AN EXPLORATION OF FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE: DO THE DIFFERENCES MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

by

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ABSTRACT

Recent Ontario legislation by the Ministry of Education has targeted a goal of 50 percent as the minimum objective for representation by women in positions of responsibility by the year 2000. As a result, those few women currently in the field of Educational Administration have become a focus for researchers. The intent of this research is to contribute to the current knowledge and understanding of women principals in the leadership role.

In-depth interviews with four experienced female principals were conducted centering on their perceptions and experiences on a wide range of issues that included: gender characteristics and impact on role, perceived differences as a result of gender characteristics, decision making, curriculum leadership, communication, the perception of others, and the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman in the role. Narrative profiles were constructed for each participant and analyzed. A description for each woman emerged by an analysis of common patterns and themes in the participants' narratives.

Results revealed that the participants were able to identify and to describe particular gender traits that they perceived had impact on their role. Moreover the participants regarded their gender characteristics as facilitating and enhancing the performance of their role. Common patterns for all the participants emerged from the data that conveyed a strong feminine imagery of mother and espoused the idea of school as home, and staff and students as family. Leadership
styles demonstrated an emphasis on collaborative decision making, open communication, and apparent difficulty and ambiguity arising from the role of Curriculum leader.

The results of this study also indicate that personal metaphors ascribed and embedded in the narratives are significant in conceptualizing and interpreting the administrative role.
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Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the four women leaders interviewed in this study who gave so generously of their time to be participants. Their stories instilled motivation, optimism, and joy to those of us who seek an administrative career.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter ONE: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter TWO: Review of the Literature</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter THREE: Developing a Methodology</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter THREE: The Pilot Study</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter THREE: Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter FOUR: Data Collection and Data Analysis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter FIVE: Narrative Profiles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberta</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter SIX: Results</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter SEVEN: Conclusion and Discussion</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Why research women? Why don't you choose another topic?" inquired a male colleague. My response to his question about my research topic brought a look of disdain and annoyance to his face. "Why, what's wrong with doing research about women?" I asked. The reply was unexpected, for the implication was as though he expected better of me. "It's an overworked issue," he retorted. He explained his argument further, inferring in his conversation that I should choose to investigate something that would be beneficial to everyone in an educational system. I was disappointed with my friend's view, and I quickly rejected it. Later, I reflected on the incident. Perhaps this was a singular occurrence or had so little changed? I decided to make a mental note of the reaction of others should the topic come up. It did. The reaction of my male colleagues varied from mild amusement and flippancy to expressions of bewilderment. Some merely chose to nod in negative fashion. I was puzzled because I felt the topic was neither amusing nor controversial. Even in the most polite circumstances no one really ever wanted explanations about what was actually involved. The reaction was always accompanied by short, terse phrases such as "Timely", "Oh really", "It's becoming a women's world", and "Why would you want to write about that?"; and the subject was quickly changed. No encouragement and no interest from the male colleagues within my system, I concluded. Admittedly, I never
pursued the reasons behind those facial gestures or comments. Possibly I feared hearing similar negative perceptions on the value of the topic or I feared being viewed as sexist. Outside the system the story was different. There were male friends and relatives whose reactions were both positive and supportive if not entirely accompanied by great interest. The only significant support from a male educator came from a thesis committee advisor who, in deeming my project a worthy endeavour, instilled both motivation and optimism, thereby removing the last traces of reservation I had in pursuing the topic.

In comparison to my male colleagues, female reaction was quite different. It was here that I found both encouragement and genuine interest in the topic as well as advice. Offers of assistance were usually accompanied with a similar forewarning - "proceed with caution." Much of this advice came from women who were already at the administrative level or in positions of responsibility in education. Obviously, these women were much more aware of how the intent of my research topic might be perceived or misconstrued. They appeared to understand the crux of the problem. "Don't be surprised at the reaction you get to your project," said one woman administrator. "Anything that speaks of differences, comparisons, or remotely suggests that a woman principal might be better than a male principal will not be well received," she warned. It had never occurred to me that my research might be perceived as threatening. It was a well-learned
lesson on the differences of perceptions. With that backdrop, I embarked on my task of exploring female role perceptions.

No one is overly surprised by the assertion that women differ from men. If there is any one fact that appears uncontested it is this one. Historically and across cultures, there is general agreement on this point.

Beyond the physiological differences, biological research documents innate differences that exist in brain functioning in the problem-solving processes of verbal, spatial, and mathematical skills ability (Restak, 1979). Psychologists and sociologists (Lowe & Hubbard, 1983; Blumberg, 1978) state that behavioural differences result from the fact that women from early childhood are raised and treated differently than males. The emphasis and perpetuation of those differences continues throughout school years and into the workplace.

Current literature (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987; Brownmiller, 1984) on the practices of successful women in the workplace indicate that women are choosing to lead not by the exertion of power and vested authority but through a mode that capitalizes on their innate strengths as women. Women, says Little (1984), lead in a way that demonstrates that "they are disciplined yet creative, logical yet empathetic, directive yet supportive" (cited in Porat, 1989, p. 14).

Within the context of educational administration, the current view is no different. Female and male principals and their practices have been scrutinized by educational researchers and differences have emerged which show that
successful female educators have chosen to remain true to "their heritage of empathy and nurturance" (Little, 1984, cited in Porat, 1989, p. 14). Keohane (1984) states that women lead "through example, through caring, through collaboration, through patience, through assiduous application of good common sense in pursuit of a shared goal" (cited in Porat, 1989, p. 13).

Investigations have given way to various analyses that support the notion that differences do exist in the perception and function of the principal's role as viewed by the educational researchers themselves (Porat, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1986; Berman, 1982). Thus, the idea of differences is not new, but attention now converges on the unanswered questions that have emerged as a result of these studies.

Within our culture there are preconceived notions and expectations of the role of both men and women in society. "Women grow up in a culture," states Gilligan (1982), "which regards male behaviour as the 'norm' and female behaviour as some kind of deviation from that norm" (p. 14). As Porat (1989) claims, being different is often interpreted in the negative as meaning not as good. When a woman aspired to an administrative position normally considered a male domain, being different was considered a disadvantage. The leadership role was associated with a specific set of gender traits usually attributed to males. Leadership ability was defined by male standards of power, assertion, competition, aggression, decisiveness, and authority. For this reason,
many women who aspired to career positions of leadership were expected to sacrifice or conceal their nurturant feminine traits and to yield to the traditional male stereotype. Early studies of those few successful women principals confirmed that Educational Administration was no exception to that rule. To carry out the role of principal successfully, women were required to make personality shifts to masculine characteristics of behaviour. To achieve career success, women had to pay the price of giving up their traditional values and femininity.

With an increase in the number of women in the labour force, the advent of the women's movement, and affirmative action legislation, there emerged a new social climate in the eighties. The social climate of the nineties has given way to further changes brought on by rises in divorce rates and the emergence of single parent families headed by women, resulting in women being the sole and responsible wage earners. As well, increased economic pressures and the threat of recession have forced many women to seek employment outside the home to provide additional income. It is socially far more acceptable for women today than in the past to pursue occupations and professional careers once considered the sole domain of males.

A review of the research on women in educational administration suggests that this social climate has brought about changes in the role of women in society which, in turn, have impacted on women's perceptions of themselves and their
careers. It is the current status of women in the field to which my interest is drawn.

The purpose of this study is to explore female administrators' perceptions of their role, focusing on aspects of leadership style; and second, to develop an understanding of the difference dimension as perceived and experienced by women principals themselves. The latter intent is two-fold: first, to discover what gender traits, if any, they feel they bring to the role; and second, to find out, if in their experience, the perceived traits have any impact on the conduct and effectiveness of the daily functions and interactions of their role.

In her evaluation of early research concerning women in educational administration, Shakeshaft (1979) states that much of the research on female administrators and their management styles has largely been descriptive based on mailed paper and pencil questionnaires. Representative studies queried administrators at the K-12 level as the primary means for data collection and the results were analyzed according to descriptive methods of frequency, percentages, or measures of central tendencies. Women were thus observed, described, and analyzed from the perspective of the researchers. There was a scarcity of data regarding personal meaning and perceptions. Judgements about differences were often construed with no recognition that the behaviour of a woman principal might have a different meaning for the female principal herself. She contends that the use of a survey method, the overwhelming
approach to such research, does not yield high-quality results and advocates the need for the expansion of qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods characterized by sustained contact between the researcher and the subject built on direct experience produce data that are descriptive of events, people, places and conversations. Further, she argues that work on women in educational administration needs to be taken back to the participants to see if they ring true. "If the authority of knowledge is reinvested in the participant it is more likely that the research effort will reflect a female consciousness and a female experience. From the point of view of the subject it changes research from a passive undertaking, to an active one. Research thus becomes an interactional method for discovering truth" (p. 27).

Leithwood (1988) echoes the same sentiment. Leithwood writes that there have been prodigious efforts made to better understand the effective administrator. However, most studies try to determine what principals do by observing them at work, and from these data generalizations are made about the nature of effective administration. Leithwood views the examination of overt behaviour or action as inadequate. In order to fully understand how principals respond to situations, data about how principals think is required.

Ultimately, I feel that one must try to comprehend the role of the female administrator as the individual experiences it, while at the same time remaining sufficiently detached to understand and analyze the acts taking place. To share the
perspective and definition of the female principal does not mean the researcher concurs with the subject's definition of the situation, rather the primary purpose of such a study should be to comprehend and illuminate the subject's view and to interpret the experience as it means and appears to him/her.

Recent legislation announced by the Minister of Education for the province of Ontario has targeted a goal of 50 percent as the minimum objective for representation by women in positions of responsibility by the year 2000 (Ministry of Education News Release, March 30, 1989). Thus, a study which contributes to the knowledge and understanding of women in the administrative field is both timely and pertinent as boards and female aspirants move towards the quota.

Another interest in the study stems from a more personal motive of one who aspires to an administrative position. In looking at the reality of the position as it exists presently for women in the field, I can confirm or deny my own preconceived perceptions and expectations of the role. Hopefully, such findings will also be of benefit to other aspiring candidates.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historically, because of male numbers and dominance, the managerial world has been accepted as a male cultural organization. Traditionally, women have been considered outsiders to this male milieu. With the advent of the Women's Movement, Human Rights legislation, and Affirmative Action, women have increased their numbers in the managerial force. Yet, female school administrators remain greatly underrepresented in education, a profession numerically dominated by women.

In recent years an abundance of research (Shakeshaft, 1979; Tibbetts, 1979; Paddock, 1978) has been devoted to investigating the reasons for the lack of women in educative administrative roles. A review of the relevant literature indicates that many factors such as discrimination, sex-role stereotyping, socialization, lack of female role models, and the absence of an old girl network are to blame for the shortage of women administrators. Canadian studies, (Nixon, 1987; Lennox, 1984) concur with the list of contributing factors that have also resulted in the exclusion of women from the administrative role in Canada. Among the several theories that have been expounded, the most widely accepted view is that women's exclusion is caused by biological and societal experiences which have resulted in differences between the sexes. These, in turn, have created in females, styles, emphases and responses that are dysfunctional for success in
management (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). Much of the current research, however, has shifted in its direction in focusing on the perception and effectiveness of those few women who have obtained an administrative position in education.

This discussion reviews research data identifying existing differences between men and women in the organizational context as perceived by superiors, staff, students, and community. The research is reviewed with the purpose of providing insight into the perceived role of women in the field. Toward the goal of addressing the research on the relevant issues pertaining to the principals role and effectiveness, this chapter discusses administrators' priorities and functions of the role, communication, and decision-making style. Communication and decision-making styles appear frequently in the literature as areas for comparison. It is generally agreed among researchers (Hoy & Miskel, 1987; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986) that these are the essential components of leadership within the everyday social reality of the school that encompasses modes of social interaction between the leader and the led. They can, therefore, be a source of conflict or personal commitment and growth. In addition, other researchers contend that the elements of communication and decision making form the central bases of any organization. Quality communication and decision making result in effective implementation and ultimately successful organizations.

It was only in the decade of the seventies that research
actually began to be devoted to the issue of gender (Schmuck, 1981). Researchers with both a psychological and sociological perspective have attempted to explain the behaviour of educational leaders by investigating relationships of variables to the performance of administrators. Early theories about traits attempted to isolate demographic or personality characteristics that would predict successful educational leaders. In both scientific fields, research focused on interactions between the leaders and the led rather than on the traits. Most of these interactional studies were conducted within schools and concentrated on relationships between principals and teachers (Schmuck, 1981).

Studies conducted in the period of the seventies directed attention to the sex variable in the performance of school administrators. *Sex Factor and the Management of Schools* by Gross and Trask (1976) was the first significant text to address sexual differences and, according to the authors, was a response to the criticism that most studies of organizations ignored the fact that their members have gender. Their study on elementary male and female principals in U.S. cities exceeding a population of 50,000 along with an earlier report published by Gross and Herriot (1965) remained the only technical report in the U.S. office of Education for over a decade (Schmuck, 1981). Both of these studies confirmed little differences in the administration of male and female principals. They did, however, convey the image of the female principal as a firm manager of teachers, concerned with the
problems of classroom teaching and instructional program, interested in individual needs and personally engaged in the task of administering the school, in other words - they attested to the competency of women in the field. An overview of these studies follows.

Early Investigations

Women principals' relationships with teachers, students, and the community appeared in several earlier studies surveying the views on principals (Hoyle, 1969; Gross & Herriot, 1965; Hemphill, Griffiths & Frederiksen, 1962). These studies concurred that women teachers tended to have favourable attitudes toward women supervisors; and although men who had not worked for women preferred working under male supervisors, those who had worked for women were generally favourable in their evaluation of women supervisors. These studies also revealed that staff morale was higher in school administrated by women.

The majority of studies conducted between 1956 and 1978 in the U.S. in which women principals were rated by their supervisors and subordinates generally confirmed an in-depth study by Fischel and Pottker (1975). The authors reviewed behaviour and attitude studies of women principals' performance based on measures of student performance and participation in school activities, teacher morale, and parent and community involvement. They concluded that most people consider women's performance in the administrative field equal
to, or, in some cases, better than that of their male counterparts. Women were especially perceived as more adept in the area of people skills.

In a summary of their findings, Frasher and Frasher (1979) indicated that in nearly every variable of comparison of actual administrative performance there had been no gender differences but did note that when women did integrate their feminine modes of behaviour, it resulted in high performance ratings and overall high evaluations of effectiveness.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 1979) conducted a formidable national study surveying attitudes toward women as school district administrators. The first survey was concerned with the attitudes toward women's ability to serve at levels of school administration; the second was the SRA opinion survey for men and women on work habits and attitudes. The first survey was administered to 2,095 superintendents and 2,095 school board chairpersons/presidents of school boards nationwide: the latter survey to a sample of 200 superintendents and 200 school board chairpersons. All four groups - male and female superintendents - male and female chairpersons - indicated they would not consider stereotypic attitudes about women as valid barriers to employment. However, a few of the respondents in each group held negative preconceptions, and this impacted when employing women full-time.

Some other interesting distinctions surfaced in the findings. Women agreed almost unanimously that to be a
successful school administrator a woman must sacrifice some of her femininity, although how this is done was not made clear. More than half of the male respondents agreed that females could possess the self-confidence necessary for leadership. While a majority of the male superintendents and board chairpersons felt that menstruation should not affect hiring a women as school administrator, they were less inclined to overlook her possible emotional instability and personal conflict between an administrative career and the possibility of pregnancy and children.

The theme throughout much of these studies in educational administration, as in the business world, supported the fact that women succumbed to the acquisition and integration of masculine modes of behaviour to attain their positions. Investigations (Hennig & Jardim, 1977; Cannie, 1979) conducted on executive women during this era indicated that women executives, albeit a few, were generally passive, unassertive and afraid to take risks. These works reinforced, for the most part, the idea that a woman had to reduce the threat of her womanliness if she was to attain professional status and success. This threat was thought to be reduced by subscribing in a certain way to a particular code of behaviour, career plans, and dress (Swoboda & Vanderbosch, 1983). In effect, these studies assumed success, for a woman administrator was dependent on living her professional life according to male-centred norms. Swoboda and Vanderbosch (1983) refer to these female professionals as misfits within a male-defined
structure. Women were faced with two options when it came to their womanliness; they could either live their womanliness up or they could live it down. In living it down, a woman attempted to neutralize her gender in order to gain acceptance on professional terms; in living it up, she either integrated or emphasized her gender in order to gain respect on her own terms. Most women chose the former option of opting out of their feminine ways as a means of gaining acceptance. This might account why early investigations of male and female leadership have recorded so little differences in the administrative style between male and female principals carrying out their duties.

From the data of these studies biological sex did not appear to significantly influence behaviour. While these earlier studies revealed no significant differences in performance, they did nevertheless acknowledge that some differences did exist in some areas of administrative performance. Moreover, they provided evidence that females were perceived just as effective as their male counterparts in the managerial role and that there was little if any support for the view that males were better suited for educational leadership than females.

The Eighties Era

Investigations in the eighties suggest a new type of female administrator who has emerged from a social climate different from those experienced by older females when they
initially entered educational administration. This new era is reflective of new life styles, a change in societal attitudes about working women, and women's rising aspirations. This new breed of women, as Tibbetts (1980) labelled them, have risen to assume the leadership and view themselves differently from the minority of women who held comparable positions a decade ago. Many of the these administrators display managerial characteristics that are a departure from the traditional male management model; this gave rise for new inquiry.

Several studies surfaced that explored the image of new women administrators with those of the decade before. Benton's (1980) comparative study with data compiled on women administrators in community colleges showed that these women held images that differed them from their earlier counterparts. The image of these women were quite removed from the picture of the single conservative woman with little social life as depicted typically of the population envisaged by Hennig and Jardim (1977). A large number of the respondents were married and indicated that they had resolved the conflict between their professional and domestic lives, living out their lives and careers from their own frame of reference. Moreover, these women administrators rejected the idea of the Queen Bee categorization. "Queen Bees," state Staines, Tavris, and Jayaratne (1974), "look like women yet think like men and are able to perform traditional and non traditional roles simultaneously but effectively" (cited in
Benton, 1980, p. 21). While in an excellent position to recruit, support, and recommend other women, they were not inclined to do so; instead, they preferred to malign the efforts of other women and to protect their own image as superwomen. Benton (1980) found these women willing to take time to promote the advancement of other women by serving as role models for prospective women and by actively recruiting and supporting women candidates for administrative positions. The women also spurned the idea that they were tokens. The token, states Reynolds (1988), is someone who is usually appointed within the organization to meet the demands for access by a subgroup. Tokens were generally placed in marginal positions with limitations in power and advancement. They were often alienated by the other women because they were perceived as attaining their promotion solely on their status as women rather than ability. The women of this study viewed themselves as capable leaders attributing their success to experience, qualifications, and their strong motivation and determination to succeed.

In another study, Frasher, Frasher, and Hardwick (1982) undertook to discover if generalizations about females managers and their adoptive male masculine styles applied to female superintendents in educational administration. They found several differences between the two groups of women, particularly in their backgrounds. During adolescence, whereas the business women largely rejected feminine roles and companions and grew more distant from their mothers, the
patterns of the superintendents reflected little resentment or conflict regarding sex roles and a closer relationship with their mothers. Unlike the women managers, these superintendents never shelved or subordinated traditional aspects of femininity as did the business women. The authors concluded that these females exhibited a strong gender identity; and while they recognized that certain aspects of traditional male behaviour had been acquired to assume leadership positions, they did not find it necessary to forego feminine social experiences or to extinguish feminine patterns of behaviour in order to become successful educational leaders.

Orientations in the Working Environment

Research has also begun to emerge to suggest that there are differences in the relative importance administrators ascribe to the various competencies demanded by their jobs and, as such, have important implications.

To test the common assumption that males are better managers, Berman (1982) studied the task performances of five female high school principals. Their task performances were described, analyzed, and compared with those of five male high school principals. Data were collected through interviews, structured observations of the principals' personal contacts and correspondence, and the types and chronology of their daily activities. The comparative data were analyzed in terms of theoretical conceptualizations of the principalship and in
terms of characteristics of managerial work and managerial roles. While the findings revealed that the task performance behaviours of a principal seem to be determined more by the nature of the principalship than by the sex of the principal, Berman, however, did note the following specific behavioural distinctions for women secondary principals: (i) a higher percentage of contacts initiated by others; (ii) shorter desk work sessions during the school day and more time spent during and after school hours; (iii) a higher average duration for scheduled meetings, phone calls, and unscheduled meetings; and (iv) cooperative planning taking place more often during scheduled meetings.

A study of elementary principals by Kmetz and Willower (1982) documented similar findings. The notion of differences existing in the daily activities of administrators is also confirmed by Pitner's study (1984) of male and female superintendents. When visiting schools, female superintendents used their time to visit classrooms, keeping abreast of instructional programs; males used their time to walk the halls with the principals and the head custodian requesting that they follow up on particular concerns.

Fauth (1984) found that female superintendents and principals interacted more with teachers and students, spending more time in the classroom or with teachers in discussion about the curriculum content of the school than did males. These women administrators spent more time outside of school hours with teachers. Further, females were most likely
to help inexperienced teachers with instructional problems and direct those experiences. Women's approach to task and daily interactions in the job demonstrate differences in priorities between men and women administrators.

Differences in the way female school administrators manage their schools were also noted by Charter and Jovick (1981). They found that teachers in schools managed by women manifested significantly higher levels of satisfaction on two scales - with their careers and with their immediate work circumstances. Moreover, the authors were able to demonstrate that male teachers as well as female teachers exhibited greater satisfaction levels under female administrators. They contend that it is the more prominent and personal involvement of the female principals in the day-to-day affairs of the schools that was largely responsible for the higher moral of the staffs.

These studies support the idea that the day-to-day activities of administrators as well as their interactions with staff members may differ depending whether the principal is male or female.

As Shakeshaft (1986) concludes from her review of the literature:

[w]omen, then are likely to view the job of principal or superintendent as that of master teacher or educational leader while men view it from a managerial industrial perspective. In addition, women approach public school administration as a service to the community or to society, while men see the job as an indicator of personal status or achievement. (p. 110)
The last observation on the perceived function of their role as related to a career is borne out in a preliminary self-report study by Nolan (1987) who examined the day-to-day work lives of first-year elementary school principals (three males and three females). She recorded that male principals reflected on their jobs as a basis for career-building while females tended to personalize the school and the community in terms of having attained their goal achievement.

Communication Styles

In the area of communication, women again displayed differences. Kahn (1984) states that women exhibit a language pattern different than men (cited in Shakeshaft, 1987). Women's language is more polite and cheerful than the language of men. In verbal discourse women are more likely than men to express courtesy, gratitude, respect, and appreciation. Women show respect for their audience through listening and less antagonistic responses. Women's politeness is demonstrated in their listening behaviour. Men listen for facts, whereas women clue in to hear the emotional and personal issues in a conversation. They also use more affiliation words than do men. Men more often use hostile verbs, tend to interrupt in conversations, and talk more. Their language tends to be third person rather than personal and lacks emotional content. In general, the female style of speech was found to be less obtrusive. Women use
significantly more words implying feelings, emotion, and motivation.

Lakoff (1973) believed that females displayed and acquired special styles of speech (cited in Mackie, 1983). He argued that females' language was inferior and that females should develop male language patterns allowing for more forceful statements and thus more effective communicating. The assumption of the inferiority of female patterns was finally tested by Scott (1979), who designed a study with a view of determining social desirability of those patterns, as well as the perceived competence of those using the language (cited in Shakeshaft, 1986). Scott pinpointed 20 language and speech characteristics commonly associated with female speakers and 16 linked with male speakers.

She found that the majority of all participants judged all 20 of the female stereotypic language characteristics and nine of the male ones as socially desirable. When she examined the effectiveness of speech, she found that "stereotypic female characteristics rated more positively than male characteristics for effective communication among competent adults" (Scott, 1979, p. 13). "Characteristics of competent females were more like those for effective adults than those for effective males" (Scott, 1979, p. 14).

The view of women as good communicators is shared by Wheeless and Berryman (1985) who, in their study of employee attitudes, found that female employees demonstrated a more positive regard for females in general. Employees had a less
traditional view of women as managers and a more positive perception of their communication competencies.

Decision Making

Decision making is paramount to effective leadership. Here, too, the studies demonstrate that women are perceived as having different decision-making styles from those employed by men. Berman (1982) disclosed that women were perceived as more democratic and participatory than men. The work of a woman principal was characterized to a greater degree by emphases on cooperative planning strategies and decision making (Hemphill, Griffiths, & Frederiksen, 1962; Knight & Saal, 1983). Women tended to do more work on in-basket items, discussed problems more with superiors and outsiders, and used information found in background materials somewhat more frequently than men. In general, the difference between men and women in their performance on in-basket problems is that the women involved teachers, superiors, and outsiders in their work, while the men tended to make final decisions and take action without involving others. Fairholm and Fairholm (1984) strongly support the view that the predominate power tactics used by women principals were coalition building, coaptation, and personality. They concluded that women, then, utilize their participatory management to their personal and educational advantage.
Conflict Management

Another area under examination for differences is conflict management. However, there exists very little research on women and conflict management in educational administration (Formisano, 1987). The scant amount of research that has been accomplished has focused on males and has been generalized to all males. Most models of conflict management used in studies have been an outgrowth from research using predominantly male subjects and completed by male researchers.

Formisano (1987) observed female secondary and elementary school principals to study their specific strategies of conflict management. The data revealed two types of conflicts experienced by these principals - conflict thrust upon them and conflict initiated by them. In all cases their actions were guided by their desire to preserve interpersonal relationships. Attempts to diffuse conflict were made through empathizing, asking questions, accommodation, use of humour, and listening. When conflict was initiated by the principals themselves, they used strategies to promote escalation toward a specific goal, to encourage positive experiences to generate new ideas, and to dispel apathy. In summary, she concludes that women principals tend to manage conflict by adopting an accommodating style that preserves interpersonal relationships. These strategies of accommodating rather than use of autocratic manner concur with the findings of Kanter (1977) and Gilligan (1982).
Many of the studies as discussed above consisted of the American experience as applied to the small population of women who occupied leadership positions in management and in educational administration. American studies raised questions and issues to be posed within the Canadian context of women in education. Canadian studies emerged to examine the different experiences of men and women in education and the impact of gender on various aspects of their careers.

Gilbertson (1981) explored the influence of gender on the verbal interactions of male and female principals in elementary schools in Winnipeg. The findings indicated that male principals tended to interact more than females over organizational matters and concerns based on school-wide issues while females focused more on classroom and student matters. She interpreted the results as suggesting that women and men employ different administrative strategies.

Morizio (1985) found that female administrators displayed differences from female teachers in their career perceptions. Female administrators did not consider prestige or income as the most important reward stemming from their role. While both groups ranked intrinsic rewards for their roles as important, the women administrators tended to value opportunities to study and learn, doing something worthwhile for society and colleague interaction more than did the women teachers.

A survey of a cross section of female public school administrators in Ontario conducted by Ridler (1984) provided
a profile that suggested change in the image women held of themselves as administrators as compared to their earlier counterparts. Ontario's women administrators demonstrated confidence in their own abilities and appeared to have overcome their own ideas of stereotyped behaviour as depreciating their leadership performance.

Reynolds' (1987) study of women and men principals in Toronto chronicled their changing experiences in work lives as teachers and principals over the past 50 years. She records men and women referred to their experiences as principals in a different ways. The men spoke about public recognition, financial gain, and the increased power they enjoyed as principals, whereas the women preferred to talk about important curriculum changes they had accomplished and the help they were able to give to larger numbers of children because of the opportunity their role afforded them. Their goals and aspirations, she states, were related to what was of value to the men and women and to the outcomes they anticipated. Given that they had different values and expectations, their goals differed. She concludes that different socialization patterns of men and women as children contributed to their different views of life in the principal's office. She observes that while men and women share a common culture in many respects, they do not have entirely the same cultural experiences because of differences in gender.

In her gender-based study on career expectations and
secondary school administration conducted on men and women high school teachers in Hamilton, Dempsey (1988) found similar perceptions about image and administration among non-aspiring males and females. However, she did note a major difference in that females in this category tended to isolate male and female characteristics in administration with respect to image. Women vice principals were perceived as being just as effective as men but displaying "more sensitivity, a little more caring as opposed to a cut and dried responses" (p. 153). Non-aspiring females felt the image of the administration would be better served if there was male/female representation creating a balance in the front office. The idea of a team approach was also associated with the presence of women in administration.

In a recent study, Ramanauskas (1990) repudiated the commonly held perceptions in education that older teachers and women are not committed to their jobs. According to his findings, age was not a major factor impacting on work and job involvement in teaching, but gender made a significant impact on involvement with work. Women, he found, are much more involved with their work than men. This, he states, is the result of the need to overcome the stereotypical perceptions of women as mothers and housekeepers. He concludes that women have a greater commitment and dedication to teaching which he attributes to their traditional nurturing and caring roles. In contrast the men in his study did not approach their work with the same intensity or dedication. They became
disillusioned faster and did not perceive the job as prestigious enough to devote much time or effort.

In the first stage of their study on women and men supervisory officers, currently working in Ontario, Dempsey and Reynolds (1990) investigated how these administrators distributed their time on both personal and professional responsibilities. The authors noted some differences. "Women reported spending more evenings per week on their professional responsibilities. Only in the area of leisure time did they spend less time than their male peers" (p. 41). With respect to their roles "women were more likely than men to spend more of their time visiting schools and interacting with students and teachers, whereas men were more likely than women to spend more of their time attending board meeting and preparing for meetings" (p. 42).

In exploring differences, the data have generated several important observations and implications about various aspects of women's thinking, attitudes, image and behaviour in their performance as educators and administrators.

These studies tend to mirror a view that female administrators do a number of things differently than their male counterparts. For women, states Shakeshaft (1986), these differences are embodied in a philosophy, conceptualized in the following ways:

1. Individuals are the most important link.
2. Instruction and learning are the major focuses for women administrators.
3. Building a community is an essential part of a woman's administrative style.

And just how compatible is this behaviour with that behaviour consistently associated with effective principals and effective schooling? A glance of these characteristics provides us with a foundation for comparison. Effective principals, cite Leithwood and Montgomery (1986), are those who

1. Seek to develop shared goals and values for their schools which are clear, relevant, and attainable and which stress student learning and happiness.

2. Foster a school climate in which high expectation for themselves, for their teachers, and for students are the norm.

3. Work actively and closely with teachers on instruction and provide a strategy for program implementation that includes well refined details and accepts responsibilities for facilitation of these accomplishments.

4. Allow for extensive participation in the decision-making process with choices arrived at through consensus or occasionally by majority vote.

5. Seek staff advice and welcome new ideas.

6. See teachers as partners in the pursuit of shared goals.

Accordingly, the data support a strong correlation between the behavioural characteristics of women and those displayed by effective principals. It appears that much of
what is good about women administrators is also good about leadership in general.

The criteria for effective administrators and the high evaluation it accords women's leadership does much to dispel the belief that women are incapable of effective administrative performance. In fact, as Hemphill, Griffiths, and Frederiksen (1962) contend,

if the job of the principal is one that encompasses the value of working with teachers and outsiders, being concerned with the objectives of teaching, student participation, and the evaluation of learning, having knowledge of teaching methods and techniques, and gaining positive relations from teachers and superiors...then the job favours women. (p. 334)

And as Frasher and Frasher (1979) write, there is enough evidence to strongly suggest that good administration is more a characteristic of "feminine than masculine modes of behaviour" (p. 5).

While reflecting on the existing literature, I would state that it is not my intention to categorize all women as good administrators or all men as poor ones, nor do I mean to suggest that only women should be selected for administrative roles. This, also, I believe, is not the intent of the researchers referred to throughout this review. Such a biased view would fail to recognize persons as unique individuals, different from one another, each of whom posses a set of personal values that she/he brings to the function of his/her role. Those individual values impinge heavily on the personal philosophy of each administrator, and it is that philosophy
that has great impact on his/her administration and, ultimately, the school organization. Nevertheless, differences have been purposely emphasized throughout this paper. It is done with the view that, in recognizing these differences, we also recognize that there is much to be valued in those characteristics that differ women from men. In addition, the value of the research lies in the revelation that traits which have traditionally and historically been associated with feminine behaviour and which have excluded women from management roles, now appear to be the very ones that have become increasingly associated with effective administration implying, therefore, there is no reason why women should be overlooked in the process of selection for educational administration. Moreover, the research has implications for those responsible for leadership development and training. It challenges the traditional approach that training for females should be treated as attitude change toward the male management male model. Training should be broad enough in scope to include a wide range of gender behaviours.

The review of the literature is not without its problems. Clearly much of the research on women administrators, a visible minority, suffers from the limited number of women in those positions. Although the statistics show that Canadian females are gaining access to other male dominated professions, they continue to decline in the field of educational administration. According to Statistics Canada
"In 1986/87 one quarter of male teachers in public schools were principals, vice-principals or department heads; the corresponding proportion for female teachers was 6%" (p. 206). Between 1972/73 and 1985/86, the overall percentage of principals who were women actually fell from 17% to 15%. This percentage loss came entirely from a decrease in the proportion of elementary school principals who were women from 20% to 17%. Women increased their representation among principals in secondary level from 4% to 6% but this slight gain was not enough to counteract losses at the elementary level since women principalships at the secondary level are much lower than at the elementary level. In senior administration women fare no better. Only 6% of superintendents were women. In Ontario, statistics on the educational workforce show that in 1987 women represented 17% of elementary school principals, and 11% of secondary school principals.

In her evaluation of the research concerning women in educational administration, Shakeshaft (1989) states that "research in educational administration is weak both in research on women in organizations and research on the impact of gender on behaviour. Traditional research about theory and practice has neglected both the female experience and the influence of gender on actions and outcomes" (p. 326). She recommends that research must be undertaken that heeds females' experiences and reflects both the presences of females and the female world. Only then, she concludes, will
we be able to determine whether there are differences and ascertain the meanings of those differences.

Criticism is often levied against research that identifies differences between men and women administrators with respect to the subjective perception and priorities they envision as a function of their role (Hewitt, 1984). Regardless of the criticism, the perception of the principal is a valid and most important component for research and discussion, for one can contend that the principal as an organizational leader is the most powerful "reality definer" (p. 81) of the school situation (Ball, 1987). Thus, the perspective of the principal undeniably influences the school environment, an environment that contains all those people related variables that greatly affect the social well being of people to function and produce in the work place (Sharp & Green, 1975).
CHAPTER THREE
DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY

My intentions are to explore the world of female principals with respect to the perceptions, priorities, and the understanding they envision as the function of their role. A second purpose aims at investigating the difference dimension as experienced by the principals through the exploration of gender characteristics from which differences, if any, may arise. It follows that in my search for understanding the human perspective that such a problem cannot be resolved through a statistical survey method. When we reduce people to statistical aggregates, we lose sight of the subjective nature of human behaviour (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

Bogdan and Taylor (1975) describe qualitative research as a procedure producing descriptive data based on people's spoken or written words and observable behaviour. This type of procedure based on behaviour is appropriate for my study as it admits human values and allows expression of personal meaning and understanding. It is a humanistic approach. Through qualitative methods, problems have to be generated in real life situations. We discover and interact with people as we hear them speak about themselves and their experiences and, though we do not necessarily accept their perspectives as truth, we can develop an empathy which allows us to see the world from their point of view (Lofstedt, 1990).

A qualitative method was chosen for this study because as Jacob (1987) suggests, qualitative traditions offer a
richer and fuller understanding of human behaviour. Qualitative methods permit one to know people personally and to see them as they are developing their own definitions of the world. It allows me, as a researcher, to experience what they experience in their everyday lives and to bring meaning to that experience. This, then, is descriptive research where the meaning of the experience is a study of situations rather than a set of preselected variables (Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker, & Mulderij, 1983). Given my intent to explore the meaning of human phenomena as experienced and lived, I have selected a phenomenological approach as the most appropriate fit to my inquiry.

Giorgi (1985) states that the phenomenological perspective is the best way to understand the meaning of human phenomenon as it is lived and experienced. Unlike other methodologies, phenomenology cannot be reduced, as Denzin (1978) suggests, "to a cookbook set of instructions" (p. 41). It is more an approach, an attitude, an investigative posture, with a certain set of goals. It deals with meanings, intentions, feelings and ideas - the stuff of experience which cannot be quantified without distortion. By listening and observing, the approach aims at understanding events in terms of the meaning they already have in their natural setting (Denzin, 1978).

Other researchers (Keen, 1975; Darroch & Silvers, 1982) concur that phenomenology is an appropriate approach to understanding the meaning of experience. The phenomenologist
examines how the world is experienced, and the important reality is the reasons why people imagine it to be so. The researcher must study the experience in the taken-for-granted world of the everyday and look for meanings resident in the world of human beings in their own language. Hence, my goal is to uncover as many meanings as possible and their relation to one another as the phenomenon presents itself in the experience.

Maher (1987) commends such a procedure as appropriate for the investigations of women's perceptions. She states that scholars concerned with women's perceptions and experiences have derived a methodology which reflects the nature of the information they are seeking. This methodology involves a conceptualization of knowledge as a comparison of many perspectives that unfold to present a view of reality. Each new contribution reflects the perspective of the person giving it, each has something to offer. This methodology replaces the search for a single objective or right answer that comes from someone outside other than the source of the answer. Instead, it aims for the construction of knowledge from multiple perspectives through cooperative interactive problem solving. In every scholarly discipline concerned with human behaviour, generalizations about man have hidden women's experiences - which have often been opposite or different thus, women's roles have been ignored or made the exception. Maher (1987) contends if women's experiences are to be equally represented, then, we must locate and describe these
experiences, analyze then and give them theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The search for one universal truth or explanation is replaced with a search for shared meanings, for comparative approaches and conclusions and for what any one of the perspectives has to offer or challenge to the others. Maher (1987) concedes that collaboration and cooperation are methods for voicing and exploring the expressed perspectives of women. Both the participants and the researcher can be equals in the cooperative search for understanding about the experiences of people.

Events are comprehended at many different levels. In order to become more explicitly aware of the way we live out the experiences, we must go beyond the obvious meaning to do that so that the other nuances of meaning can come into focus. The phenomenological argument is that, if we want to understand people, we must approach the task with methods and concepts that are geared to the task.

Since my interest lies in the way people behave in actual situations, the process of narrative inquiry was selected because it lends itself to the way people experience the world while providing concrete descriptions of that lived experience. Narrative inquiry has been increasingly used in studies of educational experiences and provides a framework by which the phenomenologist can effectively study the phenomena of human experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Essential to employing this framework is the necessity of the researcher to identify and empathize with the
participants in order to understand them from their frame of reference while at the same time remaining detached enough so as to be able to stand back from the subjects' perspectives. Consequently, it is basic to open one's mind and eyes wide to the perceptions and lived experiences with the realization that we can come to understand the many layers and nuances of meaning inherent in human behaviour (Darroch & Silvers, 1982).

In my quest I purport to seek neither truth and morality nor pass judgement but rather to seek understanding, to convey not only what is understood but the perspective from which it is understood. My primary focus as stated is to uncover as many meanings as possible and their relations to one another as the phenomenon presents itself in the narratives of stated experience and perception. In focusing exclusively on the task of understanding perceptions, I seek, therefore, to understand meanings and, in understanding meanings I will attempt to articulate the contexts from which the meanings emerge. The knowledge derived, then, is not pervasive; it is only the knowledge of the individual case of each participant.

This approach satisfies my need to get "inside the experience of the actor" (Blumer, 1969, cited in Jacob, 1987, p. 30). The method not only seems to offer a best fit for the question under study but capitalizes on what I feel are my own particular strengths. Phenomenology seeks to understand people as people. The method is decidedly personal. Admittedly, I have a biased interest in persons in their relations with others and always with respect to their group culture. This
I believe to be an essential element for the phenomenologists who seeks to know people personally, understanding their behaviour from their own frame of reference (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975).

The Pilot Study

Having made the decision to pursue the phenomenological approach, I designed a series of questions (Appendix 1) and began a pilot study with a female administrator, Roberta. The experience with the pilot study, a first for both myself and the participant, provided a valuable learning experience. The developed narrative profile was the result of collaboration between myself and Roberta to arrive at shared meaning.

My perspective as a researcher was that Roberta was the expert of her own experience. She created her own meaning. The phenomenologist views human behaviour as a product of how one sees the world. My task was, therefore, to make meaning of the pieces and to capture this process of interpretation (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

It is understood that in understanding behaviour one must also understand the person's feelings and thoughts about that particular behaviour (McMillan and Schumacher, 1984). This necessitates the development of an empathetic understanding on my part and emphasizes the importance of developing a rapport based on trust with the participant. Such a rapport is paramount in developing a co-researcher relationship. Because we had been in the same school system for many years,
we shared common acquaintances and experiences. The revelation of mutual friendships and the relating of shared experiences set a comfortable and relaxed environment. Roberta's vivacious and open personality contributed considerably to the warm ambience of the interview sessions.

I would attempt to see the reality through Roberta's eyes. This meant bracketing my own biases and recognizing my limitations to my own understanding (Barritt et al., 1983). To this end I shared my background and experiences with the participant. The capacity for empathy depends upon seeing others as possessing the essential or intrinsic qualities and arises through a circle of experience and clarification. The shared interests allowed me the opportunity to develop empathetic understanding which is the essence for developing sincere and honest dialogue. The content of an empathetic act is the degree to which it has been clarified and reinterpreted as the circle of knowing someone from the inside.

The pilot study proved very useful in that:

1. I learned how to build an atmosphere favourable to qualitative research as well as gaining a clearer understanding of the research paradigm.

2. It led to a more refined focus on the techniques and parameters of the interview process.

3. It strongly affirmed my conviction that the methodology employed was most conducive to the purposes of the study.

4. It proved that the revelation of meaningful experiences
and reflections as the narrative unfolds is not only advantageous from the researcher's perspective but for the participant herself who may find the accounting to be a positive enjoyable experience.

Indeed, during the second interview, Roberta revealed that her initial concerns about not sounding professional subsided as she got more involved in the process and that she found herself rather enjoying the whole experience. Moreover, she thoroughly concurred with my interpretation of her narrative using phrases like "right on" and was in total agreement with the metaphor selected.

Because the pilot study provided so much relevant data to the purposes of my inquiry and because it gave rise to emerging design from which I could extrapolate patterns and themes, it was decided that Roberta should be included as one of the four participants in my study.

Limitations of the Study

This study can only establish validity for the experiences of the four participants who were interviewed. The study is limited by the small numerical sample of the population of female principals from which the data are drawn. Consequently, generalizations for the population as a whole cannot be formulated. Although techniques have been attempted to ensure a valid data base, the validity of the study to a large extent is dependent on my skills as a researcher. Problems can arise surrounding these skills or as a result of
the researcher herself which can be reflected in her acceptance by the participants. This acceptance with its implied trust is essential for the processes of co-researcher and shared interpretation to take place (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The study is also dependent on the ability and willingness of the participants to share their perceptions, feelings and thoughts with the researcher in a meaningful way.

In the final analysis, it is up to the reader to determine if the research has struck at some shared experienced or not. Whether the data are plausible and in keeping within one's own experience of female administrators the reader can accord. As Barritt et al. (1983) state, "The investigator can point to themes which appear but the ratification of these meanings can only proceed with the agreement of the audience" (p. 162). There is no quest for certainty suggests Connelly and Clandinin (1986) in the writing of narrative. "In narrative inquiry...there are multiple possible narratives and/or narrative threads and the judgement of whether or not one is 'telling the truth' has to do with criteria such as adequacy, possibility, depth and a sense of integrity" (p. 9).
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The source of raw data for this study is the expression of the personal perceptions and experiences of the participants as related in their narrative profiles. I employed the process of narrative inquiry because I adhere to the theory, as stated by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of the narrative is the study of the ways humans experience their world. My role as a researcher is to describe such lives, to write the narratives of experience, and to make sense of the whole. The narratives are the context from which I derived meaning of the principals' perceptions of their role and how they functioned in a variety of situations.

Narrative inquiry is, in substance, a process of collaboration involving mutual story telling and restorying as the research proceeds (Clandinin, 1989). Crucial to the success of this process is the element of shared collaboration and interpretation between the researcher and the participant. Hogan (1988) comments that an important element of the collaborative nature of the research process is one in which all the participants see themselves as participants in a community, where there exists a sense of equality between the participants, a caring situation, and feelings of connectedness. This implies the formation of a close relationship wherein trust and confidence abides between the
researcher and the participants. It is essential to establishing a successful co-researcher process. My task in this endeavour was made easier because the participants and I already shared several common experiences. We shared personal histories as women; we worked for the same school system; and we were of the same religious denomination. Although I am not a principal, my present role as a gifted education resource teacher and my experiences as an acting principal have afforded me the opportunity to experience some of the facets of the role of administrator and curriculum leader.

The participants were four experienced female elementary school principals from a Catholic school system located in Ontario. I selected the participants based on my knowledge of their varied backgrounds and their experience. I wanted both relatively new principals and those who had been in the role for a longer period of time because I anticipated that perhaps each would present a new perspective. I knew none of the participants personally, although I knew of them professionally; and likewise, they were aware of my position with the board.

Interviews were used as a means of access to the experience of each participant. I sent a letter to the participants inviting them to take part, briefly outlining the general purposes of my study. Within a week of sending the invitation I followed up each letter with a telephone call for their response and to answer any questions they might have.
All the participants kindly accepted and responded with interest. Two interviews were arranged with each.

In the first interview I shared my background with the participants and stated the purposes of my study and my interest in the subject of women principals. I explained that I wanted to explore a female perception of the principals’ role as well as the difference question. I revealed that a number of studies indicated that there were no differences in the way men and women perceived their roles as principals while other studies did acknowledge differences. I related my own position on the matter: simply put, I did not know whether differences did exist or not; but I expressed hope that perhaps my study might provide some illumination on the topic. I emphasized that they were completely open to respond yes or no to the question. I explained that my curiosity also extended to exploring gender characteristics that they felt they exhibited and their impact on the role, if any. I again stressed to the participants the importance of my understanding the meaning of the role from their perspective as women. I stated my own personal motive for discovering answers disclosing that I was also interested in pursuing an administrative career. I sensed that the latter revelation did much to establish my credibility and integrity and invoked empathy from women who had travelled the same path. I explained the principles of the co-researcher procedure and emphasized its importance, which was favourably agreed upon by all the participants. The women expressed confidence in
research that would be handled in a collaborative way in which they were able to review their stories for accuracy in interpretation, and which permitted additions and deletions, if they so desired.

The interviews were basically unstructured and designed to encourage the participants to reveal the meaning of their role experiences as much as possible. Each interview was recorded on tape with the permission of the participants. Although I prepared questions I did so mainly to serve as a guideline to insure that all points were covered (Appendix 1). Participants were not given access to these questions beforehand because I wanted to insure spontaneity and candidness. The questions were open-ended allowing the participants to freely expand on their responses without restriction.

In narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stress the importance for the researcher to "listen first to the practitioners' story" (p. 4). I encouraged the participants to freely discuss their feelings, thoughts, and behaviour in their own words. Many times the participants told lengthy stories to provide examples or justifications for their view. I interrupted only to seek clarification or to ask follow-up questions or when the participants wanted acknowledgement from me that I understood exactly what they had intended. Never was any attempt made to put words into the participants' mouths or to change the language used or the context in which statements were made. I initiated my own
critical set of criteria as a researcher to further safeguard the procedure from any unintentional abuse. First, I would listen to fully understand; and second, I would write the narratives so that each participant was fully understood. I reviewed these principles before each interview and scrutinized my practices carefully after each discussion so as to secure my study as valid inquiry.

It was difficult at times to reserve comment or not to register surprise when participants identified similar character traits or perceived differences particularly in instances when the same language or choice of words was used. When three of the participants described concern for details as characteristic of their feminine qualities which differed their behaviour from that of their male colleagues, I began to feel uneasy. The patterns appeared glaringly apparent. Any uneasiness I had quickly dissipated with a review of the tapes which affirmed that I had maintained the rules of my inquiry.

In addition to the tapes, a journal was kept that included field notes. Field notes were made immediately following each interview. They included my own impressions and personal reflections on a number of items. These proved most useful in complementing the recorded data. Included among the items written were notes and observations on physical appearance, dress, facial expressions, the physical environments, interruptions, and most often, my own reactions and feelings about the events that unfolded.
The interviews were held in the natural setting of the principal's office with the exception of Rebecca. Her first interview was conducted over lunch at a local restaurant at her request. Confidentiality was assured, and I informed each participant that I would assign her a pseudonym in the study. Each interview ranged from one-and-a-half hours to two-and-a-half hours in length. I asked the participants at the conclusion of each interview if there was anything they wished to discuss about the role or anything they wished to add.

Following each discussion I reconstructed each interview and made necessary revisions by comparing the reconstruction to the taped version. Analysis of the data is dependent upon the accurate description of the participants' experiences. To insure that accuracy each narrative used the language of the participant to discover the important elements of the experience, for I considered the participant to be the expert of her own experience (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 14). There followed the lengthy process of extrapolating information from one area of the data that was best categorized in another. There was a great deal of overlapping, particularly in the descriptions of decision making and communication style. Participants would also make comments or recollections later in the dialogue with reference to an earlier made statement expressly in the area of differences. Often, stories that were attributed to one element of the role manifested revelations of their behaviour in other areas. I then categorized the participants' reflections under headings that
included: gender attributes and references to differences; decision making; communication style; curriculum leadership; and the perceptions of others. This framework helped me later on to make sense of the whole picture by allowing me to compare responses in which I could identify commonalities and differences among all the participants.

Embedded in the narratives was the theme of personal metaphor. Personal Metaphor is an important element in the narrative and in interpreting meaning through personal experience and reflection on that experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1987) understand metaphor as the way that one structures the way one is in the present and guides one's future practices. The personal metaphor is pervasive in daily life. "It governs the way we perceive, our everyday functioning, and how we relate to other people" (p. 60). Bredeson (1988) agrees that metaphors are revelatory of the perceptions, values, and behaviours of school administrators. Metaphors have an effect, he states, whether they are verbalized openly, expressed symbolically, or camouflaged in organizational structure and behaviours. Through transfer of meaning, metaphors attempt to broaden perspectives, enhance understanding, and provide insight into the organization, operation and administration of a school. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that the human conceptual system is defined and structured metaphorically, and human thought processes are largely metaphorical. Their belief is that people construct or see their world metaphorically. Munby and Russell (1990)
content that a practitioner metaphor helps to gain insight into how people construct their professional world.

Accordingly, I searched the narrative stories for instances of the use of metaphors as found in the conceptualization of their role as described in the various categories. Metaphors emerged not only from the descriptive language and terms of references used by the participants but most often they came as a result of examining their practices. From the data I determined and analyzed those metaphors that structured the women principals' thinking, a wide range of their practices and governed how they related to other people. They surfaced in the women's description of their gender characteristics, the perceptions held of their own images and as viewed by others, and in the behaviour, attitudes, and values they displayed towards others. I assigned each participant a personal metaphor based on my analysis of the data. Roberta was designated as "A Mother", Rebecca as "Miss Fuss Budget", Catherine as "The Caretaker of Children", and Patricia as "The Corporate Executive". The four metaphors provide insight and contribute to the understanding of how these women conceptualize and interpret their administrative role and explain why they act as they do within the context of that metaphor. Finally, I shared my interpretation with each participant. I forwarded the description of their experience based on my analysis and interpretation of the data. Each participant was asked to read her narrative carefully and make any additions, deletions, or corrections.
that she felt necessary. I also asked each woman to reflect on her assigned metaphor and to comment on it stating whether she was in agreement or disagreement with it. Another interview was then arranged in which the text was discussed until there was a sense of shared meaning. Each participant was asked to express her reaction and feelings to the her narrative profile, her metaphor and personal theme. I incorporated these comments as part of the study which are discussed in depth in the results chapter. Following the last interview, the final draft of the narrative profile was submitted with changes and corrections, if required. The participants acknowledged final approval both verbally and in written form.

After the profiles were completed and approved, I set about to review all the data. I reread each of narratives with fresh eyes to develop a sense of the whole. I searched among the metaphors and various categories within the narratives comparing each participant's description of experiences and looking for important elements of that experience. I looked for common patterns and themes in which, as McCutcheon (1978) states, discreet actions are given coherence, form, and meaning. This approach necessitated reading the data afresh many times in order to explore beyond the words and into the women's thinking and the reasons for thinking the way they did. Themes were not always derived from the descriptions but from reading between the lines. Once I gleaned a pattern from the data, I proceeded to further
analyze, interpret, and synthesize constructing what I felt best explicated the meaning of the experience and the reality for these women. Variations on the themes were also considered for their importance to the development of understanding their role perception. The themes evolving from the metaphors, the descriptions of their experiences, and the principals' thinking came only when I satisfied myself that proof could be elicited from the data to support these. I compiled a list of the themes and prepared a summary of each. The themes - Image of Mother, School as Home and School as an Extension of Family - unfolded from the exploration of gender traits and differences. Collaborative Decision Making, Open Communication, Conflict as Curriculum Leader, and The Importance of the Perception of Others developed from the descriptions of role perceptions.
CHAPTER FIVE
NARRATIVE PROFILES

Roberta

"A quality principal has enough confidence in himself or herself to allow teachers to teach and students to learn. His or her commitment is to people, not to a building."

(Rubinstein, 1990, p. 151)

Roberta is currently an elementary school principal in a Catholic school with a student population of approximately 250 students from JK to Grade 8. At 36 years of age and three years administrative experience, Roberta's meteoric rise is born out by the fact that she is very unrepresentative of the average female who enters administration in Canada today at an age closer to fifty. Although she appeared unaware of the rarity of this distinction, she nevertheless was quite conscious of the fact that she was the youngest principal in the school system, a fact which made her subject to the teasing comments of her fellow colleagues who jokingly would ask her what she wanted to do when she grew up or who would introduce her as the baby of the group.

Previous to holding an administrative position, Roberta was an elementary school teacher for thirteen years where she primarily taught intermediate students. Her love of teaching is evident not only in the exuberance with which she spoke about teaching but also by the expression on her face which lit up whenever the topic was discussed.
Roberta had readily and very kindly accepted my invitation to be interviewed, and it was agreed that we would conduct the interview in her school office. I had never met Roberta before although I was aware of her fine reputation and popularity among my colleagues. Since this was my first experience with the interview process, I was quite nervous. As I entered the building I was met with a strategically placed sign that immediately caught the visitor's eye. It read "We love our school."

I located Roberta in her office hovering over a plant whose condition was causing her concern. Roberta's warm greeting was punctuated by her very natural and very pretty smile. That smile went a long way toward easing my anxiety. Roberta had a few matters to clear up before we could begin. While she attended to these, I began to look around the room which was filled with personal objects, plants, signs and posters. Two signs particularly caught my attention - one which hung from the doorknob read "I love to be hugged", and another which was secured to the front of her desk read "The heart is big enough to hold an abundance of love." The room made a personalized statement about the occupant and conveyed a cosy atmosphere of hominess. The setting contributed to my comfort level, for I felt that I was sitting in the room of a typical home rather than that of a business office. Later, I would come to realize how this setting was totally in keeping with the person herself.

I had just started to introduce Roberta to my research
topic when we were interrupted by a visitor whom I recognized as Robert, a vice-principal from one of the schools I service as a resource teacher. Roberta greeted him with a warm hug. After a few exchanges of pleasantries we began the interview.

As the interview progressed I was glad that I was tape recording the proceedings, for I had difficulty at times focusing on the responses as I became more aware of the person. Roberta is a bubbly, vivacious individual with a wonderful sense of humour. She exudes so much confidence that I surmised she could make a believer out of anyone. It was a delight to listen to her. The exuberance and the enthusiasm with which she spoke about her role, the terms of endearment that continually cropped up in her vocabulary conveyed an impression of a sincere and genuine person who spoke with the conviction of her beliefs. I suspected that because of her warm personality and the kind of loving person she was that Roberta would be a success in whatever endeavour she pursued.

Roberta described at length her experience on becoming an administrator. She confessed to being a reluctant candidate for such a position because she loved what she was doing - teaching children. Nevertheless, at the encouragement of both her principal and superintendent, she decided to do so. Roberta recollects that they must have recognized my leadership potential. When she was informed that she had the job as vice-principal, she recalled being quite apprehensive about leaving the teaching role and wondering what she was getting into. Despite her misgivings she accepted the
position and the challenge. Two years later she was appointed a principal.

It is significant to note that Roberta's becoming a principal was, as far as she was concerned, not the result of a planned pursuit. There was no specific deliberate plan, no networking, no female mentoring, no affirmative action tactics, none of the usual recommended strategies for women aspiring to the role. While she did not condemn these strategies for other women, she readily admitted that these were not for her. Although she had participated in many of the same activities and steps that eventually lead up to a position of responsibility, she maintained this was not an intentional effort on her part toward acquiring the goal of an administrative position. She became involved in those activities because she enjoyed them. The point specifically being made here is that the acquisition of her position appears to have evolved out of the circumstance, the situation itself, and the desire to accept a challenge.

Roberta hoped she attained her position on the basis of her own merit. She was conscious of the fact that many teachers regarded female appointments as tokens. "If I ever thought I got this job because I'm a woman, I would quit tomorrow! This is something," she commented, "that is always in the back of my mind because people don't know you...they don't know your background. You always hear teachers say when women are appointed...oh, they got chosen because they were women." She confessed that it made her "blood boil" because
she knew how hard many of these women had worked to achieve those positions.

At the beginning of the first interview, I asked Roberta if she had read or was aware of any of the current literature on the perception of female administrators and the differences they brought to their role. She replied she had not. This I judged to be the truth as she did not use the language that is so often found in those articles and because she did not appear to take note of my intermittent expression of surprise whenever she disclosed something that substantiated the current view.

As I reconstructed this narrative, I was again reminded of my initial reactions to Roberta's experiences. I am struck now as I was throughout the telling of her story as to how typical she was of the female administrator model as depicted by Shakeshaft (1986), Fauth (1984), and Pitner (1984) in their respective studies, particularly in the area of their emphasis on people.

In reflecting on her role as principal, Roberta unconsciously chose her own personal metaphor although I assigned it to her. Frequently during the conversation she referred to herself as a caring mother. It is this personal metaphor which structures and guides her practices and provides understanding of her behaviour and interpretation of the role. From my own observations the expression of her metaphor was very appropriate. It was very much in keeping with the signs and the atmosphere of her school as well as in
keeping with her use of familial language whenever she spoke about the children in her school rather than students.

Initially in the interview, Roberta was asked if she perceived her role as principal differently than a man; she unhesitatingly replied "No." Admittedly, she acknowledged, by the examples she gave, she did identify subtle differences. However, as the narrative unfolded I realized how much greater the impact of the differences she seemed to bring to the role by the very nature of the metaphor embedded in her professional role of administrator, by her emphasis on being a teacher, and the projection of feminine gender traits on the daily lived experience of that role.

Roberta's Reflections

Feminine Traits

"I'm like another mom to them."

When asked what feminine traits she brought to her role Roberta cited sensitivity. "Not that males can't be sensitive," she quickly added, but rather the sensitivity like "that of a mother." Although she was not herself a mother, she felt as a woman she shared a "close perspective" enabling her to naturally empathize with the feelings of other women and their concerns for their children. This led her, she explained, to better understanding "their thinking the way they do." To put it in more concrete terms, she recounted an experience she had as a vice-principal with a male principal
following an interview. On that occasion she recalls saying to him, "Can't you understand why the mother said that...or can't you see why that mom was so upset? 'That's silly', he would say, 'there's no room for that.'" Instinctively, because she was a woman, she felt that she could understand and empathize how that mother might have had the concerns she did and why she reacted the way she did.

The sensitivity of a mother is further exemplified in the relationship she has established with her school children. Again she perceived that, because of it, she was more understanding of the feelings and emotions of children as well. The image of a sensitive mother is underscored in her attitude and behaviour toward the children in the school. This is manifested in the gesture of hugging. Roberta loves to hug the children on their arrival to school - "all the children" - she emphasized. This is no small task, for it meant standing at one door, one day, and greeting 125 students, and standing at the other entrance the next day to embrace the other half of the school. She hugged the children, and they hugged her "regardless of their age or grade, whether they were a boy or a girl." She interpreted this as an advantage of being a woman. "Given the society of today, men can't do this, parents would be up in arms," she explained. "Their gestures might be construed otherwise and their motives suspect...they might even be charged." She viewed this gesture as important in conveying to the children the impression of the principal as "...the loving person in
the office. Then, when they have a problem, they will not hesitate to come to me...kids come in all the time, talking or crying...I'm like another mom to them." The sensitivity displayed toward parents and children is also conceived as fundamental to Roberta in the development of good staff relationships. Sensitivity, coupled with the years of experience of being a teacher herself, enabled her to grasp where the teachers were coming from and facilitated her understanding of their feelings and emotions. Thus, the aspect became central in both the modes of communication and decision-making she utilized in the function of her role.

Another behaviour Roberta felt was indicative of a feminine nature was the way she decorated the school. This became more understandable in the context of the meaning she attributed to the appearance and physical environment. She envisaged these elements as conducive to invitational education, a concept theorized by Purkey and Novak (1984). She considered this behaviour as "very typical of the way mothers keep their home", and typically female. She compared her behaviour to that of a mother of a household. "I keep my school...the same way, very decorated, very clean and very organized. These are the things that men can do I suppose...but I see them as feminine, I see them as similar. I put flowers all over the place, I place doilies under the statues...I give attention to details." She intimated that it was not the type of behaviour usually attributed to or associated with men, nor did men see it as a priority or
concern.

Roberta admits to having put a big thrust on doing these things because it has created a very positive reaction from the students and the community. She quoted several examples of compliments she had received from the community. It has been a very big plus in creating a very pleasant and warm environment which in turn has influenced the attitude the children have adopted about their school. At this particular moment I was reminded of the sign that had caught my attention at the door. This was not something she felt she achieved herself rather "everyone took ownership and shared pride in the school." Before she gave others the job of sharing the responsibility of the school environment, she did, nonetheless, set the example by doing it herself. She recalled working all summer, cleaning and preparing the school for September. Flowers, posters, and decorated bulletin boards greeted the students on their first day back to school. She fondly remembers the children chiding other children not to touch. Roberta's pride of what was accomplished is reflected in her statement that "there was no vandalism last year, no marks, not on the desks, walls, nor the bathrooms."

She stroked this positive attitude on the part of the children by publicly thanking organized committees responsible at school assemblies. While she did not think it was necessary to overdo it, she did feel it vital to bring it to their attention that she was happy that they were taking pride in their school.
In summary, Roberta saw the establishment of a school environment "like that of a home - warm and very inviting" as a priority, for such a environment was conducive to a climate and behaviour that was acceptable in their own homes, behaviour that exhibited both respect and pride.

Decision Making

"If I'm going to make the school work, I'll need the teachers to work with me."

Roberta does not believe she makes decisions differently than her male colleagues, although she surmised she did not have enough experience working with male principals to really comment. Later in the discussion she did recall how upset she had been as a teacher with a male principal who had made a decision that affected her without any request for her input and without providing any reasons. It was obvious that she had tucked away that unhappy situation for future reference.

As a new principal, however, she did not hesitate to call on her male colleagues to bounce off ideas when she felt she needed another opinion. They, in turn, called her for her opinion in areas where they thought she had expertise.

Roberta bounced ideas off her staff frequently. If she were going to make the school work, she judged it would be essential that the teachers worked with her. She never approached the staff from a position of "What should I do?" or "I don't know what to do." More often she formulated plans
A or B soliciting input by asking, "What do you think?" or "How do you want to do this?" Sometimes the staff would come up with plan C which was a more viable alternative and which she would just as readily accept. Even though some decisions she had to make herself, she deemed it important that staff be involved in some part of the process if not the decision itself, as well, perhaps, in some aspect of implementation. By giving the staff input into the decision-making process, she hypothesized that they, in effect, would share an invested interest in the outcome. She referred to the concrete example of the budget. "There were certain things I had to buy with the budget: consumables, texts, but there was a remainder of $5,000. I decided we would meet together as a staff and let the teachers decide the best way to spend the money." She rendered that staff input would result in less complaining and problems.

It was her experience that, because of this decision-making process, her staff immediately came to her defence whenever they heard a parent express a complaint or concern. "I always thought the rule was to be behind the teachers, but because of the way we got along, they stood behind me. Somehow the roles got reversed," she said pleased, but somewhat surprised at the outcome. In the retelling of another story it became apparent that Roberta had won the admiration and loyalty of the staff. It appears that one day, as the director and superintendent were walking through the school, she found that each teacher wanted to say something
nice about her to them.

On those occasions when she could not involve them in any part of the decision-making process, she still felt compelled to explain the reasons why in order to make them understand. In retrospect, she sensed this likely grew out of resentment she experienced as a teacher whenever her principal made a decision without giving reasons. "If they can't be involved in the decision, they should, at the very least, be involved in the explanation of why not...even if they agree to disagree, they're more apt to learn to live with it." Roberta discerned that the type of decision-making style she implemented proved successful for her in eliminating problems and contributing to good staff relations in the school.

Communication

"I spend the first forty minutes before the day starts, the two recesses and forty minutes after school in my office; the door is always open...that is the time for them (staff) to chat, ask questions, address concerns, get some help or assistance."

Roberta has adopted an open door policy that is designed to accommodate staff, students, and parents. Indeed, accommodation is the key word in the organization of her day. Board policy is adhered to in the scheduling of monthly mandatory meetings which are posted far in advance for staff.
It has been Roberta's experience that the most effective way of communicating with staff is to make herself available as much as possible. She spends the first forty minutes before school starts, both recesses and forty minutes after school ends in her office to informally address any concerns that they might have. "Teachers really appreciate having the time to talk confidentially and openly with me in an informal manner," she declared. She characterizes these meetings as being "very informal and very open." Beyond this arrangement she makes herself available any time she can be.

Of the 170 families that make up the school, she estimates that at least 150 of those have both parents working in a variety of jobs which do not coincide or permit them to come to the school during regular school hours. In accommodating these parents' requests for interviews, she arranges meetings during the evening hours. She confessed to toying with the idea of establishing an evening hour once a week for those parents who wished to drop in without an appointment.

The children are free to come in any time during the day if they feel the need to see her. This is simply done by telling the teacher they need to see her. She urges teachers who find a child hurting not to hesitate to find an excuse to send the child to see her. The child would be instructed to speak to her directly with a message that would clue Roberta into the problem.

Roberta's communication style was consistent with her
manner and appeared to be an extension of her values and the importance she placed on human relationships.

Curriculum

"If you don't get into the classrooms how do you know what's going on?"

Roberta expressed concern that office work could take up to three-quarters of her day leaving her little time to work at the things she liked to do. It was very obvious from the discussion that what Roberta liked to do best was teach. "I love teaching ...I don't know if I love being a principal...I know I love teaching."

Roberta's love of teaching was extremely evident not only by the exuberant way she talked about it but in the way she preserved it as a priority in her role of principal. At least three times during the school year she would gather the whole school in the gym and teach a lesson. She thought herself fortunate to be in a small school that would allow her to do this. Another priority was to get into the classrooms. Frequently, she would assume the role of the teacher and take over a lesson while she sent the teacher away on a break. She laughed at the fact that sometimes she had to solicit the help of the children in order to carry on, but that the children loved it. Roberta was very emphatic about this point. "If you don't get into the classrooms how do you know what is going on? Co-ordinators, consultants, or curriculum experts
can help; but you can't understand the problems and the needs of the students and the teachers unless you're there to experience it for yourself." The importance she put on teaching appeared to have aided her in clarifying her perceptions of the role of the principal as curriculum leader. So strong were her views that principals should be in the classrooms, that Roberta remarked that superintendents should check up on this to make sure it was being done. And how did the teachers feel about her visits? All of this was smoothly accomplished because she had clearly affirmed her teachers as "excellent qualified people" from the beginning. She told them that she was not in the classroom to spy on them, and she conceded she rarely evaluated her teachers. Roberta embraced the philosophy that all her teachers were excellent and highly qualified or else they would not be there. "It wasn't a case of prove to me your a good teacher but rather you would have to prove the reverse...you would have to prove to me that your not qualified." On the basis of her ability to make them understand the strength of that conviction, she found herself welcomed into the classrooms.

The Perceptions of Others

"I think I had to prove to parents that, as a woman, I was very competent and capable of running the school and taking care of their children."

Roberta's initiation into the role of principal was not
a smooth transition. She recalled being plagued the first couple of weeks at school by parent calls about lots of "piddly things" about which they would have not normally ever have complained. Comments such as "while you're new... you're a woman and you're young" would frequently confront her in the conversation. The underlying meaning of these she assumed was aimed at questioning her capability to handle the children without coming out and directly saying it.

"Parents see the principal as a male, about 45 years old," she declared. "They perceive that this type of person knows what they're doing and they can handle the child." Roberta has no doubt that she was being tested in those early weeks. As a result, on parents' night, when she felt they really came to check her out, she was not afraid to confront them. She asked them to give her two months. Then, if there was something that was happening in the school that they did not like, they were to come in and talk about it. She went on further to explain to them her education and her qualifications for the role. It appeared to be a turning point.

Her perceptions of those early weeks were substantiated by the fact that at the end of the year she was approached with comments like "you surprised us, you did a good job." Smilingly, she recalled how a parent came up to introduce her to the grandparents of a student. "'She's our principal - and she's a woman principal!' like I was some kind of creature from outer space." Roberta felt that it came as a surprise
only because they had decided "you couldn't be good because you were a woman".

Some of the staff's image of a female principal was coloured by their previous experiences. Roberta found it took a while to win them over, as she put it, "to see that all men principals aren't the same; there's good and bad, so it's the case with women." Because they had not had many women principals and because there were so few, she felt they tended to generalize. She paused for a moment, then reflected that she was uncertain why they did that to women but not to men. She divulged that it became her personal goal to establish good relations with the staff, to show them that not everyone was the same. Right from the beginning in the organization of her administration, she set out to welcome them, to provide them with a warm and open environment.

Roberta did not know how the kids felt about having a woman principal, but she received respect right from the very beginning. She had hoped they had come to see her primarily as a loving person. "This", she said, "is not to mean that I didn't get angry. They knew when I was upset or angry; they could see it in my posture...I would come into the classroom with my arms folded." The students were well aware that she did enforce disciplinary measures (detention, etc.), and she thought it important that they understood that there were consequences for their actions. "None of my discipline measures were ever challenged...throughout the whole year not one student ever challenged or confronted me." Roberta
ascertained that if they have seen you as a loving caring parent, they were more apt to accept the punishment and not to challenge you.

Roberta was adamant in her belief that she was perceived as an equal by her colleagues and senior administration. She spoke extremely highly of the board and administration with respect to the way they had treated and supported her through all the phases of her career development. "I can honestly say in this board, I never had a problem because I was a woman." She heaped equal praise on her male colleagues whom she felt accepted her and treated her as an equal. "I was just one of the guys, sort of speak," she interjected. Sometimes she socialized with a group of female principals, and other times she would find herself the only female amidst a group of male principals. "It was not a deliberate arrangement", she added, "to be part of one group or another; it would be something that came about spontaneously." She was aware that in the company of the male group the men became more conscious of their language and their jokes and would often apologize or hope they had not offended her. She appreciated this type of consideration and regarded it as an indicator of their respect and admiration for her. Besides, she liked the fact that men recognized her as a woman by gestures like opening doors and so forth. She saw nothing wrong in this.

At principals' meetings Roberta perceived her ideas and views were recognized and valued as just as important as anyone else. Often she found her colleagues would ask what
she thought of an idea not as woman but as someone new coming into the organization. She attributed that whatever contribution she made, it was always on the basis of her observations and experience not on the basis of being a woman.

Roberta feels she received a great deal of support from the director and her superintendent during her first year as a principal. They always took the opportunity to comment positively and displayed confidence in her ability to run the school. She was further bolstered by the offer of assistance by many of her male colleagues.

Roberta has experienced pressure from some of her female colleagues. One particular incident stood out vividly in her mind. At a principals' meeting she asked a male colleague if he would like a coffee. As she was bringing him a cup, she was approached by a female principal who began to chide her. "You don't have to be subservient to him," she cried. "You don't have to serve him his coffee!" Roberta resented that statement. She quickly retorted, "I'm bringing him coffee not because he's a male but because he's my friend."

Roberta was asked to join a group of women principals for monthly meetings. She did not accept the invitation; she says this was because she knew how she would resent it if the men principals were to form a group and hold monthly meetings without inviting her.

Guiding Metaphor

In talking about her role as principal, it became clear
that there is a guiding metaphor in Roberta's personal philosophy. One theme overwhelmingly emerged above all others. Roberta consciously chose the metaphor of a mother to describe her perceptions of the functions and interactions of her role. This is visible in the relationships she wishes to establish with the children. "I love to hug the children...they don't hesitate to come to me...I'm like another mom to them." Even the school environment is envisaged as a home. "I keep my school...very decorated, very clean, and very organized...very typical of the way mothers keep their home." The perception of school as a home espouses the idea of staff and students as a family. This view assumes a central importance in her modes of communication and decision making. Members of a family need not make appointments to see their mother; thus Roberta's priority in establishing an open door policy is very much in keeping with the extremes to which she goes to accommodate both staff and students who wish to see her. "The door is always open...meetings are very informal...very open...children are free to come in any time during the day whenever they feel they need to."

In invoking a family relationship, it follows naturally that the school household has input into the decision-making process. This is deemed essential if the school family is to get along and flourish.

The deliberate attempt at creating a home-like atmosphere and a loving family relationship serves another purpose. It
solicits a type of acceptable behaviour that is commonly associated with good homes. Roberta sees that behaviour as one of family pride, discipline, respect for property and the rights of others, and the respect of authority. One readily recognizes these as the traditional values of family life, and this I believe to be the essence of Roberta's philosophy that gives meaning to her goal of establishing a happy school which she equates as a successful school.

Personal Themes

The Importance of Teaching

Roberta, first and foremost, thinks of herself as a teacher. This has been a prominent theme and focus in her life. While she conceded that you had to do paper office work she was adamant in the view that you had to be "a good teacher before you can be a good principal. My whole job is teaching; I'm teaching teachers; I'm teaching parents; I'm teaching children." Roberta insisted that she applied the same techniques and ran her school exactly the same way she ran her classroom. "Just as you had to manage problems, be enthusiastic, motivate, discipline, and give positive reinforcement, you use the same techniques in managing a school." She does not believe the responsibilities she had as a teacher are any different than the responsibilities she has now, but she readily agrees you touch more lives. One remains assured that teaching will always be a major focus for
Roberta throughout her career.

Femininity

Roberta is very much her own person; that person, however, appears to be very feminine, although whether she realized it or not is unclear. It is not something that she dwells on as she is too busy being an educator. Still, femininity permeates her leadership style, which is characterized by a caring form of power. In the revelations of her experiences I came to understand how much that style capitalizes on the strengths of her own natural feminine traits.

She did see being a woman as an advantage in that it allowed her to do many things men could not do because of the restrictions imposed upon them by the traditional thinking of society. "You do tend to think of things differently." She clarified this with an example of how she paid special attention to details in the preparation of staff luncheon. "It was important that everything went right...that everyone left on a positive note." She did not think most men would concern themselves with those kind of details. "Staff notices, people notice; and when they care enough to comment positively, it obviously made a difference." Moreover, she regarded feminine traits as compatible with the role and as having a positive impact. This is understandable in light of the fact that she views her role as that of a teacher and teaching is traditionally viewed as a feminine profession.
Roberta felt she had a successful first year as a principal. She is not alone in this view, for it is shared by senior administration, her colleagues, teachers, students, and the community itself. It has been rare to have found such a consensus of opinion among these diversified groups.

In a recent conversation the director of education remarked that her appointment was one of the best decisions ever made, and he praised her for having successfully managed to turn a whole school around in one year. It has also been my experience while in the company of other principals and teachers to hear equally high accolades accompany the mention of her name.

Roberta's staff regarded her as a joy to work with, and the community response to her first year of administration was highly positive. And good news travels fast, for I encountered numerous teachers and parents who had also heard about her good reputation. Some teachers were impressed enough to talk about the possibility of seeking a transfer to her school and parents whose children were located out of the school boundary talked about the possibility of sending their children to her school.

Do the differences make a difference? One can readily conclude that Roberta's success as an administrator can be attributed to her perception and feminization of the role. However, it may well be important to Roberta, as with some other female administrators, to avoid addressing the question
as originally posed in this interview. I sense that it is not so much a concern with being different or acknowledging the differences that is problematic, rather it is the difficulty that ensues from being so labelled. "Different is often accompanied by a judgement of better or worse." Roberta is not hung up on gender, but being the best woman principal in the system as some have labelled her could likely be perceived as less preferable than being designated the best principal. The descriptor for many still denotes the idea of being second best.
Rebecca

"To be an effective administrator you must be real. A woman must like herself and be herself."

(Porat, 1985, p. 301)

Although she is only 45 years of age, Rebecca may well be termed a veteran of the school system with twenty-six years of educational experience to her credit. Currently a principal in an elementary Catholic school, she oversees a student population of approximately 266 students from JK to 8. Rebecca has been an administrator for six years and a principal for four years. Her appointment at the age of 41 to a principalship came as no surprise to those who were aware of her many skills and talents. Previous to being an administrator, Rebecca was a physical education and arts consultant. During her thirteen years as a consultant, Rebecca built up a strong reputation as an extremely efficient, highly organized, and creative person.

Rebecca kindly accepted my invitation to be interviewed with little reservation. At her request we agreed to conduct the first interview at a local restaurant close to her school as she said she so seldom had the opportunity to get out of the school. This setting was a departure from my other interviews which were conducted in the principal's office. Rebecca chose the restaurant. It was a good decision, for besides increasing the comfort level, it also gave me the opportunity to see the other side of Rebecca, the bubbly, fun-
loving and witty person who few people outside of her staff and students know. She is generally regarded by my colleagues as a strong outspoken person. Because of her skills, verbal fluency, and command of the English language, some of my colleagues have expressed that they become very uneasy and intimidated in her presence. Yet, these are the same colleagues who refer to her as the ultimate professional.

I have known Rebecca professionally for many years and have always been somewhat amazed at her timeless face, which absolutely does not give any revelation of her age. The woman just does not seem to get any older. During one point in the conversation, Rebecca referred to herself as a "short, dumpy, cutesy person in the office." I was somewhat startled. This was neither my own nor my associates' perception of the person. No one I knew had ever described her as such. However, as she left the restaurant I became acutely aware of the fact that she was indeed short or at least shorter than myself. Priding myself as a keen observer, I wondered why I had never noticed this before. I concluded my image of her has always been that of a very knowledgeable articulate woman who organized creative and innovative curriculum workshops, the woman behind the podium who facilitated leadership training workshops. Thus, in my view, Rebecca's manner and presence were so impressive that it rendered her the appearance and stature of a much taller person.

Rebecca briefly discussed her background. She had entered education as a result of economic restraint. Her
brother was given the opportunity to go to college because her family deemed it more important that a boy be educated than a girl as he was more likely to be the provider. There was no encouragement from her family to further her education. Since it was cheaper to go to teachers' college and because her group of high school friends were going, she decided to go as well. There was, in Rebecca's case, no planned pursuit of career in education.

Rebecca appeared very comfortable during the interview. She spoke honestly and candidly. Knowing her reputation I had expected her to be so, but it is always refreshing and somewhat surprising when someone lives up to your expectations.

During the course of the interview, it became apparent that Rebecca had never given much thought to her gender and its impact and effect on her role as principal. It seems that few busy women rarely do. Nevertheless, as Rebecca related her experiences and the dialogue unfolded, one specific gender trait - one that she herself regarded as feminine - attention to detail - gives insight and dramatically reveals the impact it has on her role.

Rebecca could not respond and wavered on the question of differences in role perception. In fact, she did not answer if being a woman in the role were an advantage or a disadvantage because, as she expressed it, "I never think of myself as a woman principal. Very basically I just think of myself as a principal doing all these things that have to be
done. The work is there, I see and I do. The only time it really hits home that I am a woman in the role is when the mail carrier comes or the Xerox repair man looks at me and my secretary and they ask, 'Where's the principal?' They think I'm the secretary and they get very confused when they see the two of us. They can't figure it out at all." There are other times, too. At least ten times during the school year she becomes acutely conscious of the fact that she is a woman in the role when a disagreement has occurred about a child. She will be confronted with the statement "I'm going to bring my husband in." This she comprehends as meaning that it's going to take a man to tell you off lady and to put you in your place.

During her first challenging year as a principal she recalled one episode when a tall, angry father, a policemen, confronted her in her office. "He came in with the idea that he was going to tell this lady how to do her job. He kept touching my arm, pointing his finger at me and waving his arms as though I was a child. He kept telling me what my job was and why we paid our taxes. Finally, I told him if that finger comes near my arm again I'm going to bite it off. He stopped and he looked embarrassed and he put the finger away. I can't see him tapping a male principal in the arm and shaking a finger at him or even talking down to him like that."

Regardless of her perceptions and whether she realizes it or not, Rebecca is a woman in the role. In actuality, it is precisely the attribute that she regards as specifically
feminine that permeates her role. It is the care for detail, the desire to provide security and the need for everything to be right that dominates the school environment and solicits high expectations and standards from both students and staff. Although she referenced herself as "Miss Fuss Budget" and "fussy" she appeared unaware of the influence and impact this feminine trait made on her administrative role. Moreover, she did not discern how the effect of this trait on her daily practices differed her from the practices of her male colleagues. However, she did comment that she had inherited two schools from male principals that required complete reorganization. Just as quickly she qualified her statement declaring that she did not believe that all male principals are disorganized.

Interestingly enough, in describing her, the use of feminine descriptors is absent in terms of reference used by my colleagues and by some who have served on her staff. She has been labelled as an exemplary leader, an excellent manager and organizer, the ultimate professional. Terms that have not been prefaced by gender connotation. I have heard references to other women principals denoted with phrases such as "She's a good woman principal" or referenced as "She's a good female administrator." Some of them have been falsely accused of attaining their positions as token women. But never has anyone accused or designated Rebecca as a "token woman". Without question, there is consensus among male and female teachers that she got the job on qualifications and hard work.
Rebecca's Reflections

Feminine Traits

"I believe I have a very good intuitive sense. I think I can read body language and know how things are going over. I am very much aware of body language."

When Rebecca was asked if she thought she perceived the role of principal differently than a man, she replied that she felt having never been a man that she could not respond to the question; however, she did think that there was a difference in the way men and women organized things. "Women," she observed, "tend to the fine details on projects. Men will think globally; they think they are organized, but they can't project how it's going to run, and they don't account for anything going wrong. Women will try to project all the possible pitfalls. They will account for everything that might go wrong and build into their plan what factors they feel are needed to insure that things won't go wrong."

Rebecca could only surmise that perhaps this trait was related to women's self-image. "Women feel that nothing must go wrong on this project." She continued, "Women are very organized and have a fine eye for details. I see this concern for detail as a female trait, not all women possess it, but generally they do." When pressed for a concrete example, Rebecca recalled that when she was P.D. Chairman, she delegated sub-committees for planning for speakers, dinner arrangements, etc. When the various committee chairmen
reported back to her, she told them to anticipate all the possible problems that might occur under their jurisdiction and be prepared for these. "I do that with my staff or any committee; I tell them: How are you going to account for that? What will be your alternate plan?"

When asked what particular feminine traits she brought to her role, Rebecca responded that she thought she had a good sense of intuition, an ability to read and to respond to situations in an empathetic manner. "I believe I have a very good intuitive sense, I think I can read body language and know how things are going over and I am very much aware of body language." As a result of this trait she believed that she was keenly aware of her school environment and staff morale. Being intuitive made her cognizant of staff needs and allowed her to be supportive emotionally and empathetically toward staff. "The staff is of prime importance, as is my relationship with them," she noted. "I know when staff are down. I know when the staff needs a jolt. I say let's go out for a drink or go bowling."

On a recent P.D. day for example, when the topic had been on family violence, staff were bombarded with information. After such a heavy topic she deemed it necessary to provide an informative but more relaxing afternoon in order for staff to lighten up from their draining morning experience.

Rebecca is also very aware of the pressures and stresses of the teacher's role, and she provides opportunity for staff to relax. "You are aware of the need to give them little
perks, and every perk you give them, they return and give back to you double." She recalled how at the beginning of the year she had laid ground rules for the staff room. She told staff, "It's a place to relax; you don't want a break to talk about the kids or the problems. You don't want to hear about somebody's bad kid. I told staff, 'If you got a problem see me. We will have a team meeting or a conference about it.' That is a professional way of doing it!' Rebecca felt that this had made quite a difference in the atmosphere of the staff room.

Rebecca did not know if bluntness was a feminine trait, but she said it was certainly one of her traits. She recalled a recent interview between a parent and a first year teacher to depict what she meant by bluntness. "I didn't take sides. In my desire to open up honest communication I was blunt with both parties." After the interview the relieved teacher told her how much he appreciated that she had been there and the way she had conducted the meeting.

Rebecca does not believe in beating around the bush. "If I have something to say I say it." She recalled how on one occasion her staff was talking it up to a staff from another school with reference to her saying "she always knows where she stands on things; you don't have to guess or figure out where she's coming from." Rebecca referred to this approach as being straightforward. "If I think things are not working around the school, I will be blunt. I will say I don't like this, let's stop it, or let's find other ways to deal with it.
Staff knows exactly where your coming from. I address issues right up front." And what kind of reaction does that get? "Sometimes staff are taken back, but invariably someone will say I'm glad you said it because I think so too. It definitely gets people opening up and talking." On the strength of her own convictions, Rebecca felt she could be blunt and do it that way because, as she put it, "I can do that because I feel very confident in something I feel very strongly about. I don't do it often, but I do it if there's no way around it."

Decision Making

"I really think it is to the benefit of all to have a strong staff of decision makers...I believe they (staff) are personally enhanced if they do assume leadership."

At the very onset of the school year, Rebecca has told her staff that there are some decisions that they will make on their own and they do not have to tell her. Some they will have to ask about before they can make a decision. Others she will have to make because she is an administrator, and there will be no questions entertained about these decisions. These decisions concerned board policy or safety decisions. "I know teachers are entitled to a 45 minute lunch; however, if it rains outside and the kids are wreaking havoc, and where and when the safety of the children are involved, the bell will
ring and there will be no complaining about it." This type of a decision was not made without providing support for the teacher. Each teacher was given a package of resources containing suggestions, activities, and indoor games for rainy days to occupy students. "If I come down hard on anything I always back it up with support or a follow-up."

If she has to make a decision that she feels will affect teachers in a strong way, she will seek input. But Rebecca is very time conscious and, therefore, does not believe in the whole staff becoming involved in every decision. This she feels would be an unnecessary, slow process. Often she will delegate committees and solicit volunteers to sign up in the interest of saving time.

Rebecca has strong views on designating responsibility. "I really think it is to the benefit of all to have a strong staff of decision makers." While she will offer her support and assistance when necessary she will not make decisions for staff when she feels they are quite capable of making decisions themselves. She is amused at how often staff will come to ask her about some silly or insignificant thing. With a well-raised eyebrow she tells them to make an executive decision and inevitably they will walk away. "I want them to participate," she resolves. "As teachers, staff makes about two hundred decisions a day. 'Surely', I tell them, 'you can make a decision on that issue.'"

As part of her belief in designating responsibility, staff are invited to volunteer for a number of committees that
will be required throughout the school year. Rebecca gives staff titles with each endeavour they undertake. These include titles such as Convener of Remembrance Day Activities, Co-ordinator of Field Day Events, and so forth. This allocates status to the position of responsibility. If the designated convener approaches her with a Can-I-do-this? question, she immediately replies, "You are the co-ordinator. This is your baby, you decide. It has other advantages too," she laughed. "When someone comes to complain, I tell them to speak to the Co-ordinator."

Rebecca concedes that in designating responsibility you have to accept that the outcomes will not be perfect. She realizes on these occasions that you have to be flexible and set aside your own standards of expectation. "It might be less than perfect but primarily you have to think of it as a training task. The worst thing to do is to delegate and then tell them how to do it. They know it's a 'joe job'. When you confer status you can't defer status." Thus, she prefers to play a background role providing guidance but making sure that the teacher is visually in charge.

Summing up her feelings, Rebecca stated, "I really want them to take more responsibility in management. That is effective for a staff to do now, to develop good decision making skills and leadership experiences. I don't want to do it all," she stated emphatically, "because I want the school to run well when I'm not there. I think they are personally enhanced if they do assume leadership."
Curriculum Leader

"They see you as caring and being there for them to help them solve problems and get out of messes if the need should arise."

Rebecca reiterated the views of many of her colleagues when she interpreted her perceptions on being the curriculum leader. Like the other participants, she too expressed her concern for finding the time to do this aspect of the role. As curriculum leader, she stressed the importance of being visible in the school. For Rebecca this means spending the afternoons interacting with teachers and students. The significance of these visits is seen as creating a sense of security in both staff and students. "They see you as caring and being there for them to help them solve problems and get out of messes if the need should arise. It also means showing interest in the things they are doing and suggesting ideas for teachers. You develop a sense of unity and leadership in the staff by actively becoming involved. By asking, suggesting, participating and extending freedom to teachers you encourage staff to take risks and try new things."

Communication

"I don't beat around the bush if I have something to say...I tend to be blunt...straight forward."

Rebecca characterized her communication style as being
direct. She holds regular tight staff meetings as she typifies them that are of one hour in duration. Being time conscious she likes to address issues candidly and directly, bluntly but honestly. By speaking straightforward and speaking her mind, she feels teachers are more appreciative, and it is more apt to make for more meaningful dialogue and encourage the exchange of ideas. In the interest of time, she does not feel long discussions should take place about determinations; she would rather not hear staff carry on arguments about various issues. Regardless of the point being discussed or the fact that not everyone who wishes to has had opportunity for input, she will announce when the time is up that the meeting is over, and she will not entertain any further discussion. She solicits feedback from her teachers on various matters and indicated that she organizes her staff meetings based on the reaction from some of her teacher friends from other staffs. When they tell her how poorly or disorganized their staff meetings are, she uses this type of information to make certain those types of situations and errors do not occur at her meetings.

Rebecca maintains an open door policy for teachers and kids when they feel they need to talk to her personally. Bimonthly newsletters are sent home to keep the community informed about school events. These newsletters are shared with other principals and contribute to the development and exchange of ideas.

Parents can drop in for interviews as well, but she
discourages this practice at her first meeting with parents in September. "I tell them that, in order to give them the proper time and attention they deserve for their concerns or problems, they should call the office and set up an appointment. Often a parent will arrive at your door and ask for five minutes of your time and that short meeting extends to 45 minutes or an hour." She also accommodates parents with evening appointments.

Rebecca feels that she, like all principals, spends a great deal of her time in counselling and conducting social work. Parents will stop in to tell her that they have just been evicted and have no where to go or a mother will tell her that she is undergoing separation and this might account for changes in the child's work or behaviour at school. They want to know what they should do. She feels that the ever-increasing demand for counselling and social work has added a new dimension to the role of principal.

Perception of Others

"Females see me as a principal and males see me as the top teacher."

Rebecca believes that male and female parents perceive her differently. She referred to this as an inner feeling, something that was subtle and hard to define. "Women share more with you. Mothers will tell you a lot. We have a better understanding of each other because of our personal histories
as women." She felt that women more readily accepted her as an authoritative figure, whereas men did not. She reflected on feedback she had received on a curriculum night when she was approached by a mother who remarked on what an effective public speaker Rebecca had been. "Even my husband was impressed," the woman added. While a number of females complimented her on public speaking ability, she was never approached by a single male.

It has also been her observation that fathers do not refer to her by name, whereas women addressed her by name and not just her title as principal. After pausing and reflecting on the matter she offered her view, "Females see me as a principal and males see me as the top teacher."

Rebecca conceded that she did not see many males during the year. More often it was women who came to her with their concerns about their child or sought direction. As a group, she felt the males did not defer to the position in any sense, and it was females who provided her with the community's reaction.

The staff, Rebecca perceives, sees her as one of the guys, someone with a good sense of humour with whom they can socialize, laugh, and be an equal. "They know I can be a lot of fun, and I try to be helpful by providing both time and resources for them. They also probably see me as 'fussy'. This is another gender trait I am very particular about: details in the school. I am also likely viewed as resourceful and a determined decision-maker."
With a broad smile, Rebecca stated that she thought the students viewed her as someone to play with, particularly J.K. students. From previous conversations I have had with her, it has been obvious she enjoys the little ones as she would often share some anecdote about some child from her school I had taught or referenced. "I think they find me approachable; they are not afraid of me. They respect the role and I draw from it."

She conceded setting high standards and expectations for her students. "I am very demanding - another female trait. I am particular about grammar...I expect good manners, proper behaviour and speech, and proper acknowledgement of staff. I don't let anything go by. I'm a real fuss budget about these types of things. I see all these little things like how the school appears as important. I view it as an extension of my house where things are orderly and people behave in that place and they know how to treat each other."

Rebecca augments her expectations with positive reinforcement for good behaviour and admits to continually expounding her expectations time and time again: "I just don't tolerate anything less. I just don't let anything go. I find if you do, it's going to become pervasive." By not letting anything go she means stopping whatever she is doing at the time and immediately correcting or remedying the situation. She surmised as a result of this, the expected behaviour followed.

Persistent reminders of high expectations coupled with
positive reinforcements appear to have achieved its purpose, for Rebecca has received many positive comments about the children's behaviour. At plays or assemblies or when the children were gathered for masses, the priest and the parents would always remark on the good behaviour of the children.

The community, she felt, saw her as one who cares about their children, someone who liked to hug the children. This opinion, in my view, was substantiated because I recalled a time when I stopped at the school to deliver a memo. I remembered seeing Rebecca on a bench outside her office hugging and comforting a small, sick student while awaiting his mother.

The concern for staff and students was also voiced when Rebecca talked about her resentment of paperwork and what she felt were unreasonable demands made by administration early in the school year. She expressed being overwhelmed by these demands like a mother at a time when her charges needed her the most. She disliked putting the teachers and kids, the priority she cares for the most, on hold in order to meet administrative demands.

She laughed when I asked what she thought her peers thought of her. "Another principal in a neighbouring school amiably refers to me as the perfect principal", she mused. She continued, "My peers see me as someone organized, verbal, articulate; and they show me respect." She admitted she experienced a special kinship with her female peers which she felt arose out of a need. As an affirmative action
representative, she carried a heavy responsibility and has served as a mentor to many women in the system who now hold positions of responsibility. She spoke with pride as she recalled how nine of those she had assisted had attained their goals. Her pride appears valid since it is a well known fact in the system that many a successful candidate, which includes males as well as females, has come up through Rebecca's training program and informal peer coaching. The women continue to network and socially they still get together to bring in guest speakers and lend each other support.

Rebecca's countenance became more serious when she talked about senior administration. After what seemed to be a rather lengthy and reflective pause she spoke. "They see me as competent, vocal, and occasionally a trouble maker. I'm regarded as someone who speaks well, presents a good case, and thinks quickly." As one superintendent put it "While others are still pondering the question Rebecca has the answers."

She divulged that at times she could be flippant and disrespectful. She elaborated on the topic. These are the times as she phrased it when she was fed up, times when she becomes impatient and emotional over playing the game. Playing the game, I assumed to mean unnecessary delays or "jumping through the hoops" as she put it. She emphatically declared her sentiment, "I deplore inefficiency and wasted human potential."

Rebecca felt she received little encouragement from senior staff. After the superintendent had visited her school
for a week, his only comment to her was that she ran a tight ship. Rebecca did not know whether to interpret this as a positive or negative commentary, and she was visibly disappointed that after a week of observation that this was all he chose to say.

Guiding Metaphor

During the course of the interview, Rebecca frequently referred to her preoccupation with details, often referring to herself as "Miss Fuss Budget". It was, therefore, easy to assign her a metaphor which she already accepted about herself. In a real sense Rebecca consciously chose this metaphor to describe her perceptions of herself, and it is explicitly embedded in her professional role as administrator. Being "fussy" as she calls it really determines and sets the expectations and behaviour for both staff and students. Rebecca meticulousness might positively be translated as the search for excellence and perfection. It is recognizable in the statements "I just can't let anything go" or "I can't stand chaos or any kind of disorganization." It is apparent to all of those who have had the opportunity to work with her on staff or on various committees. The search for perfection is manifested in the extremes which she undertakes to make sure the perspective of every enterprise is explored and scrutinized to insure that nothing goes wrong. And it is unmistakably recognized by the outsider.

It transpired on one occasion that I had the opportunity
to sit down with a staff during lunch. The topic was a recently posted position of responsibility. The woman leaving the post had been promoted to the position of superintendent. She had been highly proficient in her role and had a well-earned reputation as being a workaholic. "Who's going to replace her?" inquired one staff member. "Two men," jokingly responded another. One of the males at the table who had been designated by staff as the resident male chauvinist chuckled and surprisingly concurred, "You're probably right." "There's only one person who has the qualifications for that assignment," asserted another staff member, and she mentioned Rebecca's name. Everybody around the table nodded in mutual agreement.

One of the male members began to disclose how he had served on a committee with Rebecca. Each of the committee members, he related, was requested to come back to the meeting with some ideas. He came back with a few ideas but Rebecca presented a hundred ideas at the meeting to everyone's astonishment. "She was remarkable. I would really like to work for her someday," he said. "Well a lot of her staff speaks highly of her," quoted another. "Not me," spoke up a lone female dissenter. "She's too demanding. She makes me feel uneasy." The bell rang and the discussion ended on that note.
Personal Themes

The Importance of Details

I have had, in the course of my role and throughout my many years in education, the opportunity to teach in many school settings. Rebecca's school is exceptional in its appearance. During the two weeks I had taught there I concluded that there was, in my opinion, no neater more organized school in the system. No debris in the hallways, no tattered boarders or faded bulletin boards. Every piece of student work is beautifully and artistically displayed and every bulletin board bears a designer touch. Student work is displayed with pride.

Amazingly enough her teachers appear to share this same characteristic. Each classroom you enter has a warm, pleasant and artistic setting. Did Rebecca succeed in recruiting a staff of perfectionists? Creative, artistic people with the same care for detail? It is more probable that she has succeeded in projecting her priorities for what she believes is a successful school on staff. And she has had no less of an influence on the students' performance and behaviour. Having closely scrutinized the poems displayed on the wall, they are not only aesthetically pleasing to the eye but also reveal proper spelling and grammar. I have sat alone on more than one occasion in that staff room structured like many others but with a significant difference. This one is highly organized. Papers lie in neat piles before the ditto machine;
memos to teachers, current system information, and social events duty rosters are hung neatly under respective titles on the uncluttered walls. The coffee pot is clean and so is the staff refrigerator and stove! I had observed and reflected on this staff room phenomenon and this school environment long before I had ever embarked on this thesis. All of this has not gone unnoticed. Rebecca has received many compliments from parents and school volunteers on the appearance of her school. The superintendent has also noticed, for he addressed a letter to staff complimenting and thanking them for creating such a nice inviting environment for the children. There is little doubt that Rebecca's school is very much a reflection of the person in the office.

The importance of detail exhibited in her administration is precisely in keeping with Rebecca's philosophy about a successful school which she equates as a place where people are happy. She spoke further on this point. "Happy, in the sense of being satisfied, the parents, the teachers, and the children. If there is not contentment in the school I sense it. I get upset, I want to get to the bottom of it and look at the cause. I don't believe in band-aid solutions. Things have got to go right." Right consists of high staff morale, an insistence on high expectations and standards and an inviting attractive environment. Using this criteria one can assess that things are indeed going right in Rebecca's school.
The Quest For Satisfaction

Rebecca gave insight into her personality and convictions when she talked about herself and her role. "I have more expectations everyday. If a day goes by without stress I wonder why? I do not ride on my coattails. I get bored easily." At least three times during the year she has assemblies just to do something creative and innovative and she keeps a good idea book. "I do like change. I find it challenging...and motivating" and she finds herself constantly initiating change with teachers and students. Rebecca confessed to never being content in the role. Not unhappy, she clarified, "I am just never satisfied."

As a person who likes change and challenge, I was surprised when she revealed that she was not seeking to attain a higher position. Everyone has always tagged her as superintendent material. With a hint of bitterness in her voice she talked about her career aspirations.

Unlike Roberta, Rebecca at one time had thought of becoming a superintendent, but after two unsuccessful attempts in seeking different job positions she felt there was a hidden message. She interpreted this underlying message to be that she was not wanted, and she felt she had never received any encouragement to pursue her goals. As well, she felt it important that I understood that it was not lack of encouragement, however, that prevented her from abandoning her original goal. "I have to be creative. I have to be able to make a difference. The superintendent's role has become so
administrative and political that I would stagnate. If I tried to change the role bringing my own perspective I would be fighting everyday. My view of the role would be interpreted by others as not being a team player." Given that she had attained an excellent education and a professional administrative position without any encouragement from her family I found it difficult to believe that a person with Rebecca's strong qualifications, personality, motivation and ambition would defer her goals because of a lack of encouragement. I could, however, appreciate and sympathize with her view that it would be impossible for her to assume any job that would not be compatible with her essential qualities allowing her to remain her own person.

It is obvious that Rebecca has a wealth of untapped talents and skills, and I cannot believe with her need for change and the desire for challenge that she would remain happy in the same role over an extended period of time.

As I wrote this paper I found myself speculating what heights or position she might have attained if she had entered any other profession or a business career congruous with her skills and with direction and positive encouragement. I have little doubt that whatever it would have been, Rebecca would now be Chairman of the Board, insisting on and making sure every detail was going just right.
Catherine

"Effective principals are concerned with promoting student cognitive growth and happiness above all else. Effective principals are exceptionally clear about this priority with all those whom they have contact."

(Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986 p. 226)

Catherine is currently principal of an elementary Catholic school with a student population of 494 pupils from JK-8. She has been an administrator for eight years serving six of those years as a principal and two years as a vice principal. Catherine became a principal at the age of 42 bringing to the role an impressive background that included nine years as Language Arts and Communications Consultant at both the primary and junior levels. As well, she has experienced 10 years as a special education teacher and has also taught reading courses at York University. In all, Catherine brings to the role twenty-five years of educational expertise.

Catherine kindly accepted my invitation to be interviewed and it is noteworthy that she was the only one to inquire as to how I was going to explore the difference factor. After a brief discussion of my research problem, it was agreed that we would meet at her school.

We met at Catherine's school on a very cold winter evening. I detected that a six o'clock appointment was not an unusually late hour to find her still working in her
school. In the course of the interview, I ascertained that long days were a common experience, corroborating her reputation of being a dedicated hard worker. On this occasion she appeared tired, and I was appreciative of the fact that she was so willing to make time to see me. However, finding and making time for people I observed is very characteristic in keeping with her form of caring leadership.

Catherine is an attractive 48-year-old woman who is, in my opinion, always appears impeccable in both her manner and attire. Her femininity is emphasized by her very soft spoken voice, pleasant and extremely courteous manner which denotes a demeanour of feminine grace and charm. Its immediate effect is to make one feel entirely comfortable, accepted but alert to one's own sense of etiquette. Like the other participants I have interviewed, I have known Catherine for many years on a professional basis and was well aware of her educational abilities. The dialogue, nevertheless, provided me with insight not only into her perceptions but into the personality, warmth, and humour of the person that had not been privy to me before. I appreciated the openness and sincerity with which she spoke throughout the discussion, and I sensed a feeling of trust had been placed in me for her to have consented to discuss her role.

Catherine briefly discussed her background. As one of six children, she selected to enter education for economic reasons. A post-high school education in teaching was less costly than attaining a university education. After having
become a teacher, she later attained her university degree and mentioned that she had attended a Catholic high school and a Catholic university. The mention of this fact I later assumed was indication of commitment to the ideals of Catholic philosophy that weighed heavily on her role as an educator. She remembered receiving a great deal of support and encouragement, particularly from her mom, to pursue a career in education. Her family valued education and shared the view that education was a worthy aspiration. Catherine recalled that as a student she had enjoyed school and had been a very highly motivated learner and successful pupil. Thus, there was nothing in her background to suggest that she would not enjoy a career in education which would likely be an extension of that happy experience. Indeed, Catherine confessed to being happy in her role recommending the job to other women who were not afraid to work hard and who enjoyed the challenge of being a problem solver.

At the beginning of the interview I asked Catherine if she thought she perceived her role as a principal differently than a man. She responded that she felt that some men have a different perspective of the role. She proceeded to explain that difference in terms of the designated label one assigned to one's self in the role. "If you view your role as curriculum leader, leadership is characterized by a view of motivating staff, being responsible to set the tone or agenda for the school. Some men," she continued, "oversee the school strictly as an administrator and not in a leadership capacity."
In some schools the teachers provide the leadership." The distinctions in style noted here and other differences were further enlightened upon as Catherine's account unfolded to reveal her as a curriculum leader.

Catherine was the first participant I had encountered who seemed to be more aware of the fact that she was a female in the role, and she recognized readily how she perceived her role differently than some males. In describing the feminine gender traits she brought to the role, she frequently touched upon her philosophy which centred on the care and well being of the children entrusted to her care often drawing comparisons to her male counterparts perception of their role. The role of the principal as a mere administrator or authoritarian is adamantly rejected in her view. Her caring attitude and the concern for details expressed in the organization and interactions with students, staff, and community are aspects that have been addressed throughout the interview.

Catherine viewed being a woman in the role as having a distinct advantage. She believed that the patience and the time she devoted to the children as part of her caring attitude were appreciated by the parents. As a result "they see you as understanding, willing to take the time. They develop a sense that you really care how the kids are raised." Because of her attitude she felt that the parents were open and honest with her. She interpreted it as "a trust that had been formed which makes them feel comfortable with you and
which allows them to divulge their problems and concerns which they might not otherwise do."

Conversely, being a woman was sometimes viewed as disadvantageous when relating to staff because as a woman she felt staff was either "for you or against you." Part of the reason for this, she indicated, was that staff had already formulated opinions about women. She cited the custodian as an example of someone who had preconceived notions about women. "This man wanted to have power over women. He lay claim to what he regarded as his territorial rights. It was necessary for staff to seek his permission to use resources even for such small thing as a glue gun." Catherine disliked this male chauvinist attitude toward herself and staff. Confrontation with the custodian emerged over other incidents, eventually escalating to a full-blown power struggle. She was not prepared to back down. She continued, "One of the goals of the P.T.A. was to restore cleanliness to the school. We all get paid for the job, and you are expected to do the job well. You make known your expectations from that person." It was apparent that the custodian felt, even though she was the principal, she had no jurisdiction over him and his role.

Catherine also felt that some male teachers experienced difficulty relinquishing power to a female or working under her control. She mentioned the conflict where she disagreed with a male teacher's disciplinary action. After counselling him, she requested that he make an apology to the student. "Men don't like to be corrected by women" and as a result of
that incident she felt there prevailed an attitude of resentment on the part of the teacher that suggested he was out to get her.

Catherine's Reflections

Gender Traits

"I want to nurture the attitude that I care. I am interested in them, and I am there to help them. I feel that's so important. I am not an authoritarian type of person...still you can gain their respect."

When asked what specific gender traits she felt she brought to the role of principal, Catherine quickly responded, "I think there are two that stand out in my view: Looking after the details-making sure everything is planned and works well at the school-making things special for all." She further elaborated what she meant by "making things special for all". She would always make sure there was coffee and cookies available for after school staff or P.T.A. meetings. "I don't think men notice or concern themselves about all these types of little things. I feel it makes a difference. It takes that extra ten to fifteen minutes to do that, but I think it shows the parents and teachers you really care, and it shows appreciation of staff and a recognition of their needs. It's a small thing, having coffee available for parents and visitors...I guess its part of my caring attitude
too. I care about the teachers. I care about the children." She started to laugh, "I have been accused of providing too much ice for kids." She quickly cleared up my confusion. "Teachers say 'Why do you give out so much ice?'" The intimation being that unless they should be seriously injured she should just disregard or send them away. "Students frequently appear at my door. If they bang their head or their finger or something or other, I like to look after them myself until things are straightened out." Catherine views this as an opportunity for the children to see that she cares about them enough to warrant her time and personal attention. "I think the child thinks 'the principal really cares about me.'" She again referenced how this differentiated her from her male colleagues. "I don't know if men would do that as frequently as I would do it. I just feel its part of my role as well." She cited another example. "If I'm in the hall and a child happens to come along with a problem I look after that child myself unless of course I'm in a meeting. I don't let the secretary do these things."

Moreover, she believes that this caring attitude should also be conveyed to the staff. "If I know that there is a staff member who is not feeling well, I make sure I get up to see that teacher, if not in the next hour or two, sometime during the day. If I can't make it during the day, I make sure I get there the next day, probably before class starts to check to see how she or he is doing and if I can help them in any way." Catherine emphasized making personal contact
deeming it a very important element of her role. "I do that even with the children. I do take the time, and I know a lot of my colleagues can't be bothered. They would buzz a classroom and have kids sent down. "If I think a child may be the least bit upset or worried because I buzzed them from the office I'll take the time to go to the classroom to talk to the child and make sure they are comfortable. If there is a call from a parent or a problem, I don't want to centre that child out, and I don't want the teacher to centre that child out either, so I'll just walk in the classroom, talk to a few of the children and eventually approach the child I want to talk to." She continued, "I don't want to make a big issue out of it. I don't want to centre the child out. I want to get to know the kids. Personal contact is important. If they have been sent to me for misdemeanors, I take the time to get to know each one of them. I want to know how that child is feeling, and I take the time however long it takes me to sort out the child's problem."

Catherine very rarely ever raises her voice to a child unless she found out previously, in fact, that was the method that was found most effective to communicate to the child. A harsh voice and manner seemed hardly compatible to her soft spoken style. "I found," she claimed, "that a reasonable normal manner is a far better way to get through to children rather than shouting or screaming." She recalled an episode when several girls were standing outside her office waiting to see her. She noticed that one of them appeared very
anxious and worried. Catherine was called away for a brief moment and when she returned she found the group attempting to calm and comfort the distressed student. Apparently this student had never been sent to the principal's office before. The girls commented to Catherine that they had been trying to calm her fears. They attempted to reassure her that she did not have to worry, referring to Catherine's reputation as a caring person. Eventually the problem got sorted out and everything was solved between the friends and to everyone's satisfaction.

Catherine summed up her feelings about how she hoped to be viewed in her belief that the principal should be seen as someone who cares, not someone to whom you are afraid to come. "I want to nurture that attitude that I care. I am interested in them, and I am there to help them. I feel that's so important. I am not an authoritarian type of person...still you can gain their respect." It is a message she also aims to communicate to parents and staff. "There are some people who feel you have to be shouting at children, to be authoritarian in your manner in order to convey a message and to gain respect." Catherine does not believe that this is her role as a principal.

Catherine's philosophy is embedded in a plan of action that she and her staff have established, a goal in which every child feels worthy, accepted and comfortable in his/her school environment.
"It takes a lot of time to do it properly but then everyone shares ownership."

Catherine reviewed how she went about making decisions revealing some of the principles by which she operated her school. Some decisions, she stated, are made strictly based on ministry rules, board philosophy and policy. For some decisions, such as in the area of budget, she solicits input from staff. "I look at the needs of each division: primary, junior, and intermediate. I seek consultation. I consider program, the level of the children, and their program needs." This she believes is a way of being fair to everyone. Once she has met and consulted with all the parties involved she reviews all the needs in front of her, and then she makes the decision. There is no vote by staff.

In other matters she seeks what she referred to as "consensus reaching." She cited discipline as an example. As a new principal to the school, she had reviewed the school's discipline handbook and at a staff meeting she requested feedback from staff as to how it was working. While she did not think it necessary to start from scratch, she judged it necessary to cooperatively formulate a set of consequences for behavioral infractions. This issue had not been addressed and was, therefore, she implied, resulting in inconsistencies. There ensued an extensive amount of dialogue after which she requested the staff reflect and return to make
and agree about recommendations. She paused, "It takes time to do it properly, but then everyone shares ownership."

In planning school events and activities such as Christmas concerts, she invites staff for their input and encourages the exchange of ideas in planning and reaching common ground. "I try to work on consensus reaching, not necessarily a vote. I don't always get it, but generally it's consensus and that involves staff."

Communication

"If you really care about kids you'll assist these parents to do these things. I am pleased because I see these parents coming out and getting involved in the question session. In the end it's the kids that benefit."

Catherine places communication and the development of positive relationships between school and the community as a very high priority in her administration. Monthly newsletters sent home to parents provide coverage about the school's current curriculum, sports events, and liturgical events plus P.T.A. news. Beyond this, she keeps the community informed on current issues by arranging for speakers to come to the school to address such topics as curriculum, child development, discipline, and a wide range of other issues. Some of these are arranged in conjunction with the P.T.A., but many of these seminars are arranged by Catherine herself with
topics she has suggested such as whole language, substance abuse, report cards, and evaluation. She chooses topics based on what she feels are the current concerns of the parents in her community. She recalled that when a speaker appearing in the area sent two complimentary tickets to each school in the system, she suggested to her fellow principals that they be given to parents in their schools who could the least afford them. Her concern and thoughtfulness toward parents is particularly evident by the fact that she even arranges free baby sitting services and transportation for those who might not otherwise be able to attend because of these reasons. She requests staff to contact parents who they feel would most benefit by attending the sessions, and she arranges for car pools. While she realized that these considerations and courtesies went far beyond the designated role of principal, her countenance became serious and she spoke with conviction. "If you really care about kids you'll assist these parents to do these things." "I am pleased," she added, "because I see these parents coming out and getting involved in the question session. In the end it's the kids that benefit."

Catherine frequently communicates to parents by phone, and they are invited to attend case conferences concerning their child. Of course, she makes a point of inviting parents to all the school happenings and liturgical events. Although she has requested parents to make appointments, she maintains an open door policy and does not get upset when parents appear at her door unannounced. She welcomes them and concedes, "I
Making time and accommodating parents, students, and staff characterizes her communication style. Catherine holds monthly meetings with staff and divisional meetings as well. These meetings are arranged at the beginning of the year, and she confesses she does not like surprise meetings or cancellations. She also communicates to staff by what she terms memos, small notes, and lengthier notes. "Lots of them," she added. The open door policy extended to parents also applies to teachers and students. Sometimes teachers set up personal meetings with her by appointment as she is not always readily available. Other times spontaneous meetings occur in the halls and she meets with teachers at the less informal division meetings to discuss their concerns.

At the beginning of the school year, the students from each division are assembled in the gym where the Code of Behaviour and the expectations of the school are addressed. Catherine acknowledged that students come to the principal for both academic and social problems and that they it is not necessary for students to have to go through their teacher in order to see her. "I have an understanding that they can come to me." It is, therefore, not unusual for students to appear at her door crying and upset for various reasons. Even teachers periodically arrive at her door feeling upset, frustrated or emotional. Sometimes its because of some personal problem, or because they are encountering difficulties with a student. It is not uncommon for her to
receive requests from teachers requesting her personally to talk to children from their classes. She remembered that one teacher was particularly upset over the fact that she even had to bother her about her student. She assured the teacher that this did not present a problem and she would look after the matter. Catherine also mentioned that she often received requests from parents to speak to their child about various matters. She felt that she had to make time to do much of what she designated to as the social work in running the school.

Curriculum Leader

"It's a big job with so little time to do it. The role requires that you have a great deal of knowledge on curriculum, a good understanding of child development as well as knowledge of learning aspects."

Catherine heaved a heavy sigh when she described her role as curriculum leader as "a big job with so little time to do it. The role requires that you have a great deal of knowledge on curriculum, a good understanding of child development, as well as knowledge of learning aspects," she listed. "Further," she added, "You must be able to convey this to staff in terms of programming, long-range planning, basic attitudes, resources, and methods of evaluation. Staff have to be able see how all of this fits into a child-centred program."
She cautioned that as a principal you have to be flexible. This, she recognized as knowing what teachers will accept change, the limitations of what staff can do without becoming overwhelmed. It means developing in the teachers the perspective and understanding that this is a part of their professional development.

Catherine felt an important component of being a curriculum leader was getting involved and making time for classroom visits. She recollected the time she saw an excellent display on the environment on one of the bulletin boards. Rather than merely commenting on the PA system she prefers to drop in on the class informally to convey in person her positive comments. Informal visits and discussions occur spontaneously in the school halls or in the classrooms at recess or during the day. More formal visits are arranged for performance reviews in which the teacher is notified in advance of the purpose of the visit.

In spite of the time it takes, Catherine conceded that she really likes getting involved and her commitment as curriculum leader extends beyond the school level. It is exemplified in her participation in numerous curriculum and staff development committees at the Board level throughout her career.
Perception of Others

"As a woman you always have to strive for your endeavours, to be more prepared than our male counterparts before you can speak up for what you want."

Catherine feels that she has established a good rapport with her colleagues and that they share mutual respect and admiration. She felt that she had the support of her colleagues in her enterprises, a view, she believed, was substantiated by the fact that when she had chaired a Discipline Committee, she had gone to the principals and teachers of the system for all kinds of input. The overwhelming response and the willingness of her colleagues to confide she felt was not only gratifying but demonstrated their trust and confidence in her. She appreciated that these were busy people, and she was very pleased with the response, involvement, and support they had given her. There was collaboration in which everything was shared and she was particularly happy with the ideas for staff morale which evolved out of that committee.

Catherine believed that she and her opinions are valued by senior administrators although she theorized that "A woman has to demonstrate a complete and thorough knowledge of all the facts. A man seems to get his way the moment he opens his mouth." She continued, "As a woman you always have to strive for your endeavours, to be more prepared than our male counterparts before you can speak up." More prepared she
explained as meaning better organized and exceedingly able to respond to the many questions that would be put to you. This I took to mean that her male colleagues ideas were questioned less and more readily accepted whereas a female had to provide proof and substantiation. However, she stated she liked being prepared and felt that on the whole, women principals were generally perceived by Senior Administration as being hard working, caring, assisting and providing a support organization within the school system.

Catherine ascertains that the community perceives her as someone who encourages parents by helping them to keep up with educational trends, someone who welcomed them to come to her with their concerns. Likewise, she felt the students recognized her as caring for people, helpful, and interested in their welfare.

Guiding Metaphor

When reviewing the dialogue in the course of writing up this narrative profile I was overpowered by the constant emergence of the word care. The prominence of the word lends support to the personal philosophy that Catherine subscribes to and the personal metaphor which I attributed to her and which is embedded in her professional role. As the "Caretaker of Children", Catherine represents the ultimate "Child Advocate", a term she referenced in describing her goals. She spoke of the children and the importance of "how they feel, their acceptance within the school environment, their
individual needs." It is very critical that they recognize that she is there to help them, and it is the underlying basis by which she forms relationships with the students, parents, and the staff. Being the caretaker of children encompasses a serious responsibility, and it accounts for the actions she undertakes to insure that the students are provided with a comfortable positive environment wherein a child's self-esteem is never threatened or put in jeopardy. It is exhibited in the importance she places on maintaining personal contact with them, and it is visible in the efforts she shoulders in order to accommodate parents so that they become informed and involved in their child's education and welfare. All of these intentions embody the singular objective of benefitting the child as the end result.

In an honest appraisal of the beliefs which govern her actions, she understood that giving more than lip service to being an advocate for children could put you at odds with staff. Unwilling to compromise her convictions in her role as a child advocate, it is a risk she is willing to take. Catherine cited an example which exemplified the strength of her philosophy. She recalled making a decision when she felt a teacher had erred in his treatment of a child. "Both the child and the parent were hurting. I can't support that teacher in that instance." She asked the teacher to make an apology even though she realized the staff might run her down for making such a decision. "Unlike some principals I am not afraid of becoming unpopular or that staff will not have a
high opinion of me for having made that decision." In other words she was not about to set aside her personal convictions and her role as child advocate in circumstances where she knew the child had been wronged in order to appease staff.

Personal Themes

Facing Challenges

Catherine acknowledged having inherited a school where staff relationships were strained and unhappy. The school's reputation of conflict and hostility between staff members had seeped out into the system and had become a topic of conversations in teacher circles. Although the situation had been eased somewhat through some teacher transfers, many conflicting personalities and situations still existed. Catherine was cognizant of this and in addition to running the school she knew it would be a challenge to improve the situation. She conceded that developing an understanding and forming relationships could be taxing and draining even among staff particularly in a transitional phase. "In order to effect change you have to be honest and considerate." As a result she found herself being accused of being too honest and too blunt in trying to wipe the slate clean and start anew.

Undaunted, she set out to improve staff relations by initiating social activities and events designed to develop staff camaraderie and boost staff morale. Although there was a social committee, she often found herself being the only one
to make suggestions and encourage these initiatives, even though she would have preferred to remain behind the scenes hoping that staff would become involved.

Maintaining good relationships among staff members was stated as a priority in terms of the personal goals Catherine hoped to achieve at the school. "Keeping the staff happy has all around effects", she remarked. She was conscious of the fact that it would mean a great deal of additional work on her part. "But isn't that the case for most women?" she queried. "I think we are so darned used to working so hard...so we think what's another few more hours." I sensed a tone of exasperation in her voice which just as quickly she rallied from and rationalized her predicament with a note of optimism. She confessed to having to work "loads of hours" during this transitional period but felt that there will be a distinct advantage and payoff in the operation of the school next year.

Although she has acquired a tough situation, Catherine regards it as a challenge. "I like challenges," she stated. "Is that a female trait?" she laughingly inquired. As a realist she understands that she has a lot to accomplish and knows it will take time to create a successful school. And how did she define a successful school? Catherine responded, "A school actively involved in the learning process where students are happy to be there and staff feels successful." She added, "Staff and students view it as a dynamic place, progressing in all ways of development."

Several months following this interview I had an occasion
to spend three days teaching in the school. I observed that the school was remarkably clean, nicely decorated, and the staff seemed to be in good spirits. In the staff room and in the school yard teachers were friendly and cordial. In the course of one conversation with a teacher newly appointed this year to the school, she expressed her happiness at being there. Catherine, too, seemed relaxed, and certainly we were both less tired than the evening of our first conversation.

The transitional year is almost half over and hopefully the worse is behind her. Catherine appears to be that much closer to achieving her goal of a successful school. But that is not really so surprising. If the job required long hours, hard work, dedication to goals, and the courage and strength of personal convictions, then it is likely the right woman was selected for the challenge.
Patricia

"The successful female administrator communicates effectively, evaluates perceptively...is composed, self-confident, knowledgeable...sensitive...strives to appear efficient, capable, aware...and is driven to achieve."

(Erickson, 1985, p. 291)

Patricia is a vivacious, exuberant woman who looks far younger than her stated forty-seven years of age; and although she was not the youngest participant I interviewed, I thought her the most youthful. Much of this I attributed not only to her appearance but to a personality which exuded confidence, vitality and enthusiasm, qualities which are so readily associated with the young. In some ways she reminded me of a newly appointed teacher filled with conviction, excitement, ideals, dedication, and the vigour to act upon the unknown challenges that lay ahead. In point of fact, Patricia is an experienced educator bringing to the administrative role fourteen years of educational expertise.

Throughout the interview Patricia projected joy, the kind that seems to come with loving what you are doing. This, coupled with her exuberance, generated an aura of exhilaration which made the interview a delightful experience.

Patricia graciously accepted my invitation to be interviewed. Recalling that she herself had just completed her M. Ed., she was most empathetic to my research and offered to help me in anyway possible. It was agreed that we would meet
at her office in the afternoon of a school day.

With fourteen years in education to her credit, Patricia possesses a varied background in education. After teaching three years Patricia received her "Ma Degree" as she coined it having given birth to her first child. Then she went on to teaching night school at a Community College for five years after attaining an M.A. degree in English Literature. She started teaching in high school in the areas of English and Physical Education.

Patricia spoke very frankly about her ambitions. Unlike the other participants, who appeared at times uneasy with the topic, there was no hesitancy or reservation on her part to discuss her future goals in education. It was in her third year of teaching that she decided to pursue an administrative career. Not long into her search for a position of responsibility, she discovered that there were no available chairs in English. She had also observed that chairs in the Department of Physical Education where she was also qualified were occupied by men. The head of a physical education department was at that time traditionally considered a male portfolio.

She looked beyond her high school environment to observe administrators in the elementary system. Her personal observations led her to believe that administrators, especially vice principals at the elementary level, appeared to be much happier in their jobs than their high school counterparts. She noted administrative jobs at this level
seemed less stressful, an important factor, since well-being and job satisfaction were of prime importance to her. In addition, Patricia observed that superintendents' positions were more geared toward the elementary level. Several years later she decided to make the transition from high school to elementary school teaching Grades six, seven, and eight on rotary for two years. At the same time she embarked on her Master of Education Degree.

After two years of elementary teaching, she applied for a vice principal's position and attained it. Two years later she was appointed to the position of principal of an elementary school JK-8 with a pupil population of 207.

Patricia briefly spoke about her original decision to enter education commenting that her choices like many other women at the time were limited to traditional feminine careers of teaching and nursing. Although she was interested in a career in law she received no encouragement from her family to enter a non traditional field. She remembered receiving negative feedback from her father but support from both parents to pursue education as a career. After completing university, she took summer courses to obtain her teaching certificate followed by a Master's degree in English Literature and a specialist degree in English and Special Education.

Patricia acknowledged that both her husband and children have been very encouraging and supportive of her career plans. She remarked that all of her family was proud of her success.
I remembered congratulating her a few days after she had been appointed and recalled her revealing that her husband had thrown her a surprise party to celebrate her success.

I have known Patricia professionally for two years, and she has always struck me as a determined person with definite goals and a well formulated plan of action as to how to go about achieving those goals. As the dialogue unfolded my instincts proved to be quite true.

It was with great interest that I listened to Patricia's response to the differences she perceived between male and female administrators in our system, partly because she articulated those differences so well and with so much detail and partly because some of those expressed mirrored my own views. She spoke not only about the what she regarded as recognizable differences in management styles but also grasped the more subtle differences such as those that existed in the social relationships among the male administrators that contrasted with the females. Moreover, she was able to explain why she believed these differences existed.

She thought it a distinct advantage being a female in the role particularly at a time when, as she put it, "the feminine gender traits are now being accepted as conducive to good leadership." She felt that this type of leadership increased the comfort level and flavoured how people reacted. "People are friendly and less defensive because you are less authoritative in your manner." She felt it was also an advantage because a staff tends to be predominately female and
as a female she believed that they tended to accept a female
more easily. "Most people, women included, expect a male to
be more authoritarian," she stated.

The only disadvantage she was aware of occurred when she
was faced with a parent, usually a male from an Eastern
European background, who assumed because she was a woman she
could be bullied. "It's more a cultural traditional
perspective where a woman is regarded as inferior so when they
encounter woman in the capacity of an authority or leadership
position it is incompatible with their perspective."

As stated earlier, I felt that Patricia radiated joy when
talking about her job. My perceptions were confirmed when she
highly recommended her role. "I am very happy with my role.
It's a super challenging job that's exciting from the point
of view it changes all the time. You do get lots of feedback
from the staff, the students, and the community on what and
how you are doing and you come in contact with a great variety
of people."

Patricia's Reflections

Feminine Traits

"I really don't think men empathize with children
quite to the same extent or become quite so emotional in
as many numbers as women do."

I asked Patricia if she thought she perceived her role
as a principal differently than a man. She quickly responded, "Yes and no." She explained, "Yes, in that I think that many of the men, not all men, but many who have been in administration for a long time, see themselves as managers. They take a more paternalistic attitude toward their staff and toward the children." She further specified, "They feel it's 'their school', and they are going to do this and this in 'their school'. Some have been administrators for so long," she emphasized, "that they have lost touch with what happens in the classroom and in fact maybe lost the joy in their jobs." The last point seemed to disturb her, and she reflected on it before she continued. "A great many of them initially got their appointments at a time when they attained it solely on the basis that they were males. They had so few years of teaching experience before they became administrators that really, in effect, they were still at the honeymoon stage of learning about teaching and education. I think as much as they are males it colours their attitude toward the job. Because they were appointed at a very young age compared to their position they perhaps had to take the 'I'm the boss and you do what I say' stance because they were dealing with people who were their peers age wise; whereas, I am one of the older people here on staff."

Patricia believes that there is a difference and an advantage in being older because of the years of experience of having raised her own children, which in turn makes you react a little differently. "You think differently in your
forties than you do in your thirties, and your attitude toward life is different in the forties than it was in the thirties. Having just that ten years of age makes a difference."

Patricia summed up her feelings on the differences she perceived. "I see in the men and myself sex differences which are all due to the leadership role. When the leadership role was assumed at an early age with less years of teaching experience men fitted into the mold of an authoritarian type. Many of them haven't left it or are having a tough time leaving it."

Patricia also believes that many of the male administrators in the system are isolated in their roles. "They don't have a lot of contact with each other; and if they do it's with their best buddies; and they don't seem to share much information or network about what they are doing in their respective schools. Rather than an exchange of ideas taking place it's more a case of one upmanship." In contrast, she explained that many of the women in the system network for the purpose of supporting one another and for sharing ideas.

When asked what gender traits she felt she brought to the role of administrator, Patricia cited that she felt she brought the perspective of a mother to the role. "Having experienced those very traits that a mother feels about her children, I can better understand the parents' viewpoints." She expanded on her perspective. "I think a mother's attachment to a child is different than most fathers, and the strength of that attachment, particularly when the children
are little, is qualitatively different. It's a whole lot more stronger when it's your child who's crying and it tears at your heart and you are given to crying right along with him or her. I'm not sure dads share that kind of empathy with their children when they are little. I think they acquire it a whole lot more when their child gets older."

Patricia declared another feminine trait she possessed which differentiated her from her male counterparts. "I am more empathetic and emotional. I'm a crier." She epitomized this with examples while laughing at herself. "I cry at parades when I see drum majorettes with blue knees. I cry when I see children up on the stage performing. I cry when I'm so proud for a child for something they have accomplished. I really don't think men empathize with the children quite to the same extent or become quite so emotional in as many numbers as women do." She paused then cited one of her male counterparts whom she felt might feel the same way she did about such things but conceded that males who shared these traits were generally rare. These traits, she felt, enabled her to see things from the other person's point of view, thereby providing a better understanding. She provided an example. "If a teacher gets mad at something because the teacher's objecting to a change, say in a schedule, some men become more determined that there will definitely be a change in the schedule. In other words, they perceive that kind of reaction as a threat to their authority whereas I don't. I ask myself, 'Why is the teacher reacting that way?' 'Is it a
personal reason, or is it related to the job that I am asking to be done?' If they are justified then we are better to negotiate the plan and come to a different decision. I think that kind of empathy works here. I think it's a help to have this kind of response as reactions to the situation not as reactions to authority or personalities."

Continuing on the theme of differences, she presented another dissimilarity. "A lot of the women have strong personalities and have a high level of self-esteem. Whether that's because we are women or because of our age or because we are women in administration I don't know. I don't see the women accepting other people's judgments of them when they are negative as necessarily true judgments of their character. Some of the men are quite hurt by any negative commentary about their ability to lead or to be a principal. They really seem to be hurt by the evaluation, and they accept the judgment as valid and react that way." Patricia claims that she and the other women in administration react differently. "As women we may say that's unfair or that's wrong. I do not readily accept that judgment as accurate judgments of the situation and my part in it. I may see their point of view and note their negative criticism, but I'm not going to buy into it." She footnoted her feelings. "I guess in part we differ in this characteristic because in order to get to this stage in our careers we have had to make the separation in our evaluation of negative criticism: Is that being said because I'm a female or woman, or is that truly accurate? In the end
Decision Making

"I like to see people make changes and grow...people should be encouraged to make decisions for themselves."

Patricia talked at length about the decision-making process employed at her school. Almost all of the budget decisions are proportioned by circumstances which are generally based on curriculum and program needs in the school. If one division gets the lion's share because of the needs of board program thrust in one year, then she feels obligated to even it out the following year. "My job is to make sure the money is equalized and put it where it is needed." Classroom teachers are asked to prioritize their needs and, in turn, make budgets for their year. Teachers thus have some input into the budget distribution process. Basically, she simplifies her approach to staff presenting the facts. "Here is what I have to work with, and here is what the board tells me on how to divide within the division." There is an amount allotted for textbooks, program materials, etc. Sixty to eighty percent is an administrative decision. However, the remainder is proportioned for classrooms and the teachers decide how to spend it.

While staffing is generally an administrative decision, Patricia tries to make internal decisions in conjunction with her teachers. She provided an example of a teacher who was
on maternity leave. She waited on her decision until the teacher had an opportunity to consider all her options. "That teacher may decide on the possibility of a part-time position; she may want to extend her leave; she may decide to stay home, or she may want to remain in the position. Sometimes teachers may want to make an internal move in the school if the opportunity becomes available." She declared that she undertakes to get as much input before a final decision is made. "I try to accommodate teacher preferences over my own preferences unless, rather than a preference, it's a strong feeling that what is going to happen is in the best interest of the school." With an intent expression on her face, she made a pronouncement. "When it comes to what's going to happen is for the best of the school then I'll be dictatorial." For example, at Christmas she had to give up one teacher. "I made the decision to give up one super female teacher in order to keep a male teacher in the intermediate grades, otherwise there would be only one male in the school, and also I needed him for coaching. I had to tell her, "You are the one who has to go. I have to make the decision and here is why." These types of decisions, she conceded, you have to make alone. "That certainly was not a fun situation or pleasant decision to have to make, but I acted in what I knew was in the best interest of the school."

With decisions on staff placement, she solicits as much input from staff as possible. She proclaimed, "I like to see people make changes and grow, and I encourage them to try new
grades. People should be encouraged to make decisions for themselves." She remembered a situation when a teacher had requested a transfer. She acknowledged that she was disappointed and would have liked her to remain in her school, but she knew she was making a good career decision for herself. She felt it was the best decision for her to have the opportunity to teach at the high school level. She saw it as a wonderful growth opportunity for the teacher. "I don't see it as my role to hold people back but to help people grow and achieve their personal goals even if it means an inconvenience."

Patricia used collaborative decision making in developing the goals and philosophy for her school. The discipline strategy used in the school emerged as an outgrowth of that philosophy. Their thrust as a school goal the first year included building teacher self-esteem. This year staff concentrated on developing the self-esteem of the students. "We are aware that lots of our kids have low self-esteem. Often the trouble makers are the ones with the lowest self-esteem. The consensus of staff was that self-esteem was a real need. That flavours how you react to a child's discipline problem."

Patricia disclosed that one of her teachers had a problem with sarcasm, at least from her point of view. She felt that the teacher was too sarcastic with the kids. The teacher did not regard it as a problem, but Patricia did and on one occasion after witnessing an incident she decided to make an
issue of it. She pointed out that when he had reprimanded a student that the child just wilted because of the way he was talked down to by the teacher. "I had to say to the teacher, this may have been a necessary strategy for him to take at another school where things may have been different. He may have had difficulties or had a different type of class, but in my view it was making the difference here, between making the teacher good and excellent. It was a hard thing to have to tell him." She was happy that the teacher responded very positively and that he, himself, realized how uncomfortable it must have been for her in such a situation.

Patricia felt that she had taken something away from the teacher. Although it was something she decided needed to be said she judged that it had reduced the teacher's self-esteem. In an effort to replace what she felt she had undone she took the opportunity later in the year to send him to a conference on self-esteem so that he could acquire some strategies. She paid for him to attend the conference out of her own principal's allowance.

Communication

"It gave the message that we (the school) cared about the parents and their families."

Patricia provided many examples that exemplified her communication style with staff, students and parents. It also gave insight as to how she managed conflict.
Patricia chuckled when asked about her communication style with the students. "One of the things I want to do is not to own the PA system." Toward meeting this objective she has turned over the PA system to the students in the school who are given the responsibility for conducting morning exercises everyday and communicating other information. She may read announcements for the day from a book; however, if a class or child is doing something special or planning a special event then they come down to give their own announcements. She sees it as an opportunity and good experience for the students to practice their communication skills.

When the students are encountering problems, Patricia believes that there exists an understanding that they can come to her directly. She was confident that the students understood this because, as she stated with a laugh, "They do it! Sometimes to great distraction. The Grade threes and fours in particular like to do it quite often." She provided an example, relating a recent event when a couple of Grade four boys appeared at her door with a problem. I told them, "This is a problem you should be sharing with your teacher. I felt it was something they could work out with her. I asked, 'Have you talked to her about it?' 'No,' they responded." She explained that it was not up to her to solve the problem, rather it was something they had to work out together with the teacher. Patricia then took the time to work on some problem-solving skills with the students. They
did not know how to approach their teacher and they felt awkward approaching someone they were working with daily. She decided to role play, prompting them with questions. "I'm your teacher what are you going to say?" They gave a response, which sounded pretty negative. She coached them. "Can you word it a little better?" She helped them find the right words to say it better. "They do come; not all the time," she mused, "but they do come."

Patricia maintains an open door policy with her staff. She can and does meet with teachers informally, and they are invited to drop in when they feel they need to. Sometimes the response to a request is immediate. She recalled that one day she had returned to her office to find a note left by a teacher requesting her to come to the teacher's classroom as soon as possible. Apparently one of the Grade seven girls wanted to so impress the teacher with her writing that she plagiarized a whole group of poems. The teacher had recognized some of the poems and was in a quandary as to what to do. "How do I handle this?" she inquired. "I told her to send five or six girls down to the office to read and share their work with me. I saw each girl and gave them lots of praise plus lots of ideas and suggestions. The student I wanted to see I left to the last as I didn't want to centre her out. I invited her to read her poems. I then got up and closed the door. I approached her and I smiled expressing my view. 'Either you are a fantastic poet with your writing and are ready for a professional level or you liked your teacher
so much that you really wanted to impress her with those poems.' After a few minutes the student admitted what she had done, and there followed a discussion about the reasons for why this had occurred. We came to an understanding about what the student was going to do about it. Then I asked the teacher to come in and talk with her."

For children experiencing more difficult and serious problems, she has case conferences and more formal team meetings scheduled for early mornings or evenings. She reflected at this point and spoke earnestly. "I hope they feel they can come to me with their problems."

Patricia communicates with the community by means of a monthly newsletter which is sent home with the children. The newsletter is frequently accompanied by a message from the principal on various subject matters or educational issues. The significance of these letters to Patricia were indicated in her reference to them. "I sort of regard them more as an expression of who I am. It says things that are not necessarily about school activities or events." She presented me with an example. Indeed, I thought them more unique than the usual principal's message in that they contained a more personal air and depicted her own values in offering opinion and comment addressed from the perspective of one concerned parent to another.

This uniqueness is further exemplified by thoughtful details and gestures she extends to the parents. On Valentine's Day every child was sent home with a Valentine's
gift from the school for the parents. The gift was a heart shaped key chain with the message "You're the heart of our success! Thanks for caring." imprinted on the surface.

At the end of her first year as a principal of the school, she had planned a school musical. She was very conscious not to make a lot of changes in the transitional year, but she acknowledged you do things differently literally from the personal point of view of the things of which you take charge. This type of subtle change took place rather than the more overt manifestation of change that can occur inside a classroom. In preparation for the musical she had the teachers obtain from every student in every class a picture of his/her family or his/her parents' wedding picture under the guise of being needed for Family Life Studies. She took the pictures and had slides made up and returned the pictures to the students to take home. During the musical interlude she arranged to have the pictures shown as the school choir accompanied the presentation with the song Sunrise Sunset. Every child in the school was in the choir and every child participated in the Musical. She recalled that it was really a touching, lovely emotional moment. The reaction of the parents was very positive and Patricia was pleased when one of the parents expressed, "That it gave the message that we (the school) cared about the parents and the families." That's great, she thought, because that's exactly what she was hoping the reaction would be - that parents matter - that families matter.
Patricia spoke proudly of another occasion when she had overheard a group of parents from the Parent's Council talking. One of them had a house whose backyard bordered on school property. Every year they had been visited by friends from Scotland. They and their friends had been unable to sit out in the yard because of the swearing and the fighting among students in the school yard. This year it was different; they sat out there enjoying the sounds of the kids playing, the parent commented. Patricia joked, "Either I got lucky or I lost a lot of swearing and fighting Grade eights that year. They believed that I had an impact because I was the only visible change in the school."

Curriculum Leader

"A lot of what you do does not mean I'm going to show you how to do it better, rather it presents an alternative and modelling in areas where you can."

Patricia interpreted her role as curriculum leader by prefacing her comments with the statement, "It's one of the hardest things on the job because it's impossible to know all the curriculum. I think the principal has to be a generalist, not a specialist, as far as curriculum is concerned." Whenever new curriculum comes out she feels she has to look at it from the perspective of what makes it different from the old curriculum; and she searches for the visible signs of differences be it in materials, in teacher behaviour, in
student behaviour, or in the products. If she knows this, then as principal she can go about making materials available for the teacher and ordering the right things. This type of information she also felt was necessary for her to provide assistance and encourage teachers through the times when the implementation of the new curriculum becomes a problem as inevitably it will.

"What I need to know from the consultants is not the same as what the teachers need to know. I need to know what the picture of the ideal teacher of this curriculum is. I need to know what the image of the ideal student of that curriculum is so that I have something to measure against." Patricia believes the consultant should be able to give her input as to what changes should be taking place, the pitfalls and the problems in implementing the program and what can she do in her role to assist that teacher. She spoke emphatically, "Without it I can't encourage a teacher to implement new curriculum with any credibility; otherwise I might as well come into the classroom and just say 'Do it!' because I can't be a specialist in every subject area. There just isn't enough time. I can't do it all."

Patricia feels she has to rely heavily on the consultants to do their job in this aspect. Because the system's consultants were also resource people, she discovered that they, too, did not have the time to respond to meet her needs. As a result, Patricia believed she did not have the time to do this aspect of the job well because she was not getting the
information she needed to know. "I end up pulling it out of
the curriculum materials myself and it's not as good. I'm not
trying to pass blame. It's more an administrative problem."

This year her Grade one teacher wanted to implement whole
language across the curriculum and, being an expert in that
area, she encouraged the teacher's initiative. It was not
long before she realized the teacher was trying to make
sweeping changes in an attempt to accomplish it all in one
year. She had to make the teacher understand that change is
a process that takes some time. Such a process might take two
to three years. "Sometimes a principal's job is to tell the
teacher to pull back. I had to tell her that she couldn't
change every subject in which the students were accustomed to
a teacher-centered approach to an activity-centered approach."
Such a process is not achieved overnight. She had fears that
the teacher would wear herself out.

Patricia reiterated that it was impossible to monitor all
the curriculum although, through performance review, she was
able to give a lot of feedback to her teachers; and she
encouraged the teachers to evaluate their own performance and
work.

As the curriculum leader, she sets her expectations for
new teachers. She cautioned a first year teacher on staff not
to expect to do it all in one year. Because he was a first
year teacher, she helped him limit his priorities by telling
him she expected him to learn basic and fundamental class
control, management principles, discipline, and some
organizational skills. "When you are teaching curriculum for the first time, you don't know it. You can't know it; so you aren't going to do it superbly well; but you are capable of doing a good job." She advised him such because she knew he was wavering in the face of teaching language arts, an area that he declared was not his forte. To further assist him she sent him to a writing process workshop. He returned quite positive about the method that was curriculum strong and wanted to know more information and details about the approach. She encouraged him to meet with an expert in the writing process area and arranged for him to spend the morning with her. "A principal doesn't know all the finer points or the techniques or how to work smart rather than hard in every curriculum area."

Patricia has discussed curriculum implementation with staff and tries to model mostly through "little things" as she referred to them. She provided an example. She asked a class to write thank you letters to a guest speaker. She was not pleased with them so she went back to the class, told them that their thank you letters were fine in content, but had far too many spelling and grammar errors, and that they required editing. Then she gave a short lesson on editing and publishing techniques. Afterwards the teacher responded that he also had learned something about methodology. "A lot of what you do does not mean I'm going to show you how to do it better but rather presenting an alternative and modelling it in areas where you can."
Patricia confessed she was not big on going into the classroom and watching someone teach. She does not feel comfortable with that and tends to avoid it and thinks every principal feels much the same way. Nevertheless, she does feel comfortable dropping in for five or ten minutes looking at the student notebooks or seeing part of a lesson as it unfolds. If it is part of a performance review the visit is set along more formal guidelines, but she does not feel this is as productive as ten minutes here or there.

Patricia summed up her feelings about being the curriculum leader. "I'm not comfortable with it because it hasn't been modelled by my principals or superintendents when I was a teacher. It's difficult to see what you haven't seen done. In the principals' course the principal as the curriculum leader was a main theme, but I don't remember being taught how to be a curriculum leader. I knew I was going to be a curriculum leader, and I had to be a curriculum leader but nobody actually taught me how to go about doing it!"

Because she is in a small school, Patricia realizes that some of her teachers are isolated in attaining staff support for implementing new curriculum. Because you are the only Grade one teacher and the only one in the primary division interested in attempting a new program, there is a lot of intangible response, and there may be no one with whom you can bounce off ideas. As a result she has to do a lot of encouraging. She has also solicited student teachers to come to her school. She discovered that after six or eight years
some of her teachers were ready for change. She received four student teachers and deemed it a great experience for the staff. Isolated teachers were able to discuss and attain feedback about the whole language approach, and in assisting the students some of the older teachers were able to do an analysis of their own methodologies and approaches. She rated the project as most worthwhile.

The Perceptions of Others

"They were most impressed that I slid down the hill with a group of children and that I will talk to them as a person rather than as a principal."

Patricia perceives that her colleagues view her with a fairly positive attitude. "I think they know when I say something it makes sense, and I think they respect my professionalism and intelligence." This view is highly substantiated by comments I have overheard on both social and professional occasions. Two of her male colleagues referred to her as being "most intelligent", and consultants of the Board used descriptors such as "highly knowledgeable." "Sometimes," she continued, "I think some of the men are intimidated by me. They think I go too far or that I am too extreme in my views or what I propose." She quickly added with a laugh, "But that is their problem not mine." I asked her to define extreme. "I think they feel I say and feel things more strongly than is necessary." Although not
expressed, she inferred this to mean that they felt she was too opinionated or pushy in her expressing her views.

She commented on the strong support system that existed among the women in the system, and she felt she could confidently call a number of them with whom to bounce off ideas. As well, she felt she did have the support of some of the men for her ideas. She deliberated and nodded negatively, "Some of the men won't support anything."

Her response to the perception of Senior Administration was immediate and glib. "Who knows? I have no idea." She pondered the question as if put in a dilemma. "I find they send contradictory messages. On one hand I see messages that say you are doing a good job and are encouraged as material for advancement in the system. On the other hand you volunteer for Committees and you aren't even acknowledged or don't get on them. You ask a question and their reaction is 'That's a stupid question' and the intonation is 'Why bother me with this?'" Patricia's puzzled countenance indicated that she was perturbed by the inconsistent messages she was receiving.

At this point Patricia talked candidly about the feelings among her male and female colleagues. It was a viewpoint, a familiar commentary that I had heard expressed by many other educators in the system and one that Rebecca had touched upon in an earlier discussion.

Patricia further elaborated on one of the inconsistencies. "There is a feeling, a feeling of
dissatisfaction largely a result of hiring not only outside the system but from the same pot. Although many applicants had the necessary qualifications for many of these positions of responsibility, they did not attain the advancement they sought. They and others in the system have interpreted this message as meaning they were not good enough to fill key positions because they were a product of the system."

Generally it was felt that the appointments undermined the system because it displayed a lack of confidence both in their personnel and in their own system to produce quality leaders. Patricia augmented this impression. She sensed that they really do not have a high opinion of her colleagues, and she felt that this was because they do not really know their own personnel. "They don't know us. They don't know their principals at all. They see us once a month at meetings and for two days at a Principal's Conference, and they base their judgement of us on what they see there and what they hear from the community. Of course," she sighed, "what they hear is usually negative because that is what usually filters up."

She supported this view by recalling at one principals' meeting being totally shocked by the Director's reference to a male colleague as someone who ran an ordinary school. The implication here being that he was a 'ho hum' or a-run-of-the-mill type of administrator. Patricia felt she knew that particular principal well and her experiences did not lead her to share that view. Her differences in perceptions with the Director's were vindicated after the Director had occasion to
visit the school. He was not only very impressed and happy by what he saw but enthusiastically endorsed it as an exciting place to be. Cynically, she expressed her point more strongly. "The people they listen to are not necessarily people who know anything about education except they may have once been in a school or attended one." She concluded that their feedback was often confusing and inappropriate.

Patricia believed that staff recognized her as a leader. She expressed the view that in her first year at the school, staff had an incorrect perception of her. "They thought when I threw out an idea for discussion or tried to get their reaction to it that it was in fact a fait accompli." She surmised that there was misunderstanding her first year with a few of the teachers who thought that when she suggested something that was the way it was going to be. Therefore, she assumed when she went ahead with some project that she had their support. "They misunderstood my approach when I presented an idea as a possible way of doing something, and I would follow it up with a question as to what they thought." What she was really asking for was feedback on whether they had a better way or another way of doing it or whether they in fact were opposed to it. "They only had to let me know." She gathered that this misunderstanding likely occurred because they were not used to a principal approaching ideas or decisions in that way. "They were expecting me to tell them what to do so they perceived it as I was telling them what to do." She clarified her intent for them resulting in
much more input and ideas forthcoming from staff.

When the teachers encountered a difficulty with a student or a parent, she trusted that the teachers felt she was supportive. "I'm supportive of them to the extent that I'm not going to shoot the ground underneath them, but I am not going to say they did something right if in fact they did something wrong. They are going to have to stand up and take the flack for it. I will protect their point of view so that the flack is not going to hit very hard, but I think parents have a right to convey to the teacher and ask a teacher for an apology if they have done something wrong and I expect the teacher to give such an apology." However, she stressed, "I don't permit a personal attack on a teacher because of something they have done. There's a difference. If there's a complaint about their teaching, that's valid; if it's about their person, it is not."

She believed the students liked her but that they were also at times afraid of her. She approved of that explaining that she believed it was a good thing for children to be afraid of her when they had gotten into trouble. "If they have done something bad or have acted out of line, they do not want to get sent to the office because they know I will dress them down for it." She appeared to perceive it as a responsibility of her role to be a disciplinarian. She hypothesized, "I think, as much as any principal can expect them to, they do like me. They like the fact that I can be involved in directing a musical or that I will go out and play
with them on the playground especially in wintertime. It really mattered to them. They were most impressed that I slid down the hill with them and that I will sit down with a group of the children and talk to them as a person rather than a principal. I think they perceive me as a fair person." She beamed when she described her relationships with the little ones. "I know the little ones really like me by their spontaneous signs of affection as displayed by their hugs and kisses and the little notes and pictures they send me." She related an anecdote about how open and spontaneous they could be with her. She had accompanied a group of young children from her school to a reading contest, and while they waited in her car they began to report to her a list of everyone in the school who had ever committed any wrong doing. They obviously felt as principal she was entitled to a real earful and the latest gossip from the student grapevine.

One of the goals Patricia hoped to achieve her first year was to talk to every child in the school for ten minutes. Given the small size of the school, she thought it an entirely reasonable goal. Her goal was short lived as she only managed to get through one grade. She really regretted having to abandon those talks. "While perhaps it wasn't too realistic I think it would have been the best thing in the world. I would have had to make it a priority. Unfortunately I didn't and the role of the principal often separates you from the children."

The community, she believed, knew that they were able to
come to her with their concerns and complaints, but she added
they also came to her with their praise. With pride in her
voice she talked about the positive feedback she had received.
They indicated that they had perceived the changes in the
school since she came on the scene. Some of these changes
that were happening she was unaware herself until the parents
pointed them out.

Patricia is very happy that the parents feel positive
about the school; however, as a realist she understands that
you cannot please everyone. She made the point by referring
to a letter she had received from a parent. In it she was
chastised for having given advice to their child to which the
parents objected. Against her own feelings she decided not
to over react and make the issue worse by responding to what
she regarded was an unfair criticism. A few months later she
received another letter from the same parent praising her
highly for the way she had conducted a school activity. The
letter was accompanied with a donation to the school. "An
example of typical parents," she interjected with laughter.
"I guess I'm approachable."

Guiding Metaphor

Patricia's approach to her administrative role is
reminiscent of a highly motivated, modern corporate executive
as affiliated with the Japanese style of management. Such a
style merges the concepts of family, personal growth and
achievement, productivity and marketing. As she verbalized
her goals and described her day-to-day functions, I assigned her this metaphor cognizant that underlying her actions was a vision. That vision not only expounds her concept of an effective school but as well encompasses a strategic plan to achieve her personal career goal aspirations.

Consistently I found myself drawing comparisons to the image and attributes of the successful contemporary executive as typified in the current literature on successful leadership. And what is the motivational force that drives the corporate executive? Underlying this image and the basis for motivation pervasive in the literature is a belief in self to accomplish one's goals. Patricia believes in herself and emanates confidence in what she is doing. It forms that basis of her behaviour and enables her to set the priorities and goals that govern her administrative role.

When she discussed the importance of affirming staff she referred to the management techniques of Japanese Managers who manage their companies as a family operation and regard their employees as family. "Their morning," she remarked, "begins by assembling their employees together, reviewing the company's philosophy, and reaffirming the manager's faith in the abilities of the members to accomplish the goals set before them." She regretted that during her first year she did not do enough verbalizing regarding her philosophy of education. "I really see that it is needed both individually and collectively. You need to remind them of the goals and to pump up their enthusiasm and motivation by affirming them."
It's a basic strategy in business but there's not enough of it done here. We virtually get no affirmation from the top in education." As a result, she vowed to make it a priority to hold a fifteen minute staff meeting every Monday to focus on the school objectives, to remind staff of their goals, and to praise and encourage the sharing of good ideas. "It's important to make people feel good about what they do." Initially, it would be a formalized structure where she would initiate the exchange of ideas and affirm staff eventually leading to the staff sharing the good ideas and affirming each other. "To verbalize the philosophy and set the image of the ideal is one of the most important things a principal has to do in the leadership role." Affirming and building self-esteem in teachers in turn will positively impact on the self-esteem of children of her school. She believes that positive self-esteem is what is needed if children are to learn to grow and flourish. Like a corporate executive, Patricia exudes the image of a caring, confident, competent, and decisive person very much aware of what was going on in her organization. Throughout the interviews she appeared acutely aware of the positives and negatives of her school. She was determined to praise that which was positive and productive and to plan and eradicate the negatives that impeded growth.

That image of the executive who could handle any impending crisis became more than conjecture on my part. Midway through the first interview we were interrupted by a frenzied knock on the door. An excited teacher quickly opened
the door, pardoned himself, and blurted that a student had been injured on the school grounds during the recess break. The child had a head injury and was bleeding. The teacher looked deeply worried and bore a "What do I do now?" expression on his face. Patricia quickly took charge. She reacted calmly while rifling off a series of questions to get necessary information from the teacher focusing on the who and what. These she asked as she immediately made her way to see the child. She returned shortly after having examined the extent of the injury and assessing the situation. She apologized that it would be necessary to postpone our interview as she was going to accompany the child to the hospital. As she was getting on her coat she issued firm and explicit directives to her secretary on whom to notify and then she was gone. The incident was quickly handled in a matter of a few minutes; so quickly that I forgot to turn off my tape recorder having myself been caught up in the events.

Personal Themes

The Importance of the Maternal Perspective

Patricia brings a strong sense of mother to her role. As earlier described, she felt that having been a mother and having raised children herself definitely influenced her behaviour patterns. That maternal attitude is evident in the sensitivity and empathy she feels for the members of her school family, be it for a child who has displayed
accomplishment or for a teacher who has attained his/her personal goals or growth. On these occasions Patricia openly admits to being emotional, making no apology for the times she has displayed visible signs of these emotions in tears. "I'm a crier. I cry when I see the children up on the stage performing. I cry for a child for something they have accomplished." Similarly, the priority in establishing school goals to induce positive self-esteem in both staff and students is very much in keeping with a mother's nurturing perspective.

Her response to relevant issues that accompany the monthly newsletter are also addressed from the perspective of one concerned parent to another. Consequently, the view encompasses the importance of family. Therefore, the care and detail she undertakes in making certain that parents are recognized and acknowledged in school events such as a family concert or by sending a small token of love and appreciation on Valentine's Day is not surprising. Both from the perspective of mother and principal it is understandable why it is important to her to convey her attitude and belief that just as school matters "parents matter...that families matter."

Patricia was the last participant I interviewed and, in many ways, I felt she typified the research on the new breed of women managers. She brings to the role all those attributes traditionally associated with leadership in general. She is intelligent, articulate, confident, ambitious
goal oriented, and task-committed yet she has not sacrificed her feminine qualities remaining sensitive, empathetic, caring, practical, and approachable. It is a type of leadership that capitalizes on all her strengths, one that both business and educational organizations predict is needed in contemporary times and which they endorse as highly effective.
CHAPTER SIX
RESULTS

Common patterns and unifying themes embedded in the profiles and in the personal metaphors conveyed a strong feminine imagery of mother and espoused the idea of school as a home and staff and students as family.

The participants themselves identified and discussed openly gender traits that they felt they possessed and that they believed influenced their roles as principals. Among the traits recorded were empathy, sensitivity, emotionality, caring, nurturing, intuitiveness, bluntness, and attention and concern for detail. While the latter is not traditionally attributed as a female gender trait, it was commonly attributed to women by the participants in their accounting for the practices they and other women employed. Regardless, it is, however, important to note that the women's selection and definition of a gender trait was not of my influencing but of their own volition and, therefore, was readily accepted and unquestioned. It can also be argued that many of the traits could be ascribed and claimed by males, but that is not the intent of this study and best be left for the possibility of another probe.

The question of differences evolved from the participants' responses to the question. The responses varied in extent from Roberta's denial and Rebecca's uncertainty to Catherine's awareness and Patricia's acknowledgment and declaration on the subject. The findings indicate that
differences do exist in the way these women perceive their role as evident in the emerging patterns and priorities discussed in this chapter. While gender specific qualities do not totally determine the behaviour patterns of these women, it is acknowledged that they do impact on the role and in some cases more dramatically than others.

Eisner (1985) states artistic or creative approaches to research are less concerned with the discovery of truth than with the creation of meaning. Deriving meaning was the intent of my investigation. It is not the discovery of laws of nature by which true statements can be given, contends Eisner (1982), but rather the creation of images that people will find meaningful and from which their views of the world can be altered, rejected, or made more confident. While this type of approach has no mechanism for generalizations, Eisner (1985) believes that the expectations we acquire from our examination of the particular become part of our anticipatory schema; we shape our information selection system by what we learn from individual cases. Thus, he suggests "a build up of common general features recognized in the particulars...has a contribution to make to the comprehension of what is general" (p. 186). While it is not my intention to make generalizations, it is, however, my hope to contribute to that which is general. In the end, it remains with the reader to weigh the responses found in the narratives to see if they strike an accord; however, I will attempt in the next chapter to draw conclusions based on the following themes.
UNIFYING THEMES

Image of Mother

Roberta refers to having the sensitivity of a mother enabling her to empathize with the feelings of other women and their concern for their children. As far as she is concerned, sensitivity enables a far better understanding of staff dynamics, and it directly underlines her collaborative decision making and open communication style.

Patricia reiterates the same perspective when she talks about bringing the "experience and traits of a mother to the role". Referring to herself as being both "sensitive and highly emotional", she, too, feels this enables her to more readily identify and empathize with the parents' and children's viewpoints. Like Roberta, she feels that possessing these feminine characteristics gives her an edge in dealing with staff relations. She credits the traits for creating positive relationships among staff.

Empathy permeates a communication style that relies heavily on being open, available and a good listener. As empathetic listeners, they focus on listening not with an intent to manipulate, convince, or to find points to counter argue a position but for feeling and meaning to better understand a person emotionally as well as intellectually. As a result, they believe an environment of trust is established that leads people to work much more honestly and productively with one another.
Catherine expresses the perception in terms of her nurturing and caring attitude for the children as being part of her role. "I just feel it's part of my role as well. Care, like that of a mother", as she describes it, warrants the children her personal time and attention. This caring attitude spills over to effect interactions with members of her staff expressing equal concern over their health and well being.

Rebecca speaks of having a good sense of intuition; and although not expressed explicitly as the other participants, it conveys a similar realization in that she defines her intuition as an ability to read and respond to situations in an empathetic manner. Being intuitive she believes has made her cognizant of staff and student needs. It enables her to sense when there is something wrong and to detect the existence of any unhappy situations in the school. Intuition solicits a response that allows her to be supportive emotionally and empathetically toward staff and students and their problems.

School as Home

The concept of school as a home was a reoccurring theme throughout the data. The idea appears central in the participants' philosophies and explains the priorities given to certain types of activities engaged in by the principals. Expressing it as "feminine nature to give attention to detail", the participants demonstrated by specific examples
how this concern for detail influenced their management and organizational styles. Although not commonly and traditionally attributed as a feminine gender trait, Roberta, Catherine, and Rebecca shared the belief that the preoccupation with detail was pervasive among all their female colleagues and to females in general.

Indicative of her feminine nature, Roberta talks about the attention given to details in describing the way she decorates the school referring to it as "typical of the way mothers keep their homes and households". Therefore, one would find doilies under the statues, fresh flowers in the office, and posters with warm greetings in the halls. The objective of such activities is to create a particular environment "like that of a home - warm and inviting". Thus, she recreates the kind of home environment which she believes fosters positive attitudes of respect and pride.

Catherine classifies solely as a feminine trait "looking after details, making sure everything is planned and works out well". She elaborates on the idea as meaning "making things special for all". Thus, creating a congenial environment means having cookies and coffee available to staff and guests. "A little thing that takes a few minutes more," she concedes, "but one that is indicative of your concern for others".

Rebecca also cites concern for detail as a feminine trait unique to most women. Declaring that "women tend to the fine details on projects", she emphasizes that in the management and organization of projects, small things matter to women.
For her, small things normally overlooked by men, make a difference in achieving positive outcomes. In the pursuit of that difference every possibility is explored. Rebecca easily exemplifies this characteristic herself, acknowledging that she too is "fussy about little things" and that she is unable "to let anything go by" that does not meet with her approval. Her emphasis and care for detail is also translated into an exceptionally attractive physical school environment. She concedes like the other participants that all "these little things, like how the school appears" as important to her. Similarly, she echoes Roberta's perception in viewing the school as an extension of home although her concept of home differs somewhat from that envisaged by Roberta. The school is referred to as an "as an extension of my house where things are orderly and people behave in that place." Again, an attractive and organized environment is seen as vital to harmonious relations between staff and students and conducive to proper, orderly, and respectful behaviour.

Patricia was the only participant who did not directly address the care for detail as relating to the physical appearance of her school. In a side comment, however, she states she has brought in the art consultant with a hope of improving the artwork and displays in the halls with which she is not satisfied indicating that the appearance of the school is important to her. It is also evident that the preoccupation with little things so aptly described by Rebecca are just as important to her in the context of school as an
School as Extension of Family

Dominating the participants' practices is the view of school community as an extension of family. It is common practice for all the participants to involve the parents into the life of the school, but the kind and extent of the involvement is strongly linked to the participants' feminine perspective. It is, therefore, understandable why Catherine arranges for car pools for mothers who cannot drive, babysitting services for mothers with small children, and provides free tickets for parents in order for them to attend seminars. Patricia thoughtfully sends home Valentine's Day gifts from the school to each parent and plans a concert with the highlight being a salute to the students' families. Rebecca arranges for social services for evicted mothers and counsels single mothers who seek her help.

Open invitations are extended to parents to attend liturgical celebrations and school functions, and open door policies are established to accommodate parent requests for interviews.

The participants' attitudes and behaviour in developing good relationships within the staff greatly parallel the concern of the traditional parent for the members of the household. Repeatedly, participants spoke of their personal goals of establishing good staff relationships. Rebecca states that, "staff is of prime importance to me as is my
relationship with them." Being conscious of their well being, she creates family outings like bowling when she feels staff morale is low or she arranges more relaxing activities after those occasions where she feels staff are drained. So attentive for their welfare and security, she initiates policies which insure that the staff room is a haven for relaxation from the stresses and problems of teaching. That is why, in Rebecca's Roberta's and Catherine's view, it is paramount for these administrators to be both visible and available in the school and in the classrooms for staff and students "to help them solve problems and get them out of messes" that sometimes befall members of a family.

Roberta speaks of "welcoming staff with a warm and open environment" affirming staff right from the beginning in her confidence and in their expertise and ability to do the job. This necessitates, in her view, providing ample opportunity and time for them to spend time with her to chit-chat or discuss their problems. Patricia offers much of the same making it a goal to reaffirm staff every Monday morning in the job they are doing with the idea of increasing self-esteem and confidence. Both Rebecca and Patricia speak of nurturing and assisting the growth of staff members in terms of attaining their personal and career goals.

The behaviour toward the school children dramatically exhibits the common focus of school as family by the participants. Beliefs are transposed into actions as Roberta arranges to hug every child in the school, and Catherine
herself comforts the hurting, administering ice to bumps and bruises. Patricia is found sliding down the slopes with the little ones in the school yard and laments the fact that she could not find the time to interview every child in the school personally as she had planned. Rebecca singles out her joy at being able to have fun playing with her junior kindergarten children and bemoans the fact the excessive paperwork prevents her from being there for staff and students at times when she feels they need her most. School philosophies are established and every effort is fostered to insure that each child feels comfortable and accepted in their school environment as he/she would be in his/her home. Patricia challenges a teacher whose use of sarcasm she feels damages the positive self-esteem of her children, that very self-esteem she has committed herself to developing. Rebecca and Patricia find time to actively involve themselves in the play and fun activities of the little ones whose signs of affection bring them joy. And there is both help and support provided in the understanding that children can always come directly to a loving and caring person in the office with their problems no matter how busy the principal may be.

And just as parents share pride in their children's achievements, these principals took no less pride in the accomplishments of their students. Roberta boasts that in her school "there was no vandalism last year, no marks, not on the desks, walls nor the bathrooms." Rebecca mentions the many positive comments she has received from the community
regarding the students' good behaviour at plays and assemblies, and she proudly acknowledges the high calibre of student work displayed throughout the school. Patricia admits to becoming overjoyed with pride and tears of happiness when any of her children have overcome some obstacle to accomplish a goal. She fondly recalls a concert where every child in the school participated and whose performance created such a positive reaction from the parents.

Behaviour of a caring parent also implies responsibility for disciplining charges. It is denoted in the expectations and standards the principals require of students. Roberta tempers loving care with justifiable blasts of anger "when they know I am mad because they have done something they know was wrong." Rebecca speaks of the children respecting her position and insists that they "acknowledge authority by appropriate respectful behaviour at all times"; Patricia talks of it being quite alright for the students "to fear her when they know they have done something wrong."

Deeply rooted in the participants' personal philosophies is the belief that all actions undertaken must ultimately be, as it is for any parent, beneficial to the welfare of the children for whom they bear responsibility.

Collaborative Decision Making

The participants all exhibited to some degree a participatory type of decision-making style, but the extent of staff involvement and participation varied. Each
participant appeared to have in mind reasons and expectations of the outcome for employing the their particular style of problem solving.

Operating at the higher end of the scale of participatory decision-making process, Roberta believes that if she is going to make the school work it is essential that she works with the teachers. This she interprets as the staff becoming involved in as many decisions as possible and cooperative action is deemed the best way to solve a problem. If they cannot be directly involved in the process or some aspect of it, she feels obliged that they should be involved "at the very least in the explanation of why not." Grounded in this philosophy is the belief that staff are stakeholders. Their involvement in effect means shared responsibility and a personal investment in the outcome. In her view it also contributes to the formation of staff loyalty to the principal and full support of the decisions made. Having made a family decision everyone mutually supports the members of the family.

Catherine expresses more of the same referring to making decisions by what she termed as "consensus reaching" for most matters. It means staff input into alternative solutions, consultation and a long time devoted to extensive dialogues, and reflection before consensus is achieved. In spite of the process taking a long time, she deems it valuable because "everyone has input and everyone shares ownership."

Unlike Roberta, Rebecca only involves teachers in those decisions she feels "will affect teachers in a strong way."
There follows a procedure that is a mixture of participatory and a decentralized form of decision making. Most administrative and budget decisions she oversees herself, and in the interest of time she far prefers to designate responsibility for some decisions to others. Rebecca and Patricia share a similar perspective, a variation from the others in that they viewed decision making as a nurturing process. While Patricia seeks consultation and input with staff in making internal school decisions and speaks of decisions as being made in conjunction with her teachers like Rebecca, she believes teachers should be encouraged to make a number of decisions for themselves. Both express the belief that it is not necessary to involve staff in every little decision and both view staff empowerment as a means of encouraging and enhancing personal growth and the development of leadership skills.

Three of the principals made it clear that the practice of involving staff in decision making was generally suspended when it strongly conflicted with the personal values of the participants. Thus, Catherine, acting in the best interest of the child, makes a dictatorial decision insisting that a teacher make an apology to a student and a parent she believes have been wronged. Patricia avows that if she believes that the decision to be made is in the best interest of her school, she too will be dictatorial and will supersede all other interests. Rebecca asserts that, even though the collective agreement stipulates a forty-five minute uninterrupted lunch
for staff, where the safety and health of the children are involved, she will impose a singular decision and there will be no complaining about it!

Each of the principal behaviours in the above circumstances appeared to be based on a set of criteria and priorities based on goals embedded in their own philosophies, namely that the children are first and foremost their responsibility.

Belief in Open Communication

Similar patterns of communication style surfaced among the these women principals. A high priority was placed on maintaining effective communication among staff, students, and the community. The energy and time devoted is regarded and equated to spending time with the family. With this as an underlying value, all the participants established an open door policy to facilitate the process in their schools. Roberta arranges lengthy periods of time before, during, and after school hours to make herself available to staff while the others stress the importance of being there and being visible for staff when needed.

Although they prefer parents to schedule appointments, it is made clear that no parent who appears at the office door requesting a few minutes of the principal's time is ever turned away. Aware of the fact that most of the families in their communities consist of two working parents, all the participants willingly accommodate parents even during evening
hours. Roberta reveals plans on working one evening a week in order to accommodate parents who want to drop in. It is also apparent that the topic of interviews frequently extend beyond educational concerns for the children to include a host of other problems encountered by families which the principals refer to as social work.

A monthly newsletter is a common vehicle of communication used by each principal to keep parents informed about school activities and events. Beyond this most of the principals see it as part of their role to keep the community aware of current educational trends and teaching strategies by providing workshops and speakers. Roberta speaks of it as educating parents, and Catherine best typifies the importance accorded this in the effort she undertakes to bring parents to school functions to keep them abreast of educational trends.

The participants speak confidently in their belief that they have fostered an understanding among students that as principals they are both approachable and accessible. They feel this is accomplished by being visible daily in the school and making direct contact with the students. The much preferred way of making contact occurred through spontaneous and informal contacts. Meeting and chatting with students in the classroom in the course of their work, chatting in the halls, attending their events, playing with students in the school yard, and attending to their needs were described as some of ways of establishing relationships.
Because of their positions as head of the school, the principals expect and feel they are accorded respect from students. Just as important, if not more so for these women, is the certainty that students recognize them, as Roberta describes, as "the caring or loving person in the office" who is there to help them. It is, therefore, no surprise that all of the principals recorded a steady stream of students appearing at their office door seeking help or advice for a wide variety of problems.

The Difficult Role of Curriculum Leader

No other perception and function of the role drew as varied a response or invoked consternation during the discussions than did the participants' perceptions on being a curriculum leader. While the participants share some similar views they appear to differ somewhat in their interpretation of the role.

Roberta defines her role as involvement in the classroom. For her this means periodically assuming the role of teacher. Only through her presence and teaching in the classroom does she believe she can best interpret the needs of both students and teachers. Departing from this view Rebecca interprets it as meaning being visible in the school. Visibility includes interacting with students and teachers, showing an interest and offering suggestions and ideas on the curriculum. Classroom visits stem from her purpose of conveying what she calls providing "a sense of security."
Catherine clearly provides a more holistic well defined picture of her perspective having appeared to have given the process a great deal of thought. The view she describes likely originates from her experiences as a curriculum consultant. As the curriculum leader she states that one has to have a great deal of knowledge and experience in curriculum and in the various learning aspects coupled with an understanding of child development. She construes her role as conveying all of this to staff in terms of their programming, planning, attitudes, resources, and evaluations.

Assisting teachers with their problems in implementing curriculum was the view of the role held by Patricia. Patricia considers it an unreasonable and most difficult task because she argues that she cannot be an expert in every area. The best she considers she can offer is to present teachers with alternative strategies, as well as to do some modelling and counselling for them. Unlike the others, Patricia does not feel comfortable going into the classroom to teach although she does drop in for very short intervals to look at student work or see a few minutes of a lesson unfold.

Although they differed in their conception of the role of curriculum leader, they were nevertheless in complete agreement in one aspect. Each indicated dissatisfaction with her performance in this facet of the role. Frequently, descriptors such as a "formidable" task and a "tough" job were referred to during the course of the conversations accompanied by strained facial expressions and exasperated tones. The
major factor contributing to this problem was given as a lack of time to do what they felt was really needed to do the job well and their unwillingness to make the time at the expense of staff and students to do so. A conflict of values emerged regarding time spent on paperwork and administrivia versus time spent with people. Overwhelming and unnecessary paperwork left feelings of resentment because as one participant put it, "It regretfully forces me to turn away people when they need me." It is appears as yet to be an as unresolved conflict.

The Importance of the Perception of Others

All the participants exuded confidence in their abilities to be successful in the role. That confidence was bolstered by what the participants agreed was the respect and support of their colleagues, particularly other women. Three of the women mention the strong bond and kinship and the support network that exist among the women in the system. Overall, the principals feel they are perceived positively by both staff and community. This view they substantiated with numerous concrete examples and positive feedback experiences. Generally, the women feel that their work is valued and that their contributions to the system, on the whole, are recognized by their colleagues. The perception of superiors, however, brought about mixed reaction. With the exception of Roberta, all the other participants feel both affirmation and encouragement is lacking on the part of Senior Administrators.
Although their ability to do the job is never questioned for these women, it appears equally important to have their achievements recognized and endorsed by superiors. Rebecca concedes her disappointment in the lack of positive or constructive feedback from her superintendent on how she is operating her school. Patricia is irritated at receiving mixed messages for how she is perceived and valued. Catherine laments that females have to work extra hard and be better organized and prepared than their male colleagues in order to be heard or to get approval for ideas. Rebecca and Patricia, thwarted in their attempts for career advancement, make reference to the last three senior vacancies which have all been filled by men. Only Roberta gives indication of having received encouragement to pursue a higher position as superintendent. The others resentfully speak of receiving little or none. Although Roberta expressed disinterest in seeking advancement, she did not entirely rule it out. She did, however, acknowledge that it would mean attaining another degree, thereby preventing her from being an immediate prospect should a position become available.

The respect of staff and students was viewed as having been achieved as a result of the high priority placed on being both empathetic and approachable to students and staffs. All of the participants feel that the students accord them respect as head of the school. They also viewed themselves as having been accepted as the caring person in the office.

Confidence and support from the community for being a
woman in the role did not come without conflict. Many of the women spoke about being tested early in their administrations. All were able to relate experiences where they were openly confronted with gender bias from both men and women on staff and in the community at some time or another in the function of their role. They spoke of proving themselves and focusing their efforts in demonstrating their competencies and in obtaining open and honest communication to gain acceptance in the community. Generally, the women felt very positive about the relationships they had established over a period of time with the community and took pride in the positive comments they had received about their schools.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that the women principals in this study do not entirely share the same perception of the role as men do. It appears that some of the differences in role perception and behaviour as viewed by the women can be attributed, in part, to their common cultural experiences as women and as a result of their gender traits. The data further imply that while gender may not determine wholly the women's view of their role it does in varying degrees of significance impact on function of that role.

In this chapter, I will attempt to link the findings of this study with the research and contemporary theories of others (Gips, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1986; Noddings, 1984; Tibbetts, 1979) in order to better understand the data by which conclusions may be drawn.

Are their differences in the way men and women perceive their roles? Roberta, who gave a 'no' response to the question, reacted positively to her profile concurring whole heartedly that she brought a feminine perspective to the role, agreeing with the mother image assigned her. By the very fact that she likened her role to that of a mother, she conceded that alone appeared to differ her from her male colleagues. She footnoted that although she agreed to the metaphor she did not believe that she viewed the role differently than her male colleagues. She laughed at what she said appeared to be her own apparent contradiction.
Catherine, too, agreed with the image of the Caretaker of Children metaphor ascribed to her, fully understanding that it was a traditionally feminine perspective. This did not seem in any way to present a problem to her as she appeared to be completely in touch with her own feelings on the matter. There was little doubt as a caretaker she primarily viewed her role as a child advocate, a care giver and nurturer of children.

Rebecca, who gave a non committal response to the question, accepted the characteristics attributed to her and having many times referenced herself as a "Fuss Budget" could see why she was assigned this metaphor. She readily admitted being preoccupied with details, a trait she felt was very common among females and which was to a large extent substantiated by her female colleagues. However, she felt that image she had given was perhaps a bit narrow in that it missed a side of her personality that exhibited more warmth and fun. She felt that the image portrayed was lacking in some respects and that there was more depth to her that somehow did not show through. An exploration of what she felt was missing produced no significant changes and she requested none. Later in the analysis, I judged by the words she had chosen (warmth and fun) that perhaps she viewed herself more feminine in her feelings than had been projected in her profile.

Patricia readily concurred that her role perception was strongly characterized by her gender traits. She recognized
herself as a highly sensitive person who was given to emotional responses, and she made no apologies for it. However, she was also aware that she possessed other traits that were not gender specific but that equally affected her role. She perceived that they complimented her feminine ones. She was pleased with the corporate executive metaphor because she believed it represented her successful effort in attempting to balance her female traits.

The depth of perceived differences became more apparent in the blunt discussions of Catherine and Patricia where the topic of differences permeated the discussions. Rebecca's initially cautious response to the question gave way to an open discussion frequently interjected with her own perceived differences. It appeared that, having been given the opportunity to reflect on the question, all of the women could ascertain a number of differences that ranged from a high priority on human relationships to concern for the smallest of details, all of which affected their daily functions and school organization.

What gender traits do these women principals feel they bring to the role? All of the women identified personal traits that they regarded as particular to their feminine nature. Also cited was concern for detail, which when described by the participants, had traditional overtones in meaning - providing an attractive, inviting and warm physical environment and concern for the comfort and well being of others. The same characteristic was referred to by Porat
(1988) who described it as a female principal's concern for the small things that go on in schools. Less traditional was Rebecca's translation of the characteristic as meaning concern for organizational excellence and perfection. She also interpreted this as setting high standards. Bluntness was also referred to as a feminine trait by a majority of the participants although its interpretation varied in meaning from being honest and sincere to being upfront and confrontational in relationships. Why this trait was considered feminine remains unclear. All of the specified genders traits were consolidated within the context of the theme of the mother image.

The theme and image of a caring mother is not new to the educational experience. Zumwalt (1986) draws on the mother image to formulate an analogy between new mothers and new teachers. Having been both she feels that the experiences of a new teacher and a new mother evoke many similar feelings—so similar that some descriptions of the experience appear interchangeable. She concludes that teaching, like mothering, involves the application of a good dose of personality, intuition, common sense, past experience, and values along with accumulated knowledge and skill offered by other professionals. Could anything less be said of principaling for the women in this study?

The image of mother and the perspective of school as home and staff and students as family reinforces the traditional theory of women in our culture. This tradition within the
context of educational administration holds consequences for female principals. In our culture, claim Culley, Diamond, Edwards, Lennox, and Portuges (1985), the role of nurturer and intellectual have been separated not just by gender but by function. The authors argue that this creates an imbalance for professional women. "The idea of female virtue and the image of mother tend to work against female capacity to achieve or even aspire to attain professional success.... As mothers, they claim, we are expected to nurture; as professionals we are required to compete" (p. 12).

The context in which nurturing takes place is a patriarchal context. Thus, there exists a conflict between the patriarchal structure of our society and our own natural feminine instincts and relationships. How then do these women handle the imbalance to achieve the success that they have attained as professionals? Culley et al. (1985) grant that while women remain fully conscious of the extent of these contradictions, which, in itself, will not suffice to dissolve them, the awareness of their circumstances may finally enable women to preserve their positive maternal qualities of nurturance and caring while working to displace the conflict of imbalance. I believe that the women in this study are reflections of this latter point. My findings indicate that they have chosen not to isolate their nurturant qualities from their professional role; rather, they appear to have tried to rectify the imbalance by clearly meshing their traditional virtues with the context of their managerial skills allowing
a new pattern of confident leadership to emerge, leadership which capitalizes on their natural strengths as women.

Metaphors, state Schlechty and Joslin (1986), particularly those drawn from emerging organizational forms, might be more "consistent with the realities of schools" (p. 160). The theme of students and staff as family as derived from personal metaphors also provides insight into women's practices. Metaphors, state Schlechty and Joslin (1986), not only reveal how one thinks and defines problems; but they also shape actual behaviour. In their critique of various metaphors, the authors refer to the "school as a family" (p. 153) as an uncommon metaphor in educational literature, but one which is commonly used in staff rooms and by teachers. Phrases like my children, my teachers, caring person, and helpful are commonplace among the language of the principals just as much as they would be among concerned parents. Moreover, they may provide insight as to why a woman principal might choose such an image. Although Schlechty and Joslin (1986) believe that the family metaphor is not fully appropriate given the vast differences between schools and families, they do concede that the image of school as family has appeal for people who enter teaching with the idea of helping others and nurturing the young. Given the crushing power of bureaucracy and the weakening effects of depersonalized and mechanized approaches to teaching, clinging to the family imagery undoubtedly bolsters feelings of self-esteem and worth for teachers. This seems highly feasible in
current school systems where students and teachers sometimes feel detached, isolated, overburdened, and victimized. I would maintain that the image of school as a family has specific benefits for principals too in trying to overcome similar feelings. Providing a warm family environment would do much to reduce negative feelings and pressures among all the members of its community. The authors mention several strategies which they believe evolve out of this family-like environment. For example, children should be treated like unique individuals; children should be given time to spend with their teachers, for the relationship between teacher and children is the most important relationship in the school; and the whole child should be taught.

In the analysis of the women's leadership experiences as seen through the perspectives and values of the mother image, it appears that these women operate within a structural framework of traditional feminine morals and values as discussed by Gilligan (1982). Gilligan (1982) found that men differed from women in moral orientation in that men are oriented toward rights while women are oriented toward caring. She summarizes this orientation: "women not only define themselves in a context of human relationships but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Woman's place in a man's cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies" (p. 17).

Noddings (1984), in her book, *Caring*, concurs with
Gilligan's view. She agrees that women define themselves as both persons and moral agents in terms of their capacity to care; and that in their development, they move from natural caring to an ethic of caring. Relationships to children are governed first by natural caring that makes the ethical possible. Men, she states, view this approach as odd and because of it women have often been judged inferior to men in the moral domain. She argues quite the contrary is true, that a powerful and coherent ethic and a different sort of world may be built on natural caring which is so familiar to women.

Noddings (1984) expands on the theory which she refers to as "the voice of the mother" (p. 182) not only for explaining the moral development of women but also for developing understanding of the context by which women operate. Within the framework of education she defines caring as a feminine approach, a philosophical bases, more typical of women than men - rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness. She contends that just as there are differences between masculine and feminine approaches to ethics there are, as well, differences in approaches to education and living. Noddings' philosophy of education embodies the care ethic. She believes that the primary aim of all education must be the nurturance of the ethical idea of caring and that schools should be deliberately designed to support "caring and caring individuals" (p. 182). She criticizes the present structure as a masculine one that has silenced the mother's voice, as she refers to it, wherein
human caring has not received attention. She recommends a change in the traditional structure based on male orientations because she feels this structure is embedded with negative practices that only serve to perpetuate maintenance of the present standard. In her view, the structure promotes a systematic dehumanization of both male and female children through the loss of the feminine. A feminine approach to schooling is viewed as a positive one that favours more personal contact with individual children and an increase in the spirit of caring, which she links to women's "maternal attitude" (p. 197). The theory of differentiated moral developments as offered by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) serve to provide enlightenment for the practices of women in prioritizing caring and helping and other components of the role.

Do these gender traits impact on the conduct and effectiveness of their daily functions and interactions of their role? The theoretical conceptualization of caring as it applies to the perception and function of the role certainly confirms its influence. There is further evidence in the data to support that the expressed gender traits and the feminine perspective voiced in the mother image appears to have a direct spillover effect on management styles and behaviour patterns. It is evident that these women placed a high priority in developing good personal relationships, commenting often on its prime importance to them. All of the participants relied on what they perceived as the strengths
of their natural feminine traits as a means of facilitating those positive relationships.

The priority of developing good relationships, in turn, impacts on the type of decision-making and communication style employed by the principals. The participants tended to use participatory decision making-process where the emphasis is placed on sharing information, collaboration, and consensus reaching. This type of power sharing seeks to empower staff in the decision-making process. Communication is characterized by the participants as open, honest, and often blunt. The emphasis on maintaining good communications accounts for the great lengths that women like Catherine and Roberta will go to make themselves accessible to students, staff, and parents. Because people are such a high priority, much effort is expended by remaining in what Roberta referred to as the "thick of things in their schools". This involves not only being visible and actively involved, like Patricia, but also comforting, caring, and loving, like Roberta and Catherine.

The significance of collaboration and its effect on school cultures are embodied in the philosophical works of Dewey (1916) and Freire (1985). Basically, their theories comprise the modern day concept of **empowerment** in that they designate a cluster of beliefs which affirm the importance of helping shareholders gain some control over important decisions in their lives. This tradition (cited in Eisner, 1982) assumes that students as well as teachers have
legitimate rights and contributions to make through a democratic process employing cooperation, collaboration, and interaction. The process involves the shareholders in the construction and evaluating of their own educational practices and experiences.

Dewey's theories in *Democracy and Education* (cited in Miller & Seller, 1990) regarding education warrant deliberation here because he postulates ideas that are particularly applicable to views and aspirations of the participants. Dewey (1916) developed the concept of interaction, or transaction - an approach based on democratic principles emphasizing cooperative interaction between students and teachers. Education, in Dewey's view, has both a conservative and reconstructive function in that schools should exist to pass on to students the mores and language of the culture. However, the school's role is not limited solely to this function. More than this, Dewey viewed education as a dynamic process that can help both teacher and the student participate in the democratic process. For Dewey, the overriding aim of education is growth. Growth involves the reconstruction of experience and knowledge that helps in developing and controlling future experience. Educational experiences are judged on their ability to promote growth; positive experiences facilitate growth whereas negative experiences arrest or retard it. Such a view puts the child's welfare, self-image, and personal growth at the heart of the matter. His vision of schools as miniature communities where
teachers and students develop shared goals and cooperatively solve mutual problems deeply parallels the vision of the participants in seeking to create a similar type of school community and culture. Such a community is described as child-centred, autonomous, and growth oriented encompassing democratic principles and a curriculum that expands beyond the cognitive domain.

Many of Dewy's beliefs (cited in Miller & Seller, 1990, pp. 70-71) coincide with the views held by the participants, specifically where school life is envisaged as an extension of home life. Among these were the view that schools must represent life as real and vital to the child as that which he/she carries on in the home, in the neighbourhood, or in the playground; the view that school life should grow gradually out of the home life; and the view that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar with in the home. Because the home is the form of social life in which the child has been nurtured and has received his/her moral training, Dewey believed that it is the business of the school to deepen and extend the child's sense of values that are bound up in his/her home life.

The emphasis on collaborative and participatory decision making made by the women principals also has clear consequences in light of current perspectives on school improvements and provides further explanation why these principals heed so much time and effort in promoting it.

Lieberman (1986) speaks to the necessity of forming a
collaborative school culture. She concedes that little will happen in schools unless attention is paid to the necessity for building an ethos, a climate for a collective effort on the part of teachers and principals. In her study, she cites the critical importance of congeniality and collaboration between principal and teacher and between teachers. The development of good working relationships and a positive climate and rapport were a central focus of effective administration for all the principals in her study. Lieberman's (1986) findings on attaining school improvement mirror many of the beliefs shared by the participants, namely, that teachers should be involved as much as possible in local problem solving and decision making. Teachers feel a sense of colleagueship with each other when they have united to do something rather than making do in their own isolation - a collective effort with even small and varied problems results in a renewed commitment for shared goals. Lieberman advocates several themes, many of which ring familiar in the narratives. They include: working with people rather than working on people; building collaboration and cooperation; involving the provisions for people to do things together; talking together; sharing concerns; using knowledge as a way of helping people grow rather than pointing up their deficits; being aware and sensitive to the differences in the worlds of teachers and other actors within or outside the school setting; and sharing leadership functions as a team so that people can provide complementary skills and get experience in role taking. In
effect, Lieberman might just as aptly been quoting practices engaged in by the women in this study!

Decisions about curriculum and the amount of time devoted to it are crucial because curriculum influences what children learn and what they perceive of value in the school and the culture at large. The on-going task of developing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum is now the jurisdiction of the principal as instructional leader. Although the participants found the role of curriculum leader complex, time consuming, and difficult much of their interpretation of the role aligns with current concepts. Miller and Seller (1990) contend that curriculum work is based on the particular orientation of the curriculum leader. This orientation is reflected in one's philosophy. It seems only natural, given their expressed values and concern for the welfare of children, that the participants would adhere to a curriculum orientation that is rooted in the transformation position. In contemporary education, transformation programs are based on research that links positive student self-concept with school achievement. Promoting positive self-esteem for teachers and students was a prominent theme in the principals' thinking. Such themes are reflected in the Purkey's *Inviting School Success* and Combs' *The Professional Education of Teachers* (cited in Miller & Seller, 1990). Purkey (1978) developed concepts of the invitational school and the invitational teacher to facilitate positive self-concept and positive school climate. The invitational teacher
is portrayed as one who sends invitations to the students to encourage learning. Invitations include listening to students with care, being authentic with students and one's self, and reaching out to students. Combs (1974) theory of education states that, in order to encourage a positive student self-concept, the teacher should have a positive view of himself or herself. Combs (1974) asserts that the teacher's positive self-concept can be used as an instrument in teaching; as the teacher experiences his or her uniqueness as a person the act of teaching is enhanced. These concepts appear to be embraced in the goals of the women principals.

Reference was also made to the arduous tasks associated with implementing curriculum. Miller and Seller (1990) state that implementation, a major component of the curriculum process, is often identified with instruction; but they argue that this view ignores the multidimensional and complex impact of change as a factor for curriculum implementation. Fullan (1982) identifies three levels on which curriculum change can occur. All of these were listed as activities the women principals engaged in with their teachers or in which they elicited support staff for assistance. These included the use of new or revised instructional materials or technologies; new activities, practices, and strategies, etc.; and beliefs, that is, pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying new politics or programs. To be truly effective, the authors argue that implementation must also involve changes in what teachers do and how they think, a viewpoint that was readily
shared by Catherine in her interpretation of the role. The ultimate goal of implementation, comments Fullan, is not to implement any one particular innovation but to develop the capacity in schools and individuals to process all innovations and revision. Little wonder that these principals found themselves overwhelmed. Like the participants, Miller and Seller (1990) admit effective implementation is often demanding because it occurs in the complex environment of a school system where patterns and structures have been developed over long periods and that often run counter to the thrust of new programs. It was obvious that the principals had experienced this and had adjusted their strategies as Patricia comments to move slowly and cautiously in pushing for change. Miller and Seller (1990) also understand implementation as a personal and social process whereby the spirit of collegiality and high morale are key characteristics of a school culture that can offer support and facilitate those using a new program. In a sense, the women principals demonstrated this in their behaviour allocating as much of their time as possible to meet with staff both informally and formally to discuss curriculum and teachers' needs. It likely accounts for their priority in making informal visit to the classrooms to discover the needs and provide support.

Nolan (1987) stated in her study on male and female principals that females tend to personalize their functions as principals. The personal metaphors ascribed to the women in this study suggest that the same type of personalization
exists in the participants' view of school and community. As
the personal and the professional interact within that image,
the school atmosphere is changed and enhanced toward achieving
the goal of a successful school. The successful school is
envisioned and described by the participants in terms of
children's happiness, personal and spiritual growth, and
achievement. "A place where children are happy," states
Rebecca; "a place where children develop positive self-
esteeem...where children are accepted...a place where they can
achieve and be proud of their achievements," comments
Patricia; "a place where I can impact on the lives of children
and they know I care," cites Catherine. In terms of their
relationships to staff, the principals place no less
importance in their commitment to staff viewing a successful
school as typified in Rebecca's comment "a place where people
are happy...where they respect and are kind to one
another...", and in Patricia's statement, "a place where
teachers can experience spiritual and personal growth." It
appears that these women judge themselves, as Porat (1989)
suggests, in terms of their ability to care and to maintain
relationships; and they put a lot of effort into trying to
understand each situation they encounter.

How well do these perceptions correlate with the goals
and the successful school of principals as envisaged by the
effective principal? With respect to goals, Leithwood and
Montgomery (1983) contend that effective principals are
concerned with promoting student cognitive growth and student
happiness above all else. Effective principals, state the authors, are exceptionally clear of this priority regardless of the conflicts they encounter. One can readily recall with understanding Rebecca's commitment to the same goal "and when and where the safety of the children are involved, I can be dictatorial...the bell will ring and their will be no complaining about it!" It is inferred in Catherine's unpopular stance "the child was hurting and the teacher was wrong...I made him apologize" and in Patricia's chastisement of a teacher, "his sarcasm was affecting the child's self-esteem...he had to be confronted."

Many of the practices noted throughout the data parallel those recorded by other researchers (Porat, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1986; Little, 1984; Berman 1982). They document the high priority afforded individuals by women principals and its influence on building a community. Because of it, they argue, women use traditional virtues that are exhibited in a democratic participatory style reflected in all aspects of leadership including decision making and communication. Such practices are also among those singled out in studies of effective administrators. Leithwood and Montgomery (1983) state that effective principals view the establishment of cooperative interpersonal relationships as an important factor to achieve goals. Effective principals also encourage participation in decision making. Toward building and maintaining interpersonal relationships, they identify a number of strategies that have likewise permeated the
practices of the female principals in this study - encouragement and involvement with staff, being available and accessible, being honest, direct and sincere. In addition, facilitating with in-school communication and facilitating communication between the school and the community were documented in the literature.

School and staff cultures which have been labelled "collaborative" or "shared", have been the focus of study for researchers Leithwood and Jantzi (1990). They state that such staff cultures appear to foster practices most conducive to the types of student and staff development which are the nucleus of current school reform efforts. The authors conducted an inquiry into the practices of nine elementary and three secondary principals of schools identified as possessing such cultures. As a result of their study, the authors provided support for the claim that principals have access to strategies which are transformational in effect and, hence, assist in the development of collaborative school cultures. Six strategies were classified as contributing factors. The majority of these are commonly recognized practices employed in the school cultures administrated by women (Lieberman, 1985; Shakeshaft, 1986) as well as those of the women in this study. These strategies included strengthening the culture, using bureaucratic mechanisms, fostering staff development, frequent and direct communication, sharing powers and responsibility, and using rituals and symbols to express cultural values. They contend that such endeavours constitute
a form of leadership that they have labelled transformational
and which they predict as necessary for the future reforms of
education. Because women's practices are so closely
associated with the conceptualization of the transformational
leader, women appear to be at a natural advantage in
facilitating the challenge of the change process.

In summary, as Shakeshaft (1986) concludes, the female
world is very similar to the world of effective schools.
Female strategies to schooling are remarkably similar to
prescriptions for administrative behaviour in effective
schools. It appears for a number of reasons many of which
have been stated in this study, women possess characteristics
that are conducive to good schooling. I would conclude, as
does Shakeshaft, that "analyzing female approaches to
administration that can be used by all administrators might
help to isolate particular strategies and behaviours that
promote effective schooling" (p. 122).

Does the research make other inferences? Tibbetts (1980)
takes all of the above characteristics and behaviours
exhibited by women principals a step beyond daring to claim
what so few would. Because women use democratic practices
more often than men, because they involve the group in policy-
making decisions allowing for individual and group creativity
and initiative, and because they foster two-way communication
between the leader and the group, this, she claims, has
resulted in the superiority of women principals. She
concludes that is this type of leadership that is considered
by many to be the best form of leadership and one which teachers expressed the greater satisfaction.

Crystal Gips (1989) provides yet another theory which encompasses reasons why women are models of successful leadership in schools for the nineties. The traditional role of the school which has been to transform children into workers has changed and those who see a need for greater democracy in all societal institutions, including education have a different view of the role of education. They see the school's primary responsibility as the education of the whole child for citizenship. Unlike the traditional concept of schooling where children were mere consumers, the new belief is that education for citizenship can only be achieved through a child's active and pleasurable participation in the learning process. In Ontario, the Ministry of Education refers to this process as child-centred, active learning wherein the process of how to learn should supersede the importance of subject matter. The effective schools research identifies principals as the most important influences on student learning and student outcomes. It is their thinking and action which determine the school organization which impacts on student learning. Gips (1989) recognizes that the field of education already contains a large pool of potential school leaders (women) whose personal ways of thinking about teaching, learning, and their own roles quite naturally support the above democratic approach to schooling. Those differences in women's thinking and practices has been recorded throughout
this study. Gips (1989) cites that in the U.S. women have emerged as outstanding leaders at a rate five times that of men. She suggests that this may well be because their approach to school leadership has been democratic and particularly feminine. Gips (1989) finalizes that a women's priority on human relationships, care, responsibility, equity, fairness, inclusion, intimacy, interdependence, and cooperation are the very essence of a democratic community. I resolve that no less can be said of Roberta, Rebecca, Patricia, and Catherine - the four participants of this study - for their views and ways of thinking are also compatible with the goals of democratic schooling.

Despite having a positive attitude toward their job, the women singled out several areas of frustration. Cited most frequently was excessive paperwork that kept them away from what they felt was the main priority of their job, namely, staff and students. Each participant also regretted the lack of time resulting in what was expressed as a less than adequate job in functioning as a curriculum leader, a criticism of the role so aptly described by Fullan (1988).

While all the women spoke glowingly of the intrinsic rewards of the job, they were less inclined with the exception of Roberta to be satisfied with the extrinsic rewards in terms of advancement in their careers. For these women, it appeared that a significant component of job satisfaction was strongly linked with support and recognition from superiors. Underlying the general dissatisfaction was the expectation
that having run a successful school that they would be rewarded either by affirmation or advancement in their career aspirations. Unlike the women described by Dempsey (1988) who viewed the principalship as their final goal in their professional aspirations, only Roberta entered the principalship with the idea of this being her final achievement; and although she expressed no desire to seek any higher administrative level, she did not entirely rule it out as possibility commenting that she did not know what the far off future may hold for her. For now the positive affirmation and support she received from her superiors was enough. For the others the principalship was viewed as a step toward attaining higher aspirations such as superintendent or even Director of Education. There was masked resentment and undertones of disappointment and bitterness in what was interpreted as "hidden messages...confused and inappropriate feedback..." pertaining to the pursuit of career goals as well as a lack of interest and affirmation in the job they were doing in the schools by some of the participants. Nevertheless, two of the women responded that they have not given up their goals and if necessary were willing to look elsewhere to avail themselves of the opportunity for advancement. These women also mentioned that they had both encouragement and the support from their families in the pursuit of their career goals.

In spite of the lack of advancement, each participant acknowledging the hard work and the investment of personal
time involved contends that her efforts have all been worthwhile in the end. Positive feedback from colleagues, staff, parents, and students referred to throughout the dialogue were factors contributing to job satisfaction. Without reservation, all of the participants highly recommended the job to other women.

All of the women in this study projected self-confidence holding positive perceptions of themselves and their effectiveness in running their schools. Each shared a view that at this particular time in society there were more advantages to being a woman in the role than disadvantages. Several reasons were given for this: Society's attitude toward women and their abilities have changed; women are numerically dominant in staffs, and we have a better understanding of each other; we share more; it is a time when society accepts women in authoritative professions and when attitudes toward working women have changed; society recognizes feminine attributes as conducive to good leadership; women's motives and gestures of affection are not suspect as men's have been perceived.

In relating their gender behaviours, these women exhibit a style of management that appears, to a large extent, to be characteristically feminine in nature and democratic in principle. Significantly, it appears that none of these women feel they have had to sacrifice any of their femininity in order to be an effective administrator and leader. Moreover, being a woman, as Roberta and Catherine singled out, gives
them the edge or advantage in a number of areas, in their relationships with people and in handling conflict. Repudiating traditional thought that females have to adopt a male management style and the male mask as Frasher and Frasher (1988) describe it, in order to be effective, these women share the belief that quite the opposite holds true. Thus, they view being a woman not only advantageous, but they also regard their gender characteristics as facilitating and effectively enhancing the performance of the various aspects of the role. That performance consistently draws comparisons to the successful behaviours by which to achieve effective schools.

Finally, I would conclude that women of the nineties seem to have rejected the role models of the seventies and have heeded the advice of their colleagues in the eighties in meeting the challenge set before them.

It is up to the women to recognize and believe in their own worth and ability, to shake off the shackles of acculturation that have locked them into believing in their own inferiority, and to overcome the socialization process that has discouraged their self-assertion, achievement, leadership and independence, that has sapped them of their self-confidence and led them to underrate themselves (Tibbetts, p. 178).

I judge that the participants of this study appear to be successfully in the process of meeting that challenge. One can only anticipate with renewed optimism the strides women
will achieve as we move beyond the nineties into the next decade.

Limitations of the Study

Several questions emerge out of the commonalities found in this study. Most centre around the personal philosophies of the women involved. Are the philosophies and subsequent practices adopted by these women a result of being raised in a Catholic environment? All of the women, with the exception of Patricia, a late convert in marriage, were raised in a traditional Catholic environment. The impact of that variable and the differences, if any, might best be investigated in a similar study being conducted on female administrators within a public school system. Are the perceptions congruent with their own values or a result of buying into a school philosophy exclusive to a Catholic System? Two avenues might be examined to provide insight into the latter question: an investigation of the values and practices undertaken by male administrators of the same board or a repetition of the study on female administrators within another Catholic School System.

Researcher's Reflections

The process of daily living and working is never without conflict. These women are not exceptions to that fact. In the pursuit of attaining answers there was one area of reluctance that solicited guarded responses. In discussions
about career aspirations only Patricia seemed to openly want to address the topic at any length; and, although I knew the topic was equally important to the other women, they appeared to shy away from it. I could surmise from my own experiences that this is not a topic frequently discussed openly among women, even among personal friends and even much less with men. I have always pondered the reason for this although I am no less hesitant in sharing such information with my colleagues. For women the question is highly personal and perhaps there is still the fear about appearing too ambitious, a characteristic traditionally incompatible with women's behaviour. Perhaps we have yet to overcome the fear of not being taken too seriously in an endeavour that was once considered a male exclusive. Perhaps, as Rebecca suggests, much of what women do is related to their self-image and continual exclusion from career advancement can take its toll. As confident as women may appear on the outside, one suspects that self-image remains fragile, and as such we are careful to protect it.

Just as interesting was the way the initial slow, thoughtful reaction to the question of differences by some participants gave way to a profusion of responses increasingly punctuated by concrete examples. Sometimes these were given off the record or addressed as asides to emphasize a point. Much of this increased willingness to disclose I attributed this development and growth in the relationship between researcher and participant as co-researcher and as well as to
the time to actually reflect on differences. There was, at times, concern over certain words that appeared in the dialogue about differences, and on a few occasions I was asked to soften the language, but, in all, the number of requested changes in the text were extremely few and minor. Patricia, whom I considered to be extremely candid about differences, summed up her reaction to the her narrative: "There isn't anything here that I haven't said before or made others aware of in stating my opinions." In all, I was appreciative of the honesty, candidness, and sincerity with which the participants approached the issues.

One of the personal goals of this research was to explore the current status of women in the field to discover for myself and for others how women view the role and to find out how they are coping. This I viewed as a practical perspective on my part as one who seeks an administrative position. During the same time I also availed myself of the opportunity to explore the more theoretical side of principal leadership as offered in a Ministry approved principal certification course. This qualification is required by most boards in Ontario for those who intend to pursue a career in educational leadership. Having recently completed that course, I was able to reflect on both experiences.

A primary goal of the first part of the course was listed as developing leadership skills consistent with the image of the effective principal. Eighty percent of the 80 candidates enrolled in the course were women, a fact that seemed to have
been overlooked by the program developers in providing appropriate role models and addressing gender issues. It did, however, not go unnoticed by the candidates themselves or by Ministry officials who evaluated the course. The issue of feminine leadership and differences in styles had surfaced in small group sessions and had been hotly debated. The issue became much more critical after a plenary session. The topic of that session was situational leadership and a "male expert" was expounding on many theories of leadership when he was asked by a female candidate for his view on feminine type leadership and where it fitted into the scheme of things. He appeared perplexed. The female candidate then referred to a number of writers and books on the subject, many of which appear in this bibliography. "No," he replied, he had not heard any of those "new books". The woman continued pointing out that many of these were not new ideas and listed one book as being ten years old. Appearing somewhat annoyed, the speaker interrupted, dismissing her concerns. "I am not here to talk about that, I'm here to speak on leadership." The problem seemed apparent to the audience. His view on successful leadership was based entirely on research studies conducted from the perspective of males. Perhaps in his view effective leadership was not compatible with a feminine image. But this is merely an assumption on my part. He moved on with his lecture leaving an uneasy and upset audience. The course's failure to address the administration from the feminine perspective and gender issues came under heavy
criticism by both the ministry officials and the candidates. The organizers, recognizing these as legitimate concerns, tried to remedy the situation by scurrying to find a speaker. Unfortunately, no one could be found to avail their services on such short notice. In the next few sessions there followed a search among the candidates, women who could speak on the issue in small groups. To my surprise, there was a number of candidates in each group who could indeed speak to the question "the expert" could not.

Although I enjoyed and profited by the many facets of the Principal's course, I did not view the experience as particularly encouraging and motivating to prospective women administrators. I dwelt on this for some time. In fact, a few women having completed the course confided that they had now become uncertain as to whether they wanted to seek out such a position. Others, without giving reasons, spoke about putting their quest on hold. I concluded it was not what was being said in the course that caused concern, rather it was what was not being said. No one ever claimed that women were incapable of being good principals, but on the other hand, no one ever mentioned that they make good principals. No literature was ever distributed that reported the success that women were enjoying in administration. No models and no attributes characteristic to women in general were ever held up as exemplary to leadership, and that is precisely the kind of encouragement that has been withheld from women in our society for decades. I believe the assumption here was that
women having attained the qualifications and having enrolled in the course had already been motivated and encouraged to seek out an administrative role, but that simply was not the case for a majority of them. I compared both experiences; and although both I deemed positive in gaining understanding, meaning, and insight into the role, it was from the participants of my study that I obtained motivation, enthusiasm, and, above all, encouragement to pursue the goal.

No one ever undertakes a study like this without rating the experience and its impact in personal terms. It is likely much easier to do in circumstances where you have not set out to prove or validate a particular theory or hypothesis. There were times when I got bogged down wading through the data and tired and resentful of my "night job" as I often referred to it. But those negatives were far outweighed by the many positives I enjoyed as a result of this experience. I am aware that I share in common many of the same feminine traits that have been expressed by the women in my study throughout their narratives though it was never discussed. That they view such traits as enhancing and facilitating their experiences as principals provides both encouragement and motivation. That they find the role both challenging and rewarding gives rise to optimism. The women in this study have heightened and enriched the experience of the principal's role in terms meaningful to me as a woman and a prospective administrator, and for that I am grateful.
References

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions:

The following questions were prepared as a guideline for the participants' reflections on role experience.

1. Do you feel that you perceive your role as a principal differently than a man?
2. What feminine traits if any, do you feel you bring to your administrative role as principal, and what effects have these had?
3. In your experience has being a woman in the role been an advantage or disadvantage? Explain.
4. Can you describe how you go about making decisions?
5. Can you illustrate your communication style?
6. How do you interpret your role as curriculum leader?
7. What other priorities have you established that you believe are essential to function successfully in your role?
8. How do you think others (senior administration, colleagues, staff, students, community) view you as a female principal?
Appendix 2

Release Form

I ______________________ consent to participate in the research study being conducted by Phyllis Hurst under the supervision of Susan Drake for the Master of Education program at Brock University. I understand that the interviews will be taped; the contents of the tape will be held confidential; and I will be assigned a fictional name for the purpose of this study. I am aware that Phyllis will present her interpretation of the data to me so that I will have the opportunity for feedback before the final version of the narrative is completed. I agree to the use of the material from the taped interview in the thesis and in any further publication which may arise from the research.

Dated: ___________ Signed: ______________________