept of servant leadership—the leadership so nobly practiced by Madeline Cartwright, Larry Norwood, and many other principals. Greenleaf (1977) believes that “a new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader” (p. 10). He developed the concept of servant leadership after reading Herman Hesse’s Journey to the East. As Greenleaf explains (p. 7),

In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey. . . . The central figure of the story is Leo, who accompanies the party as the servant who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering, finds Leo and is taken into the Order that had sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, whom he had known first as servant, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader [p. 7].

For Greenleaf, the great leader is a servant first. Servant leadership is the means by which leaders can get the necessary legitimacy to lead. Servant leadership provides legitimacy partly because
of the responsibilities of leadership is to give a sense of direction, to establish an overarching purpose. Doing so, Greenleaf explains, "gives certainty and purpose to others who may have difficulty in achieving it for themselves. But being successful in providing purpose requires the trust of others" (p. 15). For trust to be forthcoming, the leader must have confidence in the leader's competence and values. Further, people's confidence is strengthened by their belief that the leader makes judgments on the basis of competence and values, rather than self-interest.

When practicing servant leadership, the leader is often tempted by personal enthusiasm and commitment to define the needs of those to be served. There is, of course, a place for this approach in schools; sometimes students, parents, and teachers are not ready or able to define their own needs. But, over the long haul, as Greenleaf maintains, it is best to let those who will be served define their own needs in their own way. Servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that serving others is important but that the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that help shape the school as a covenantal community. In this sense, all the members of a community share the burden of servant leadership.

Schools should not be viewed as ordinary communities but as communities of learners. Barth (1990) points out that, within such communities, it is assumed that schools have the capacity to improve themselves; that, under the right conditions, adults and students alike learn, and learning by one contributes to the learning of others; that a key leverage point in creating a learning community is improving the school's culture; and that school-improvement efforts that count, whether originating in the school or outside, seek to determine and provide the conditions that enable students and adults to promote and sustain learning for themselves. "Taking these assumptions seriously," Barth argues (pp. 45–46), "leads to fresh thinking about the culture of schools and about what people do in them. For instance, the principal need no longer be the 'headmaster' or 'instructional leader,' pretending to know all, one who consumes lists from above and transmits them to those below. The more crucial role of the principal is as head learner, engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse—experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do." The school as learning community provides an ideal setting for joining the practice of the "leader of leaders" to servant leadership.

Command and instructional leadership, "leader of leaders" leadership, and servant leadership can be viewed developmentally, as if each were built on the others. As the emphasis shifts from one level to the next, leadership increasingly becomes a form of virtue, and each of the preceding levels becomes less important to the operation of a successful school. For example, teachers become less dependent on administrators, are better able to manage themselves, and share the burdens of leadership more fully.

The developmental view is useful conceptually, but it may be too idealistic to account for what happens in practice. A more realistic perspective is to view the expressions of leadership as being practiced together. Initially (and because of the circumstances faced) the command and instructional features of the leadership pattern may be more prominent. In time, however (and with deliberate effort), they yield more and more to the "leader of leaders" style and to servant leadership, with the results just described.

The idea of servant leadership may seem weak. After all, since childhood, we have been conditioned to view leadership in a much tougher, more direct light. The media portray leaders as strong, mysterious, aloof, wise, and all-powerful. Lawrence Miller (1984) explains:

Problems were always solved the same way. The Lone Ranger and his faithful Indian companion (read servant of a somewhat darker complexion and lesser intelligence) come riding into town. The Lone Ranger, with his mask and mysterious identity, background, and lifestyle, never becomes intimate with those whom he will help. His power is partly in his mystique. Within ten minutes the Lone Ranger has understood the problem, identified who the bad guys are, and has set out to catch them. He quickly outwits the bad guys, draws his gun, and has them behind bars. And then there was always that wonderful scene at the end. The helpless victims are standing in front of their ranch or in the town square marveling at how wonderful it is now that they have been saved, you hear hoofbeats, then the William Tell Overture, and one person turns to another and asks, "But who was that masked man?" And the other replies, "Why, that was the Lone Ranger!" We see Silver rear up and with a hearty "Hi-yo Silver," the Lone Ranger and his companion ride away.

It was wonderful. Truth, justice, and the American Way protected once again.

What did we learn from this cultural hero? Among the lessons that are now acted out daily by managers are the following:

• There is always a problem down on the ranch [the school] and someone is responsible.
even less whether the style of leadership is directive or not, involves others or not, and so on. These are issues of process; what matters are issues of substance. What are we about? Why? Are students being served? Is the school as learning community being served? What are our obligations to this community? With these questions in mind, how can we best get the job done?

Practicing Servant Leadership

Summarized in the following sections are practices that, taken together, show how servant leadership works and how the burden of leadership can be shared with other members of the school community.

Purposing

Vaill (1984) defines purposing as “that continuous stream of actions by an organization's formal leadership which has the effect of inducing clarity, consensus and commitment regarding the organization's basic purposes” (p. 91). The purpose of purposing is to build within the school a center of shared values that transforms it from a mere organization into a covenantal community.

Empowerment

Empowerment derives its full strength from being linked to purposing: everyone is free to do what makes sense, as long as people’s decisions embody the values shared by the school community. When empowerment is understood in this light, the emphasis shifts away from discretion needed to function and toward one’s responsibility to the community. Empowerment cannot be practiced successfully apart from enablement (efforts by the school to provide support and remove obstacles).

Leadership by Outrage

It is the leader’s responsibility to be outraged when empowerment is abused and when purposes are ignored. Moreover, all members of the school community are obliged to show outrage when the standard falls.

Leadership by outrage, and the practice of kindling outrage in others, challenge the conventional wisdom that leaders should be poker-faced, play their cards close to the chest, avoid emotion, and otherwise hide what they believe and feel. When the source of leadership authority is
moral, and when covenants of shared values become the driving force for the school’s norm system, it seems natural to react with outrage to shortcomings in what we do and impediments to what we want to do.

Madeline Cartwright regularly practiced leadership by outrage. In one instance, she was having trouble with teachers’ attendance. She learned of another principal who solved this problem by answering the phone personally, and she decided to follow suit: “I started answering the phone. I say, ‘Good morning, this is the Blaine School, this is Madeline Cartwright.’ They hang right up. Two, three minutes later, phone rings again. ‘Good morning, this is Blaine School and still Madeline Cartwright.’ Hang right up. Next time the phone rang I said: ‘Good morning, this is Mrs. Cartwright. If you’re going to take off today, you have to talk to me. You either talk to me or you come to school, simple as that’” (Lou, 1990, p. 64). The school is the only thing that the kids can depend on, Cartwright maintains, and for this reason it is important to make sure that the teachers will show up. She tells the teachers, “As old as I am, you haven’t had any disease I haven’t had, so you come to school, no matter what.”

Some administrators who practice the art of leadership by outrage do it by fighting off bureaucratic interference. Paperwork is often the villain. Other administrators capitulate and spend much of their time and effort handling this paperwork. As a result, little is left for dealing with other, more important matters. Jules Linden, a junior high school principal in New York City, and Linda Martinez, principal of San Juan Day School, San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico, belong in the first group.

In Linden’s words, “The only thing the bureaucracy hasn’t tried to solve by memo is cancer. . . . My rule of thumb is, when people can’t see me because of the paperwork demands, I dump [the paperwork]—and most of it is not missed” (Mustain, 1990, p. 14). Martinez has devised a unique filing system to handle the onslaught of memos, rules, directives, and the like, which she receives from above: “I decided to ‘bag it.’ Every Friday I would clear my desk. Everything would be tossed in a garbage bag, dated and labeled weekly.” Should Martinez be contacted about something filed (and that is not often the case), the proper bag is opened and dumped on the floor, and the item is retrieved for further consideration. Linda Martinez remarks, “I had never really considered my ‘filing system’ of garbage bags to be associated with leadership. I’ve been told it borders on lunacy.” In a redefined leadership, what first appears to be lunacy may not be, and vice versa.

Not all schools share the dire conditions of Blaine School, and not all are deluged with a mountain of paperwork. But every school stands for something, and this something can be the basis of practicing leadership by outrage. Many administrators and teachers believe that students do not have the right to fail—that, for example, it should not be up to students to decide whether to do assigned work. Unless this belief rests on the practice of leadership by outrage, however, it is likely to be an academic abstraction rather than a heartfelt value, a slogan rather than a solution.

How is failure to complete assigned work handled in most schools? Typically, by giving zeros—often cheerfully, and without emotion. It is almost as if we are saying to students, “Look, here is the deadline. This is what you have to do. If you don’t meet the deadline, these are the consequences. It’s up to you. You decide whether you want to do the assignments and pass, or not do the assignments and fail.” Adopting a “no zero” policy and enforcing it to the limit is one expression of leadership by outrage. It can transform the belief that children have no right to fail from an abstraction to an operational value. When work is not done by Friday, for example, no zeros are recorded. Instead, the student is phoned Friday night, and perhaps the principal or the teacher visits the student at home after brunch on Sunday to collect the work or press the new Monday deadline. If the student complains that she or he does not have a place to do homework, homework centers are established in the school, in the neighborhood, and so on.

Just remember Madeline Cartwright, and follow her lead. Granted, not all students will respond, but I believe that most will, and those who finally do wind up with zeros will get them with teachers’ reluctance. Even if the school does not “win them all,” it demonstrates that it stands for something. The stakes are elevated when the problem is transformed from something technical to something moral.

As important as leadership by outrage is, its intent is to kindle outrage in others. When it is successful, every member of the school community is encouraged to display outrage whenever the standard fails. An empowered school community, bonded together by shared commitments and values, is a prerequisite for kindling outrage in others.

Power Over and Power To

It is true that many teachers and parents do not always respond to opportunities to be involved, to be self-managed, to accept responsibility, and to practice leadership by outrage. In most cases, however, this lack of interest is not inherent but learned. Many teachers, for example, have become jaded as a result of bad experiences with involvement. Louise E. Coleman, principal of Taft Elementary School, Joliet, Illinois, believes
that trust and integrity have to be reestablished after such bad experiences. When she arrived at Taft as a new principal, the school was required to submit to the central office a three-year school-improvement plan, designed to increase student achievement:

Teachers were disgruntled at first. They were not really interested in developing a school-improvement plan. They had been through similar exercises in shared decision making before, and that’s exactly what they were—exercises. Taft had had three principals in three years. The staff assumed that I would go as others had in the past. After writing a three-year plan based on the staff’s perceptions, influencing teachers by involving them in decision making, helping them to take ownership in school improvement, we have made some progress. Trust and integrity have been established. Most of the staff now has confidence in me. We have implemented new programs based on students’ needs. The staff now volunteers to meet, to share ideas. Minority students are now considered students. Communication is ongoing. Minority parents are more involved. Positive rewards are given for student recognition. The overall school climate has changed to reflect a positive impact on learning.

Coleman was able to build trust and integrity by gently but firmly allowing others to assume leadership roles. She did not feel too threatened to relinquish some of her power and authority. Power can be understood in two ways—as power over, and as power to. Coleman knows the difference. Power over emphasizes controlling what people do, when they do it, and how they do it. Power to views power as a source of energy for achieving shared goals and purposes. Indeed, when empowerment is successfully practiced, administrators exchange power over for power to. Power over is rule-bound, but power to is goal-bound. Only those with hierarchically authorized authority can practice power over; anyone who is committed to shared goals and purposes can practice power to.

The empowerment rule (that everyone is free to do whatever makes sense, as long as decisions embody shared values), and an understanding of power as the power to, are liberating to administrators as well as teachers. Principals, too, are free to lead, without worrying about being viewed as autocratic. Further, principals can worry less about whether they are using the right style and less about other process-based concerns; their leadership rests on the substance of their ideas and values. Contrary to the laws of human relations, which remind us always to involve people and say that it is autocratic for designated leaders to propose ideas for imple-

mentation, we have here a game that resembles football: everyone gets a chance to be quarterback and is free to call the play; if it is a good call, then the team runs with it.

Wayne K. Myers, a principal in Madison, Georgia, welcomes teachers to the role of quarterback, but he is not afraid to call some plays himself. In the spring of 1989, he declared one week in August as International Week, having organized the major activities on his own. He contacted parents for volunteers, asked foreign students from the University of Georgia to come to the campus and make presentations, arranged an exhibit from UNICEF, and even asked the lunchroom to serve meals from the cuisines of different countries:

In describing this week, I keep [saying] “I” because the major activities were completed by me, but the real success of the week came from the teachers. It was based on a general understanding I had gained from working with these teachers: that they felt the true spirit of schooling had been lost, and that we were committed to recovering it. I shared my idea with them only one month before the start-up date. But, within that month, each grade organized a fantastic array of activities for students. The media specialist located all the materials she had on foreign countries. The halls were full of displays of items, made by the students, that represented other countries. Since each homeroom would have a visitor with information about another country, each teacher centered activities on that country. The real significance was that the general theme of the week may not have been [the teachers’] idea, but the response was unbelievable. They were, of course, free to take the idea and run with it. It became a learning experience for everyone—administrators, teachers, students, and the community. All were involved, and all enjoyed themselves. . . . I am not sure what type of leadership this is. All I know is that the results have been very positive. I do not believe in telling people what to do or how to do it, but I do believe that sometimes we all have ideas that need to be proposed, sometimes unilaterally.

Myers does not have to worry about leadership—that is, about who does what, or whether he is being too pushy or if he is passing the ball off to teachers. But he would have to worry if trust, integrity, and shared values were not already established in the school. Moreover, Myers understands the difference between charting a direction and giving people maps, between providing a theme and giving teachers a script. Finally, although human relations remain important, Myers is confident that if he
acts from the standpoint of what is right and good for the school, human relationships will have a way of taking care of themselves.

The Female Style

It is difficult to talk about power to and servant leadership without also addressing the issue of gender. Power to, for example, is an idea close to the feminist tradition, as are such ideas as servant leadership and community. By contrast, the more traditional conceptions of leadership seem decidedly more male-oriented. Modern management, for example, is a male creation that replaced emphasis on family and community with emphasis on individual ambition and other personal considerations. As Debra R. Kaufman and Barbara L. Richardson (1982) explain, “Most contemporary social science models [of which modern school management is one]—the set of concepts that help social scientists select problems, organize information, and pursue inquiries—are based on the lives men lead.” They go on to say, “In general, social science models of human behavior have focused on rather narrow and male-specific criteria regarding the relationships of ability, ambition, personality, achievement, and worldly success” (p. xiii).

Joyce Hampel (1988) argues that the concept of servant leadership is not likely to be valued in male-dominated institutions or professions. Relying on the research of Carol Gilligan (1982), Joyce Miller (1986), and Charol Shakeshaft (1987), as well as on her own experiences in schools, Hampel points out that men and women generally have different goals when it comes to psychological fulfillment. Men tend to emphasize individual relationships, individual achievement, power as a source for controlling events and people, independence, authority, and set procedures. Women, by contrast, tend to emphasize successful relationships, affiliation, power as the means to achieve shared goals, connectedness, authenticity, and personal creativity. For most men, achievement has to do with the accomplishment of goals; for most women, achievement has to do with the building of connections between and among people. Hampel quotes Miller as follows: “In our culture ‘serving others’ is for losers, it is low-level stuff. Yet serving others is a basic principle around which women’s lives are organized; it is far from such for men.” (p. 18).

Shakeshaft (1987), in her groundbreaking research on the topic, characterizes the female world of schooling as follows:

(1) Relationships with Others Are Central to All Actions of Women Administrators. Women spend more time with people, communicate more, care more about individual differences, are concerned more with teachers and marginal students, and motivate more. Not surprisingly, staffs of women administrators rate women higher, are more productive, and have higher morale. Students in schools with women principals also have higher morale and are more involved with student affairs. Further, parents are more favorable toward schools and districts run by women and thus are more involved in school life. This focus on relationships and connections echoes Gilligan’s (1982) ethic of care.

(2) Teaching and Learning Are the Major Focus of Women Administrators. Women administrators are more instrumental in instructional learning than men and they exhibit greater knowledge of teaching methods and techniques. Women administrators not only emphasize achievement, they coordinate instructional programs and evaluate student progress. In these schools and districts, women administrators know their teachers and they know the academic progress of their students. Women are more likely to help new teachers and to supervise all teachers directly. Women also create a school climate more conducive to learning, one that is more orderly, safer, and quieter. Not surprisingly, academic achievement is higher in schools and districts in which women are administrators.

(3) Building Community Is an Essential Part of a Woman Administrator’s Style. From speech patterns to decision-making styles, women exhibit a more democratic, participatory style that encourages inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness in schools. Women involve themselves more with staff and students, ask for and get higher participation, and maintain more closely knit organizations. Staffs of women principals have higher job satisfaction and are more engaged in their work than those of male administrators. These staffs are also more aware of and committed to the goals of learning, and the members of the staffs have more shared professional goals. These are schools and districts in which teachers receive a great deal of support from their female administrators. They are also districts and schools where achievement is emphasized. Selma Greenberg (1985, p. 4) describes this female school world: “Whatever its failures, it is more cooperative than competitive, it is more experiential than abstract, it takes a broad view of the curriculum and has always addressed ‘the whole child.’”

The female perspective on school leadership is important, for a number of reasons. The teaching force is predominantly female, and this raises
moral questions about giving full legitimacy to management conceptions and leadership practice that take women’s lived experience into account. Female principals need to feel free to be themselves, rather than have to follow the principles and practices of traditional management theory. The record of success for female principals is impressive. Women are underrepresented in the principalship but overrepresented among principals of successful schools. Giving legitimacy to the female perspective would also give license to men who are inclined toward similar practice. The good news is that such ideas as value-based leadership, building covenantal communities, practicing empowerment and collegiality, adopting the stance of servant leaders, and practicing leadership by outrage are gaining in acceptance among male and female administrators alike.

Servant Leadership and Moral Authority

The link between servant leadership and moral authority is a tight one. Moral authority relies heavily on persuasion. At the root of persuasion are ideas, values, substance, and content, which together define group purposes and core values. Servant leadership is practiced by serving others, but its ultimate purpose is to place oneself, and others for whom one has responsibility, in the service of ideals.

Serving others and serving ideals is not an either-or proposition. Chula Boyle, assistant principal of Lee High School, San Antonio, Texas, for example, can often be seen walking the halls of the school with a young child in arm or tow. Student mothers at Lee depend on extended family to care for their children while they are in school. When care arrangements run into problems that might otherwise bar student mothers from attending class, Boyle urges them to bring the children to school. By babysitting, Boyle is serving students but, more important, she reflects an emerging set of ideals at Lee. Lee wants to be a community, and this transformation requires that a new ethic of caring take hold. Lee High School Principal Bill Fish believes that this type of caring is reciprocal. The more the school cares about students, the more students care about matters of schooling. When asked about the practice of babysitting at Lee, he modestly responds, “From time to time kids get in a bind. We are not officially doing it [babysitting] but unofficially we do what we can.” His vision is to establish a day-care center in the school for children of students and teachers.

Administrators ought not to choose among psychological, bureaucratic, and moral authority; instead, the approach should be additive. To be additive, however, moral authority must be viewed as legitimate. Further, with servant leadership as the model, moral authority should become the cornerstone of one’s overall leadership practice.

Stewardship

The “leader of leaders” and servant leadership styles bring stewardship responsibilities to the heart of the administrator’s role. When this happens, the rights and prerogatives inherent in the administrator’s position move to the periphery, and attention is focused on duties and responsibilities—to others as persons and, more important, to the school itself. Stewardship represents primarily an act of trust, whereby people and institutions entrust a leader with certain obligations and duties to fulfill and perform on their behalf. For example, the public entrusts the schools to the school board. The school board entrusts each school to its principal. Parents entrust their children to teachers. Stewardship also involves the leader’s personal responsibility to manage her or his life and affairs with proper regard for the rights of other people and for the common welfare. Finally, stewardship involves placing oneself in service to ideas and ideals and to others who are committed to their fulfillment.

The concept of stewardship furnishes an attractive image of leadership, for it embraces all the members of the school as community and all those who are served by the community. Parents, teachers, and administrators share stewardship responsibility for students. Students join the others in stewardship responsibility for the school as learning community. Mary Giella, assistant superintendent for instruction in the Pasco County (Florida) Schools, captures the spirit of stewardship as follows: “My role is one of facilitator. I listened to those who taught the children and those who were school leaders. I helped plan what they saw was a need. I coordinated the plan until those participating could independently conduct their own plans.”

The organizational theorist Louis Pondy (1978, p. 94) has noted that leadership is invariably defined as behavioral: “The ‘good’ leader is one who can get his subordinates to do something. What happens if we force ourselves away from this marriage to behavioral concepts? What kind of insights can we get if we say that the effectiveness of a leader lies in his ability to make activity meaningful for those in his role set—not to change behavior but to give others a sense of understanding what they are doing, and especially to articulate it so that they can communicate about the meaning of their behavior?

Shifting emphasis from behavior to meaning can help us recapture leadership as a powerful force for school improvement. Giving legitimacy
to the moral dimension of leadership, and understanding leadership as the acceptance and embodiment of one's stewardship responsibilities, are important steps in this direction.

REFERENCES


