

**VISIBILITY OF WOMEN
IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

DOREEN ALMA DOTZLER

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Abstract

Support, based on a literature review, and reflective analysis of interviews with three administrators in rural Alberta, is presented in a plea for a greater visibility of women in school leadership. Women, through their goals, values, commitment, and expertise, have contributed in significant and valuable ways to the education community. While women have been responsible for most of the teaching and a great deal of the informal leadership in the schools, there is overwhelming evidence that their participation in formal roles of school administration has been extremely circumscribed. Continuing statistics and reports indicate that, despite their increased interest and achievements, women are vastly underrepresented in school leadership. The literature review, results of the interviews and personal experience validate women's effective leadership skills and abilities. Barriers which serve to exclude women from leadership are then examined, as are accommodations undertaken to overcome those barriers. Schools, operating as communities of leaders and learners, must assume their responsibility by providing more equitable opportunities in leadership, in curriculum and practice. A greater inclusion of women at all levels of educational leadership is essential in order to effect the rationalization, valuation and integration of women's and men's contributions to society.

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Carrying the load. Veiled and voiceless. Their Public Image.

*Dignified. Proud. Beautiful. Gracious. Hospitable. Caring. Loving. Giving.
Desperate to reach each child. Crying with pain. Articulate. Women of Faith. I
grew to know and love them.*

*Images of women in India are not unlike images of women in Canada. That's what we
do, I said, when I saw them carrying the loads on their heads - fuel, mortar,
water, grain. We carry the loads in schools and in homes, and we veil our faces,
our realities, and silence our voices in public. Gracious, hospitable, caring, loving,
and giving, our contributions sustain the community but our voices are least and
last. Desperate to reach each child. Crying with pain. Searching to make this
community better serve its members. Articulate. Women of Faith. I know and
love them.*

Introduction

Continuing statistics and reports indicate that women, despite their increased interest, are underrepresented in positions of school leadership in Alberta and Canada (Alberta Education, 1991; Economic Council of Canada, 1992; Montgomerie, Peters and Ward, 1991; Rees, 1991; Smith, 1991). While women constituted 62.5% of the teaching force in Alberta in 1991, only 4% of superintendents, 18% of principals, and 28% of assistant or associate principals were female (Alberta Education, 1991). The Economic Council of Canada, in the 1992 document A Lot to Learn points out: "The lack of women in positions of authority in our education system presents an unbalanced view of the possibilities available to women in the eyes of children, young women and young men" (p.20). Women must become visible and vocal in our educational institutions. They must gain public recognition for their intellectual competence, their values and knowledge, and their vision for the future. If women are to become truly valued members of the community, respected for their contributions and achievements, they must also be seen that way in the schools, the institutions which serve in such a critical way in influencing and impacting on the lives of all children.

It is imperative for the students within the school community, the school staffs and the community at large that value and recognition for women's abilities, efforts and contributions, be accorded in a visible and public way. As schools strive to provide an environment for the equitable

rationalization, valuation and integration of girls' and women's, and boys' and men's experiences they serve to meet the needs of all members of society. It is to the increased valuation and visibility, to a greater recognition of the contributions of women in education, who have privately "held up half the sky," that this paper speaks (Gougeon, 1991, p.5; Helgesen, 1990).

Support, based on a literature review, will be presented for greater inclusion of women in educational leadership. A brief summary of the research devoted to the articulation of barriers which serve to exclude women from school leadership will be presented. Accommodations and strategies, institutional and personal, employed to overcome those barriers will be examined, with reference being made as much as is possible to provincial and national programs. Interviews of three women in positions of school leadership in rural Alberta were conducted to determine their experiences and perceptions of valuation of women in school leadership. Having lived and worked as an educator in rural Alberta for the past sixteen years and having known only two women in positions of school leadership during that time, I wondered how, given the obvious preference for male leadership in administration, these women had achieved their positions. I was interested in the respondents' perceptions of which of their competencies and capacities considered most significantly in their selection as the best possible candidates for positions of leadership in their local school jurisdictions. I wondered how the women perceived their own capacities and contributions, their valuation as women in education, and if by their sharing their values and aspirations we might all gain a greater

awareness and appreciation of women's abilities and potential. I wanted to know if women currently in positions of school leadership had encountered the barriers described in the literature, and if so, what strategies and accommodations were employed to overcome those barriers. I was interested in their influence, as women in leadership, upon the students, the staff and the community. Their achievement as women who were recognized as leaders, speaking and acting for the good of child and the community, seemed a personal and political affirmation and I wanted to hear their stories. Reflective interpretations of their observations and experiences, juxtaposed alongside the literature review, add a dimension of hope and faith in a search for a recognition of the invisible majority.

Demographic Presentation

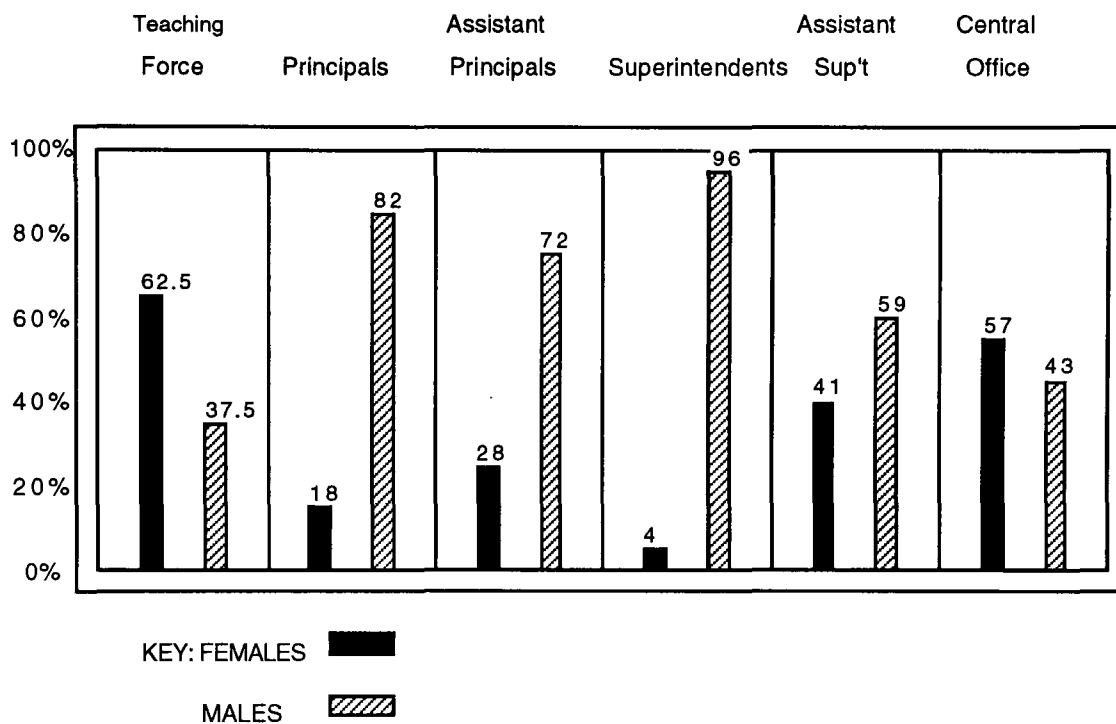
While the vast majority of educational administrators are men, there have been times when women were in a majority in positions of school leadership. Shakeshaft (1989) presents the proportions of female administrators for the United States from 1905 when 61.7% of the administrators at the elementary level were female to 1985 when the percentage of female administrators at the elementary level had dropped to 16.9%. Female administrators at the secondary level had also dropped from 5.7% to 3.5% for the same time period.

Statistics for representation of administrators by gender were unavailable for the early history in Alberta education but statistics for 1988 compare with those in the same time period in America: female administrators in 19% of positions in elementary school and in 3% of the high schools (Rees, 1990). The most current statistics for Alberta in 1991 indicate that 18.3% of all principals were female, an increase of 2.3% over 1988 when 16% of all principals were female (Alberta Education, 1992). The document Education in Alberta: Facts and Figures 1991 states that the number of males at the administrative level decreased by 2.5% from 1989/90 to 1990/91, while the number of females in administration increased by 4.6% (1992, p.29). We are encouraged by the increase, recognizing that the 4.6% relates to the increase in numbers of women in administrative capacities, up from 1,071 to 1,120 that school year, and not to the increase in proportion of women in school administrative positions. The actual increase in proportion of women in positions of school

principalships from 1989/90 to 1990/91 in Alberta was 0.7%. Such an increase somewhat tempers our encouragement.

The proportion of women in Assistant Principalships in Alberta increased from 23.4% in 1988 to 26.2% in 1989/90 and 28.2% in 1990/91, gains of 2.8% and 2% respectively. In 1988 the percentage of women as Department Heads was 25% of the total; in 1989/90 they were 25.7%; and in 1990/91 they were 26.9%, gains of 0.7% in one year and 2.1% over the next year. At the Assistant Superintendent level the proportions changed from 10% in 1988 to 41% in both 1989/90 and 1990/1991, indicating a significant increase of 31% in 1989, remaining at the same level for the last reported year. At the Superintendent level women represented 5% of the total in 1988, decreasing by 1% to 4% in 1989/90, remaining at the same level for the 1990/91 school term. Women are represented in a majority in staff positions as Consultants and Supervisors at the district or board area. Statistics for 1988 indicate that 63% of those positions were held by women. A category entitled "Other" in the 1989/90 and 1990/91 report corresponds to the central office positions, in which women were represented at 54.1% and 57.4%, respectively, in proportion of "other" administrative positions.

**Distribution of Administrators
Alberta School Boards, 1991**



Source: Alberta Education, 1991.

The latest statistics indicate an increase in proportion of women in all combined administrative positions in Alberta's public and private schools for 1989/90 -1990/91 of 1.4%, up from 27.5% to 28.9%. The total gain, however slight, is on the positive side and therefore acknowledged as affirming to all who seek a greater recognition and valuing of women in education. The significant increase in the proportionate increase of women in the position of Assistant Superintendent signals a greater public recognition of not only the aspirations but also the abilities and

achievements of women. As educators respond to demands for greater equity in educational opportunities and outcomes, women are being included in determining policy and programs and are receiving credit for their contributions.

Statistics from Alberta Education (1991) report 18,224 female teachers, with 1,120 or one in about every 16 women serving in some administrative capacity in 1990-91. Of the 10,948 men in education in Alberta school systems, 2,751 or about one in every four served in some administrative capacity. Viewed from that perspective, men are four times as likely to serve in leadership positions in Alberta educational systems. When we consider that a large number of the women identified in positions of added responsibility are in staff positions, supportive, consultative, expertise roles such as consultants and special education teachers, then the limited visibility of women in leadership becomes even more apparent (Rees, 1990). The gender imbalance of women and men in positions of school leadership becomes more evident upon further analysis. There were 570 female principals or assistant principals out of the total of 17,801 female teachers in school positions in Alberta in 1990/91, a ratio of 1 to 31 (Alberta Education, 1992). There were 1941 male principals or associate principals out of a total population of 10,483 male teachers in Alberta schools, a ratio of 1 to 5. The ratios of women and men in first line positions as principals of schools is more disparate: 254 female principals out of the total of 17,801 female teachers in school positions, a ratio of 1 to 70. Of the 10,483 men working in school positions, 1,136 are principals, a ratio of 1 to 9.

Those ratios present a "disturbing imbalance" (Bruce, 1991, p.723), a misperception of the abilities, motives and contributions of women in our schools and we must acknowledge an urgent need for a greater representation of women positions of leadership. Richards (1988) decries the underrepresentation of women and minorities in administrative positions, the highly visible positions which signal institutional commitment to equity for all other units within the organization:

When women and minorities secure highly visible leadership positions in educational institutions, the organization signals the legitimacy of affirmative action, diminishes the power of stereotypes, provides role models for children and young adults, and confirms experientially the democratic ideals taught in the classroom. To put it simply, schools and colleges nourish democratic ideals when they practice what they teach. (p. 160)

The existing organization presents an image to children in the schools, educators and the community, that mostly women educators will be in the classroom teaching, serving and dependent, while men will be in the office administering and leading our schools (Wyatt, 1990). We must address the inadequacies of these images and present a balanced correct view of what each member, female and male, contributes to the school community. Women have been leading quietly and invisibly, contributing to the school community and curriculum through significant contributions in their consultative roles and through their voluntary contributions of time and

effort over and above classroom assignments. Women have sought opportunities to improve all aspects of education, motivated by overriding concerns for the welfare of children. They have sought and continue to seek change and challenge and believe they can accomplish growth through administrative roles (Edson, 1988). Their increased efforts to become an integral part of schools have not been recognized.

Three women in positions of school leadership in rural Alberta shared their stories with me and I felt a deep sense of pride for them and for all teachers and students. Their valuation as leaders in the school community sends out a strong message about the skills and strengths of women. These women talked about pushing for shifts in paradigms, for learning centered schools, for schools which provide a sense of community for all students. These administrators are educators whose greatest values are concerns for the children, for open and successful communications and positive learning experiences for all students. They are, in their own words, "teaching and living by example, enthusiastic and encouraging." They are providing strong positive role models about what women can do, and they are doing it well, a small minority of women in a male dominated field of educational administration. These women have worked very hard, one in program and staff development for the Provincial Department of Education, another as language arts coordinator for her district, and another with a graduate diploma in education, vice-principal for several years and principal for eight years of the largest school within her district. They shared their many accomplishments, their skills, their motivations and goals. Talented, articulate, dedicated educators.

It was an honor to hear their remarkable stories and I wished I had had the opportunity of working with them. Their stories stirred a pride and knowing within me as I recalled Polanyi's explanation that subsidiary awareness functions to guide us to the integration of coherent patterns, to a comprehension of something real. These women spoke as women who have been valued for their skills and qualities, as women who have provided effective leadership, motivated by a real concern for the best interests of students. Their stories told me that women can teach, and women can lead. Administration and teaching are not mutually exclusive domains, but in the case of these women, complementary and interrelated. Their words gave form to the tacit knowledge gained from years of experience in schools, women have strengths that must be validated. Women's competencies and contributions, though they support the entire system, are represented publicly like the tip of an iceberg. Women as educators have been subsidiary and background rather than focal and integral. It is imperative and urgent that women's accomplishments and achievements be affirmed, not only in the best interests of students, but in the best interests of all members of the educational community.

When the reality of students' lives is to see mostly women serving in the classrooms, responsible for the first line care of children, and mostly men serving in the offices of leadership, responsible for directing the organization, we understand, in small part, why a high proportion of young females are unsure of their own roles (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1990). While young women are concerned about their

responsibilities for making a living, maintaining relationships and raising a family, they feel hopeless about their achievement (1990). The immediacy of their environment is not congruent with the verbal messages of the educational system: work hard, do well and you will be rewarded. The realities of their lives show them women have not been publicly valued for their roles in maintaining relationships, child care, for raising families, or for their achievements. While there has been increased visibility of women in leadership in politics, business, media, sports and science, women, in public school systems, have not, for the most part, received appointments that reward their merit or leadership skills (McIntyre, 1991). Neither have schools accepted their full responsibility in providing fair opportunities for growth and leadership to ensure that young girls develop a greater sense of worth. These young women feel the world is "unfair" to them, yet they deny the work world is biased against them (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1990). Statistics tell us that 80% of young women will spend 30 or more years working, out of sheer economic necessity, in service industries for wages which are currently 66% of their male counterparts, dependent upon themselves as nearly two-thirds of all women in the labor force are single, widowed, divorced or separated, or married to spouses earning less than \$10,000 a year (Gaskell, 1992; Labour Canada, 1986; Women in Canada: A statistical report, 1990). It appears difficult to distinguish the conditions which constitute bias when that is all you have ever known.

Economic realities are only part of contradictions girls and women face in their lives. The results of the social and educational disparities

evidenced by lower achievement, biased classroom treatment, limited opportunities, violence in their lives, and devaluation of their work, force us to re-examine experiences in the lives and education of young girls and women (Brisken, 1990). Schools must assume their responsibility in ensuring girls and women their right to a safe environment, their right to equal educational opportunities as valued and active learners, and their right to benefit from "Knowledge, skills and attitudes" in becoming self-confident, capable and committed to setting goals, making informative choices and acting in ways that will improve their own lives and the life of the community (Alberta Education, 1990). Women educators also seek the opportunity to improve their own lives and the life of the community as they aspire to become an integral and substantive part of the policy making and management that affects, and goes beyond the world of the classroom (McIntyre, 1991). Issues of gender equity in curriculum, in classroom instruction, in educational outcomes and educational administration must be examined with the aim to provide change so that all students, girls and boys, have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential (Sadker, Sadker and Klein, 1991; Young 1990). A significant number of girls surveyed for the report A Capella (1990) expressed dissatisfactions with the education system, noting the curriculum lacked relevance to their lives, and that the system was often unfair to them. A more balanced contribution to perspectives on programs and practices, with increased representation of women in educational leadership is just one place to begin to effect change for greater equity.

Considering the long and arduous struggles of women to gain positions of public influence in leadership positions in education, one finds a message of hope in the small increases in representation of women in school leadership over the past few years (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Young, 1990). When the rapid and substantial increase beginning in the 1980's in the proportion of women qualified to hold positions of administrative responsibility in education is also taken into consideration, we are reminded that there is a continuing need to address the issue of the equity of women in school leadership. In the early 1970's only 36 per cent of female educators in Canada, compared with 72 per cent of male educators, had at least one degree (MacLeod, 1988). The gap was closing by 1985-86 when 73 per cent of female educators held one or more degrees, compared to 90 per cent of men (1988). In 1986 women earned 60 per cent of all master of education degrees, and 51 per cent of all PhDs in education in Canada (1988). Rees (1990) conducted a national survey of gender distribution of persons in positions of added responsibility in school systems in Canada in 1989 which showed that while 58% of the total teaching force were women, no more than 12% of all principals were women, and no more than 17% of all vice-principals were women. In Ontario, for example, while women made up 40% of Master of Education candidates in 1978-79, in 1988-89 their proportion increased to 71% of the group of candidates (Rees, 1991). The increased proportion of women qualified through advanced academic preparation has not manifested itself in increased representation in leadership positions (Smith, 1991).

While increased proportions of women in administration are evident, most notably in the position of Assistant Superintendent in Alberta, there are no other comparable increases in proportions of women in positions of leadership. Ortiz and Marshall (1988), Shakeshaft (1989), and Wyatt (1990), among others, suggest that those who are in power are not likely to give up those positions readily. As we look to improvements in the educational system we realize that shared power, or shared leadership, offers advantages to both teachers and administrators and ultimately to the students (Barth, 1990). Emphasis on restructured organizations which focus on relationships and processes for improvement, rather than on power and positions, might more realistically provide opportunities for increased numbers of women and men who seek leadership and influence beyond the walls of the classroom.

Nixon's (1985) Alberta study on the pool of qualified prospective administrators reported an increase from 9 females or 4% of the graduates between 1958 to 1970 up to 66 female graduates or 49% of the graduates between 1981 and 1984 in the Master's of Educational Administration program at the University of Alberta. Montgomerie et al (1991) point out that there has been an almost equal gender split in enrollment in graduate programs in educational administration at the Universities of Calgary and Alberta in the last few years. Women have made up 53% of the graduates from the University of Lethbridge Master of Education program (University of Lethbridge, 1993).

In 1990/91 in Alberta, males, though they constituted 37.5% of the teaching force accounted for 59.2% of teachers with higher degrees and served in 71.1% of administrative capacities. Their increased academic preparation would account for some of the difference in representation by gender. However, when faced with one in four men in positions of leadership in the school systems in Alberta, compared with one in sixteen women, the need for students, teachers and the community to see women, 62.5% of the teaching force with 40.8% of the higher degrees, as competent, to hear their voices as worthy and their words and ideas acted upon and valued, becomes more evident.

The Edmonton Journal featured a three part special report, "Without a Voice" in late November of 1992, summarizing reports from the Canadian Advisory Committee on the Status of Women (1992) and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (1990), along with interviews with teenage school girls. All reports indicate that many more young women than young men are not self-confident and do not feel good about themselves. Low self-esteem, feelings of stress and a reluctance to voice their opinions are the results of societal pressures, media messages and the hidden curriculum that students see about who is in charge and what is valued. It should not be a surprise that young girls feel uncomfortable when so few positive role models are promoted within our schools. It is imperative that there is a more equitable representation of women in leadership, drawn from the pool of qualified women whose contributions, experiences and understandings are not being recognized or utilized, and that women be accorded a greater value for their competencies and capacities, if we are

going to affirm the rights and efforts of girls and women within our schools and society.

A young mother, anxious to acquire essential skills at a Career Development Seminar. . . . wanting work, not wanting to leave her children. Soul bared, vulnerable, eyes pleading for understanding and acceptance. I was abused when I was a child, she said.

Brittle shells masked in black fashion and bright smiles. Anorexic, chemically dependent. Clinical, distant sounding terms, veiling the destruction. He shares the pain of his sister, frightened and paralyzed himself. A friend is desperate to salvage her beautiful daughter.

"80% of young women will spend 30 or more years working out of sheer economic necessity. . . . one in four women will be sexually abused before reaching the age of 18. . . . 150,000 Americans die of Anorexia Nervosa a year. . . ."

How do we serve their needs in the public school system? Do they benefit from equal educational opportunities, from knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to their lives so they become self-confident, capable and committed to setting goals? What is the view of possibilities available to them?

Women's Perspectives

It is imperative that women's perceptions, interpretations and experiences be included as we seek improvements in programs and policies in our educational systems. Women's voices must be heard and their positions made visible as all aspects of the female experience in educational systems are examined. Girls have become the silent majority, almost invisible members of the classroom population, forming a quiet background to the active role of boys in the classroom (Fair, 1980).

Girls are underrepresented in compensatory educational programs and in extra-curricular programs. They are misrepresented and underrepresented in curriculum, texts, pictures and other displays. They are rewarded for their appreciative, dependable and considerate behavior while boys are rewarded for their active, assertive and curious behavior (Fair, 1980; Lockheed and Klein, 1985; Carelli, 1988; Sadker et al, 1991). Female students' limited participation in mathematics, science and technology restricts their opportunities in areas which dominate change and drive social and economic trends (Robertson, 1988). Their participation must be emphasized at a time when there is a need for both women and men to be involved in the development of high technical skills in our country.

Overrepresentation of women in traditional service occupations, part-time and underemployment, underrepresentation in positions of management are evidence of the need to address issues of equality. While

the aspirations of young women regarding family issues shapes and constrains their aspirations for paid work, the devaluation of the work that women do confines them to low paying positions which allow for little influence (Gaskell, 1992). Just as we need to address inequities and disparities impacting on the lives of girls and women, we need to begin to value as highly the things and ways that women learn well as the things and ways that men learn well (1992).

Enrollment data indicate that more young women than young men are presently enrolled in and graduating from universities and colleges. While 38% of the bachelor and first professional university degrees in 1970-71 were awarded to women, that percentage had risen to 56.1 by 1988-89 (1992). The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies Statistical Report, 1992, reports women comprised 56.9% of student enrollment in the Masters and Doctoral Programs at the University of Alberta and 53.6% at the University of Calgary. The issues, then, are not of achievement but of encouraging women to select alternate courses and careers, and of valuing the work they do and the strengths they bring to the work.

The costs of gender bias to the academic, psychological, physical, social and emotional well-being of our young women and men runs high (Carelli, 1988). As increased economic, social and political pressures bear upon our young people the need for a more equal sharing of all partners in personal and institutional relationships becomes more evident. Education has to assume its responsibility in developing relationships based on equal opportunity, representation and responsibility. A critical re-examination

of peer/teacher relationships, social climate, role modeling and role expectations, curriculum, extra-curricular involvement, representation in text and language, recognition of ability and achievement, course selection assistance and career counseling is essential, especially in light of the needs of girls and young women. As we recognize and value women's competencies and capacities and encourage the development of a wide spectrum of traits, including assertiveness, confidence, autonomy, connection, compassion and nurturance, in both girls and boys, we allow for the development of their fullest potential (Moody, 1986). We can and must work more consciously to meet the needs of the entire community, in terms of gender, race and class.

Statistics assault my sensibilities as I struggle with the issue of women in school leadership. 16% of female teachers, compared with 30% of male teachers plan to seek an administrative position, reports a survey in The ATA News, February 9, 1993. "Administrative positions are not considered a desirable option for most teachers, particularly those who are female" (1993, p.12).

1987. Administrators said they knew only one woman, from the entire system of 300 teaching staff, who had the ability to be an administrator. She moved from classroom teacher to resource room teacher. An article in the local newspaper, September 1992, points to the progressive focus of the public school system as two women were appointed vice-principals, complementing the all male school administrative staffs.

Another resource room teacher, another system. She had been in the school as long as the young male classroom teacher. . . . Perplexed, offended that they would ask him, not her, to take the position of acting principal in the principal's absence.

Why could or would we have imagined that administrative positions were a desirable option for women?

Women's Qualities

Scholarship in women's studies, education and leadership has resulted in increased understanding of the strengths women bring to organizations. Studies such as Gilligan's (1982) notable work on women's morality, Belenky's (1986) work on women's ways of knowing, and Helgesen's (1990) work on women's ways of leading, describe ways in which women's thinking, feeling, and acting differ from that of men's. Integration of the experiences, expectations, knowledge and "feminine principles" that are characteristically held by women, into all the existing bodies of knowledge can provide much needed growth and reform (Helgesen, 1990).

Gilligan (1982) traced the development of women's morality, based on women's sense of connection and relatedness to others, around notions of responsibility and care rather than on rights, abstract laws and universal principles as is more commonly the case for men. While differences in moral perspectives do not necessarily follow gender lines, women and men who define themselves in terms of connection frame their moral judgments in terms of responsibility, seeking an understanding of the context for moral choice and a consensus to resolve conflicts (Belenky, 1986). Women are compelled by their identity within a relationship, and by their sense of responsibility to those connected in the relationship. In "balancing the claims of others and self, the ethic of responsibility rests on an understanding that gives rise to compassion and care" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 165). Such an orientation, rather than being deficient, has positive implications for our diverse schools and communities.

Helgesen (1990) studied the strategies and organization theories of four successful female leaders, using the same methods as Henry Mintzberg for his study of five male managers for The Nature of Managerial Work (1973). Helgesen proposes, discounting results of almost two decades of management style and philosophy, that there are several differences in the ways men and women approach management. Women see themselves at the center of a network, or web of inclusion, where communication, or the flow of information throughout the organization is so vital that their days are structured for as much sharing as possible. Concerned with keeping relationships in good standing, women tend to see unscheduled tasks and encounters as normal to the flow of work. Women are able to pace themselves and integrate their home life with their work, keeping a focus on the interrelatedness of their lives to the organization as it exists within the context of the world setting. The successful women see themselves as good negotiators, valuing interdependence, and seeing negotiations as an opportunity for collaborating or building relationship.

The women in Helgesen's (1990) study were highly successful women, exhibiting strengths both in planning and communication, human relations and skills, and the ability to focus both on ends and means. It is their experiences and expectations as women and mothers, in addition to their acquired management and human relation skills, that makes them better managers (p.31). Skills and strengths that women offer to the public sphere are their ability to integrate work and home, to pace themselves, and their ability to focus on process, valuing cooperation and relationships.

Belenky et al (1986) traced the development of knowledge, sense of mind and sense of self in women who claimed their development intertwined with the development of their sense of voice. To know was to break their silence and give voice. For women, talking, listening, and corresponding are critical in the communication process. Women's strengths in collaborative approaches to decision making, in listening to others and including their contributions are documented by Helgesen (1990), Shakeshaft (1989), Gougeon, (1991), McGrath (1992), and others.

The administrators interviewed for this project all mentioned their collaborative approaches to decisions making:

"While I feel my greatest contribution to education is my concern for the children, along with an open mind for change, I think I'm the type of person who's empathetic to people. . . . a give and take type of a person, a collaborative type of person."

"The staff said I included them more. . . . it was more getting input from them, more collaborative than authoritative. In my experiences . . . I wanted everybody's input on the main issues. I didn't want to be . . . the sole decision maker. . . . that's just not the way I would do things. . . ."

". . . if we had a difference we'd talk it out and work it out. . . . It has to be a team. . . it has to be more than that. You have to be supportive of each other and let people get on with their job. . . . there has to be a certain amount of autonomy as well as getting along together. It's important and it's very very hard sometimes to make that work."

These women value all the members of their communities. They listen and include contributions from the people, students, staff and community

members with whom they work. Their strengths as people very concerned about honor and dignity in relationships shine through their conversations.

Shakeshaft (1989) documents the strengths that women offer educational systems: "Women enter education with clear educational goals, supported by a value system that stresses service, caring, and relationships," (p.197). Women spend more time interacting with teachers and students, more time in discussion about the academic program of the school, viewing their job more from the perspective of master-teacher or educational leader than from a managerial - industrial perspective (p. 173). Their democratic, participatory style of communicating and decision-making lead to a greater sense of community and inclusiveness in school (p.197). Their commitment to education as evidenced by their academic preparation and increased membership in professional associations; their greater knowledge of teaching methods and techniques and their focus on teaching and learning, methods, techniques, programs, and progress that stresses achievement within a supportive atmosphere (p.197, p. 200). Their success in maintaining discipline and managing more orderly schools has been well documented (p. 70). Shakeshaft reports that in studies comparing the effectiveness of male and female teachers and administrators on selected criteria, such as teaching evaluations, teacher exam scores and administrative function, "when there is a difference, females are rated higher than males" (p. 23). Parents are more favorable and more involved in the life of schools and districts run by women, and further, academic achievement is higher in those schools and districts (p. 197). Ortiz and Marshall (1988) summarize extensive research documenting female

leaders' strengths in management and teaching by their emphasis on instructional leadership. Edson, in her study of 142 female educators aspiring to positions of leadership notes "an overriding concern for children's welfare propel the women in this study to become school leaders," (1988, p.19).

The women who added their personal voices for this study shared the impelling concerns which motivated their leadership:

"I was into administration . . . being able to help other people and so I just went out trying to improve, get more education and doing as well as I could, helping boys and girls, and teachers, the best I could, being there and working hard, planning new things, being enthusiastic and encouraging. I don't ever remember not receiving that as a child and don't remember not ever giving those things to my own kids. . . bringing them up as independent individuals. I tried to give them what I've given my own children. . . . I enjoyed working with colleagues, to help them. I teach by example."

"The driving force has been my own children. Both of them were having trouble in school . . . and as I went through it I thought there's got to be a better way It drove me to want to change somehow and it got me to realize that the way to make changes would be to move up the ladder. . . . My greatest contributions to education are my concerns for children and having an open mind for change."

"My greatest contribution in education is the way that I am in the classroom with kids, the way I communicate with them. What I set out to do is make learning fairly effortless for the kids, so I present situations or

materials so it's easy for them to get concepts, develop skills. . . .

Administration was not a motivating factor when I went into education."

Their emphasis is on children, on giving the children the best possible learning experiences. They focus on competencies in teaching and setting a good example to students, teachers and parents by modelling the values they hold. They talk about open communications with parents. Two of the administrators are completing studies towards their Masters Degree in Education, one has completed the program. They set high standards for themselves, students and staffs.

While competition and hierarchical structures often form the basis of men's relationships, women's have been formed on the love and/or duty ethos (Valentine, 1990). Women are more apt to develop lateral relationships and cross - relationships. Female school administrators have been found to favor behaviors in coalition building, cooptation and the use of their personalities to get work done (Fairholm and Fairholm, 1984; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988). Shakeshaft (1987) reports several studies which indicate a high level of participatory leadership by women. Valentine's (1990) study of a woman-dominated organization also reports a high level of participation and consensual decision making. Women tend to be more nurturant, less hierarchical and more consultative as administrators (Gaskell, 1992). All three respondents for this study emphasized their cooperative, collaborative approach to decision making. They place a high order on team building, working consciously to involve everyone on staff. In having to deal with conflict the administrators tell us they draw on

strengths for which they have been recognized, their communication skills, their honesty, and their commitment to hard work and resolution of problems: ". . . my ability to calm waters, to deal with pressure, see two sides to a situation. . . . honesty, being upfront."

"It is a given that conflict will be there . . . expect to have to deal with it, parents, students, teachers, in education and business management. . . ."

Eagly, Karau and Johnson, in a review of 50 studies that compared the leadership style of principals of public schools found the largest difference between the sexes was their tendency to lead democratically or autocratically, with female principals adopting a more democratic or participative style and a less dominant or directive style than male principals (1992). In general, female principals scored somewhat higher than male principals on measures of task-oriented style, suggesting somewhat more concern about organizing school activities to accomplish relevant tasks (1992).

Women are capable in the areas needed to strengthen our educational organizations. Studies rating skills of educational executives indicate climate building and success in managing personnel are among the most essential skills required to do the job (Glass and Sclafani, 1988). While both men and women demonstrate the skills equally well, male superintendents expressed confidence in their ability to manage operations, facilities and finance but admitted feeling the need for improvement in the areas of communication, implementation of new instructional systems, curriculum development and teacher evaluation. Women leaders

demonstrate high levels of skill in communications, problem solving, organizational understanding, team building and curriculum (McGrath, 1992). They offer valuable leadership at a time we seek to improve our schools. Women's ways of knowing, their reliance on a morality based on an ethic of responsibility (Gilligan, 1982), their emphasis on relationships, their focus on teaching and learning, their focus on community, their nurturing and compassionate qualities must be recognized in leadership capacities.

Schuster (1989), in a national study in the United States, reported data from 183 female superintendents in 1986 and compared data from a survey of 792 superintendents in 1984. Those female superintendents scored significantly higher than male superintendents on every measure: better academic preparation in terms of more advanced degrees, more knowledge of the literature, more hours spent on the job, and more teaching experience. Sergiovanni points out "that while women are underrepresented in principalships, they are overrepresented in successful principalships" (Brandt, 1992, p.48). Gips (1989), in a review of the group of 100 school administrators named as outstanding among their peers in the United States in an annual competition revealed that 50% of those named were women. Such an even split from a group which is so predominantly male, with women holding only 10% of the line leadership positions in the schools, suggests that women emerged as outstanding in their roles. Experience and research indicate that women's judgment and skills ought to be recognized, valued and offered to the members in whose best interest the educational systems serve.

Effective leadership must include aspects of both the masculine and feminine styles of leadership (Rossler, 1992; Gougeon, 1991). Both the competitive and cooperative orientations, rational and intuitive problem-solving styles, instrumental and expressive behaviors are valued and appropriate in leadership. Just as females have learned from males, males also can learn from the female experience. Males and females who tend towards an androgynous style of leadership do equally competent jobs (Rossler, 1992). Eagly et al (1992), while noting that women lead in a more collaborative manner point out that findings on leadership style reflect largely overlapping distributions of male and female principals' styles. Jones (1990), in a synthesis of empirical findings on gender differences published in the first 22 volumes of the Education Administrative Quarterly, reports such small effect sizes due to gender that she raises the possibility that gender has no explanatory power to predict differences in organizational behavior and roles. Further research based on strict methodological rigor is recommended. However, there are suggestions that even greater differences due to gender may become apparent as women come into leadership relying on their own qualities and capacities rather than on androcentric models of administration. The qualifications, competencies, commitment, and motivation of women should ensure their more equitable representation in educational leadership. Women should be department heads and principals, researchers and scholars, science teachers as well as language teachers (Gaskell, 1992). They should be making curriculum decisions, based on their experiences

and understandings, in ministries of education and school boards as well as in their classrooms.

Women. Teachers. Mothers. Friends. Professional. Competent. Dedicated. Enthusiastic. Knowledgeable. Serving. Nurturing.

Child-Centered Schools. Curriculum Planning. Preparation of Materials. Evaluations and Evaluated. Reports. Communications. Extra-Curricular Involvement. Community Celebrations. Inservices, Workshops, Conferences-organizing, planning, attending, evaluating. Personal Research, Reading, Writing. Academic Involvement - as Confirmation of Self. Local, National and Global Concerns. Slight nods of approval. We tipped our heads in return. Veiled our faces, served in silence. Committee Chairperson. Secretary. Consultant. Peripheral. . .

The slight increases in the proportion of women in administration give us hope that we will move from the periphery to a more central focus in the school community.

Community

School viewed as community, operating under shared values, sentiments and beliefs, rather than school as hierarchical competitive bureaucracy appeals to the deepest needs in those of us who have felt marginalized and silenced. We search for a sense of home, a sense of belonging, a need to be recognized, and feel an affiliation for Anne Winnings' (1990) description of community: "a special space a friendly space . . . where one can simply be oneself . . . somewhere to learn and grow. Community is somewhere like home, somewhere from which we can begin and to which we return" (p.16-18).

Community means feeling part of a group, receiving affirmation through contribution and commitment to the direction and purpose of the whole group. Community enables understanding as it allows closeness to people.

Schools, as communities, are places where we learn and grow, where we need to be ourselves, to be affirmed through our experiences in the collective. Schools as communities offer members the freedom to begin a journey of growth and knowledge. In turn, they offer members a base to which to return and share contributions to the purpose and direction of the members.

Women seek the space to invest our moral responsibility to contribute meaningfully to the learning and growth of all students, and to publicly

support our colleagues in the shared effort. We seek a community which accepts us as equal members, regardless of race, class or gender. We seek affirmation by the recognition of our contributions, by the knowledge that what we offer to others by our lived experiences is empowering to them. Women, with their greater concern with community and sharing, have much to offer to make schools places of growth and sharing (Brandt, 1992, Shakeshaft, 1989). As we search for ways for schools to meet the needs of a changing society, politically, socially and economically, we ought to be looking at every opportunity to promote growth and strengthen our schools.

Whether we look at alternatives to leadership, androgynous leadership, restructuring, or some other means of reform in schools, it is imperative that we publicly recognize women's capacities and competencies in all areas of educational leadership. We must actively promote the full inclusion of women - the female half who sustain our families, schools and communities, "the absent presence behind all our work" (Apple, 1983, p.64).

Woman as leaders who were interviewed spoke with confidence of their ability to share effectively with members in their communities, of being accepted, of providing positive role models to students and teachers. The administrators talked of substantive opportunities to influence growth and learning, enjoying the challenge of teaching, learning, and collaborative decision making at all levels in education. Their stories are cause for celebration, as they share their acceptance by students, teachers and

administrators. Their successes should ensure a greater proportionate representation of women in school leadership in all of our communities.

It is uncomfortable to dwell on barriers. How can we admit that there are barriers to our advancement, growth or achievement? To admit to barriers is to admit there are obstacles which stand in the way of our full participation in a field which serves to empower, not disempower, people. We would then have to reason why we were being excluded and that would lead to all sorts of untenable conclusions. . . .

So we acknowledge there are barriers to everyone's advancement and refuse to deal with the disparities we live with because to give words to the inequities would demand a response from those of us who purport to teach and live democratic ideals.

And then the disparities and inequities and silence become untenable and another cry for justice and dignity and honor is uttered. We are capable, competent and worthy. There are barriers to our full participation in education and those barriers must be exposed and removed.

Barriers

Women, though they have always been represented as educators, have rarely been well represented in positions of influence and control in education (Gaskell, 1992). From mid- nineteenth century struggles for women to be accepted in academies and universities, to early twentieth century struggles for women to finally be accepted as teachers within the public school system there have been tremendous efforts by women and men for greater equity in education (Gaskell, 1992; Gaskell et al, 1989; Prentice, 1991). Continued emphasis focuses on efforts to include women as equal partners in all aspects of education, including leadership.

Research shows us that women have the skills to be competent leaders in our schools and mounting evidence points to their increased aspirations for greater representation in positions of leadership in our schools. Women are currently enrolling in increasing numbers in all educational programs and are becoming involved in increasing numbers in leadership preparation programs. While their representation in positions of added responsibility in educational leadership is slowly increasing there is growing evidence that a greater equity must be achieved in order to meet the needs of our present society (Economic Council of Canada, 1992; Gaskell, 1992; Rees, 1991; Smith, 1991; Hughes, 1990; Wyatt, 1990).

Increased awareness of the need for greater equity coupled with the problem of the present disproportionate representation has become the focus of a number of researchers as they seek explanations for barriers

which hinder the advancement of women in public or formal positions of leadership (Shakeshaft, 1989; Sadker et al, 1991; Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991; Rees, 1992; McGrath, 1992; McIntyre, 1991; Edson, 1988; Whitfield, 1990). Among the several models forwarded for describing the barriers have been those such as the "woman's sphere" model (Bernard, 1981), "organizational socialization" model (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988), the "meritocracy model" (Estler, 1975) and the "deficit model" (Acker, 1983). The factors operating within the models have generally been defined as intrinsic or extrinsic in origin, and result from our socialization in an androcentric world. Colonial and patriarchal perspectives, broad social and cultural forces, are pervasive at the "macrostructural" level and serve to exclude women and minorities from positions of professional leadership (Richards, 1988, p.162).

Low self-esteem, lack of confidence, motivation or aspiration are often reasons given for women's low representation in positions of public leadership. These psychological, internal or intrinsic barriers, however, are seldom more prevalent for women than for men, and it is not usually the woman's psyche at fault, but the social structure of society that is the root cause of the inequities (Apple, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1989). Women aspire to leadership but societal and organizational barriers prevent women from acknowledging or acting upon their aspirations.

Women often disengage in a form of depressed aspirations because of a lack of recognition at work, or because of lack of assistance in the home for home work and child care, not because of their lack of motivation or

commitment. Lack of confidence is normal for any individual who has little experience in a given area and women, invisible in school leadership, are often separated from those experiences which would help build confidence in the public sphere. Rees (1992) suggests that if the barriers were only personal and self-imposed, then women could learn to overcome them by taking corrective action. Taking corrective action by enrolling in leadership development programs, educational administration programs, assertiveness training programs and the like has not led to an increased representation in leadership positions in comparable proportions. Close examination of the internal barriers, which accentuate the deficit model of women, usually discloses that it is the deficits in our social structures which impede the advancement of women.

External, institutional or environmental barriers are the real barriers which devalue women's work (Shakeshaft, 1989; Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991; Rees, 1992). The institutional or organizational barriers, defined also as systemic discrimination, work against the valuation of women often in a very unintentional way (Calgary Board of Education, 1992). Several studies demonstrate a pervasive bias for men over women for school and line administrative position and women's aspirations reflect the realization of those attitudes (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988). The socialization of men and women, and the separation of administration from teaching contribute to the development of attitudes that favor the movement of men into positions of educational leadership. Lack of encouragement for women to compete for administrative positions, expectations that women have usually been required to hold higher levels of certification than male candidates for the

same position, and restriction of women to primarily staff positions are reported as discriminatory practices (McGrath, 1992; Miklos, 1988). Other examples of systemic discrimination include all male interviewing and decision-making committees (Calgary Board of Education, 1992).

Gender stereotyping of roles continues to allow men rather than women into school principalships, and supports such myths as women administrators' supposed difficulty in dealing with discipline or in working with male staff members. The view that women in power are exceptional also denies results of twenty years of research on effective schools that documents the strengths that women bring to education (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Sadker et al, 1991).

Lack of visible, accessible female role models is often cited as a reason why women have not moved into administrative positions in greater numbers (Schneider, 1991). Women's late entry into the career track, due to family obligations, is also held up as a barrier to their advancement. McGrath (1992) points out that a primary reason for not considering women candidates has often been their "lack of qualifications," defined as a track record of successfully more responsible administrative positions. Women have not been aware of this, nor have then been aware which careers paths lead upward or to a dead end. Discriminatory practices result in the promotion of women to primarily junior administrative ranks, to the "glass ceiling" level, beyond which their efforts go unrewarded (Calgary Board of Education, 1992). Women are not usually part of the informal and private male network which shares information on new

positions, and grooms, sponsors or mentors promising candidates for those positions. Ortiz and Marshall (1988) point to several studies which report that sponsorship plays a deciding role for both new entrants and experienced participants in administrative careers, and limits the play of open competition. Women have not enjoyed the benefits of the sponsorship process which is so necessary for career mobility (1988).

Leadership theory and educational administrative studies, with their emphases on hierarchical control and efficiency and their basis largely upon male subjects by male researchers must be changed to include women's experiences and concerns (Hughes, 1990; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1988). Those already in positions of leadership are challenged to consider new forms and structures that will change the patterns of control and provide a more inclusive viewpoint that better serves the needs of all organizational members (Hughes, 1990; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988).

As educators we see the need to respond to the segregation and isolation imposed upon our lives by the patriarchal, hierarchical macrostructures of which our political systems are a part. Schools as institutions created under particular historical, economic and social conditions reflect and respond to the prevailing conditions (Weiler, 1988, p.147). Awareness of the discrimination based on gender, race, or class that has historically occurred in our schools compels us individually and collectively to continue to respond to needs for greater equity.

The literature speaks to the barriers and biases. The disproportionate representation of women in educational leadership, especially at senior levels of policy making is further evidence of the barriers facing women. However, the women in positions of school leadership in rural Alberta who were interviewed for this project did not believe there were significant barriers which had to be overcome in order for them to secure their positions or for them to carry out their responsibilities as leaders. One administrator sensed resentment by a number of people who questioned her motives when she first began to move up, but she also enjoyed support from others. While she experienced noticeable aggressiveness on the part of one interviewing committee all other interviews appeared open and unbiased. Another administrator whose experiences as a student, teacher and administrator were in a district where a number of the administrators were and continue to be female responded: ". . . the first nine years of my schooling were with a woman principal. I certainly . . . had seen women being principal so . . . any barriers I had would have been just mine in thinking that I couldn't do it or it was too much responsibility. . . ."

The educator with the most extensive experience in school administration believes hard work and self-confidence, not proportionate representation, are the keys to successful leadership: "Once I had proven I could do the job and was O.K. and things were working out I was asked my opinion and I was included in planning just as much as anybody else. I think that we can't forget that. I do think it's up to women themselves, whoever they are, to be more confident in themselves and not think it's a right" She believes that one of the factors contributing to her success

may have been the ease of movement in administration in the northern district in which she gained the majority of her leadership experience.

Various explanations can be made regarding the contrasting results of the literature review and perceptions of the interview respondents. Questions could have been phrased differently in the interview schedule. Rather than asking if the respondents had to overcome any barriers in attaining a position of leadership, the question could have been: "What experiences have you dealt with as a woman aspiring to, and achieving, positions of leadership that a man would not have had to deal with?" One begins to detect the almost imperceptible and unintentional biases which serve to work against women, such as questions from other people about one's motives for seeking leadership positions or one's own perceptions about one's ability to administer. One administrator reported she had questioned the superintendent's recommendations when her administrative abilities were first mentioned: "The superintendent said. . . you should consider applying for a principalship if it ever comes up. I said 'Why would you say that. . . what do you think?. . . what qualities or abilities do I have that would make you say that?'" Another administrator reports surprise that a position would be created for her: "When I was asked, I'd been there one year, if I would be vice-principal by the superintendent, and that was a bit of a shock as there was no vice principal's job."

While the respondents were interviewed only once, their strengths and skills shine prominently throughout the entire interview. Articulate, dedicated and competent educators, one can only wonder about the

possibilities of their influence in educational leadership, given a more gender equitable environment. These women are accomplished educators, determined to provide, with confidence and competence, positive leadership for democratic schools. Their leadership, and leadership by other women who have similar skills must be promoted.

How do we remove "broad social and cultural forces, pervasive at the macrostructural level" which serve to exclude women and minorities from positions of professional leadership?

The task of demolishing the barriers is monumental, formidable in conception. Faced with our own personal limitations and our sense of personal responsibility to ourselves, our children, our colleagues and our community, we make accommodations. We adapt to the situation, undertaking personal and professional initiatives in order to fit an androcentric model of administration. Career planning, networking, job shadowing, assertiveness training, all this and more, moved at times to denying our very femininity, making slight progress in our ability to influence policy and programs.

We should be looking anew at ways to revalue women's roles in education, at a model of organization which recognizes equally women's and men's participation in society.

Accommodations

Women, compelled by their desire to improve schools to serve the best interests of children, colleagues, and the community, are challenged to participate in school leadership. They are working hard at personal, institutional, and socio-political initiatives in order to achieve their goals (Edson, 1988). Women are becoming involved in career planning and preparation programs, acquiring visible leadership experience within the educational community or the community at large (Rees, 1990). Women are aware that they must believe in themselves, be committed, be visible and let people know of their expectations of professional advancement (McIntyre 1991; Porat, 1985).

Women are involving themselves in areas which bring them in contact with those in authority, establishing networks with men and women to gain visibility, information, advice and receive moral support as they pursue their careers (Rees, 1992). Networks based on affiliation and collaboration, on mutual interdependence and support, capitalize on positive female attributes including our need to connect, and promote the development of valuable skills required by professionals in our educational organizations (Edson, 1988; Gilligan, 1982; McGrath, 1992; Rees, 1992). Women are affirmed by the experience of being involved with many other women who believe they can offer strengths to schools through their administrative abilities and educational goals. Networks provide for a widening circle of personal and professional references who can assist in the promotion of women as candidates for positions. Networks also

provide information through newsletters or word of mouth on systems that have job openings and contacts offer advice on benefits of positions, salary, history and background of school boards (Rees, 1992; Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991).

Various American networks such as Sex Equity in Education Leadership (SEEL) and Women in School Administration (WISA) have been established (Shakeshaft, 1989). In Canada the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO) provides different types of networking opportunities ranging from courses to prepare for the different leadership positions, to conferences, resource booklets, and a regular newsletter. The Canadian Teachers' Federation organizes an annual Status of Women conference. In Alberta networks have operated and will probably continue to operate on a fairly informal basis.

Mentors or sponsors are mentioned by many researchers as critical for advancement for women seeking positions of public leadership (Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Schneider, 1991; Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991; Porat, 1985). Mentors serve as role models, sponsors, teachers and guides in the career plans of aspiring leaders. They are able to make introductions and provide training for the effective movement of novitiate leaders through the systems (Kanter, 1977; Young, 1990). Men dominate in decision-making positions so many women must depend on willing male sponsors and role models for assistance in their efforts to become involved in educational leadership. Sixty-eight percent of the women in Edson's study (1988) identified a mentor in their work settings.

All three women interviewed for this examination of women in school leadership mentioned a sponsor who recognized and promoted their leadership qualities. Two of the leaders were advised by superintendents to consider school administration. In one instance a position of vice-principalship was created by the superintendent who valued the informal leadership of the teacher. She was subsequently appointed to the position. Another administrator, after being advised by the superintendent and a university professor to consider school administration, later applied for and was awarded the position of principalship. The administrator who is in her first year as school principal reported close contact with her sponsor/mentor, who assisted in resolution of issues as well as in career planning. She explained: "If I didn't have a mentor I don't think I would be here. . . . I identified to [the mentor]. . . how does a person get on. . . committees to develop curriculum?" From that point on she has received valuable knowledge, feedback, coaching, and encouragement from her mentor.

Interning and job shadowing are strategies currently being encouraged and used by some systems to assist aspirants in acquiring essential skills. While a mentor/coach has been assisting one of the administrators, the other women have developed leadership skills largely through their own efforts. One respondent mentions the leadership skills gained through responsibilities involved in farming and small business enterprises, along with extensive experience in small rural schools where "everybody does everything. . . . you just kind of know how to be responsible." Experience

as vice-principal, principals who provided good examples of what to do and what not to do, and learning on her own, were the means by which another administrator gained valuable leadership skills.

Employment equity programs involve the systematic monitoring of who holds what jobs so that areas of concern, such as a fair and representative work force and equality of treatment and outcome, become public. Comparisons across jurisdictions can be made. Employment equity programs have generally come to be known as affirmative action initiatives within Canada (Rees, 1990). Affirmative action is considered to be more focused towards programs and policies which assist women in achieving equal opportunity through the acquisition of necessary qualifications and experiences. Equity is important to enable more women to have an impact on how schools are run, as well as making available more female role models for students (Gaskell et al, 1989).

While universities have been forced into employment equity because the federal government specifies that institutions with large contracts with the federal government must comply, action has been slower at the school board level (Rees, 1990). The Canadian Education Association reported in a 1988 survey (1990) that 15 of the sample of 83 school boards who responded to their questionnaire indicated that they had hired an employee who works specifically on affirmative action. School boards in six provinces were found to have affirmative action policies. Action varies across the country and ranges from Ontario's new legislation that will

increase the hiring of women as educational administrators to policy statements such as an Affirmative Action Directive in Nova Scotia.

Women have not used the Canadian Human Charter of Rights to challenge or bring legal action against any bias which might have influenced their inability to attain leadership positions within educational organizations. A number of cases have been brought forward in the United States, under Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in programs or activities that receive federal funding (Edson, 1988). In many cases the judgements have been in favor of the women, who have subsequently been hired in the disputed positions (1988). However, the women believe that their challenges have resulted in their being frozen in the those positions, with little chance of further promotion (1988).

Some women have not been able to adjust to the barriers which limit their full participation in educational leadership. Sadker et al (1991), Edson (1988), Barth (1986), and Ortiz and Marshall (1988) report that women, because of their lack of voice and influence are exiting from educational institutions. Many women, upon completion of graduate programs in education, have left education for other fields where there has been a more open reception to women in leadership (Sadker et al, 1991).

Alberta reports no systematic government initiatives related to the underrepresentation of women in administrative ranks (Young, 1990). While formal mentorship programs were put in place to train women for

management in the Civil Service, the Department of Education did not participate (Lise, 1987). In early 1989 the Alberta Teachers' Association established a task force to study the issue of women in administration and to propose programs and activities designed to assist women in securing administrative positions. Responses to their questionnaire indicate less than six percent of Alberta school boards have adopted formal policy on employment equity. Three school boards from the province have set targets for promoting women to administrative positions. Ten percent of Alberta school boards provide opportunities specifically for women to become qualified for administrative positions. In addition to supporting policy resolutions encouraging the promotion of women in educational administration, the 1990 Annual Representative Assembly approved the formation of a standing committee, Women in Education. The committee sponsored a conference "Women in Administration" in November of 1991, and is planning a seminar, "Gender Bias in the Curriculum" for 1993-94. The Alberta Teachers' Association also offers a half-day or one-hour workshop addressing gender and leadership issues, "Reshaping Conceptions of Leadership: Not for Women Only," and another workshop, "Women in Administration" to interested staffs.

There has been concerted action by members of the Calgary Board of Education for public admission of a need to achieve gender parity in educational practices, especially relating to leadership and promotion (Porat, 1985; Wyatt, 1990). Following a number of briefs and reports, and an "Inquiry on Opportunities for Women," several recommendations for action in regard to women in administration were forwarded.

Recommendations were related to affirmative action policy, balanced male/female screening and interviewing committees, mentoring programs, recognition of curriculum and instructional leadership experience, annual statistical staffing reports, and current research on leadership opportunities. The Calgary Board of Education has employed a full time advisor on women's issues for the past year (Calgary Board of Education, 1992).

Women must not only be competent, but be seen to be competent, with responsibility on the part of women to become visible, and also on the part of the educational institutions and community and government organizations to provide opportunities for greater recognition of women's work (Rees, 1991). There are a number of initiatives in Alberta, including programs from the Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and Technology (WISEST) association from the University of Alberta in Edmonton which provides opportunities for girls and boys to participate in research and discussion in non-traditional careers (Lise, 1987). The Alberta Science Foundation has undertaken "Project Minerva," pairing grade 8 girls with women of achievement so conferencing on such issues as women and science is possible. The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, established in 1986, prepares reports and makes submissions to the government through the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. Interested educators have been invited by the Advisory Council on Women's Issues to attend a forum, "Equity 2000" to review issues on human rights and strategies for gender equity.

Promoting gender equality in the classroom is essential. Entire staffs should be involved in consciousness raising about employment and educational equity (Rees, 1991). The Canadian Teachers' Federation has prepared a number of documents and bibliographic materials promoting gender equity and increased participation of girls in mathematics, science and technology. Saskatchewan Education has produced Gender Equity: Framework for Planning (1991) which addresses the issues of equity in school programs and school environments. The Curriculum Branch from the Department of Education in Alberta offers a workshop "Teaching with Gender Balance." Alberta teachers involved with the Science Teachers' Society have undertaken initiatives for school students. Implementation of all girls Physics classes have resulted in a tripling of students in enrollment in that subject in the four years the program has been in operation at William Aberhart High School in Calgary (Faulder & Jimenez, 1992).

Gougeon (1992) rejects the explanation that barriers to women in school administrative positions have been due to personal, organizational and attitudinal barriers. He suggests that the barriers exist in our separate communication styles and in our inability to communicate our realities women to men, and men to women. Women are more attuned to both content and corresponding relationship information in communication exchanges. Men do not attribute as high importance to relationship information (how the content is to be interpreted) as do females. As a result female teachers perceive male and female principals to communicate and motivate differently. Female teachers experience a greater sense of connection with the community, society, in working with female principals.

Their sense of connectedness is experienced on a more personal, ego-related basis, with a lesser sense of connection with the greater whole, in working with male principals. Gougeon (1992) advises facility and fluency in cross-gender communication patterns for women and men seeking administrative roles.

Gilligan (1982) also suggests that men and women may be speaking different languages which they assume are the same, as they use similar words to encode disparate experiences of self and social relationships. Though we are able to articulate with one another in critical ways, our differing explanations and life experiences must be translated in a way that makes understanding clear to all of us. Including the voices of women, incorporating the truth of their ethic of care with the ethic of justice achieves a more comprehensive portrayal of work and family relationships and leads to a more complete understanding of human experience (1982).

Various accommodations are implemented as women seek a more equal representation in leadership in education. However, one of the most challenging accommodations is the possible restructuring and revaluing of what it is that schools are about. Gaskell et al (1989) suggest that affirmative action efforts imply an acceptance of existing relations of value and power rather than a revaluing of the work that all educators perform, and a needed democratization of the educational system which would serve to empower all classroom teachers. Barth (1990) and Sergiovanni (1992) emphasize the school as a community of learners and a community of leaders, where everyone encourages everyone else's learning, and where

students, teachers, parents, and administrators share opportunities and responsibilities for making decisions. McIntyre (1991) suggests broadening the vision of school leadership to include the female experience within administrative roles as well as the female experience of leadership outside formal administrative roles. Women, motivated by intrinsic needs for professional growth and the desire to actively share in the responsibility for improving education so that students and colleagues alike benefit, seek opportunities which provide for influence in the area of instructional processes (1991). Career direction, for the respondents in her study is not bound by prestige or status of a position but rather by pathways which allow for growth of students, colleagues and self. Incorporating the work of teacher-leaders with the work of administrators is essential for the growth of a democratic community of learners and educators.

Schools as communities, a vision of inclusive education that values equally all girls and boys, men and women, regardless of race, or class. Where curriculum and practice are in harmony with our democratic principles, where acceptance, connection and collaboration are as important as assessment, autonomy and competition. An integration, a validation of the female experience.

Concluding Thoughts

The original intent of this project was to provide support for a greater visibility of women in school leadership. In this undertaking I have had the opportunity to share in the responses of many writers to the obvious gender inequity in all aspects of educational systems. I have had the opportunity to hear speakers at conferences address the issues of gender inequities, have attended several meetings and finally conducted interviews of women in leadership. My position calling for an increased representation of women in school leadership is resolute.

I found the support that substantiated what I felt as I worked with students and teachers: women are capable, competent, qualified, and eager to provide leadership. If we are going to meet the needs of our children and society women must be included as equal educational partners in all aspects of our organizations, in leadership in administration as well as in teaching. Women's contributions must be given legitimacy, made public and be given credit. Women's opportunities for leadership have often been confined to places and times external to the location of their work. Extra effort, above and beyond their full days in the classroom is expended in order for them to receive affirmation from others, to effect needed change in curriculum and practice, to share with their colleagues. Shakeshaft (1988) reports that women belong to more professional organizations than do men, and for many women it has been the membership in professional associations that has allowed them an avenue of growth and leadership often denied in the public school systems. It is time for women to stop

carrying the double load, to remove the veils from their faces, to speak and show their competencies, their values and their visions for the children of this country and world, and for each other. It is time for a public admission that women are effective and wise leaders in our schools.

The interviews conducted for this study provided powerful messages about the strengths of the women. Their overriding concerns of the three administrators for children, learning, integrity in relationships, confirmed McIntyre's (1991, p.115) conclusions: these women were leading from the heart. Their public affirmation validates young girls and women for our beliefs, knowledge and achievements. We must, women and men in education, be given the opportunity regularly in our programs and practices of sharing with women as leaders.

I chose to interview three women in leadership from rural areas of Alberta since most of my experience was in what we consider rural areas. The respondents, with whom I had no previous professional association, were selected from three different zones in the central and southern part of the province. While one of the respondents worked in a district where women were commonly awarded principalships, that was not the case for the other two respondents, one of whom was the first female administrator in the division. The third respondent had extensive experience as a principal in the northern part of the province and is currently one of the two female vice principals in a district in central Alberta. There are no women as principals in this last district, nor are there any women in positions of leadership at the board level.

Though sponsorship plays some part in their backgrounds, the women have all actively pursued positions of school leadership. They have worked hard at learning about teaching and administration and have achieved success in both areas. Two of the women stress the importance of confidence, achieved through the acquisition of knowledge and the accomplishment of goals. There is an emphasis on integrity of self also, as speaking well of oneself, listening to one's intuitive knowledge and being honest are valued as qualities in a leader. For one woman, being the best that she can be is her greatest contribution to education. Continued professionalism is a way of life. Adaptability, an open mind to change, a willingness to work hard, the ability to deal calmly with conflict, to relate well and communicate effectively with parents are the competencies most valued by their local boards. Communications, interpersonal relationships, learning and teaching motivate the actions of these leaders. Their excellent examples are being recognized.

The literature review, the successes of the respondents gives me a confidence and an assurance that schools can only improve with a greater representation of women in leadership. Statistics and proportions provide us with only a partial picture of the realities of educational organizations. While we look with hope to the future for a greater number of women in leadership, we realize that the critical issue is one of shared leadership. Women, with their collaborative approach to decision making, with their emphasis on relationships, can assist in the movement towards more inclusive models of leadership. In conceptualizing schools as communities

of learners, operating under shared leadership, we are able to envision organizations which promote growth and affirmation for all members.

Two issues of critical concern confront me as an educator. The first is the need to raise awareness of sexual stereotyping and bias in curriculum and practice in educational organizations, and to address the resulting inequities and disparities. If we are truly concerned about equal opportunities for all students we must make provision for the inclusion of the female experience in the classroom, in practice and in context in history, literature, the arts, mathematics, science, and health and in all aspects of educational leadership. Raising awareness of bias, examination of practices, integration of current learning theories, revamping curriculum, formulation of policy, must be undertaken to provide for inclusive education. Schools must provide safe, nurturing environments for all students, a need made painfully obvious as educators, responding to public pressure, are currently formulating policy to deal with sexual harassment to students and or staff. Education must assume its responsibility in developing relationships based on equal opportunity, representation and responsibility.

Secondly, the issue of leadership must be reexamined with the goal to include all educators, reinvesting in them their professional responsibilities to themselves, their students and their communities. Educators, by virtue of their knowledge and skills, seek to be an integral part of the system which influences the lives of our children and ourselves. Shared leadership, which honors and affirms all participants, women and men, and collegial rather than hierarchical relationships, must be emphasized as we look for ways in which schools can better serve the needs of all participants.

While I despair over past inequities, including my own failures in the system, I find encouragement in the efforts of all those striving to implement a system of gender-inclusive education. Statistics and stories, those of both hope and despair, confirm the need for schools to assume their responsibilities in developing a fair

and just system which serves the needs of all students. The curriculum must address such issues as role models, inclusive language, the maintenance of relationships, and the needs and contributions of girls and boys, women and men. Such an educational system contributes to the well being of all its members, to a more complete understanding and appreciation of our human condition, our ability and desire to develop healthy and productive lives.

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