

BREAKING THROUGH:  
THE GLASS CEILING REVISITED

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

**TOTAL OF 10 PAGES ONLY  
MAY BE XEROXED**

(Without Author's Permission)

E. DEANNE BARRETT





## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
800-521-0600

UMI<sup>®</sup>





National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Your file / Votre référence

Our file / Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-73577-X

Canada

**BREAKING THROUGH: THE GLASS CEILING REVISITED**

by

**E. Deanne Barrett, B.A., B.Ed.**

A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the degree of  
Master of Education

Faculty of Education  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
December 2001

St. John's  
Newfoundland

## ABSTRACT

Women are very actively involved in education in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They hold more teaching positions than men do, but significantly fewer administrative positions. This pattern is even more apparent in high schools. The purpose of this study was to research reasons for this phenomenon, specifically to revisit the concept of the glass ceiling (Morrison, White and Van Velsor, 1987), namely the invisible barrier that keeps capable women from attaining the administrative positions to which they aspire. The study examined whether this glass ceiling still exists, and if so, how it manifests itself for female high school vice-principals in Newfoundland.

In 1999, eight female vice-principals in high schools from across Newfoundland were involved in this phenomenological interview study to establish their perceptions with respect to opportunities and concerns for women in administrative positions in high schools in Newfoundland. Based on the data collected and on available statistics several conclusions were drawn.

There are factors that influence women's opportunities in high school administration in either negative or positive ways. Each negative factor represents a pane of glass in the glass ceiling and the positive influences tend to offset to some degree some of the negative factors. Some of these originate from sources that are external to women, while others come from within the women themselves. Not all panes of the glass ceiling are imposed upon women from external sources. Several of the layers of glass are created and constructed by women, and in this way women limit their own career opportunities.

The glass ceiling is very complex and is comprised of multiple panes. As each pane is broken women are in a more advantageous position to advance professionally. It

is the internal, female-created panes of the glass ceiling that appear to be the most persistent, the most difficult for women to break through.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my family and friends for their support throughout the data collecting and writing of this thesis. In particular, I would like to mention Ivan Saunders and thank him for his emotional support and encouragement. I want to thank Marilyn Reid, Dale Blake, and Sharon Halfyard for their contributions during the many discussions over cups of tea or coffee. I thank John Proulx for his company on the many trips across the province to interview the various participants.

I would like to thank Dr. Jean Brown for unknowingly introducing me to the idea for this thesis. It has caused me to grow both personally and professionally, for which I am very grateful. I would like as well to express my gratitude towards my advisors, Dr. Roberta Hammett and Dr. Alice Collins. Their knowledge and input was invaluable. Without them I would never have been able to complete this project. They helped to focus and guide my work enormously.

My gratitude is also expressed to Sylvie MacKenzie for her help with the transcription of the cassettes, and to Wayne Hillier for his answers to my numerous questions about computer mishaps. I would be remiss if I did not express my gratitude to Dorothy Joy in the Office of the Dean of Education for her support.

Last and most importantly, I would like to thank the women who agreed to participate in this study. Janet Vivian-Walsh graciously accepted to take time out her very busy schedule at a very difficult time of the year to sit for a pilot interview. I learned much from that experience. To the other eight women, who shall remain nameless, I owe you so much. You unselfishly shared your stories with me and I am forever grateful. I learned so much from you. This project could not have been completed without your

participation and I dedicate the findings to you and all other hard working women in education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	1
Background to the Issue	2
Purpose of the Study	4
Significance of the Study	9
<b>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>	12
The Under-Representation of Women in Administrative Positions in Schools	12
Why there are Few Women Administrators in Schools: The Glass Ceiling	14
Gender Discrimination	15
How Women Lead	23
Factors Which Help Women Attain Administrative Positions	28
<b>III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	35
Rationale for a Phenomenological Interview Study	35
Process	39
Description of the Population	39
Protection of the Participants	41
Description and Design of the Interview Guidelines	41
Pilot Interview	42
Limitations of the study	43
Sample Restraints	43

Observer Effect	43
Observer Bias	44
Data Analysis	45
Member Checking	48
Triangulation	49
<b>IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA</b>	51
Profiles: The Women's Stories	52
Presentation and Analysis of the Data	54
External Factors Influencing Opportunities for Women in Administration	54
External negative influence 1: Demands of the position	55
External negative influence 2: Gender bias against women	58
External positive influence 1: Recognition and encouragement	64
External positive influence 2: Appreciation for women's leadership styles	66
Internal Factors Influencing Opportunities for Women in Administration	70
Internal negative influence 1: Role conflict	71
Internal negative influence 2: Professional relational dilemmas	77
Internal negative influence 3: Initial lack of self-confidence	81
Internal positive influence 1: Qualifications	85
Internal positive influence 2: Self-assurance with Experience	87



V. CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	94
Conclusions	94
Implications of Gender Discrimination	96
Implications of Encouragement from Others	97
Implications of Increased Workload	100
Implications of Success in an Administrative Position	102
Recommendations for Future Study	105
Recommendations for Future Changes	107
REFERENCES	110
APPENDICES	115
Interview Guidelines	115
Letter of Consent	117
Consent Form	118

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Several years ago, as a graduate course assignment, I made a presentation on the topic of the role of women in educational administration. I had always seen myself as a quiet feminist and was interested to discover what other women in education were doing. The professor suggested that I interview a female elementary school principal in front of the class as part of my presentation. Through this activity and the readings associated with it, I became intrigued by the subject of women's role in education, and in particular, the reasons for the scarcity of women in educational administration.

The following year I had my first real experience as a teacher of working with a woman administrator. I was curious to see how she would accomplish tasks and how others would react to her. I found that I liked the way she performed her duties. She had a very relaxed and welcoming presence and always made herself available to discuss concerns with the staff. The office was a comfortable place to visit in the school. I think other women on staff, for the most part, came to appreciate her presence as well. I began to think that some day I, too, might consider such a role, but I wanted to learn more about it first. This thesis has become more than a study that will add to the body of knowledge about this subject. It has taken on a very personal purpose in my life, to help prepare me for administrative positions.

This thesis is an interview study of eight women high school vice-principals. Vice-principals are also regarded as assistant principals. I hoped to gather information pertaining to their experiences as teachers, the process of becoming a vice-principal, their experiences as vice-principals, and their aspirations for the future. The purpose of this

study is to further the knowledge of feminist research, in particular with respect to women's experiences within educational administration at the high school level. I intended to investigate several phenomena: the barriers and opportunities that exist for women as they become high school vice-principals, the opportunities for advancement beyond this position, and the obstacles which might prevent advancement to the principal's position. In short, I intended to investigate the glass ceiling as it exists for women in high school educational administration in Newfoundland. I wished to determine if this glass ceiling was similar to that previously researched and traditionally presented in the research literature (Morrison, White and Van Velsor, 1987; Stith, 1998).

This chapter explains the purpose and the significance of studying the barriers and opportunities for women in educational administration within Newfoundland. As well, it provides information pertaining to the current state of affairs for women who work in the public education sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

#### Background to the Issue

Historically, women have always had a significant role to play in the field of education. They have dominated the teaching force in numbers in Newfoundland (Education Statistics, 1995-2000), in Canada, (Statistics Canada, 1996; Reynolds and Young, 1995), and elsewhere, (Shakeshaft, 1989) for a very long time. The same can not be said for their role in educational administration. According to Education Statistics (1995-2000), although more than 60% of teachers in Newfoundland are women, women make up less than 25% of the school and school board administrators. The school board is a district-wide central office that creates policy for the schools within that district and

engages in hiring practices for the schools. In Canada, according to the National Census of 1996, 60% of the teachers are women, while females hold only 40% of the administrative positions. All the formal administrative positions are dominated, statistically, by men, from the Director's position at the school board level to that of department head within a given school.

It is interesting to note that many of the women who have attained positions in school administration are employed in the primary and elementary school systems, or have become program specialists. Of the 82 female vice-principals in this province approximately only 10% work in schools that accommodate adolescent children only, that is to say, junior, senior, or central high schools. This is not uncommon (Shakeshaft, 1989; Reynolds and Young, 1995). It seems that women have success in gaining administrative positions generally if they work with very young children or if they become curriculum specialists. Women are possibly still being perceived as fulfilling a mothering role (Shakeshaft, 1989). Unfortunately, the position of principal of an elementary or primary school appears to be a dead-end position since very few people go on from there to work at the school board level (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Recently it appears that the number of women in administrative positions at the high school and school board levels is increasing (Educational Statistics, 1995-2000), although their numbers are still far below those of their male counterparts (Reynolds and Young, 1995). I have noticed the same phenomenon in my own school board. For years I was unaware of any female administrators at the high school level. Then, about ten years ago, three women were hired as vice-principals in the same year. More have been hired

since. My interest was in interviewing some of these women to see what their experiences have been.

School board administrators in this province are almost entirely comprised of men. According to the Education System Directory of Newfoundland and Labrador (1997-1998) there were only four female school board administrators in the province at that time. Since there is a tendency to hire people who are much like oneself (Reynolds and Young, 1995), there is a real danger that a higher proportion of men will continue to be hired for administrative positions in high schools. School board personnel need to be supplied with the research data on the effectiveness of women administrators. The research in this thesis could help that happen.

#### Purpose of the Study

For years the research conducted on administration was androcentric, that is, based on the experience of men (Shakeshaft, 1989; Adler, Laney, and Packer, 1993; Reinharz, 1992). Since almost all of the administrators in the past were male it was assumed that the experiences of these male administrators were those of all administrators. Therefore women who managed to attain formal administrative positions were thought to encounter similar experiences and to exhibit similar behaviours as men. In the feminist studies completed to date this has turned out to not be the case (Adler, Laney and Packer, 1993).

Research has been conducted on the obstacles that keep women from attaining administration positions in the school system, particularly in schools which teach adolescent children (Shakeshaft, 1989). Many of the men who aspire to these same

positions do not encounter some of these same obstacles. A woman's experience appears to be affected by her gender. Clearly there is a need for more feminist research on this topic in order to discover more about the feminine experience and perspective. Therefore this study includes the experiences and perceptions of women only.

Very simply, to do feminist research is to put gender at the center of one's inquiry....The overt ideological goal of feminist research in the human sciences is to correct both the *invisibility* and *distortion* of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position.

(Lather, 1991, p. 71)

The reasons offered by the literature for the shortage of women in such positions are varied. Both women and men view women as inappropriate for managerial roles (Gill, 1995). Blount (1994) found that women were never viewed as appropriate for administration and that women and leaders were seen as "two mutually exclusive categories" (p. 52). Other reasons range from lowered aspirations on the part of women, fewer women being academically prepared for these positions, problems of role conflict with family commitments, to a lack of role models and sexual discrimination (Shakeshaft, 1989; Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, and Harris, 1994). All of these reasons reflect the effect of gender.

Nonetheless, things are changing. According to Guppy, Blason, and Vellutini (1987) more women are completing undergraduate, graduate and Ph.D. programs and are therefore more qualified than they have been. More are applying for administrative positions as well, so clearly their level of aspiration is increasing. According to Reynolds and Young (1995), as many women as men are applying for these positions but their

applications are being excluded before the interview process begins. As well, more husbands and partners are helping out at home and encouraging women to pursue these positions (Taylor, 1995).

There is evidence to suggest that women and men have very different, yet equally effective, styles of management (Helgesen, 1990). Some researchers even conclude that women make better managers (Adler, Laney and Packer, 1993). If this is so why are there still so few women in these positions? There is a concern of the glass ceiling keeping women from attaining these positions (Reynolds and Young, 1995; Adler, Laney and Packer, 1993). Morrison, White and Van Velsor (1987) first introduced the concept of the glass ceiling:

Many women have paid their dues, even a premium, for a chance at a top position, only to find a glass ceiling between them and their goal. The glass ceiling is not simply a barrier for an individual, based on a person's inability to handle a higher-level job. Rather, the glass ceiling applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher *because they are women.* (p. 13)

Morrison et al (1987) describe this glass ceiling as a single "transparent barrier" (p.13) which keeps women from attaining certain management positions. Stith (1998) reports similar views:

The glass ceiling provides minorities and women with a constant view of what they will never achieve because of their race, nationality or sex. This is a painful and humiliating experience. The glass ceiling creates inequities in hiring practices, compensation, levels of support, and

opportunities which are mandatory for successful careers and personal satisfaction. Its activities impede or prevent its victims from progressing into entry, middle, and senior level positions. This ideology is currently supported and practised by many companies and institutions who publicly state they are equal opportunity employers. (p. 65)

The research traditionally presents the glass ceiling as constructed by forces that are external to women, and imposed by those same forces with the purpose of keeping women who have proven their abilities from attaining positions of increasing status. This barrier is applied to women as a group, rather than to individual women. It has also been viewed as a single layer of glass that, once broken, may allow women to attain various administrative positions within organisations.

In this study I interviewed eight women who have managed to attain vice-principal positions at the high school level, an area that has remained dominated by men for quite some time (Taylor, 1995). Only about 30% of school administrators in Newfoundland are female, (Educational Statistics, 1995-2000), and I found through telephone research that only about 10% of these women administrators work in schools which instruct high school aged children exclusively.

The women who participated in this study appear to have broken through at least an initial layer of this glass ceiling since they have managed to obtain a vice-principal position at the administrative level. This position would be considerably less autonomous than that of principal, but nonetheless it is an entry-level administrative position. I assumed that the experiences of the women in this study, as vice-principals, would be



fairly recent, and therefore more current than those who have already gone on to the principal's position.

This study intended to investigate how they managed to attain their current position, and to examine the form of the glass ceiling they may have encountered in doing so. This study examined their perceived level of acceptance and the degree to which they understood their value as administrators upon initiation into their first administrative position. This study not only investigated how others reacted to these women, but as well how these women felt about becoming administrators, their level of self-confidence with respect to their administrative profession, and how this may or may not have changed since the initial acceptance of their first position. They were in a position to report if being a woman had any effect on their experiences and to better describe the glass ceiling and how it serves to keep women from attaining their goals.

This study explored the reality of how women administrators maintain a professional and family life. This study examined whether high school administration is feasible for only a select group of women or whether others would be able to successfully find the time and energy to devote to it.

In summary, I investigated the obstacles they encountered in order to arrive at their current position, the obstacles they felt would continue to exist if they wished to advance their careers even further, and as well any new obstacles or barriers that might occur at this juncture in their career. I also looked at opportunities that they encountered, as these might be indications that certain layers of the glass ceiling are beginning to disappear.

### Significance of the Study

Very few studies of this nature, concerning women educational administrators, have taken place in Newfoundland. In 1988, Guy sent a questionnaire to 300 female educational administrators in all positions and grade levels. The study I proposed, while still on the same general topic as that of Guy, was different. I targeted a very specific group of women, high school vice-principals. As well, my study involved qualitative interview research methods as opposed to quantitative research methods. Through an interview process I was able to expand on some of her findings, to build on or alter her theory, to determine if the barriers and opportunities she found to exist have changed. My study was conducted in a different manner and took place eleven years later.

The sample group for this study was specific. This study examined only women who have successfully gained vice-principal administrative positions in high schools, and were employed in these positions at the time of this study. There were only nine women in Newfoundland employed as high school vice-principals during the school year 1998-1999 when the data for this study were collected. These women were employed in various regions of the island portion of this province, some rural, and some urban. Contact with eight of those nine women was made, and all eight agreed to participate in this study. As the experiences of only eight women are included in this study the results may be limited in generalizability.

These successful women were researched and written about so that they will exist for many readers, particularly female Master of Education candidates. These women, and their experiences, need to be made more visible to those who are in a position to promote women in this area of employment, and to those women who might consider such a

career move for themselves. One of the reasons I chose to study women in the vice-principal position was to offer women who aspire to administration positions the benefit of others' experience. This study gives insight into the opportunities for women in this field, and as well as into the career concerns of these women.

Few studies have investigated first time female administrators to see if their experiences were positive enough to encourage them to move on. This study, through its investigation of vice-principals only, hoped to sample first time administrators. Six out of eight of the participants were, in fact, employed in their first position as an administrator when they were interviewed for this study. This study advances the knowledge of the career path of female high school administrators in Newfoundland, and determines whether gender has a positive, negative, or neutral effect. It adds to the knowledge of the effect of gender on promotion in educational administration in Newfoundland.

This study explored the glass ceiling with respect to further advancements to which these women vice-principals might aspire. This study contributes to the body of knowledge that exists on women in administrative positions and in doing so, better describes the glass ceiling. Through the research conducted for this thesis I have found that the glass ceiling exists in a different form for women in educational administration in Newfoundland than traditionally portrayed in the literature. Rather than consisting of a single transparent layer of glass it appears to consist of several layers of glass. As each is broken women are admitted to the next level of administrative positions. Some of the barriers facing women do not seem to immediately disappear once a woman has been successful, even though there is a growing recognition of women's ability to lead.

As well, I have found that the glass ceiling is not only comprised of layers that are created by forces that are external to women as was presented in the literature (Stith, 1998). According to my research women themselves, have internalised this glass ceiling, and therefore help to maintain it. This significant finding, that sources either external or internal to women, can impact women's career options has changed the focus of this study. This finding will be elaborated in detail later in the analysis of the data.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews the current research to present the reasons why there are so few women administrators in education and the traditional view of the glass ceiling with respect to the barriers and the opportunities that exist for women in this field. This chapter also investigates the leadership skills of women and what has been done in order to promote women in the area of educational administration. It also suggests, from the literature, actions that could be taken by the various stakeholders within education, including women themselves, in order to create more opportunities for women in administration.

#### The Under-Representation of Women in Administrative Positions in Schools

In education, although the majority of people who enter into the field as teachers are women, the percentage of women decreases at the administrative level, and continues to further decrease as the status of the administration position increases (Education Statistics, 1995-2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). In Canada in 1988, 12% of principals were women and 17% of vice-principals were women (Rees, 1991). In the United States in 1999 only 35% of the principals were female, while 73% of the teachers were women (US Department of Education, 1999). In Newfoundland, for the years 1997-2000, about 30% of the vice-principals and principals were women, 20-30% of the Associate Directors of school boards were women, and there were no female Directors (Education Statistics, 1997-2000).

Most women who do achieve administrative positions in schools tend to do so within the elementary system, and this tends to be a dead-end position with little opportunity for advancement (Shakeshaft, 1989; Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo and Harris, 1994). Shakeshaft (1989) also reports a “conspiracy of silence” (p. 21), where statistics on female representation are not always readily available. Often, when education statistics are reported there is no distinction made between elementary and high school administrators. This is true of the official statistics in education compiled in Newfoundland and Labrador (Education Statistics, 1995-2000). Therefore, I was obliged to contact the school boards by telephone in order to obtain numbers of women high school vice-principals within the province. This telephone research revealed that in 1998-1999 only 10% of the female principals and vice-principals in Newfoundland work in high schools.

Meanwhile, among the population of teachers who have perhaps the most difficult and trying jobs of all, those who deal with challenging needs children, about 85% to 90% are women (Educational Statistics, 1996-2000). “School teaching has thus been presented as a classic case of the sexual division of labour. In general, women have held the lower paying jobs at the bottom of the educational ladder and men have been favoured at the top” (Danylewycz, Light and Prentice, 1987, p. 34). Other researchers have noted the same phenomenon. According to Adler, Laney and Packer (1993):

....women predominate in the areas of teaching with lower status, where skills are perceived to be akin to caring and mothering.... Despite the large number of women in primary schools – four times the number of

male teachers – men are disproportionately represented at the head teacher level. (p. 19)

The research presented in this chapter explores several phenomena related to women in educational administration within schools. Firstly, the barriers that keep women from attaining or even aspiring to positions within educational administration are explored. Secondly, a woman's ability to perform the role of school administrator is investigated. Finally, the opportunities that exist for women are discussed, and as well some suggestions for increasing these opportunities are offered.

#### Why there are Few Women Administrators in Schools: The Glass Ceiling

There are some popularly held assumptions to explain why women do not become administrators in schools; for example, it is believed that few women are either qualified for or interested in administrative positions. Warwickshire County Council (1989, cited in Adler, Laney and Packer, 1993), discovered through an interview study, however, that these assumptions are false. They concluded that women are both qualified and interested in furthering their careers, that women are not content to remain in their positions as teachers, and that mothers do have the time to devote the extra hours required of an administrative position. Therefore family needs do not take priority over work commitments.

Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, and Harris (1994) have theorised a glass ceiling which continues to keep qualified women, especially minority women, from assuming leadership roles and gaining administrative positions. Morrison, White and Van Velsor

(1987) claim the glass ceiling is applied to entire groups of people because of their race or gender, and not just individuals.

Adler, Laney and Packer (1993) suggest that:

For those women in education who do decide that they want to move up, there is the so - called "glass ceiling", the invisible barrier to achievement: the point at which women watch younger men in grey suits gain positions of power. (p. 22)

This glass ceiling enables women to see the positions they would like to attain, but works as a barrier that is not immediately evident to all people involved (Stith, 1998). Stith suggests that even employers who claim to support employment equity engage in practices that reinforce the glass ceiling.

In summary the glass ceiling is a key factor explaining why there are few women in educational administration. This glass ceiling represents an invisible barrier to success, and is generally imposed upon groups of minorities, such as women, rather than upon individuals. It is precisely its invisibility that makes it so difficult to combat. Employers who support the glass ceiling often deny its existence. As some aspects of the glass ceiling are external to women, women have limited control over them.

#### Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination is a large part of the glass ceiling. It, too, exists, even if some people feel it does not. Shakeshaft (1989) found that "women often experience, but deny, sex discrimination" (p. 106). This is sometimes a means of avoidance. If one does not acknowledge it exists, one does not have to deal with it. It does, in fact, exist at all



levels of the education hierarchy, and is exhibited by members of all categories of stakeholders, from students to the school board (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Women are not always viewed as appropriate for positions in educational administration. Martin (1993) found that the general population sees women and administrators as different groups with little in common. People feel that females do not exhibit the qualities that one would associate with an administrator. Blount (1994) found that women and leaders were seen as “two mutually exclusive categories” (p. 52). According to the research of Andrews and Basom (1990) society has a “double standard” even when describing female characteristics. Where men might be considered planners, women are seen as schemers; men are sensitive, but women are emotional (p. 40). The masculine descriptor is more positive whereas the female descriptor is negative.

Researchers have found gender bias in hiring practices. The data of Dardaine-Raguet, Russo and Harris (1994) and of Martin and Grant (1990) supports the idea that qualified women do not get administrative positions because of sex-role stereotyping and employers’ negative attitudes toward women. This is a situation where employers have certain negative assumptions about women in general and apply these to job criteria.

Blount (1994) blames the composition of professional staff in school boards, as one of the reasons for the disparity of women in administrative positions. “School board members have tended to choose people most like themselves: white males amenable to the needs of the affluent and influential members of the community” (p. 56). Marietti and Stout (1994) studied school boards to look at the numbers of women being hired by them as superintendents in the United States and found the number of women superintendents to be on the rise. On close investigation they found that school boards that hired women

superintendents were more likely to be female majority in comparison to those school boards that hired male superintendents. This corroborates Blount's findings. Marietti and Stout also found that these schools boards are more cosmopolitan, more consultative, more likely to govern in elementary districts, and more likely to have high numbers of females in administrative positions in the district.

As well, Martin and Grant (1990) found that this was compounded by the absence of women who can serve as advocates and mentors. Mentors are important as they encourage people to apply for positions, and to feel they are qualified to apply for positions. They sometimes play a role in promoting women to people in a hiring position. Simply the existence of women in administrative positions as role models can be encouraging, and conversely the lack of them can be discouraging. Swiderski (1988) found the same negative attitudes towards women in administration as well as a lack of female role models.

Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo and Harris (1994) concluded that sex discrimination occurs throughout the hiring process from application, to screening, to interview, and selection. Martin and Grant (1990) presented some specific examples of discriminatory practices within the hiring process. They found that women were not made aware of positions in time to apply for them. Some openings were not advertised at all and were instead passed along the old boys' network, from which women applicants would have been excluded. They also found that some positions required qualifications which had little bearing on job performance, but which effectively eliminated most female applicants. Those women who did manage to get interviews experienced discrimination

as well, as they were confronted with discriminatory questions and situations during the interview process (p. 40).

Rees (1991) in her study of school boards found there is a perception that women do not hold the appropriate qualifications to apply for school management positions. She found they have the paper qualifications, but other qualifications may be perceived to be missing, such as previous leadership responsibilities or self-confidence. She feels work has to be done to change two perceptions: the school boards' perception that women lack a "leadership image", and women's perception that they lack the appropriate qualifications.

Even women who appear to break through the glass ceiling and attain an administrative position continue to experience gender discrimination. These women continue to have to prove they are capable of performing their duties and are worthy of promotion. Swiderski (1988) found that women who attain administrative positions have to deal with preconceived notions on the part of both male and female teachers about the abilities of female administrators. She also found that when women seek even higher promotions they are faced with the dilemma of even fewer available sponsors, and that makes promotion more difficult still. Again, the lack of mentors is a problem at all stages of the process.

Mertz and McNeely (1994) investigated another way in which new female administrators might find themselves in discriminatory situations. They commented on the tradition in education of placing newcomers in difficult positions, those positions which others do not want. It might be "easier and less risky" to place a woman in this type of position. Then if she fails it would not be seen as the system's fault. It would be

an indictment of that woman's abilities, or of the abilities of all women. Conversely if she succeeds, she will be seen as a uniquely capable woman. Women do have to face unfair, discriminatory, hiring practices in order to obtain administrative positions. Even those women who do get hired find they encounter negative, preconceived notions about their abilities in this field of work.

These factors can not only make it difficult for women to attain promotion to other administrative positions, but can also contribute to difficulties with respect to the retention of women administrators. Tallerico, Poole and Burstyn (1994) studied four women superintendents who decided not to return to their positions, or whose positions were not renewed. While women's reasons for their decisions were different, this study emphasises the need not only to recruit more women into these types of leadership positions, but also to find ways of retaining them once they are successful. In a larger study from which these four women were drawn, they found that 70% of the women who left their positions were in their first superintendency. Without attention being paid to the retention of women they fear the system does little more than create a "revolving door". "With such long standing, disproportionate participation of white males in educational leadership, the loss of even a few women and members of underrepresented groups can be significant" (Tallerico et al., 1994, p. 452).

Gender bias can serve to discourage women from even entertaining the possibility of pursuing an administrative career. Ross Epp (1994) surveyed 123 graduate students in Educational Administration Programs in Canadian universities to see if much had changed in the previous twenty years with respect to the "chilly climate" for women students, a climate where women were made to feel unaccepted or unwanted. Although

there were some positive changes, most of what she found indicated that little had improved. She found that there were few gains in course modification. Therefore women's issues were not being addressed in the curriculum. There were too few women professors serving as role models and advisors. In fact some male and female students, and even some male professors continued to devalue women professors. Sexist language continued to discourage or isolate female students, and women in classes continued to be ignored, insulted or even penalised because of their gender. Women were actually counselled out of administration and into curriculum (p. 66).

In the following year, 1995, Ross Epp studied 151 graduate students in educational administration across Canada. She found in this study that women had some positive experiences. They were able to take women's studies courses as options, had opportunities to study qualitative research methods, and had positive experiences with female professors. As in her previous study, there were also some negative findings, which she refers to as "insidious deterrents". These were a male oriented competitive culture; gender bias in texts, materials, and traditions; and unequal distribution of financial resources and home related responsibilities. These would have contributed to a feeling of discomfort for the women, and possibly kept them from their studies because of financial and time restrictions. "The women students in this survey spoke of an entrenched anti-female attitude which discouraged female teachers from seeking administrative training" (p. 30).

Guppy, Balsom and Vellutini (1987) found that women are beginning to dominate some degree programs, and have increased their numbers dramatically in Ph.D. programs. Unfortunately, women still occupy few of the senior positions on the faculties

of universities, and are generally paid less than their male counterparts. This would have a negative effect for the promotion of women's issues, and would give the unspoken message to female students that it is difficult to achieve equitable employment status, even if one is well educated.

Schneider and Wallich (1994) studied male and female assessment center participants to see whether gender affected their pursuit of administrative careers. These assessment centers provide simulation exercises to determine which candidates possess the skills and qualities necessary for future administrative positions and promotions. The participants in this study, for the most part, held teaching or administrative positions at that time. Although their demographic profiles indicated that both groups were very similar, they found that men receive preferential treatment in terms of administrative promotion regardless of their skill level over women and that the recruitment efforts may be perpetuating the stereotypical representation of men as more appropriate secondary administrators (p. 235).

These findings show that even women who aspire to administrative positions and are following an educational path to prepare them for such positions encounter gender discrimination. They can encounter this layer of the glass ceiling in very unlikely places, such as their university classes within educational administration programs.

This gender discrimination and negative sex role stereotyping can affect women's self-esteem and can lead women to become an obstacle to their own success. Swiderski (1998) found that women have negative self-perceptions and lack confidence in their qualifications and experience. Albino (1992) feels that few women apply for these positions because they fear success. For them, achievement is incompatible with

femininity, and they do not want to be perceived as not feminine. Conversely, Albino also believes that women fear risk. She feels that men see risk as an opportunity for success or failure, whereas women see it primarily as an opportunity for failure.

The sexism of society blocks recognition of women's abilities, and women, as well as men, undervalue women. Collinson (1989) found that women become vice-principals and principals later in life and this limits their time for opportunities for further advancement. As well, Collinson found that women do not plan their careers the way men do, and when they do they are quiet about it, and therefore limit the number of people who could help them. This decreases the chances of attaining an administrative position in the first place, as women do not take advantage of networks that might be able to help them.

Collinson (1989) also found that women have a tendency to continue the superwoman myth and do not take advantage of services that could help free up more time to dedicate towards their work. This helps to perpetuate the idea that women have too many responsibilities to be able to successfully complete the roles of an administrator. It also incorrectly demonstrates to other women just how difficult this position can be, and can discourage them from applying for such positions.

Possibly a person's attitude towards gender discrimination is important. Thrasher McGrath (1992) found that successful women are aware of sex discrimination but they don't get "hung up" on gender. Maybe as individuals women need to learn to place less emphasis on the fact that they are female and to rely more on their abilities as professionals.

In summary, women can encounter examples of gender discrimination in their professional, social or educational lives. For many women this gender discrimination can constitute a major barrier to promotion. Because of sex-role stereotyping women are not always viewed as appropriate for administration. Inequities that discriminate against women exist at various stages in the hiring process. Successful women applicants continue to face gender bias in their new positions and there is a tendency to view them as uniquely capable, thus fostering the belief that women, in general, are not suited for such positions.

Women encounter this negative view of their abilities even at university, while preparing to become administrators. Women are on times discouraged as Masters of Education candidates, and can be counselled out of administration into other areas, such as curriculum.

The gender bias that women encounter leads them to behave in ways that are detrimental to their own careers. Gender discrimination can lower their self-esteem, and the fear of failure can cause them to wait until later in life before applying for administrative positions. This effectively limits the degree to which they can advance themselves professionally.

There is evidence that successful women can have a positive effect on potential candidates. As mentors they can encourage others to follow similar career paths. Unfortunately, the number of women in a position to act in this way is still very low.

#### How Women Lead



Blackmore (1989) sought to study why qualified women do not apply for positions of leadership within schools as principals and found that leadership has been traditionally viewed as a masculine characteristic. For a long while it was believed that aggressiveness was essential in various management skills such as tackling challenges, setting achievable goals, planning and persuading. Leadership was associated with a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence, and many believed that women lacked these traits, and that while women could learn them, they were innate in men. Women were perceived as too emotional and subjective. She successfully refuted the above reasons, which she referred to as "myths", as to why women would be unsuitable in this position. She found that women did demonstrate characteristics appropriate for educational administration.

Since men were seen as appropriate for leadership positions, whereas women were not, it is hardly surprising that women who wanted to succeed in the male dominated world of management were encouraged to behave, and even dress like men. This was only mildly successful (Adler, Laney, and Packer, 1993). Shakeshaft (1989) concluded "thus to counsel women to act like men may not be in the best interests of either women or schooling" (p. 210). Blount (1994) agreed that those women who "dressed for success" probably compromised their self-respect to do so (p. 47).

In studies of leadership style, there appears to be many differences between the methods used by men and women to administer. Adler, Laney and Packer (1993) noted that women's concept of power is different from that of men, and that women do not always see power as desirable. A male model of power is based on autonomy and separateness, while a female model is centered on connectedness and community. With

respect to decision-making, Shakeshaft (1989) found that women are preferred over men because they are perceived as being more democratic and participatory. Women tend to ask the people who will be affected by decisions for their input. With respect to conflict resolution school staffs have evaluated women as more effective than men in using conflict reduction techniques. They are more likely to use collaborative strategies rather than enter into conflict, whereas men use authoritarian responses more often (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Hammett (1996) believes in a feminist post-modern view of leadership, which allows for individual differences. It is unfair to say all women perform in the same way. Her view is that everybody in the school would share leadership responsibilities and that "collaborating groups would set goals for the school and determine its vision" (p. 18), all facilitated by the school principal. Leadership would not be something held by only one or two people. Hammett believes in empowerment, a shared power versus power over others.

Another difference between how women and men lead is women appear to spend less time at the desk and more time with people during their workday. Shakeshaft (1989) found women spend more time at home on administration and schoolwork, and during the work day they spend more time communicating, and touring buildings, visiting classrooms and teachers, and caring for the physical environment. In short, they spend more time caring for the school and the needs of the people who occupy it. She also found that women principals pay more attention to the social, emotional, and academic development of the children in their schools. Through these activities women become

more knowledgeable about the curriculum and value more the productivity of their teachers.

Schneider and Wallich (1994) found that women would bring a strong knowledge base in the areas of curriculum and instruction to administrative role, thus improving the image of school administrators as instructional leaders. Andrews and Basom (1990) also found that women principals make better instructional leaders. They found that this might be because they tend to teach for longer periods of time prior to becoming principals.

Andrews and Basom (1990) and Shakeshaft (1989) noted that women principals observe teachers considerably more often than male principals do, are more concerned about the academic achievement of students, and are more knowledgeable about the curriculum. They value the productivity of their teachers more than male principals do, and demonstrate greater concern for individual differences, developmental problems, and social/emotional development of their students than male principals do. They are also likely to be of assistance to new teachers.

Women's ways of communicating differ from those of men. Shakeshaft (1989) found that both oral and written communication are essential to administration, and that women tend to use language that encourages community building. This indicates more consideration and concern. They also listen more and speak less, interrupt less in conversation, and use fewer hostile verbs. Women joke less often and when they do they tend to make fun of themselves. These communication skills all demonstrate a high level of concern for the other person.

Glass and Sclafani (1988) in their study of educational administrators found that women possess the skills that the male superintendents see themselves as needing to

improve upon. These skills include communication skills, implementation of new instructional systems, curriculum development, and teacher evaluation. Clearly women have advantages to bring to the administrative positions within schools.

Women who are not managers also use skills that are conducive to an effective working environment. Lambert (1989) found they are good at working with a team, listening, empathizing, making decisions which influence others, managing stress, time, and conflict, establishing priorities, combating racism and sexism, and motivating others (p. 106)

Bolman and Deal (1992) found that women score slightly higher than men on some measures of leadership and managerial behaviour, yet they have more difficulty getting credit for their performance. "Under representation of women in school administration is not a function of their ability to do the job" (p. 328).

In summary, women are able to perform the role of administrator in a high school setting. They have particular qualities and experiences that can be very useful as instructional leaders. Some of these are qualities that male administrators admit they lack. This could represent an opportunity for women. However, as women have difficulty getting recognition for their abilities they are still under represented in this field even though they are capable.

The research literature revealed that women lead in a manner that is different from that of men. They view power differently, and some find power undesirable. Women tend to share power with others, and to value the empowerment of others. They are viewed as collaborative and participatory in nature, bearing in mind the opinions of others when making decisions. They appear to have good communication skills and they

tend to use language to demonstrate concern and consideration for others in the school. They tend to spend more of their workday outside of their office and make more contacts with the various people who comprise the school population.

As they tend to begin their administrative careers later in life than men do, they have spent more time in the classroom, and therefore tend to be more knowledgeable about curriculum matters. They are strong instructional leaders, and highly value the evaluation and performance of both the students and the teachers. Women tend not to seek credit for their accomplishments, however, and this can help explain how their accomplishments and abilities can go unnoticed.

#### Factors Which Help Women Attain Administrative Positions

Some women comment on the importance of the role of a mentor in encouraging them to seek their first position in educational administration. Thrasher McGrath (1992) found that men can help women gain successful positions. "Relationships are critical to advancement, and being recognised as a 'member of the club' is as important as hard work and competence" (Thrasher McGrath, p. 63). Unfortunately, according to Adler, Laney and Packer (1993):

Men are frequently in a position to be mentors. Unfortunately for women, mentors tend to choose proteges who are like themselves, so choose men. Furthermore, when men create networks, these often exclude women - the 'locker - room syndrome' ". (p. 32)

With few women in administrative positions, and the tendency for male administrators to mentor other men, there is a serious lack of sponsors/mentors for female

aspirants. Levine (1987) suggests that women educators in middle management positions can have a positive effect themselves, if they begin to develop opportunities for peer support. Her experience is that she and her colleagues have helped each other fill job openings and develop collaborative projects. Women need to develop these networks, and women who are in a position to mentor others need to do so. As it could take some time before the numbers of women in administration are sufficient to establish such a network, a lack of mentors or role models is a layer of the glass ceiling, as it keeps women from being encouraged to apply for certain positions.

Governments have passed legislation aimed at making administrative positions more accessible to women. Dardaine-Raguet, Russo and Harris (1994) studied the effect of Title IX of the Civil Rights Act in 1972, the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991, and the Sexual Harassment Free Schools Act of 1992 in the United States. Mertz and McNeely (1994) also looked at the effect Title IX has had on the numbers of women in educational administration. They have found that in the twenty years since this legislation was passed, the number of women holding line administrative positions has increased, and the number of women officeholders increased in every position.

This improved situation is reflected in an increase in women in the secondary school positions of principal and assistant principal. These "positions have traditionally and resistantly been held by males and have served as 'gates' to advancement in school administration" (Mertz and McNeely, p. 366). Having women in these positions can therefore help to encourage even more women to apply and attain similar positions. Their data also showed that despite downsizing in these positions women have maintained their numbers. This might suggest that their gains are not temporary.

Rees (1991) recommends that school boards revisit the role they play. She suggests that quite a better understanding is necessary on women's issues with respect to employment equity. She suggests that officials who have an impact on hiring policies and practices should be made aware of gender issues, and institutions should analyse and identify the gender distribution for all of its work force. Employers should engage in employment equity and they should consider giving preferential treatment to women in hiring and promoting female candidates for positions of added responsibility.

Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, and Harris (1994) recommend similar suggestions. They would like to see the implementation of a system of scrupulous record keeping for accountability relative to hiring, salary, promotion, retention, and recruitment. Schools, colleges, and departments of education should encourage the recruitment of minorities and females into educational administration by providing career counselling, mentoring, and financial aide for graduate preparation, and to make the hiring of these individuals a priority in both word and deed. School boards have a responsibility to eradicate sexism and racism within their ranks and to develop curricular materials and instructional methods to do so. To that end school boards should provide professional education on an on-going and consistent basis to correct sex-role stereotyping among men and women, but also among administrators, teachers, and staff.

Adler, Laney and Packer (1993) make suggestions for changes that might improve the status and position of women in education. They suggest an implementation of equal opportunities policies, including equal access to management training and equal opportunity interviewing. They also recommend proper monitoring of selection procedures and policies, training of gatekeepers, and positive action in recruiting possibly

through the use of a quota system. As well, they would like to see mentoring for women, better child care, maternity and paternity rights, networking and women's support groups.

Schneider and Wallich (1994) found that women are not as inclined as men to leave their current school district to pursue an administrative career. Therefore, attention and care still needs to focus on affirmative action policies which promote hiring women administrators.

Collinson (1989) recommends changes that, although long term, could help encourage women from the time they are little children. Her recommendations deal more with how people in institutions should treat girls and women so that they will develop appropriate self-perceptions as leaders. Parents could be encouraged to develop strategies that create appropriate values and attitudes at home. Teachers could encourage girls to take risks and speak out. University professors could be made aware of appropriate reactions to female students and professors. Principals could give women teachers more responsibility, such as leaving them in charge when the principal is away. Female teachers could be encouraged to attend leadership conferences.

It appears that there is much that can be done to help women break through the glass ceiling. School boards, universities, and current school administrators could implement policies and practices to increase the awareness of this issue, and to give women opportunities to prove themselves.

Rees (1991) has counsel for prospective female administrators. She feels that they should get appropriate classroom experience and then the appropriate administrative certification. They should develop a long-range strategy to attain a prospective position, and articulate their career aspirations to others. They should make appropriate contacts by



joining professional organisations, becoming part of networks, particularly those that support other women, and seeking out and using sponsors/mentors. They should acquire visible leadership experience, either within the school or the community at large, become more mobile, become comfortable and competent with the interviewing process. take chances and view these chances as opportunities.

Swiderski (1988) has some suggestions for current women administrators who aspire to top positions: maintain good contacts with other principals and with the district office, identify the web of the informal network and use it, and serve on formal committees. Begin with small jobs and increase participation as the situation allows, and enrol in formal leadership training programs. Women administrators should participate in and support groups that promote women in administration. They should develop open attitudes to women who may be looking to them as a model and work to remove barriers to the appointment of other skilled and capable women. This would suggest that even women who have attained entry-level positions in administration must be actively involved in self-promotion if they wish to advance further.

Albino (1992) has compiled a list of "secrets of success" she identified in women who have managed to attain positions in administration. They have a strong sense of self and the ability to give away credit for their accomplishments. They work long hours to combat the perception that men are able to do a better job due to a lack of family commitments. These women have good interpersonal skills and they seek and find mentors, both male and female. In this way, they demonstrate the ability to strategize.

For others, this is too simple a solution. Morgan, (1986) feels that organisations are dominated by patriarchal values and structures and that this must change if women

are to be appreciated as equals within these organisations. This is not an easy task to be accomplished.

In summary, the research demonstrated that employment equity and affirmative action policies have helped increase the number of women in administrative positions. These women are then in a position to help mentor and encourage still others. Employers need to be better informed about gender issues so that they will become aware of inequities and of the need to eradicate them. School boards must do their part to rid schools of racism and sexism through the development and implementation of appropriate curriculum materials and learning strategies. Teachers, parents, and university professors need to be aware of gender issues and to help develop positive self-perceptions amongst females.

The research in this chapter demonstrates clearly that women remain under-represented in high school administration. The glass ceiling theory posits that even qualified women do not attain positions of status precisely because they are women. Gender discrimination exists and serves to keep capable women from advancing in their careers. Sex-role stereotyping and a lack of encouragement through successful role models contribute to this phenomenon. At times gender discrimination serves to decrease women's self-confidence and it effectively becomes a barrier that keeps women from aspiring to administrative positions.

Women can be very capable administrators and can exhibit strong and appropriate leadership styles. There is research to indicate that women can possess leadership abilities that men claim to lack, such as positive communication and collaborative

decision-making skills. An obstacle is that women seem to have difficulty getting or seeking recognition for their abilities and accomplishments.

The promotion of women is an important issue. Government, school boards, and current high school administrators should implement policies and practices to promote women. Women have to become responsible, in part, for their own success. It appears that prospective female administrators have to learn to strategize. Mentors can have a positive effect towards encouraging women to seek administrative positions, but there appear to be few female mentors. Although men can mentor women, most often they mentor other men; therefore, women have to find ways of promoting themselves and supporting each other. They have to attain the appropriate accreditation, take on leadership roles within their school, and improve networks. These are essential to building women's self-confidence and to helping women gain the necessary recognition for professional advancement.

This research seems to suggest that although women appear to be capable leaders their numbers are still low in educational administration because they encounter a glass ceiling. There is a growing recognition of the value of women in administration but nonetheless women are going to have to take an active role in breaking through this glass ceiling.

## CHAPTER III

### Research Methodology

This chapter includes a rationale for this study and explains the research methods used for studying the barriers and opportunities for women in educational administration. As well there is a detailed description of the process followed. This includes a description of the research participants, the interview guidelines, limitations of the study, member checking procedures, the administration of the data collection, and finally, a description of how these data have been analysed.

#### Rationale for a Phenomenological Interview Study

This is a feminist research project, one in which a woman is studying other women to gain insight into women's experiences. The purpose is to see if the process of becoming a high school vice-principal, the role of the vice-principal, and the process for promotion beyond this position are affected by gender. Does being female make any difference?

Oakley (1981) finds that feminist theory is not gender-neutral. It is important for women to investigate the lives of other women in administration to help bring about change. Adler, Laney and Packer (1993) write:

Feminist methodology begins with the view that women are oppressed and is as such politically committed to changing the position of women. The process of researching and investigating, as well as the product, has importance. Like many others, we regard feminist research as essentially political, concerned not only with exposure, but also with change. We

focused on the experience of women managers because we believe that the female experience in education is qualitatively different from the male experience. (p. 57)

Guy (1988) has already studied female administrators in Newfoundland and Labrador. Guy investigated 300 female school administrators from all positions of administration. This current study investigates in depth the experiences and perceptions of eight female high school vice-principals. The vice-principalship is generally the entry point for administration, and high schools represent a school setting where fewer women are employed in administrative positions. The participants in this study have all successfully entered an area traditionally dominated by men.

Guy's investigation was a quantitative research study in the form of a questionnaire, while I have chosen to do qualitative research based on a semi-structured interview process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). All things are not measurable and questionnaires can be limited. Interviewing gathers different and more in depth information on the participants' experiences and provides for expansion, clarification and discussion on the topic (Reinharz, 1992). The interview process is also more personal in nature. In an interview there is room for some give and take on the part of the interviewer, and it is through this feeling of closeness which develops between interviewees and interviewers that some of the pertinent information is gathered (Reinharz; Kvale, 1996).

According to Adler, Laney and Packer (1993):

A feminist research process may include emotion and involvement as a central factor in locating and describing women's experiences. Feminists

from a range of theoretical perspectives have struggled to find alternatives to the androcentric method of social science, using more intuitive and phenomenological approaches. (p. 62)

This is a phenomenological study. A phenomenological interview study is appropriate for listening to women's voices as they discuss their life world (Reinharz, 1992; Kvale, 1996). The goal of this study is to discover their perceptions, in their own words, of working in this male dominated environment. According to Kvale:

A phenomenological perspective includes a focus on the life world, an openness to the experiences of the subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions, attempts to bracket foreknowledge, and a search for invariant essential meanings in the descriptions. (p. 38)

Guba and Lincoln (1985) see many advantages to the interview process as a means of data gathering as well.

[A]mong its strengths is that there is less chance of misunderstanding between the inquirer and the respondent than in other approaches... Questions can be tailored to fit the respondents' knowledge, degree of involvement, and status. The interviewer is likely to receive more accurate responses on sensitive issues, and the interview itself is likely to provide a more complete and in-depth picture than other forms of inquiry. The interview format is more flexible than other approaches to data gathering and provides wide latitude within which the respondent's responses can be explored and fruitful leads exploited. The technique provides for continuous assessment and evaluation of information by the inquirer,

allowing him to redirect, probe, and summarise. Unstructured interviews in particular provide a picture of the event or thing in question in the respondent's own words and terms, his "natural language." (p. 186)

The semi-structured interview process is appropriate for pursuing a grounded theory technique of analysis of the data (Strauss, 1987). According to Strauss the grounded theory approach to qualitative research is not really a specific method or technique to data sampling. It is:

[T]he development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests. ... It is a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, ... the making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density. (p. 5)

Through grounded theory the researcher attempts to keep an open mind about the data and the conclusions to be drawn from it. The researcher constantly analyses the data as he or she is collecting and organising them. It is therefore not unusual for a researcher to find that the original question may change as a result of the data collected (Osborne, 1990).

This has indeed been the case with this research. Originally I was interested in investigating the barriers and opportunities for women administrators, with a view to determining changes that might occur for women once they have achieved their first administrative position. Curiously, I found that the participants frequently did not view an obstacle that they had managed to overcome as a barrier. Because of this I found that the

term “barrier” was too definitive, too final a term to use when referring to these concerns. Therefore I refer to these concerns as “negative influences affecting the opportunities for women in administration” in the analysis of the data. This more subtle expression seems more in accordance with how the participants in this study view these concerns. The participants also frequently attributed their success to good fortune.

These two findings caused me to decide to investigate further how professional experiences have affected women’s self-perceptions, and how women help to maintain some of the layers of the glass ceiling. Although other people can either positively or negatively affect the opportunities available to women in educational administration, it appears that women themselves play a large role in determining what opportunities are available to them. Therefore the original question of the barriers and opportunities for women administrators evolved into an investigation of the internal and external forces which affect opportunities for women in educational administration. This has become the most important finding in this research, and it will be analysed in subsequent chapters.

### Process

#### Description of the Population

The focus of this research is the experiences of women in school administration who deal with students in the senior high system, since this appears to be the field in which it is most difficult for women to attain administrative positions. I originally wanted to interview only senior high administrators (grades 10-12). Lists were not readily available to establish how many women in the province were vice-principals at schools that dealt only with teenaged children, and in which schools they worked. This



phenomenon, which Shakeshaft (1989) calls a “conspiracy of silence” (p. 21), is not uncommon. I contacted by telephone all of the school boards on the island of Newfoundland to get a list of all the female high school administrators for each board. I was not able to include Labrador in my sample because of distance and cost to conduct interviews there.

I found that there were only three female vice-principals in senior high schools (grades 10-12). Lacking sufficient numbers for the study I expanded my research to the central high schools (grades 7-12) and junior high schools (grades 7-9). There were three more female vice-principals in each. I succeeded therefore in finding only nine female vice-principals of high schools for the entire island of Newfoundland. This is significant since it demonstrates that very few women are employed in this male dominated domain. These low numbers are not really surprising (Shakeshaft, 1989; Danylewycz, Light and Prentice, 1987).

I was able to make contact with eight of the female high school vice-principals and all eight agreed to participate in this study. The eight women I interviewed were employed as vice-principals in the high school system, that is, working in either junior high, central high, or senior high schools, during the year 1998-1999 in Newfoundland. Each had at least ten years teaching experience before becoming vice-principals and five had had experience as department heads previous to becoming vice-principals. Four of them had completed Masters degrees before seeking a position as vice-principal. One is currently working towards such a degree and two have not yet begun that process. All were heavily involved in volunteer work, either within the schools where they work, or within the community, or both. Three have since gone on to a position as principal, and

one other has filled that position on a temporary basis in the past. One woman began her administrative career as a principal and has only recently taken on the responsibility of vice-principal. One woman has gone back to teaching, but still would like to pursue a career in administration.

#### Protection of the Participants

All participants signed a letter of consent (see Appendix II), which guaranteed their anonymity. No names of people, schools, school boards or communities were used in this study. When reporting the analysis of the data the names chosen to refer to individual participants are fictional. During the interview itself any participant could have refused to answer any question she wished and could have stopped the interview at any time. If, at any time before the completion of this thesis a participant wished to withdraw from the study, she could have done so (Kvale, 1996). Upon request, each participant could have a copy of the thesis upon its completion.

#### Description and Design of the Interview Guidelines

The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that only general topics of discussion were prepared in advance (see Appendix I). As each person's experience is different, the exact same questions were not necessarily asked in the exact same order each time (Reinharz, 1992). The discussion topics covered included family and educational background, work history, volunteer work, decision to move into administration, experiences as an administrator, view of opportunities and concerns for women in administration, and future aspirations. One participant wanted to read the

interview guidelines beforehand, but the others were satisfied to conduct the interview without first seeing the questions.

Previous to the interview each participant was contacted by telephone, informed of the purpose of the study, and asked to participate. Then an interview time convenient for each participant was arranged. One interview took place in my home, one took place in a participant's home, and the other six were conducted in their offices in various communities throughout the province. All of the interviews took place from July 1999 to October 1999.

Each interview took approximately fifty to sixty minutes. With the participants' permission I taped the interviews. Note taking during interviews often leads to omission and misinterpretation of data, and discomfort on the part of the interviewees (Kvale, 1996). I attempted to put the participants at ease during the interview process to elicit as much information from them as possible (Reinharz, 1992). I established a comfortable relationship with all of the participants, and, since the interview, all have confirmed my initial interpretations of their comments.

I later transcribed each interview in full and these women's stories were presented in a descriptive form. I did about 85% of the transcription myself, and I reviewed the transcriptions I had delegated to another person to ensure that there were no omissions or misinterpretations.

#### Pilot Interview

Previous to interviewing any of the participants I used my initial guidelines to interview the principal in the school in which I teach. From this pilot study I decided that

I wanted to change the order of some of the questions I asked. I felt uncomfortable starting the interview with questions about home life, as it seemed too personal and off putting to set a relaxed tone. I decided to let the interview run its course and, if pertinent information about these more personal areas of discussion did not naturally emerge during the process, I would ask about them toward the end of the interview. I discovered that I had to probe a little more deeply at various points in the interview in order to get the information that I needed as is appropriate in a semi-structured interview. This pilot interview was valuable as it helped me to alter my interview techniques to gain the needed information.

### Limitations of the Study

#### Sample Restraints

Some might argue that as this study looked at the experiences of only a few administrators it is not possible to generalise their experiences to those of all female administrators. According to Kvale (1996) it is better to spend more time on the preparation and analysis of a few interviews than to try to interview many subjects. I did manage to interview eight of the nine existing female high school vice-principals for the school year 1998-1999.

#### Observer Effect

The interviewee may be tempted to alter somewhat her responses to give what she perceives as the desired response on the part of the researcher. The researcher has to be aware of this possibility (Van Manen, 1990). The researcher must take care not to lead

the participant to answer in any particular way. I had to be aware of this phenomenon so that I would not influence the interviewees' responses.

One of the difficulties with interview research is it takes time to train a person to interview properly. The interviewer has to be a very good listener and be able to pick up on cues, which will provide areas that might be probed a little further. At the same time the interviewee must be made to feel comfortable at all times (Reinharz, 1992).

I felt competent to conduct these interviews appropriately as I have some experience in this field. In my position as a high school French teacher I interview students every year and have received training from the Department of Education for such interviews. In fact, I have participated as a facilitator at a training session for other teachers. Although this interview experience was different in nature from the research interviews I conducted for this thesis, my past interview experience was nonetheless useful in helping me with appropriate warm up, closure and probing techniques, and with putting the interviewees at ease throughout the interviews.

As well, in order to prepare myself sufficiently to give these interviews I familiarised myself with the research literature on interviewing techniques as a qualitative research method (Reinharz, 1992; Kvale, 1996; Osborne, 1990). Finally, before interviewing any of the participants in the study, I conducted a pilot interview to field-test my interviewing techniques and the interview guidelines that I had prepared.

### Observer Bias

When reporting data in grounded theory research, the researcher has to avoid interpreting the data in such a way as to fit preconceived notions. Personal views are not

necessarily corroborated in any study (Kvale, 1996; Osborne, 1990). Osborne suggests “bracketing”, a form of “rigorous self-reflection” (p. 81) as a means of avoiding this. Being aware of one’s views is very important in being able to avoid depending on them when interpreting the data (Osborne, 1990).

In order to comply with this criterion I remained open to new phenomena. I was aware of what my views on the subject were, having read so much of the research literature. Throughout the process of collecting, coding and analysing the data, I constantly questioned my findings and took care to assure that the findings were rooted in the data. Throughout the coding process I read and reread the data, to assure that the themes that had emerged had, in fact, originated from the women’s words. The analysis of the data corroborated findings from previous research. However, one significant, new finding did emerge. There are issues internal to women that help keep the glass ceiling in place. Finally, once a draft of the findings had been prepared, I used a member checking technique discussed on pages 48-49 to allow the participants to view the findings. This assured me that I had correctly interpreted their intentions, and that I was not influencing the analysis in a biased fashion.

#### Data Analysis

Each participant shared her own opinions and experiences. In data analysis the researcher hopes that certain patterns will emerge (Kvale, 1996). Kvale prescribes the use of several different methods to derive meaning from and to interpret interview data. The various methods used in this thesis were coding and categorising of the data according to

the reoccurring themes, member checking to verify that the themes found and presented were those of the participants, and triangulation with the current literature and statistics.

According to Strauss (1987), the selection of a core category is crucial in a grounded theory approach. A core category can account for variations in behaviour within a study. He provides several criteria for judging which category would best serve as a core category:

1. It must be central, that is, related to as many other categories and their properties as is possible.
2. The core category must appear frequently in the data.
3. The core category relates easily to other categories.
4. A core category in a substantive study has clear implications for a more general theory.
5. As the details of a core category are worked out analytically, the theory moves forward appreciably.
6. The core category allows for building in the maximum variation to the analysis, since the researcher is coding in terms of its dimensions, properties, conditions, consequences, strategies, and so on. (p. 36)

Results are analysed inductively, and theory emerges from data. "Theory developed in this way emerges from the bottom up,...from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected. It is called grounded theory" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 31).

I used Ethnograph 4.0, a computer program designed to help code and categorise data from qualitative research. Ethnograph 4.0 helped me to familiarise myself with the

various categories of information that were noticeable in many of the interviews. Ethnograph 4.0 requires the researcher to visit the data several times in the search of themes, and to extract data and code it according to those themes.

Ethnograph 4.0 revealed the following categories of information. The women demonstrated several concerns, such as the discrimination they had encountered, and the heavy workload involved with the position of vice-principal. They described what they liked or disliked about being administrators, and the difficulties of maintaining a busy professional life along with a comfortable home life. This was particularly a concern for the mothers. They discussed the qualifications they held or lacked, and how these had influenced career decisions. They discussed their apprehensions upon accepting their first administrative position. As well, they indicated ways that they may have unintentionally limited their own career options. The opportunities they spoke of were related to the people who had been influential in helping them attain their first administrative position, their leadership styles, how they came to be appreciated as administrators and how their experience as administrators has reassured them of their abilities and value.

Although these were all valid categories of information to be presented in the analysis of the data, there still seemed to be something missing. Upon further analysis of the themes, again through rereading the data, re-examining the coding I had completed with Ethnograph 4.0, and rewriting the analysis multiple times, it became evident that these categories of information originated generally from one of two sources. Some of these categories were applied to women from external sources, whereas others appeared to come from within the women themselves. This, then, the difference between external



and internal sources of influence on the opportunities for these women. became the central and defining theme of the analysis of the data.

### Member Checking

In order to confirm my interpretations of the phenomenon I used member checking (Reinharz, 1992). Member checking is an important qualitative feminist method to acknowledge in more detail a participant's intended message. It adds credence to the study. Because of the nature of interview research, data have to be examined in close detail and visited several times; this also reduces the possibility of misinterpretations (Kvale, 1996). Member checking serves a number of functions:

It allows the evaluator to assess the intent of a given action. It gives the respondent the chance to correct errors of fact or errors of interpretation. It provides interviewees the chance to offer additional information. It puts the respondent 'on record' as having said certain things and as having agreed that the interviewer 'got it right'. It allows a chance for the inquirer to summarise, not only for the respondent but also as a first step toward analysis of a given interview. It gives the respondent a chance to judge overall adequacy of the interview itself in addition to providing the opportunity to confirm individual data items. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 239)

In order to comply with this criterion I sent a summary of each participant's comments and a draft of my interpretations to each participant. The participants were given an opportunity to react to the findings and their opinions have been integrated in

this report, in both the final analysis of the data and in the conclusions. In fact, there was little disagreement with my original interpretation of the data. This confirmed for me that I had understood their intentions and had interpreted their comments appropriately.

### Triangulation

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), triangulation, comparing data derived from different sources, is an appropriate method of validation for a research study. Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest (1966) find that triangulation is an effective means of making data credible since if two or more different measurements confirm an interpretation the possibility of its misinterpretation is decreased. Lindesmith, Strauss, and Denzin (1975) describe triangulation as the use of various types of data that point to the same conclusions. Some appropriate types of data they suggest for an interview study are: the words a participant uses, the body language a participant unwittingly uses, a participant's behaviour and life story. Denzin (1970) identifies four types of triangulation:

1. Theoretical triangulation involves the use of several different perspectives in the analysis of the same set of data.
2. Data triangulation attempts to gather observation with multiple sampling strategies...(Its) use insures that a theory is tested in more than one way, increasing the likelihood that negative cases will be uncovered.
3. Investigator triangulation is the use of more than one observer in the field situation.
4. Methodological triangulation (involves the use of multiple methods). (p. 472)

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989) "This is the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility ... This process occurs continuously, both during the data collection and analysis stage, and again, when a narrative case study is prepared" (p. 239). Guba and Lincoln state that "member-checking processes ought to be dedicated to verifying that the constructions are those that have been offered by the respondents, while triangulation should be thought of as referring to cross-checking specific data items of a factual nature" (p. 241).

To validate my analysis I used triangulated my findings with the current literature on this topic, current statistics available, and through member checking (Kvale, 1996). During the interviews I frequently checked to make sure I had properly understood the intentions of the statements given by the respondents during the interview itself. As well, I contacted each of the participants I had interviewed once my initial report of my findings had been written to see if their views concurred with those of my research. Subsequent to the triangulation and the member checking there was still further analysis for the preparation of the final written document contained in this thesis.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis of the Data

In this chapter there is a brief profile of each of the eight women interviewed to familiarise the reader with the participants involved in this study. This is followed by an analysis of the data gathered from the interviews and the member checking. This analysis gives insight into the perceptions of these female vice-principals regarding their position as vice-principals, the process of becoming a woman vice-principal, and their future aspirations. On different occasions their gender has worked to their advantage or to their disadvantage. It appears true that being women has had an effect on their experiences.

The analysis is organised according to the categories of information that emerged from the data collected through the coding procedures facilitated by Ethnograph 4.0. As was previously indicated my original question to the participants examined the barriers and the opportunities that exist for women who achieve administrative positions. While analysing the data it became apparent that the term "barrier" did not appropriately reflect the participants' view of the obstacles they encountered, as the participants have successfully found ways of overcoming them. Therefore I decided to rename these categories as negative and positive influences affecting the opportunities for women in educational administration.

Upon still further analysis it became clear that these influences, either negative or positive, came from one of two sources; sources that were external to the participants, or sources that came from within the women themselves. Therefore the data are divided into two core categories based on the factors that influenced administrative careers for the women in this study. Those main categories that emerged during the analysis are the

external and the internal sources that affect the opportunities for women in administration.

People or factors external to the participants' sphere of control have influenced the career decisions of the participants in this study. These influences are coded and categorised as originating from external sources, as they are external to the participants. The participants, as well, have influenced their own career paths and the opportunities available to them, and these are listed as internal factors, as they come from within the participants themselves.

For each of these sources, either external or internal, there are several subcategories of data presented, and these subcategories are organised according to whether they exerted a negative or a positive influence on the administrative career opportunities for the participants. The negative influences are presented first under each of the respective core categories.

#### Profiles: The Women's Stories

All eight of the participants in this study were female high school vice-principals in Newfoundland during the school year 1998-1999. They are all experienced teachers and worked in that capacity for at least ten years before accepting their first position as high school administrator. The names used to represent individual participants are fictional in order to protect their identity.

Abbey is married and does not have any children. She works in a rural setting and is vice-principal of the school she attended as a child. She has been teaching for more than ten years, and became department head before accepting the responsibilities of vice-

principal. She was accepted for the position of principal for September 1999. She has completed a Masters in Education.

Beth is a married mother of three young children. She has been teaching for more than ten years, and has been department head for several years. She has completed a Masters in Education and filled in as vice-principal in 1999 in a replacement position in the school in which she was teaching. She did not continue in the position the following year, and went back to a position as teacher and department head. She works in an urban setting.

Cathy has been teaching for about twenty years. She has been department head and several years ago became vice-principal. She was a single mother of three children but has recently remarried. She works in a rural setting and has been accepted for the position of principal for the following year. She is working towards the completion of a Masters degree in Education.

Dora is a married mother of two young children. She has been teaching for more than ten years. When she first became vice-principal, she had not yet completed her Masters in Education but has since done so. She is interested in pursuing a position as principal in the near future. She works in a school with a large student population in a rural community.

Edna is married with six children. She has been teaching for more than twenty-five years, and can retire very soon. She works in a rural setting, in the same community in which she grew up. When she began teaching she had not completed her undergraduate degrees. She has since done so but has not pursued a Masters degree.

Frieda has been teaching for more than ten years. She is married and has no children. She has completed a Masters degree and is currently the vice-principal of an urban school. She has not decided what career path she will follow in the near future.

Greta has been teaching for more than ten years. She has been department head, and has held several positions as vice-principal and as interim principal in two schools within the same rural community. She has not pursued her Masters but is considering doing so. She is married with one small child.

Hanna has been teaching for more than twenty-five years. When she began teaching she had not completed her undergraduate degrees. She has since done so and completed a Masters in Education as well. She completed her graduate work while filling the role of principal, her first administrative position. She has filled several positions as principal and recently has taken on the role of vice-principal in a rural community. She has not married and has no children.

#### Presentation and Analysis of the Data

##### External Factors Influencing the Opportunities for Women in Administration

The data indicated two major concerns voiced by the women in this study that originate from sources external to the participants. One category of concerns relates to the heavy workload required of the position of high school vice-principal and how this heavy workload impacts the demands of one's home life. The second concern relates to explicit gender discrimination encountered by the participants, where they have been led to feel that others view them as inadequate and inappropriate for certain roles, specifically

because they are female. Both of these concerns are strongly related to gender expectations.

There are instances as well when other people played a very positive role in these women's administrative careers. Here, two subcategories of data are explored. Firstly, there is strong evidence that other people, often men, have recognised and encouraged these women to become involved with administration. Secondly, since becoming administrators, these women have noticed a growing appreciation for their presence in the school and the work that they do. They feel that although gender discrimination continues to exist, it is becoming counterbalanced by this acceptance of women high school administrators. The people with whom they work as administrators have come to recognise their strengths and value to the school.

#### External negative influence 1: Demands of the position.

The data indicated that the greatest concern expressed by the participants in this study was the heavy workload required of the position of vice-principal. This increased the demands on their time in order to complete the various duties inherent to the position. All eight of the participants commented on workload issue. The six women who work in rural areas of Newfoundland continue to teach along with fulfilling their other duties. Nonetheless, the participants have found ways of dealing with these demands.

Frieda feels there is a strong opinion that anyone would have to be "crazy" (September 1999) to go into administration because of the added responsibilities associated with it. She enjoys, however, the fast pace of this job even though she does find the workload a bit "oppressive" in June.



The data indicated gender as an important issue with respect to the increased professional demands when one looks at how these requirements affect these women's home lives. They need to rearrange their schedules so that they can successfully complete both home and work-related tasks to their own, and to their family's, satisfaction. The women in this study, in particular the mothers, still accept primary responsibility for home care and childcare. This leads to a "double day of work" (Danylewycz, Light, and Prentice 1987). Dora's husband is the only one who voluntarily accepted more home duties.

There is just no way in this world to be able to do this without my husband, without the support of him. Child care, home things that need to be done around home, that kind of fell into my lap, being Mom, that when I began my Masters my husband started assuming those duties and has continued ever since. (Dora, September 1999)

All six of the women who were married at the time they first became vice-principals have indicated that their husbands are supportive of their career decisions, and they are pleased with the level of support they receive. Their husbands "help out" (Edna, September 1999) at home more than they did before their wives got involved with administration. Even as the participants recognise that they still do more at home than their husband does, and some of them take the blame for this, there is a reluctance to change. All participants indicated that their family understands their need to devote less time to them, and more to work.

Five of these women are mothers, and all have found ways of balancing work and home. This is not always an easy task. One participant was a single mother of three

children when she accepted her first position as vice-principal, and another is a mother of six children. Generally, they organise their week so that time is allocated in advance for various duties. Greta is involved in activities on the weekends with her daughter, and refuses to begin work in the evenings until her child has gone to sleep. Dora puts aside one evening a week to do her extra schoolwork and her family is aware this is her "night out" (September 1999). Instead of using her night away from family responsibilities to relax, she uses it to complete work-related tasks.

Cathy, a single mother of three children, feels she was able to take on the role of vice-principal with its added responsibilities only because her children were of an age when they were independent, and able to help out more at home. This, combined with a simple lifestyle, has enabled her to satisfy both needs:

I was past my child bearing years, my children were old enough when I went in to administration to be independent. I don't know that I would have been able to handle it then, in another situation. I just think it would have been too much. (Cathy, August 1999)

Two women employ housekeepers to take care of their household chores. Interestingly, they are Abbey and Frieda, the two women who are both married and childless. It would seem that a household with two adults and no children would require less attention than one with children, and that this would be a way of giving those who are mothers needed support. Yet, none of the mothers chose this option as a way of freeing up extra time. Perhaps this is a financial issue; however, as this topic was not dealt with in depth, the data were not collected to corroborate this conclusion.

With respect to financial reward several participants did indicate that, if the salary increase were more in line with the added responsibilities, they feel that more women and more men would be interested in administration. One woman also indicated that people might be willing to put more into their jobs if they were appropriately remunerated for it. Salary is not an incentive to take on an administrative role, as the salary increase is minimal. "You don't do it for the pay. The pay is no relation at all to the workload" (Abbey, July 1999).

#### External negative influence 2: Gender bias against women.

Reynolds and Young (1995) describe gender discrimination as "comments and incidents which make women feel uncomfortable and unwelcome" (p. 22). The data indicated that most of the women in this study feel that at some point in their career they encountered some form of gender discrimination, in that a woman's ability to perform certain functions was questioned or her authority was undermined by another person. Greta feels that in these instances the people involved are often not aware they are behaving in a sexist manner. "It's an unconscious thing" (Greta, October 1999).

Gender discrimination views women as less capable than men either from a physical, intellectual, emotional, or behavioural perspective. Most of the women in this study cited examples of discriminatory beliefs and behaviours exhibited towards them by various stakeholders within the educational framework and at various stages within their careers as teachers and as administrators. Some feel they will have to face this discrimination again if they wish to pursue other administrative positions. There were instances of discrimination from the academic literature, school boards, principals, and

staff. There were times when the women were made to feel uncomfortable or less valued and there were times when their presence as an administrator seemed to contribute to feelings of discomfort on the part of others.

Even as teachers, previous to becoming involved with administration, some women encountered situations that made them feel uncomfortable. For Dora's first six years as a teacher she was referred to as "Junior" on a regular basis by her then vice-principal, even over the public address system in the school. He persisted in this behaviour even though she indicated to him on several occasions that she did not appreciate it. She feels this behaviour was due in large part, but not exclusively, to the fact that she was female.

Greta encountered many forms of discriminatory banter in the staff room. On one occasion the discussion centered on a woman who received a job normally filled by a man. "A lot of joking went on about that and it's normal. People do not accept a woman in a position where normally a male should have the job" (Greta, October 1999).

Sometimes women's views were undervalued. Greta was present many times in meetings when a woman's views went unnoticed until a man brought up the same idea:

I've been in meetings over the 21 years where women have made suggestions and they're not even heard until some man says the exact same thing. But if you stopped and said, "Excuse me, did you hear what happened?" a lot of people wouldn't even have seen [noticed] it. (Greta, October 1999)

The data indicated several instances where male staff members were initially uncomfortable with these female administrators. Abbey's school, while she was vice-

principal, amalgamated with another school of a different denominational background. There were two male teachers who came to work in her school. Neither had worked with a woman administrator before. She felt that both men initially found it difficult to deal with her as vice-principal. Eventually they came to accept her, and one even encouraged her to try for the position of principal when it became available.

Dora finds it frustrating that staffs are sometimes not receptive to being told to do something by a woman. As a new vice-principal she found that some of the male teachers were initially reluctant to come to her when requesting leave, even though evaluating leave requests was her responsibility. They would avoid her by going to other administrators or having their wives call in sick for them.

Several participants commented on how others react to women's behaviour. Greta finds that men deal more easily with women who are victims and do not like to see women as a threat. For this reason she feels that some women alter their behaviour to fit what is expected.

You will find a lot of times, there are certain types of male teachers who believe that if you're a victim, if you can be perceived as a woman in distress, a damsel in distress, a teacher who, you know, can come and cry on their shoulder, then you're really accepted. And if you're the type of person who is determined and strong and on your own, then you get to become the bitch. So you draw a fine line when you're working with a male dominated staff. (Greta, October 1999)

Conversely, when women employ an assertive approach there are also difficulties. Some people may view assertiveness as a negative characteristic in women. Frieda has

noticed that men sometimes do not know how to deal with assertive women. She has to “deal consciously” (September 1999) with this response.

There are those who feel women are less able intellectually to perform the role of school administrator. As a Masters student, Hanna found articles in educational journals that stated that women are not appropriate for administration because they are menopausal at that stage in their careers. These articles concluded for that reason that women are unable to make good decisions. She remembers being shocked at the time and quite concerned that educated people would believe and promote this idea.

Edna had an unpleasant experience with one of the male principals she worked with as vice-principal. She felt he did not have confidence in her since she was a woman. She found it very difficult to work with him. “I always felt that my opinions didn’t count because I was a woman, that everything could be done more quickly by a man” (Edna, September 1999). She thinks rural Newfoundland needs to see more women in positions of authority as a way of counteracting this belief.

I think, especially in rural Newfoundland, that guys have to learn that we are individuals and that a woman doing a job is just as important as a man doing a job. The key is that the job is well done no matter who does it. And I think too, in rural Newfoundland, guys need a shake up. Maybe some of the girls need a shake up too, to realise that yes, women can do things. (Edna, September 1999)

Some of the women in this study feel that being a woman has had a negative effect on hiring practices as they were asked questions during interviews that they feel would not have been asked to a man. Greta was twice asked in job interviews for a vice-

principal position if she thought, “as a mother”, that she would have the time to devote to the position.

There is evidence that some people see women as physically inferior as well. In 1999 Dora’s principal did not want to hire a pregnant woman for a teaching position, although he believed she was ideal for the job. He did not think about the long-term benefits she would bring to the staff. He only considered the disruptions her maternity leave would cause.

This gender discrimination can exist at each step in career advancement. Several of the participants indicated that they felt that women are becoming accepted as appropriate for the role of vice-principal, but not for other higher administrative positions. Dora believes that the fact that she is female is a reason she did not get a position as principal that she applied for. The position was given to a man who had been a vice-principal for a longer period of time than she had been. She was told he had not done anything during his career to warrant not getting this position, and that he was more or less owed the position. She thinks school boards are still very traditional in nature, and are not risk takers. They are unlikely to hire someone less conventional for the position of principal.

I still believe that the principal positions for high school are still narrowly focused. I call it being a member of the boys’ club, and what I mean there is that men are supposed to have the firmness and the stability to deal with high school students. (Dora, September 1999)

Cathy is distressed about the low numbers of women in administration. She feels that the school board, the government, and the trustees have a traditional view of the role

of women in education. "I think in some instances it presents an opportunity and I think in some instances it presents barriers because there is a traditionalist view held by some people in administration as to the role of women" (Cathy, August 1999). This view, she feels, is held by fewer and fewer people all the time, but nonetheless she feels there is still a preference for men at the school board level.

As well, the data indicated several instances of the concern of reverse discrimination. Some participants fear that others attribute a woman's success in attaining an administrative position to the fact that she is female, and not because she is qualified. There is the belief that school boards are under pressure to hire more women as a means of balancing the numbers. Once, a male competitor for a vice-principal position told Greta she would probably get the job over him because she was a woman. She did, in fact, get that position.

Beth felt very differently about this topic than the other participants. There is evidence that gender discrimination does not have to be exhibited by one sex towards another. Women can doubt others women's abilities just as men can.

I cannot ever say that men have stood in my way. I found them supportive, showed me respect. If there was the odd individual that was the odd individual. I've probably had as many or more females that have been difficult than males. (Beth, August 1999)

Although Beth stressed that she thought that both men and women were equally competent, she was aware that the fact she was female might make a difference in the way others, both male and female, perceived her. "But in part, too, I think one reason I



wanted to go on and do some administrative work as a female, is I wanted, part of me wanted to show that women can do it" (Beth, August 1999).

To summarise, most of the participants are very aware of discriminatory practices and actively strive to decrease them. Others recognise that these practices exist but feel they have not personally suffered from them.

#### External positive influence 1: Recognition and encouragement.

The data indicated that all of the women in this study held strong qualifications for the position of vice-principal. They had each at least ten years of teaching experience and had completed their undergraduate degrees, some while working full time. Several had graduate degrees as well. Four participants held head of department positions before accepting their first vice-principal position and thus had some leadership experience within the school system. Several were involved with volunteer associations within their school or community and held leadership roles within these organisations.

This preparation appeared to be crucial, as many of these women decided to seek their initial administrative position only after first being recognised and encouraged by others to do so. This encouragement came from various sources. Several women were encouraged by other professionals to seek administrative positions. Dora decided to begin a Masters in Education with a view to seeking positions in administration at the encouragement of both her principal and her husband.

Cathy was asked by her principal to apply for a head of department position even though she had only been employed there for a couple of years. She was also one of only two women on staff at that time. Because of this there was, at least initially, some

resistance to her appointment by some staff members. As time passed she came to be appreciated by the staff and was even encouraged by them and the administration to apply for the vice-principal position. "I had no intention of being an administrator. I still don't have any intentions of being an administrator, but here I am" (Cathy, August 1999).

Frieda applied for her first position at the suggestion of colleagues. They thought she would find it enjoyable working with the principal in the school in which the vice-principal position was advertised. They were correct in that assumption.

I had zero intention of applying for an administration job, zero! Until [the position] where I presently am opened [for application]. And my colleague, who is so well regarded, somebody spoke to me about this position and said, 'You know what? You should consider that.' (Frieda, September 1999)

Hanna did not even apply for her first position. She was approached and asked to take a position as principal. Initially, she was tentative about accepting this position, and stated so:

So I just said to them, "Look, under these conditions I will take it: that it will be good for me, personally, good for the students, good for the staff. And if at the end of that year even if it had been good for me but not good for those [others], you know, I don't see how one could have worked without the other. (October, 1999)

It is clear that if some of these women had not first been recognised as valuable and capable by other people they would never have sought a career in administration.

External positive influence 2: Appreciation for women's leadership styles.

As much as the women in this study feel that gender bias against women still exists, they are confident there is a growing appreciation for women in administrative positions and the data supports this. All eight of the participants were hired for the first administrative position for which they applied. It appeared to participants that society is changing in a way that is advantageous to women, and they feel that women should take advantage of it. Cathy agrees with Beth that women have to create opportunities for themselves and for other women. As evidence of their success, although some of the women in this study initially encountered some discomfort with certain staff members, all of them came to be appreciated very much.

Cathy refers to the leadership literature of the mid-nineties and how it is "reflective of typical female thinking" (August 1999). She thinks boards are more forward thinking now and are aware of this trend. The participants gave evidence that central office staff, school staff, and students appreciate female vice-principals.

Dora does not think that telling someone to perform a task is the best way of getting that person's participation. She prefers a more collaborative approach, and it turned out that the staff she worked with did as well. There seems to be a preference for female administrators by some staff members. Dora spoke of how the staff, in particular the women, appreciate having her there and tell her so:

I think that's the most gratifying thing that I have experienced, is that teachers have said to me time and time again, "You know, just having you there", especially other female teachers have said that to me. They feel very, very positive about coming and approaching me about issues. The

females will use me, I guess more so than the males, but some of the males do as well, to approach the principal. (Dora, September 1999)

Greta has noticed similar things and has often been called upon to diffuse situations in the office. She seems to be better able to deal with some of the more sensitive issues. She thinks women can build rapport more easily with others than men can. Cathy thinks men are more apt to listen to women.

Hanna, too, has a very collaborative style. She respects those who work with her, and when she was a principal the staff worked very much as a team. The staff also liked the fact that she acted upon their needs. She felt it was an advantage in her first principalship. The staff had experienced some problems with the principal before her. When she arrived she responded by giving them all keys to the building, thus giving them a sense of ownership and trust.

She also provided space for the vice-principal in her office and they really worked as a team. Previously his desk was in the main office next to the secretary's. She thinks that sometimes vice-principals are not valued by the principal, and are almost seen as tokens. Her decisions made people feel very good about working with her.

For Frieda, she and her principal have monthly planning sessions and she includes her staff when she speaks of the team. Her language appears inclusive and collaborative.

Schools house both male and female students. The data indicated that most of the participants are of the opinion that schools should therefore be managed by both males and females. According to the participants, students, like staff, appreciate having a woman in administration. The dynamics of interaction with a female administrator appear to differ from those with a male administrator.

I also think that being a woman has advantages inherently for students. And I think there's a large pressure that comes from the student body to have a woman in place in administration, so that they have somebody that they can turn to and that there's a woman's view with regards to policies that are established in the school. I think the entire student body because at a level, especially around teenage boys, I found that there's this male macho image that has to be maintained, and sometimes that's very much challenged by a male administrator. It's easier for a boy to come in my office and say 'I'm feeling hurt, I'm feeling upset or I don't like what's happening', than it is for him to come in and say it to a male administrator who would say 'get your act together' or 'grow up'". (Cathy, August 1999)

Several of the women received encouragement from their community or staff since they began their administrative careers. This seems to be a strong indicator that their work is appreciated. Abbey, Cathy and Greta were encouraged by the community to apply for a principal position when it became available. Abbey was further encouraged by the fact that three people from her staff applied to become the vice-principal to work with her once she got the position as principal. The principal with whom Beth worked as a vice-principal offered to give her a recommendation and to mentor her for future administrative roles.

Three participants think the central office staff feels pressure to hire more women to try to balance the numbers. Cathy feels being a woman can lead to advantages since females are in the minority statistically so there is a lot of pressure for central office to

hire more. "I think that the fact that I'm a woman, and statistically women are in the minority, and the urge is to hire more women. I think that's a distinct advantage" (Cathy, August 1999).

Dora believes that being a woman gave her an edge in getting the position she currently holds. She thinks her employer was looking for a woman since men occupied the other two administrative positions in her school. She thinks her school board wanted a balance.

Greta recognises a danger in this practice. She fears that because women are so few in number, and because school boards are under pressure to bring those numbers up, that women may be hired as tokens. She fears some of these women may be less qualified, do a poor job, and make it more difficult for other women in the long run. She does not believe in a person getting a job based solely on gender, and fears that perception is still very much alive.

I'm a person who believes totally in equality, but I don't believe in women getting positions that they are not qualified for. Sometimes that works against women who are trying [to become employed] in a field that there's not as many women in, because sometimes people will look at it and say, "Oh well, you're the token women. Or you're here because we have to have a woman and ... we'll tolerate you but we won't accept you." And so sometimes women have got positions where they've done a very bad job, and that becomes a blanket for every body. (Greta, October 1999)

Abbey's school board has a female Assistant Director whom she feels might want to see the numbers of women in administration increased. That said, she would not like to

think she got the job of vice-principal based on gender alone. She thinks her school board would not be pressured to balance the numbers and would hire the best person for the job, male or female.

Edna feels that several women have proven themselves and are leading the way for others. "Just looking at our own board they've been very, very good. We have quite a few women principals and good women principals too. There's some very, very savvy girls around the table" (Edna, September 1999).

Greta, like Abbey, feels that retirements are on the rise. The time is right for competent young women to apply and prove themselves. The principal is no longer the person who hires. The central office staff makes this decision and they are beginning to push for more women. She thinks that successful women have opened the eyes of those in a position to hire women.

#### Internal Factors Influencing the Opportunities for Women in Administration

These women played a role in their own career development as well. These internal factors often deal with emotions regarding career and family life, and how these feelings affect decision making. Some internal factors influence these women towards creating career opportunities, and others influence them to limit their career opportunities.

The data support three categories of information which demonstrate the role that the participants had in limiting their own career choices. The subcategories of factors internal to the women in this study that exert a negative influence on their career path as

administrators are role conflict, professional relational dilemmas, and a lack of self-confidence.

Finally, there are two categories of internal factors presented which demonstrate how women influence their career in administration in a positive direction. These are the qualifications that these women have, and the self-assurance that they have gained through their careers as administrators. They are very confident that they are effective and reliable high school administrators.

#### Internal negative influence 1: Role conflict.

The demanding work schedule requires these women to rearrange their home lives in order to accommodate their professional responsibilities. The data indicates that all of the participants have been able to accomplish this balance but some of them are not entirely comfortable with the accommodations they have had to make. The women in this study could be considered groundbreakers since they work in a male dominated field. They still, however, have a tendency to view housework and childcare as primarily the responsibilities of women, particularly so with childcare.

The reluctance to pass on childcare responsibilities was evident as it created feelings of regret or guilt for some of the participants. Greta regrets the activities that she cannot do with her child. Her husband does these for Greta, but she would ideally like to have the time to do them herself with her child. She views these as "missed opportunities" (October 1999). Dora wonders if the time she spent away at study in preparation for an administrative career may have had an adverse effect on her daughter. "We went through rough times. We still do. My daughter is nine years old and there are



moments even now where certain emotions that she goes through, I wonder if it is because of my not always being there" (Dora, September 1999).

The participants continue to see the man's role as one of assistant, even when it comes to menial housework chores. The women see the housework as their role and their husbands as helpers. Several feel women create this perception, by trying to do too much at home, and not letting their husband help out enough. This can lead to burnout. Edna, a mother of six, feels that men would be willing to do more if they were asked. If this is so, women are at least partly to blame for this obstacle.

He does a lot of things. But I always feel that maybe it's us as women, or it's Newfoundland or whatever. There are still certain things that are kind of yours. It's not that they [men] won't do them. It's that it would never occur to them to do it. But my husband has been very, very good because he couldn't boil water when we got married, so he's come a long way, believe me. Like, he'll do the dishes. That kind of thing, right, and take out something for supper but sometimes he's not home to start. Usually now we've got kind of an understanding who ever gets home first starts supper. (Edna, September 1999)

Several of the participants are concerned about whether they are able to perform both work related and home related tasks to their own, and to their husbands' satisfaction. Beth cautioned that today it is common for both partners in a marriage to have careers. She praised modern husbands and modern marriages and feels that men have helped women in this respect. Although she feels women have more career opportunities than ever, and credits men as instrumental in the creation of these opportunities for women,

she thinks that women should plan their careers in advance and talk this over with their partner early in the relationship. I coded this as a gendered view of a woman's career development. Beth feels that women have to make sure that the home is taken care of adequately before they can feel comfortable taking on additional work related duties.

Rather than looking at women having to make decisions do they want a family or a career...I think you just have to work things out with your mate in life. To say, 'Look, I want the most for you and you want the most for me.' As long as men can recognise that they have a very responsible home and children [sic], it's no more an obstacle for a woman to put something into her job than for a man. (Beth, August 1999)

That said, Beth feels that women sometimes will work harder than men to make sure that both roles are completed to their own satisfaction.

Some women administrators may sort of have to work harder than men, and I think you need patience to have a family. Because you have a lot of responsibility at work and then you have to come home to a lot of responsibility in your home. And women, by nature, they're are going to do both equally well. They're not going to let one slide for the other. (Beth, August 1999)

Cathy, Hanna, and Beth find that because of family commitments, women may wait longer than men to pursue career advancements. In Beth's opinion men can put off having a family and put more into their careers at an earlier age, and women cannot do the same. Cathy, as well, feels that women want to wait until their children have reached

a more independent age before taking on outside responsibilities, which will detract from time normally devoted to family.

Several of the women in this study commented that they believe having a family has been an obstacle keeping other women from applying for administrative positions. The women I interviewed are comfortable that their own home lives are manageable, even though they may have some regrets related to time spent away from their children; however, they question whether other women would be able to accept as much responsibility. Abbey, who has no children, expressed this view: "I think that part of the reason that there are fewer female administrators is that they have so much other responsibilities with children and things. I'm not sure how they could do it" (July 1999). I interpret this dichotomy in two ways. These women either view their own home situations as more favourable than those of other women, or they see other women as less willing or able to accept such an increased workload. They possibly see themselves as more fortunate or more able than the average woman.

It is clear, however, that the women in this study did have to make concessions to their home life and seek out help from their husbands that under other circumstances they might not have done. "I'm sure males, men do as well, but ... running a household and the home work, those things tend to be, you know, sort of your duties as a woman" (Greta, October 1999).

As for the married women who are not mothers, there is strong evidence of a tendency to view housework as the role of a woman. Abbey and Frieda have housekeepers to help free up their time for other activities. Abbey views her home

situation as comparable to that of a married man who has his wife take care of all the household responsibilities.

I don't have to do any of that and then during the week I eat with my mom so I don't even cook any meals. I don't do anything. I've likened it to being a man whose wife doesn't work. And I looked at some of the principals that I had then (when I was in school) and their wives stayed home and looked after them, and took care of all of those other things. And I see now how it was possible for them to put in the time because they didn't have any of these other responsibilities. (Abbey, July 1999)

Role conflict was evident in a more subtle and subconscious manner with respect to career planning, or rather, the lack of career planning undertaken by the participants. Most of these women were not involved in professional promotional activities at all. Most of them indicated that they did not reject such a possibility but that family and convenience were more important than pursuing a career in administration. They did not consider this career move until the appropriate position became available to them in their community or in their school and they were encouraged to take it. In this way there was little disruption to their life, no need to change schools or communities. There seems to be little desire on the part of most participants, in particular the mothers, to go hunting for an administrative position that would require a move to another community. These women limited their career choices to the number of positions that become available in their town, and in rural Newfoundland those are few.

Six of these women work in or very near the community where they grew up. Four are working in schools they attended as students, and administer staffs who were

former teachers of theirs. Only three out of the total became administrators for the first time in schools in which they were not teaching at that time. With four participants, the vice-principal position came up in the school in which they were working. Otherwise they might not have sought out a position. They found this situation helpful since they did not have the added stress of going into a school they were unfamiliar with. They felt they had already proven themselves as educators in these schools. Of these four, three had been approached by the administration about applying for the job.

Beth is the only participant who has gone back to being a teacher. She was in a non-permanent position that was filled through redundancies within her board. The position was not advertised, and she had no opportunity to reapply for it. She indicated she would have continued in this position if she had been given the opportunity but was not interested in pursuing a career in administration enough to move to a different school at that time. This is further evidence that some of the participants limit their own opportunities by not applying for positions outside of their current school or district.

Four of the other women have since moved into other positions, sometimes in other schools but within the same school district. They, however, had the advantage of having maintained their first positions longer and moved by their own choice when they were ready. These women have become more ambitious and career oriented since their initial success in administration. Interestingly, two of these women have no children, and the fourth is very interested in finding a position as principal, as long as it is still within her current school district. The women who were mothers in this study moved to other schools less often than those without children. .

Hanna is the only woman who made no mention of the effect the added duties of vice-principal had on her home life as a concern. She is also the only participant who is neither married, nor has any children. Her home life is independent of others and of their opinions. Throughout her entire career in education she has moved frequently to various parts of the province. This leads me to conclude that at least a part of the concern the other women experienced is based on limiting disruptions to the lives of their family members.

The responsibilities required for the position of vice-principal represent a significant concern. Women question whether they are capable of handling both their home and work related duties to a level that would meet not only their satisfaction, but also that of their partner and their children. Most married women with children feel they have to ask their husbands to accept a larger role at home, and therefore should have his blessing to take on this job. This can lead to feelings of guilt. They also appear reluctant to move to seek employment in other communities as this may require even further disruption to the family home.

#### Internal negative influence 2: Professional relational dilemmas.

Almost all of the women enjoyed the position of vice-principal, despite the workload, and felt they were doing well. Nonetheless, the data indicated several responsibilities or qualities associated with the vice-principal position that some of the women found distasteful, and often these centred on interpersonal issues.

Effective teamwork with the principal is one of the areas all the women seemed to feel was important. Cathy thinks the vice-principal position is an excellent preparation for

the position as principal, especially if one works closely with the principal. Beth agrees that the vice-principal position is a stepping stone to that of principal. Greta feels it is the only way to know what the job entails as there does not seem to be any fixed job description for either position.

All seven of the women who started their administrative careers as vice-principal had excellent relationships with at least one principal. Frieda enjoys such a strong working relationship with her current principal that it could impact on her career decision a few years from now. She is aware that her principal will retire then and this is a factor to be considered in determining whether she will continue to work in this school, and in what capacity.

Conversely, working with a principal with whom these women do not get along is stressful. The data indicated several instances of this. Hanna began her administrative career as a principal, and this is her first assignment as a vice-principal. She finds the role of vice-principal less appealing, since she feels her views are not always welcomed by the principal with whom she works. Hanna enjoyed the "power" associated with the position of principal. Edna worked with a man who felt she was less capable because she was a woman, and their relationship deteriorated to directives on paper. Cathy, as well, worked with a man who, because of a family illness, was not able to properly fulfil his duties. This left her having to take on a larger role than she had expected. This was difficult because she was handling the responsibilities of both the vice-principal and the principal during his absence. Interpersonal conflict with one's closest colleague, the principal, can create stress and tension.

Several women mentioned the difficulty of dealing with so many stakeholders within the school community and the community at large. As a teacher, one has a lot of control as to the outcomes and activities on any given day. With the role of vice-principal there is the potential for some difficult interpersonal situations and decisions. Frieda finds there is a certain amount of mediating and “uncertainty of outcomes” (September 1999) with her role.

For a period of time Greta was employed as a vice-principal in a joint school, a school that was in the process of amalgamating two denominations. During this time the students of both denominations were combined in the one school building for the first time in this community. In order to facilitate this process, administrators of each denomination were hired to represent the needs of their respective clientele. Although her position was that of vice-principal, some members of the community, and in fact, her school board, treated her as if she was the principal for the students from that school board, and this caused some tension with the principal of that school.

Beth noted that the vice-principal's office is often where parents and teachers come to vent their frustrations. Edna finds it difficult when a teacher and a student are in dispute, and she feels that the teacher is wrong. Cathy indicated her most difficult moment was dealing with a hostile community organisation with respect to a school policy. It appears these women dislike the potential interpersonal conflict arising from this position.

There were also some specific duties that certain women do not like. Beth finds the vice-principal position less enjoyable than that of department head. Some tasks make her feel more a “facilitator of the process of education” than an “educator” (August



1999). She values very much the role of helping people develop and finds there is little opportunity for assisting human development in her particular position. Conversely, others, such as Dora, Edna, and Cathy, find the opposite to be true. They feel that there are many opportunities to help teachers and students in this position. Edna and Frieda find the constant phone calls at home disruptive to their private lives.

Frieda spoke of another negative emotional aspect of the position. She misses the anonymity of being a teacher. She finds the position very isolating since she cannot confide in any of the staff and she cannot be perceived to give preferential treatment to any member of the staff. No matter how hectic it gets she must appear to be energetic and resourceful.

There's a sense of isolation when you move into administration...I feel, no matter how you dice it or slice it you can't be a friend in the same way that you can be a supportive friend when you're a teacher with a teacher. And be always the sole of discretion and professional. The only person with whom you can ever speak is your colleague. (Frieda, September 1999)

As vice-principal women may have to accept some roles that they would perceive as undesirable, and in return for such will receive very little in financial compensation. This, combined with a much increased workload, could make becoming a vice-principal a challenge that some women would not want to accept.

### Internal negative influence 3: Initial lack of self-confidence.

One effect of gender discrimination is that it can be internalised and can serve to undermine the self-confidence of some women, leading them to believe they are

unsuitable for certain roles and leading them to question their own ability. As the women in this study have now proven themselves to be effective administrators they are very confident in their abilities. Initially, however, when accepting their first administrative position, a couple of them wondered how others would perceive them in this role, and this led them to be somewhat apprehensive.

Hanna did not seek her first position as an administrator. She was asked to take on a position as principal. She was reluctant and agreed to take the position conditionally. If after the first year of service as principal she felt that either she or the other stakeholders were not satisfied with her work she would resign and return to teaching. She was apprehensive even though she had about six months to prepare herself psychologically for the role. She made sure that when she began she looked the part, and hoped the inside would match the outside. She tried to look as confident as she could, and felt it was an act that she put on. "I looked the part...new briefcase, I had a big smile on my face and I remember saying, 'Well you know, if I can pull it off I'm going to be good'" (Hanna, October 1999).

Dora as well spoke of a process of assurance that she was "doing things right" (Dora, September 1999) as a teacher. When she had been teaching for seven years she was asked to attend a conference by her principal, and this conference confirmed for her that she was using appropriate strategies in the classroom.

This incident reassured her as a teacher, but she still had reservations about how she would be perceived as an administrator when she filled her first position as vice-principal some years later. She wondered if others would perceive her as not having the appropriate skills to be an effective leader. Dora prefers a more collaborative,

consultative approach to administration, where other people's views are valued. She had found this skill to be lacking in many of the male administrators with whom she had previously worked. Dora feared she would not be perceived as firm enough as an administrator because of her leadership style, and that this, in turn, would create difficulties for her:

So my fear was that I would be too easy, and not firm enough. That I would be perceived as, yes, and that I would not be able to actually get things done. (Dora, September 1999)

Greta thinks women are easily intimidated. She thinks that it is a man's world, and it takes women longer to get accustomed to the idea of being an administrator. In rural Newfoundland, staffs appear to be male dominated. Greta has never known a staff to have more than three women employed at any time. This, along with gender discrimination, can explain why it seems to take women longer to view themselves as appropriate for administrative roles:

In the high school, you have very few women teachers. So, I think you kind of take a little while. Men don't really appreciate seeing women in their workforce as a threat and I think it takes a while for women in that environment, you kind of feel your way around. And men are so used to doing things a certain way, or there's safety in numbers I suppose, that you don't see that much of [female] leadership, so it takes a while. (Greta, October 1999)

Both Hanna and Greta feel that capable women do not apply because they lack self-confidence and do not believe in their own abilities. Hanna told a story of a woman

who thought she was not intelligent enough at the beginning of her career to teach high school. Hanna convinced her that she was, and she went on to become a high school teacher; subsequently, she has since gone into administration.

Several women feel that their first positions were opportune for any number of reasons. "I was lucky. I think the right set of circumstances happened to me and I think it was just the right thing at the time. All of the stars were in the right place" (Cathy, August 1999). They felt the time was right when the appropriate position appeared, and many of them had been encouraged by an outsider to seek that first position. It seems they do not want to take credit for their qualifications, to acknowledge the value they were able to bring to their first administrative position.

Without the encouragement five of these women received they feel they would never have taken the initiative to apply for their first administrative position. Some of them indicated that the idea of getting involved with administration would never have occurred to them on their own. They had not considered such a career move. They were certainly qualified, and recognised as so by people who were in a position to promote them. This encouragement was an integral first step for these women to break through the glass ceiling as without it they might not have recognised their potential as administrators on their own. This inability to see their potential is a negative factor.

Hanna thinks men are more likely than women to apply for a position before they are sure they are qualified. She feels that women wait until they are overqualified to apply. The behaviour of some women in this study tends to support Hanna's theory.

There is evidence that the two who had not begun a Masters degree let that deter them from pursuing administrative positions. Edna put off applying for an administrative position for some time as she assumed not having a Masters degree would discredit her.

Greta feels a Masters degree will be important, but not necessary, if she intends to pursue a promotion. She is well appreciated and recognised for her abilities by both her staff and her community, and she, herself, is confident in her own abilities. She thinks she would get a job as principal without the degree, but is concerned that some people would think she got the job of principal because she was a woman if she did not hold the proper paper qualifications. This could very well happen if other candidates had their Masters degree.

Beth, who has gone back to teaching, will continue in the meantime to seek opportunities, such as committee work, to self improve. She believes strongly in personal and professional development. In this way other people would not be able to say she got the position because she was a woman. All three of these women were recognised by their community or their principal as very capable leaders, but it seems they feel the need to prepare themselves even better before applying for administrative positions.

The gender discrimination experienced by some of the participants in this study appears to have been internalised causing some of these women to doubt their own abilities. For these women these negative feelings disappeared once they achieved success.

#### Internal positive influence 1: Qualifications.

These women are responsible for preparing themselves to such a degree that their accomplishments and worth were recognisable to others. These women were very qualified for the positions they filled, and no doubt, this was a determining factor in the opportunities available to them. The data indicated however, that most of these women were not pursuing educational or professional qualifications with a view to a career in administration. These women were instrumental in creating their own opportunity, intentionally or not. They had varying combinations of work, educational, and volunteer or committee experience. As well, when these women were recognised by others it generated a feeling a pride and was the catalyst for a career change they all indicate they have enjoyed.

As vice-principal, one deals extensively with the student body. Therefore, Abbey and Frieda feel the best preparation one can have to become an effective administrator is to be a motivated, capable and qualified teacher. With respect to work history, all eight of these women were very experienced teachers at the time they first became vice-principals, with at least ten years teaching experience. Four of these women, Abbey, Beth, Cathy and Greta, were recognised as department heads before they became vice-principals. In this respect they were lead teachers.

Previous to becoming administrators all of these women were very involved with after school activities as volunteers. No doubt this work demonstrated their interest in education and in the students. It may have also demonstrated some leadership qualities. Some have chaired committees, some have worked with students with after school groups, and some have been involved with committees at the school board or Department of Education. Several of them have worked with School Improvement Committees and

obviously were interested in effecting change within their school. Cathy spoke of how getting involved with “fundamental activities within the school invites you into a level of administration” (August 1999).

Some are involved with organisations outside of the school as well, and would therefore be considered concerned citizens by the community. Dora is involved at both the regional and provincial level with a service organisation, and Edna was Newfoundland’s representative to a national woman’s association, as their president. She thinks this work helped her get her administrative position in lieu of having a Masters degree. Greta is involved with an organisation for children with special needs. Many of these women have indicated they will continue to do this kind of work in the future.

All eight of these women have committed themselves to furthering their own education since they became teachers. Cathy, Edna and Hanna began teaching before they had completed their undergraduate degrees, but have since completed these degrees while teaching. Five of them have completed a Masters degree, and one other is in the process of doing so.

Of the eight participants, only Greta, Dora and Abbey actively sought their first administrative position. Of those who have done their Masters, only Dora and Abbey did so with the intention of seeking administrative positions. Both of these women are ambitious and also aspire to be principals. Abbey began work in that capacity after her participation in this study.

The other participants insist that very little of their experience was gained with the intent to build their resumes for future administrative positions. They were simply pursuing their own interests. In fact, several stated that they had no desire or intention to

seek administrative positions, and therefore were not engaged in resume building with all of their volunteer activities.

Internal positive influence 2: Self-assurance through experience.

Although some of the participants experienced some apprehension upon accepting their first administrative position, through their experiences as vice-principal they have come to view their own leadership styles as both appropriate and effective. All eight participants are confident in their own abilities as administrators and in the abilities of women in general.

Cathy and Greta believe women are more suited to educational administration than men are. Cathy recognises her strengths, such as being an astute learner and having the interpersonal skills necessary for effective leadership. She feels that the traditional male style of administration is not appropriate for education. Cathy feels her “non traditional, ameliorative” style has served her well in difficult situations. “I also think that the nature of women is more conducive to a less structured administrative style and I think that that’s important in education and the amenities...that’s an advantage. Just the fact that you are a woman” (Cathy, August 1999).

Dora learned from previous male administrators how she did not want to behave as a vice-principal:

One of the things that I had observed in administrators over the years is the people skills of administrators. An administrator in a school sometimes has to have people do things a certain way at a certain time. I would observe an administrator tell a person, “You have to do this, I don’t care



whether you really want to or not. It has to get done". And I would look back on that and say, "Well, that particular thing didn't need to be dealt with that way". (Dora, September 1999)

She found that this type of leadership strategy served to antagonise the teacher. She felt that other strategies, such demonstrating to the teacher the benefits to the school if they complied and did as they were asked, would achieve better results.

Beth maintains that although there are differences between the sexes' style, one is not better than the other is. She thinks women have a tendency to be more reflective about decisions they have made. She feels this is a good thing in that they are always looking for ways to improve upon situations or to treat a given situation better should it arise again. She sees women as conscientious workers and some of them may have to work harder than men do:

Because they [women] are usually fairly conscientious. Some women administrators may sort of have to work harder than men, and I think you need patience to have a family. Because you have a lot of responsibility at work and then you have to come home to a lot of responsibility in your home and I mean women by nature, that they're are going to do both equally well. They're not going to let one slide for the other. So I think a woman in an administrative position, I think personally, puts a lot more energy into it as the better organizer. (Beth, July 1999)

Several of the women from rural Newfoundland spoke of how few women were on their staff. These women are steeped in a male dominated environment and surrounded by men's ways of thinking and doing. It would take longer, as Greta says, for

women to realise that they could perform certain functions, such as administration. Greta thinks women should network more and that this is a way of combatting the “Old Boys’ Club” mentality (October 1999), where men hire those who are similar to them: other men.

Greta decided to get involved because she felt she was a strong woman. had had good teaching experience, and thought it was time for a strong woman to get involved. She had always taught on staffs where there had been very few women, but she felt she was “one of the boys”. She had developed her self-confidence sufficiently, and was ready to become a change agent. Her staff and family had supported this decision. At the end of the year she resigned this position to have a child. A year later she got back into administration.

Seven of the women expressed a point of view that having an administration where both sexes were represented would be an asset to any school. They feel that men and women have different perspectives and it is preferable to have both of those perspectives represented, to give a sense of balance. Hanna views this as “complementary”, whereas Greta feels it gives a sense of “completeness”.

I would look at it as an advantage to the school to have a female administrator, and I think that any school that has women in administration is a better school. Because you’ve got viewpoints from different genders, different gender perspectives. If they have a male only administration, then they don’t always see things. There are males, I’m sure, who have broad views and can really see the overall picture and things, but I think women really bring a different perspective and I looked

at that as an opportunity for the school as much as for me. (Abbey, July 1999)

Although few, if any of these women had mentors, they view role models and mentors as very important to promoting and educating women about administrative positions. Cathy and Frieda would like to see a formal mentoring system put in place for women, to mentor them into administrative positions. Few teachers really know what the vice-principal's position entails. They also feel that vice-principals need to be mentored into principal positions for the same reason. The job descriptions of these two positions appear to be vague.

Well, there's no job description. And when I asked for that during the interview, [there was a] nervous laugh by everybody, no there's nothing. I think the response was, 'You and the principal negotiate this.' And this is fine if you're dealing with somebody with whom you can negotiate and who is fair, reasonable, rational, all those things. But you don't know that. (Frieda, September 1999)

Hanna feels that young women need to see other women in administrative roles. This mentorship seems to be important. She thinks women see how men run the school and know they would do it differently. They wonder if their style would be accepted. Having a mentor or female role model would make these positions more attractive, since it would give women a chance to see some of their philosophies in action.

The women in this study, in turn, feel they have become role models and mentors for the females in their life. They represent to their children, students and staff, positive role models of what women are capable of doing, and doing well. Edna feels she

demonstrates to her children how in a relationship one person can lean on the other for support and then those roles can switch.

Both Greta and Dora view themselves as role models for the women on staff. Both the students and teachers need to see that women are capable of doing this, especially the females. As Hanna put it,

Well I think there's definitely a role for women in administration especially today with such an emphasis with women being involved in engineering, in technology. You know, people holding their own in public office and everything else. So I think it's a very positive role model when young women in school systems see women administrators, see role modelling there. So I think it's very important. I think though there's still a lot of that sense of in high schools that it has to be a man, that it's a man's role, kind of thing. (Hanna, October 1999)

These women feel they are well placed as administrators in high schools. Not only are they confident that they are performing the duties inherent to administration effectively, but they also see themselves as role models to other women and girls with whom they work.

Now that these women have had successful careers as vice-principals some of them have become more ambitious. Abbey, Dora, Greta and Hanna have sought and filled several different administrative positions, sometimes in different schools, and sometimes in different capacities. Dora has gone from being a young teacher who found reassurance at a conference that she was "doing things right", to a woman who is actively seeking her "own school" where she can implement ideas that are important to her.

Already the board is approaching her about positions for next year. She aspires to continue her education, possibly at the Doctorate level.

Two women have achieved positions as principal since I first approached them to be interviewed for this study. The first time Abbey applied for a permanent position as principal, one that she had previously filled the position on a contract basis, it was given to a man because of redundancies. She has since been appointed this position. She does not foresee moving on to a school board position as this would require a lot of travel, and this does not appeal to her.

Cathy has gone on to become a principal as well. She is not attracted to the school board level because she does not think the kind of work central office staff does would interest her. She fears she would have too little contact with the schools. With respect to her current position as principal, she feels strongly that if the time comes when she does not enjoy it any more, or if people are not happy with her work, she will simply step down. "It is not a power thing for me, and therefore I can let it go" (August 1999). She is considering taking a year's break from her position next year. She thinks people need time to rejuvenate and the system benefits from another person's way of doing things. Her first love in the school setting is teaching. She fears that too often people get in administrative positions that they occupy for the remainder of their careers. For this reason these positions do not open up very often.

In summary, the participants in this study come from a variety of backgrounds and have many different life stories. Nonetheless there were quite a few common foci that could be drawn from their interviews. Gender appears to be a determining factor in

their views and experiences and they see recent years as a time when there are more opportunities for women to get involved in administration. Other women have paved the way and there is a growing appreciation for women's leadership styles. School boards, teachers and students are beginning to recognise the value in having a woman as one of the administrative team.

The major obstacles for these women appear to be self-created. While they have come to see their value and the value of other women, some of these women were initially apprehensive about becoming administrators and only did so at the encouragement of others. There is still a tendency, even on the part of these women who have experienced success as administrators, to limit their own career. Women still tend to accept more than half of the responsibilities at home, and they limit themselves to positions that become available to them in their hometowns. Some of those without children have been less reluctant to leave their current school to seek other administrative positions.

The participants speculate on reasons why other women have not become involved in administration and believe others lack either interest or self-confidence, or both. Although they feel there are many opportunities available for women, concerns such as female centred self-doubt, workload, and family responsibilities which they continue to view as inherently the role of women, are reasons for the low numbers of women in this field.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Conclusions

In this study I set out to explore the glass ceiling concept (Morrison, White and Van Velsor, 1987) as it exists for female educational administrators in Newfoundland. To this end, I studied the experiences of eight female high school vice-principals. Through conversations with them I discovered that there are factors that are positive influences and as such, help to provide favourable opportunities for women in this field. Unfortunately there are also factors that have a negative impact on their opportunities and experiences as administrators. These negative factors provide evidence of the existence of the glass ceiling.

The glass ceiling still exists and obstacles are still in place for women who aspire to administrative positions. The glass ceiling has been traditionally viewed as a single layer of glass created in society and in the professional world that works as a transparent barrier to keep women from attaining their goals, while still allowing them to see their objectives. Its transparency keeps it invisible to many.

The research carried out for this thesis found that most of this definition is true for women high school administrators in Newfoundland with two exceptions. Firstly, the glass ceiling appears to consist of many panes or layers of glass and it is therefore more complex than originally thought. As one pane is broken there are still other panes that work as obstacles to future success in subsequent administrative positions.

It is true that some panes in the glass ceiling are caused by society's view towards women in administrative positions and are applied to women from these external sources.

There are two external negative influences: one is the increased workload of the position of vice-principal and the second is gender discrimination. The increase in the amount of time that must be devoted to work-related duties as a vice-principal, along with the view of high school administration as a man's job serve to discourage women from attaining or even applying for administrative positions.

My second discovery is that there are layers of the glass ceiling created by forces that are internal to women. There are panes of glass, obstacles to women's advancement that have been internalised by women and have, in fact, been created by women. These internal negative influences relate to women's perceptions of themselves as professionals, homemakers and mothers. Women suffer from role conflict where decisions they make to accommodate their personal life impact negatively on their professional decisions. Women also suffer from a lack of self-confidence and finally, they are uncomfortable with some of the potential for interpersonal conflict that exists in administrative positions. The ways in which women hinder or limit their own professional progress demonstrate a female constructed glass ceiling.

Fortunately, for women who aspire to administrative positions, there are also sources both external and internal to women that exert a positive influence on the opportunities available to them. These positive influences counter act, at least partially, the negative influences. They can help women break through certain panes of the glass ceiling.

External sources can favourably impact the career opportunities for women. There is a growing appreciation for women in administrative positions. Other people, often a male principal, encouraged the participants to apply for their first position. Once in an



administrative role, these women are often approached by teachers or students and told that they are effective leaders and are welcome in the school.

Women create their own positive influences and promote their own worth as well. Women who aspire to administrative positions are highly qualified, and are effective leaders. With experience, they begin to realise their value as administrators to a school, and their self-confidence and ambition grow.

An analysis of how these various influences impact on each other reveals which panes of glass remain intact and which are weakening.

#### Implications of Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination represents several layers that many women must break through. Some, even though they have attained their first administrative position, feel that they must then break through yet another layer of glass if they wish to advance to the next position. Some women feel they are accepted as vice-principals, but that school boards are reluctant to hire women as principals or for positions at the school board.

Sometimes this discrimination keeps women from being chosen for administrative positions. But the more damaging effect is that it causes women to doubt their own abilities, and keeps them from even pursuing career advancement. This gender discrimination represents a major obstacle to career advancement as it undermines the self-confidence of women who might otherwise aspire to administrative positions and can reduce a woman's initiative to become involved in administration. Although gender discrimination is applied from external sources its most damaging effect is that it

becomes internalised and creates in women a lack in self-confidence, an internal layer of the glass ceiling.

Women are unsure as to whether they will be accepted for these positions, and therefore there is a large risk of encountering failure at the level of application. As well, if they do receive a position, they are unsure as to how others will receive them, and how well they will be able to perform their duties. They are concerned that others will not appreciate their leadership style.

Some fear that others will believe they were chosen simply because they were women and not because of their qualifications. They do not want to be perceived as having received preferential treatment and some of them feel there is a real danger of this as schools boards are feeling the pressure to balance the numbers by hiring more women administrators. That said, there is no evidence that any of the women in this study are less than qualified for their administrative positions. These internal panes can keep women from reaching their objectives just as easily as the more obvious, external layers can. These fears, these female created panes of the glass ceiling, hold women back.

For some women, those who have a strong sense of self-confidence, gender discrimination can have a reverse effect. There are those who seek administrative positions for the purpose of proving to other people women are indeed capable leaders.

#### Implications of Encouragement from Others

Counteracting the gender discrimination is a growing appreciation of the leadership skills of women and the value of women in administrative positions. There is strong evidence of this phenomenon. The leadership qualities of many of the women in

this study were recognised by others first, usually a male principal, and these women were in turn encouraged to apply for their first position. As well, since becoming vice-principals these women have been very well received by the students, staff, and the community, and have been encouraged by all three to either remain in their position or seek advancement. In short, the obstacle of negative opinions regarding the ability of women high school administrators appears to be disappearing. Still, there is a large discrepancy in the province of Newfoundland between the numbers of women and men who fill administrative positions in high schools.

This growing appreciation for women as leaders is, without doubt, a positive external influence on the opportunities available for women. However, the fact that women rely very heavily on the encouragement of others before feeling ready or appropriate to apply for administrative positions indicates a lack of self-confidence, or at least an inability to see their own potential as leaders within the school. This is a strong pane of an internal glass ceiling that remains in place until these women have experienced some success as administrators.

Women do not tend to plan their careers in administration, and many of them do not consider administration in a high school as an option for them even though they are highly qualified. They have prepared themselves well and hold considerable work experience as teachers and as volunteers with various organisations. As well, for the most part, they hold the appropriate university degrees. Therefore, a lack of qualifications is no longer an appropriate obstacle to applying for these positions. Nonetheless they tend to wait until they are sure they will be viewed as qualified before they apply, and therefore not having completed a Masters degree can deter them, even if they feel they might

otherwise be qualified. Women do not appear to be risk takers in this regard. They are often very well qualified, if not over-qualified, by the time they make their first application. Again, this is a way in which women limit themselves.

The women in this study were all hired for the first administrative position for which they applied. This is further evidence that they are highly regarded by others as potential administrators. The difficulty is that because they do not plan a career in administration many of them wait to be encouraged by an outsider, usually a male principal, before they apply for their first position. This is not an intentional decision. Often women simply do not see themselves as appropriate for these roles, even though others do. There are few female role models, especially in rural areas. Women need to visualise themselves in these positions, to see their intrinsic value, and to value the ability of other women in administration. Because women wait until they are recognised by others they also tend to see their first position as fortunate and do not credit their own abilities and worth. These panes of glass are beginning to crumble but it is the internal, negative influences that remain the most persistent layer of the glass ceiling.

A second difficulty with this reliance on the encouragement of others is that capable women may not get this much-needed recognition, and may therefore never come to see themselves as appropriate for these positions. Encouragement does not seem to be as large a factor for men, and they are in a position to receive encouragement more readily, as other men hold most senior positions. Men tend to mentor men, but there is strong evidence that men can mentor women as well.

There is a need for more mentors, especially for women. Although the number is on the rise, there still appears to be few role models for women in educational

administration in high schools, and fewer still at the school board. This is both an external and an internal barrier. It is external because the lack of women role models is something that women can not control. However, as more women attain these positions the number of female role models increases. Capable women have proven and will continue to prove that women can be very effective school leaders. The women administrators in this study feel they are role models for female staff and students, and their existence promotes the belief to people of both sexes that women are capable leaders.

#### Implications of Increased Workload

The increased workload required of this position is an external negative force to which all vice-principals must adjust. The women in this study have succeeded in meeting their work-related expectations by rearranging their personal lives. The demands this position requires in terms of time devoted to work-related duties can be a concern for some women, especially mothers. There are feelings of guilt associated with passing some household responsibilities on to partners, especially when it comes to childcare. Women with children really are reluctant to pass on these duties. Two of the childless women engaged housekeepers, whereas none of the mothers considered this option. This is an obstacle that is for the most part created by the women. Partners are more willing than ever to help out, but women persist in the view that they are the primary care givers in the home. This is so ingrained in some women that one participant suggested that women should seek their husband's blessing before pursuing an administrative career, and reassure him and the children that the home will always be taken care of first.

There is no evidence in this study however, that women vice-principals sacrifice work-related duties and give preference to household duties. They are simply reluctant to pass over household and childcare duties to others, even though their husbands seem willing to accept these duties. This can lead to a double day of work, and possibly stress and burnout. They feel as well that this is a major reason why some women do not want to become administrators. Nonetheless, all of the women in this study are successful administrators, and they have busy home lives. One is the mother of six children and one is a single mother of three. It is fair to assume that if they can manage the workload then others would be able to as well.

The conflicting role of mother and administrator is a difficult pane in the glass ceiling for some women to break though. Women from differing personal circumstances have proven that they are capable of effectively combining family and work, but some of the participants voiced the opinion that it is this increased workload along with the retention of household responsibilities that keeps others from becoming interested in administrative positions. Women need to learn where and how they can decrease their home responsibilities, to delegate better and to better manage their time. They need to learn to do so without feelings of guilt or remorse.

Women, especially mothers, are reluctant to make career decisions that will impact negatively on their home life. Mothers deal with two constructs that impact on their view of themselves: womanhood and motherhood. They consider what they believe to be appropriate behaviour for both of these when making career moves and when making decisions about their home. Few of the women in this study are willing to move to new communities for the sake of finding a better position. The only participant who

regularly moved was not married and had no children. If women wait until a particular position becomes available within a given community, as most of the women in this study did, then women limit the numbers of positions for which they will apply. As well, women tend to begin applying for administrative positions later in their careers, once children are older. The women in this study had at least ten years teaching experience before applying for their first administrative position. One had been a teacher for twenty-five years. Again, women limit themselves. When making these life decisions women take into consideration more than wise career moves. They look at how such career moves would impact on their personal and family life, and often sacrifice career for family. This role conflict is a strong internal deterrent to administration.

Administrative positions do not pay well for the extra work required. Therefore, either money is not an incentive to them, or if the salary increase were more equitable, more women might consider applying for these positions. Given that women tend to see themselves as the primary caregiver at home, and that administrative positions require more time and energy than teaching positions with little supplementary pay, it is not surprising that few women get involved in this role. One wonders how much an effect the minimum salary increase has on the decision to become an administrator. It may not be financially attractive to many women to assume the added responsibilities to an already hectic home life.

#### Implications of Success in an Administrative Position

Nothing succeeds like success. Female vice-principals who do exist perform the various functions of the position very well, both in their own estimation and in the

estimation of others. Women have particular skills that are conducive to effective administration of schools. They tend to be consultative, ameliorative, and collaborative. They value the input of other stakeholders and are effective at diffusing conflicts. There are some duties related to the position of vice-principal that they do not enjoy, and these are mostly regarding interpersonal relations and the potential for conflict. Vice-principals have to deal daily with more stakeholders than do classroom teachers, and there are frequently no set responses. It is this uncertainty of outcomes that women find disconcerting. Nonetheless, they perform these duties very well.

This finding is based on positive feedback they receive from students, staff, and the community at large. With time, with reassurance, they, too, begin to see their own worth. Their initial apprehensions when beginning their administrative career are replaced with a growing self-assurance that they are valuable to the school and that they are doing things right. They come to see a real need to have more women in administrative roles within all schools.

The feelings of self-doubt from which some women suffer, appear to dissipate once women experience success in their first position in administration. Some of them then find the self-confidence and the desire to apply for more challenging positions. As they believe in their own abilities, their ambition grows and there is evidence that once this self-confidence occurs they are no longer halted by failure. There are two women who continued to apply for positions as principal even though they were initially turned down.

The participants see value in men's way of doing as well and for that reason they think an ideal administration would have both a male and a female participant. Thus



different perspectives would be represented and an administrative team comprised of both male and female members would better understand and represent the needs of both sexes in the school environment.

To summarize, many of the external barriers preventing women from applying successfully for administrative positions are weakening and disappearing. Gender discrimination is being replaced by an appreciation for women administrators. This is true even for people who originally doubted women's abilities, once they have had the chance to work with a woman administrator. The heavy demands of the positions are manageable for women, even for mothers, if they learn to relinquish more of the home-related duties.

The greatest barriers to success in administrative careers exist within women themselves. These are the most persistent panes of the glass ceiling, especially for women who have not taken their first foray into administrative work. Women tend to not plan their careers, and they tend to not view themselves as appropriate for administrative positions. They also still look for ways to decrease the risk of not getting a position before they apply. They tend to look for specific positions in specific schools, as they do not want to move out of their community and upset their personal and family lives to find work. These factors can seriously decrease the number of positions for which they are willing to apply. They are reluctant to hand over home responsibilities to their partners, who appear willing to accept them. This increases the demands on their time. This is a very strong deterrent to taking on the responsibility of administrators, especially when one considers the lack of financial incentive.

The strongest, most persistent and difficult panes of glass to break in the glass ceiling are created by women, and for this reason it is women only who can break them. Individual women have shown that it is possible. The first pane of glass is thick, and difficult to break, but once that is done the other panes are easier to deal with. Once women become involved in administrative activities they gain confidence, stop questioning their decisions, and seek further promotion; as Cathy says (September 1999), "Women have to create their own opportunities".

#### Recommendations for Future Study

The following are suggested areas of future study with respect to understanding why there are so few women administrators in high schools in Newfoundland.

1. Why do more women appear to be getting positions in high school administration? Is it because more women are applying, or are they better qualified than they have been in the past? Are there more positions available because of increasing retirements? Are there not enough available and qualified men to fill these positions? Or have school boards begun to see women as suitable for these positions?
2. What is the situation for women who apply unsuccessfully for administrative positions? Do they face barriers that are different from those faced and overcome by women who successfully apply for these positions? A study of this nature could shed more light on the perceptions of women who have hit the glass ceiling. More could be learned about barriers to promotion.

3. Many women do not aspire to administrative positions. Again, barriers to promotion, incentives or the lack of incentives, lack of interest, and lack of self-confidence could be studied in closer detail. Are their perceptions of administrative positions realistic?
4. There is a need to study women in central office professional staff positions to study the barriers they may have faced and to study how they might be, or have been instrumental in helping other women attain promotions.
5. A study of attitudes by school board personnel towards women in administration would gather evidence as to whether women are really viewed as equally appropriate for administrative positions.
6. A study of attitudes of staff towards both male and female administrators would help to demonstrate if women's ways of leading are appreciated and to what degree.
7. A study of attitudes of students towards both male and female administrators would be of use, again to determine to what degree women are appreciated as administrators.
8. A comparison study of male high school vice-principals in terms of educational preparation, home responsibilities, feelings of guilt associated with demands on their time, and their experiences with mentors would provide interesting comparative data to the findings of this study.

### Recommendations for Future Changes

The following are a number of suggestions to encourage the participation of women in school administration and other positions of school leadership.

1. Opportunities to mentor and encourage women who exhibit leadership qualities can be made available, either formally or informally. The women in this study see this as essential. This could increase awareness of the possibility of attaining such positions, and of understanding what these positions entail. Vice-principals can also be mentored into principal positions.
2. District staff can consider offering workshops with a view to raising awareness concerning women's issues such as gender discrimination. They can promote women's ways of leadership, and encouraging women to get involved in educational administration.
3. Serious consideration can be made for an increase in remuneration in proportion to the increase in responsibility with an administrative position. If there was a significant salary increase for administrators, more women and men might find the positions attractive and worth pursuing.
4. The current policies for bumping within boards discriminate against women. The more senior administrators retain their positions while the more junior administrators are required to return to teaching positions. The more senior administrators tend to be male, while women are newer to these roles, and are therefore often the ones who must go back to teaching positions. There also appears to be the perception that men who have been in the system for a longer

period of time may be considered for a position before a woman for reasons of seniority. School boards and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association need to revisit these policies.

5. Serious consideration can be given, where possible, to hire a man and a woman for the two administrative positions within a school.
6. Consideration can be given, where possible, to hiring more women as teachers within the high school system. In rural Newfoundland there are few women teachers in high schools and this continues to propagate the gender imbalance at the administrative level. Women are outnumbered, and men's ways of doing things dominate. It takes women longer to view themselves as capable and appropriate for administrative roles.
7. More women can be given roles where they can develop their administrative skills and confidence in their abilities. More can be given department head positions and asked to help out in the office in the absence of one of the administrators. More can be asked to chair committees within the school. These practices would help women develop their self-esteem and recognise their own leadership abilities.
8. Memorial University of Newfoundland can consider adding a course to highlight women's issues within education, with the view to encouraging female education students to view administrative positions as possibilities in their career path.
9. Women have to find and accept ways of decreasing their home responsibilities if they wish to become involved in administrative positions. They have to accept delegation of duties as a normal response for anyone who has increased work-

related responsibilities. They need to adopt a more reasonable expectation of what how much time they can devote to home responsibilities if they want to pursue career advances.

## REFERENCES

- Adler, S., Laney, J. & Packer, M. (1993). Managing women: Feminism and power in educational management. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Albino, J. (1992). Strategy: The dirty word that women must learn. Educational Record, Spring, 47-51.
- Andrews, R. & Basom, M. (1990). Instructional leadership: Are women principals better? Principal, November, 39-40.
- Blount, J. (1994). One postmodern feminist perspective on educational leadership: And ain't I a leader? In S. Maxcy (Ed.), Postmodern school leadership: Meeting the crisis in educational administration. Westport, CN: Praeger.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1992). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bolamn, L. & Deal, T. (1992). Leading & managing: Effects of context, culture, and gender. Educational Administration Quarterly, 28, 314-329.
- Chliwniak, L. (1997). Higher education leadership: Analyzing the gender gap. ERIC Digest, April, 4.
- Collins, A. & Langlois, P. (1995). "I knew I would have to make a choice": Voices of women teachers from Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland Studies, 11(2).
- Collinson, V. (1989). Women moving into administrative positions. The Canadian School Executive, April, 3-7.
- Danylewycz, M., Light, B., & Prentice, A. (1987). The Evolution of the sexual division of labour in teaching: A nineteenth century Ontario and Quebec case study. In J. Gaskell & A. McClaren (Ed.), Women and education: A Canadian perspective (pp.33-62). Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.
- Dardaine-Ragguet, P., Russo, C., & Harris, J. (1994). Female administrators in urban settings: Legal implications for policy and practice. Urban Education, 28, 398-411.
- Denzin, N. (1970). Sociological methods: A sourcebook. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Eagly, A., Karau, S. & Johnson, B. (1992). Gender and leadership style among school principals: A meta-analysis. Educational Administration Quarterly, 28, 76-102.

Fleming, K. (1991). Mentoring. Is it the key to opening doors for women in educational administration? Education Canada, Fall, 27-33.

Gaskell, J. & McLaren, A. (1987). Women and education: A Canadian perspective. Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Limited.

Gill, B. (1995). Breaking the glass ceiling or sliding back the sunroof? Women in educational administration in New Brunswick. In C. Reynolds & B. Young (Ed.). Women and leadership in Canadian education. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Glass, T. & Sclafani, S. (1988). Here are the skills you need to succeed as a superintendent. Executive Educator, 7, 19-20.

Goin, M. W. (1992). In the pink? Educational Leadership, 49, 63.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (1995-2000). Education Statistics. St. John's, NF.

Guba, E. (1978). Toward a methodology of naturalistic inquiry in educational evaluation. California: University of California.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1981). Effective evaluation. California: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. California: Sage Publications Inc.

Guppy, N., Balson, D., & Vellutini, S. (1987). Women and higher education in Canadian society. In J. Gaskell & A. McClaren (Ed.), Women and education: A Canadian perspective. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Guy, M. (1988). Factors influencing the career aspirations of female educational administrators in Newfoundland and Labrador. Masters Thesis: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Hammett, R. (1996, April). Changing leadership styles. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.

Helgesen, S. (1990). The female advantage: Women's ways of leadership. New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Hoch, D. (1989). Characteristics of successful principals. The Canadian School Perspective, April, 10-11.

Issacs, N. (1998). Mentors are gaining ground. ComputerWorld Canada, 14(21), 26-27.



Jacobs, H. (1991). Gender differences in the program effects of administrative preparation. Planning & Changing, 22, 46-64.

Kvale, S. (1996). InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. California: Sage Publication Inc.

Lambert, P. (1989). Women into educational management. Adults Learning, 1, 106-107.

Lather, P. (1991). Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc.

Levine, S. (1987). Peer support for women in middle management. Educational Leadership, 45, 74-75.

Lindesmith, A., Strauss, A. & Denzin, N. (1968). Social psychology. Illinois: The Dryden Press.

Mahoney, V. (1993). Breaking through: Women in educational administration. Prism, 2, 10-12.

Marshall, C. (1992). School administrators' values: A focus on atypicals. Educational Administration Quarterly, 28, 368-386.

Martin, J. & Grant, G. (1990). Sex discrimination in West Virginia. Principal, November, 39.

Martin, Y. (1993). Sex-role orientation, coping strategy, and prospective women administrators. Educational Management and Administration, 21, 123-129.

Maxcy, S., Ed. (1994). Postmodern school leadership: Meeting the crisis in educational administration. Westport, CN: Praeger.

Mertz, N. (1991). Females in school administration: Making sense of the numbers. Planning & Changing, 22, 34-45.

Mertz, N. & McNeely, S. (1994). How are we doing? Women in urban school administration. Urban Education, 28, 361-372.

Morgan, G. (1986). Images of organization. California: Sage Publications Inc.

Morrison, A., White., R. & Van Velsor. E. (1987). Breaking the glass ceiling: Can women reach the top of America's largest corporations? United States: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

Oakley, A. ((1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), Doing feminist research (pp. 30-61). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Osborne, J. (1990). Some basic existential-phenomenological research methodology for counselors. Canadian Journal of Counseling, 24(2), 79-91.

Rees, R. (1991). Changing hiring patterns: A case of changing perceptions. Education Canada, Fall, 8-15.

Reinharz, S. (1992). Feminist methods in social research. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reynolds, C. & Young, B. (1995). Women and leadership in Canadian education. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Roberts, H. (1981). Doing feminist research. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Ross Epp, J. (1994). Women's perceptions of graduate level educational administration programs. The Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 24, 43-67.

Ross Epp, J. (1995). Insidious deterrents: When educational administration students are women. In C. Reynolds and B. Young (Ed.), Women and leadership in Canadian education (pp. 19-32). Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Schneider, G. & Wallich, L. (1990). Assessment centers as avenues to administrative career advancement Planning & Changing, Winter, 21, 225-237.

Shakeshaft, C. (1989). Women in educational administration. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Smyth, J. (1989). Critical perspectives on educational leadership. Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Statistics Canada. (1996). Census

Stith, A. (1998). Breaking the glass ceiling: Sexism and racism in corporate America: The Myths, the realities and the solutions. Los Angeles: Warwick Publishing.

Strauss, A. (1987). Qualitative analysis for social scientists. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. London: Sage Publications.

Swiderski, W. (1988). Problems faced by women in gaining access to administrative positions in education. Education Canada, Fall, 24-31.

Tallerico, M., Poole, W. & Burstyn, J. (1994). Exits from urban superintendencies: The intersection of politics, race, and gender. Urban Education, 28, 439-454.

Taylor, A. (1995). Employment equity for women in Ontario school boards: Toward a revolution from the ground up. In C.Reynolds & B. Young (Ed.), Women and leadership in Canadian education (pp. 83-100). Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Thrasher McGrath, S. (1992). Here come the women! Educational Leadership, 49, 62-65.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.

Webb, E., Campbell, D., Schwartz, R., and Sechrest, L. (1966). Unobtrusive measures: Nonreactive research in the social sciences. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company.

## APPENDICES

### Interview guidelines

#### Interviewer's note:

I intended to give very similar interviews to all of the participants, but given the personal and individual nature of an interview there may have been some variance in question order. As well, I may have spent more time on one topic or another with certain participants. I attempted, as much as possible, to cover in depth all of the topics suggested below.

#### 1. Background information / Career in Teaching

Can you tell me about your teaching career up to the point you first considered entering into administration?

- Number of years experience
- Grades taught
- University degrees, when sought and why
- Work on professional committees, volunteer organizations, etc....
- Experience in leadership positions as a teacher

#### 2. Career in administration

A Can you tell me a little about your decision to pursue a career as an administrator?

- When decided to move into administration
- Why decided to move into administration, what was appealing about it
- Preparation (education, committee work, leadership roles)
- Apprehensions (family responsibilities, lack of confidence, time restraints)
- Encouragement/ discouragement from others (family, spouse, friends, colleagues)
- Mentors/role models in administration

B Can you tell about your first attempt(s) at seeking employment as an administrator?

- Positive / negative experiences

- Opportunities available
- Obstacles to overcome
- Attitudes of others
- Apprehensions
- Effect of being female, if any

C What has it been like, being a high school vice-principal?

- Various responsibilities both inside and outside the school (public relations, committee work...)
- Positive / negative aspects
- Perception of you by staff, students, community, as a woman administrator - change?
- Role conflict (family responsibilities, time restraints, spousal support)
- Coping mechanisms for stress

### 3. Future aspirations

Can you tell me about your plans for the future within educational administration?

- long term goals
- opportunities for advancement
- barriers to advancement
- preparation before moving on

### 4. Conclusion

In general, how do you feel about your experiences as a female high school vice-principal?

## Letter of Consent

Deanne Barrett,  
99 Cabot Street,  
St. John's, NF  
A1C 1Z7

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. As indicated in our telephone conversation, I am conducting research into the experiences of female high school vice-principals as part of my thesis. I am interested in studying opportunities available to them in the profession, and any obstacles they might have had to face in order to gain their first administrative position. I wish to formally request your participation in this study.

Your participation will involve one interview of approximately sixty to ninety minutes in length. You may feel free to refuse to answer any of the questions asked, and you may withdraw your participation at any time. With your permission I would like to tape-record this interview so that I might better be able to interpret its results as data. A transcript of your interview will be made available to you before its use as data if you request it. The tapes will be stored in a safe place and then destroyed when the thesis has been completed. Your anonymity will be guaranteed. No mention of your name, school, school board or community will be made. If at any time you wish to withdraw from this study you may do so. Upon your request, a copy of the thesis will be made available to you.

I wish to study your perception of the experiences of women who have aspired to administrative positions at the high school level. I would like to look at what you believe to be the opportunities available for women in these positions, the obstacles, if any, which you had to overcome, the preparation for such a position, and the attitudes of others towards this decision. I would also like to look at future advances you might wish to make in administrative positions, and any difficulties that might be posed.

This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee. It is under the supervision of Dr. Roberta Hammett and Dr. Alice Collins. Dr. Hammett may be reached at hammett@morgan.ucs.mun or at (709) 737-7616. Dr. Collins may be reached at alicec@morgan.ucs.mun or at (709) 737-2505. Dr. Bruce Sheppard, who is not involved with this research in any way, can also be contacted if you have any questions or concerns. He may be reached at (709) 737-3402 or at bsheppard@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca.

If you are in agreement with participation in this study please complete the consent form attached to this letter. A copy of this letter has been made available for your files. If you have any concerns please feel free to contact me collect at (709) 754-3422 or at dbarrett@mps.k12.nf.ca. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours truly,

Deanne Barrett

## Consent Form

I \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent to participate in an interview with Deanne Barrett as a part of her study for her Master's Thesis on the experiences of women vice principals in high schools. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to. I understand that this interview will be tape-recorded and that the tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the thesis. I am aware that a transcribed version of the interview may be made available to me before its inclusion in the study if I wish. I am aware that my identity will not be disclosed, nor the identity of my school, school board, or community.







