MEETING THE CHALLENGE:
THREE WOMEN EDUCATIONAL LEADERS
TELL THEIR STORY

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ABSTRACT

Although statistics obtained from Alberta Education reveal that more women are achieving positions in administration, the rate of increase hardly indicates that Alberta has arrived at the threshold of achieving gender equity in educational administration. A number of researchers attribute the low representation to the "glass ceiling" or barriers which prevent women from achieving formal positions of leadership. Women's inability to gain access to mentors and networks within the hierarchical structure of school systems is another significant factor which many researchers relate to the underrepresentation of women in administration. Yet, despite encountering what the literature describes as almost insurmountable barriers, there are women who have survived the perils and have risen from the ashes to attain formal positions of leadership. This study explores the true nature of the female in educational administration through the lived experiences of three such survivors, who continually strive to meet the challenges associated with their administrative positions. The literature review and responses to interviews focus on three significant areas: barriers, mentorship and the leadership experience. Through their stories the three women administrators reveal how they perceive their administrative positions in terms of barriers they may have encountered,

mentor relationships developed, and their style of leadership. An analysis of their experiences and a comparison to those described in the literature is documented throughout the study.

Alberta Education's dismal statistics indicate that many female administrative aspirants often abandon their pursuit of leadership positions. Perhaps by providing "voice" to these women administrators' stories, women administrative aspirants will not only have the opportunity to gain insight into the scarcely inhabited world of women in administration, but also experience empowerment through their honest words of encouragement and advice.

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INTRODUCTION

"Chesire-Puss," she began rather timidly ... "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where -," said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

(Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland)

Like Alice, I have come to a place in my educational journey where I am in search of some direction. I am not certain of my final destination, yet I yearn to know what path to travel. My husband occasionally queries, "Where do you see yourself in five or ten years?" "What are you goals after you've completed your Master's Degree?" "Do you see yourself as an administrator?" I struggle with my reply. The personal and professional satisfaction gained from working with students in my classroom is immeasurable. I take pride and pleasure nurturing a love of learning in the child I teach, and encouraging them to develop confidence in their abilities. However, I have begun to realize that perhaps I could affect more positive change and growth in the students' personal and academic lives as an educational administrator. Although I have discovered through research and personal experience that the pursuit of an

administrative position is not an easy one; especially for women. Therefore, I am not yet convinced that I want to travel the perilous route of administration. Like many other female administrative aspirants, I want to make an informed decision before attempting to break the glass ceiling.

The statistics concerning the participation of women in education administration in Alberta indicate the possibility that there are a great number of female aspirants who share my apprehension regarding the pursuit of an administrative position. Statistics from Alberta Education report 18,733 female teachers, with 1,158 or about one in every sixteen serving in some administrative capacity in 1994-95. Of the 10,414 men in education in Alberta school systems, 2,370 or about one in every four served in some administrative capacity. The disparity becomes even more obvious when we compare, by percentage, the number of women to men in various administrative positions.

Figure 1
Percentage by Gender of Total
Administrators in the Province of Alberta
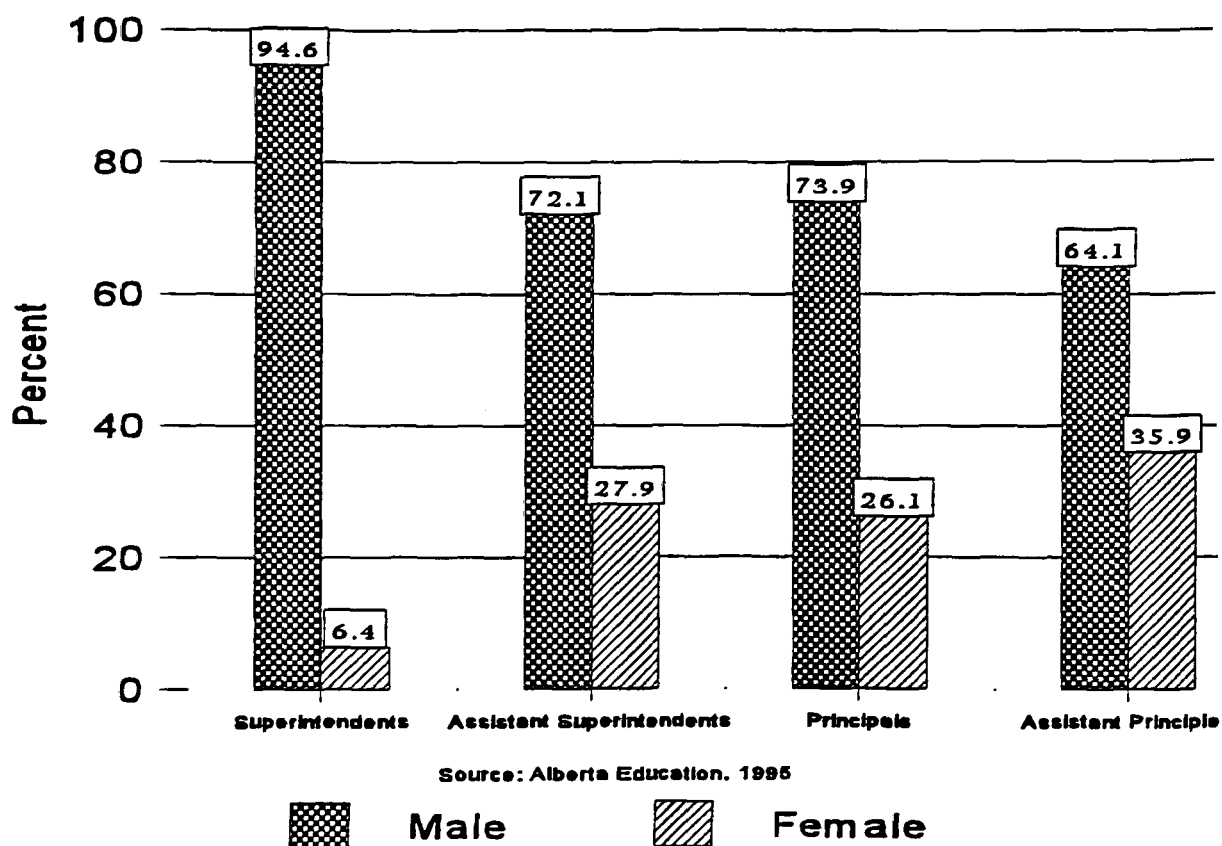
Karen Ingalls, the director of Women in Education for the Alberta

Teacher's Association predicts that the number of women in administration in

Southern Alberta will decrease within the next one to two years. She bases her

assertion on the fact that the recent amalgamation of school boards resulted in

the elimination of a significant number of administrative positions. Those

administrators with the least amount of seniority are typically forced to seek new positions outside the ranks of administration. Due to their characteristically late entry into top administrative positions, women are in danger of being asked to relinquish their office. The obvious imbalance concerning the participation of women in educational administrative positions has further motivated me to attempt to seek concrete answers to explain the underrepresentation and to understand the experiences of women in educational administration in Southern Alberta.

Much of the research conducted on women in educational administration focuses on three significant areas; barriers, mentorship, and the female way of leadership (Adkison, 1981; Edson, 1988; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Nixon, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1989; Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991; Swiderski, 1988;). The research, while providing an informative and philosophical perspective, cannot adequately explain the circumstances associated with being a woman in educational administration in Southern Alberta. Therefore, in order to gain a more comprehensive representation of the experiences and challenges encountered by Southern Albertan women in administration, I decided to not only consult the literature, but also to conduct separate interviews with three practising women in administration. It was my desire to give "voice" to these

women administrators in order to help other women, like myself, understand

the leadership experience from their personal perspective (Reynolds and Young,

1995). According to Cooper (1987), "reading about these experiences serves to

assuage our sense of isolation and validate our perceptions: I'm not crazy.

Someone felt this way before" (in Russill, p. 127).

My decision to exclusively invite women administrators to share their

stories is imbedded in my belief of Jessie Bernard's (1981) theory, that not only

do women and men experience "the world differently but also that the world

women experience is demonstrably different from the world men experience"

(p.3). Gilligan (1982) also acknowledges this premise and explains that "the

failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences

in their voices stems in part from the assumptions that there is a single mode of

experience and interpretation." (p.28)

It is my hope that the review of the literature interwoven with the rich

narratives provided by the three women who strive to meet the challenges of

education administration will serve to not only inform, but also provide insight

into the scarcely inhabited, mysterious world of women in administration.

After all, as Beth Young (1995) asserts, "women school administrators' stories

of their own career experiences are our most abundant source of knowledge

related to women and leadership in Canadian education, and the sound of these women's voices was long overdue" (p. 246).

THE CHRONOLOGY OF "MEETING THE CHALLENGE"

I am certain many administrative aspirants, like myself, have read the research on women in administration, yet continue to remain tentative in regard to actively pursuing a formal leadership position. Therefore I felt the compelling need to learn all I could about the demands and challenges associated with being a woman in educational administration in order to confirm my own decision. I determined that the only means of discovering the reality of women in administration in Southern Alberta was to interview those that had struggled and survived the perils of being a woman administrator in the hierarchal organization of the school system.

As I began the initial planning of my project, I immediately recognized the three female administrators whom I desired to become an integral part of my study. I selected Anne, Elizabeth and Maria (pseudonyms) because I had met them professionally and had developed a comfortable rapport with them through sharing thoughts and ideas at meetings, workshops and conferences. Each is also respected, within their school communities, and I highly value their contribution and commitment to effective school leadership.

Once my decision concerning the participants was finalized I embarked upon the task of convincing the candidates to become involved. I initially

contacted Anne, Elizabeth and Maria by telephone and explained the purpose of

my project and how I would require their commitment. Each readily gave their

verbal, as well as their written consent.

I drafted the preliminary interview questions which had been derived

from the literature concerning: barriers, mentorship and women's ways of

leadership (Loden, 1985; Dodgson, 1986; Nixon, 1987; Ortiz and Marshall,

1988; Swiderski, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Federation of Women Teachers'

Association of Ontario, 1992; Reynolds and Young, 1995). The FWTAO

commissioned the OASIS Policy Research Group to research the barriers to

women's promotion in education in January, 1991. Their investigation proved

exceptionally helpful in guiding my selection of appropriate interview questions

relating to barriers. Judith Dodgson's (1986) study of the importance of

mentors for women in education also served to assist me in formulating

mentorship questions.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the interview questions I

conducted a pilot interview with another female who had educational

administration experience. The pilot interview revealed that some of the

interview questions be eliminated, and that other questions be adjusted in order

to elicit a more meaningful response.

Once I made the necessary amendments to the interview questions, I contacted Anne, Elizabeth and Maria and set up separate interviews at their convenience. I then delivered the interview to each participant at least two weeks in advance of their scheduled interview. In addition to the established interview questions, Anne, Elizabeth and Maria were also invited to provide any comments, suggestions and/or advice they might have for any other female administrative aspirant in their school district.

I began the momentous task of transcribing the interview tapes according to each of the three themes of: barriers, mentorship and the leadership experience after I had listened to each of the interviews again and was satisfied with the result. After categorizing the interview responses from Anne, Elizabeth and Maria I delved into the literature and recorded significant information relating to each of the three themes. I then further subdivided the participants' responses on barriers, mentorship and the leadership experience into emergent categories which I recorded on separate pages of note paper. Finally I inserted the relevant research findings under each of the subcategories of the three themes as revealed in the rich narratives of Anne, Elizabeth and Maria.

THE SURVIVORS

Just who are these women leaders that survived the perils associated with obtaining the coveted title of educational administrator? They are three intelligent, well educated, articulate women. Each of the survivors appears to share similar characteristics associated with women who achieve positions of leadership. They fit the female administrative profile. According to research conducted by Gotwalt and Towns (1989) and Shakeshaft (1989) today's typical woman school principal is likely to be white and in her mid to late forties. She is usually first born or an only child, and is likely to have been reared in a two parent home. She is probably married to a college graduate and has children. Characteristically, female administrators have more than fifteen years teaching experience and hold at least a Master's degree (Shakeshaft, 1989). It became apparent through our conversations, that not only do Anne, Elizabeth and Maria share similar characteristics but, they also possess an unshakable confidence in and security with who they are.

Although they share comparable attributes each of these women has a unique story to tell. When asked to describe the process and circumstances relating to obtaining their administrative positions, Anne, Elizabeth and Maria

revealed that in addition to holding different administrative positions, they had certainly not followed the same route on the map to arrive at their destinations. Elizabeth matter of factly explained how she voluntarily transferred from a vice-principalship position she thoroughly enjoyed to an assistant principalship at another school.

> I was vice-principal at School A when they brought in all of the French Immersion into School A, as well as keeping the English program. There was no position for the vice principal from School B, and being that he was instrumental in getting the French Immersion program going, I felt it was in my best interest to apply for this job.

When asked directly whether she felt she gave up her position for the other male vice principal, Elizabeth simply replied, "Right."

Anne described how her decision to pursue a principalship forced her to move to another school district.

> I was in a different administrative position in a different school jurisdiction and I actually had applied to two different ads within my own district for assistant principalships in schools. One of which was at a junior high level and the principal encouraged me to apply. I didn't get either of those. So after not getting that job I spoke to that particular principal and said, "Why would you encourage me to do this if you weren't really interested? He replied, "No, your direct superior is not interested in having you anywhere else in the jurisdiction because they like where you're at." That particular position was very limiting for me, and I just decided that I was not going to do that, and if in fact there was this barrier for me that I would go somewhere else.
>
> So as it happened a principalship came in the paper about a week later and my husband said, "Hey, there's a principalship, do you want to apply?" and I said, "Oh I don't want to be a principal." Then I thought, of course I do, I wanted to be an assistant principal. But thinking that I didn't have that type of administrative background in terms of working on a day to day basis. I wasn't sure. However, I thought about what I was already doing in my job. I had six

staff members under me. I was doing in-servicing and training. I was working with students, and so while it was on a smaller scale, I decided that I really had all of the skills. So I sent in my application. There were three people that applied for that job; and I won the position. So I started off in that particular school, and it was a real exciting time for me.

Interestingly, later on in the interview when asked whether they had experienced any barriers when attempting to obtain their administrative positions, both Elizabeth and Anne initially replied, "No."

Maria on the other hand tells a tale of tenacity and perseverance. Like the majority of women between 1820 and 1900, who acted as chief administrators of their own schools, (Shakeshaft, 1989) Maria made her own opportunity.

It didn't come about via the standard process. It came about because for years I had been, through my teaching, mentally cataloguing some aspects of education which in my own experience had not worked very well. And at the same time methods, techniques, and teaching strategies that seemed to work. So I had been spending my time basically concentrating on my own teaching and my own work with my students inside, as well as outside of my own classroom. Not just educationally, but also from a personal development point of view and working with students through science fairs, on student councils, student leadership and that sort of things. So basically I spent ten years doing that. Then I had the opportunity of having a go at an administrative position, but I wasn't quite sure I wanted to go for it. I was quite happy where I was working with my students. But I decided that, well it was about time I looked for a change. This might be a way in which I might put some of my ideas into practice from an administrative position where I could widen the scope and apply some of my techniques outside of my classroom into a larger setting; a school setting. So I decided to try for it, and if I got it, I would have a look and see what happened, and if I didn't, then I would go back to my teaching. As it turns out I was not successful in my first application.

I went back into the classroom teaching and continued on. Then shortly after that I took some time off to work on a master's program. I went back for a year into my teaching position and again got involved with my students as usual. Of

course another principalship came open. I decided I was going to have a second go at it. This one again did not prove successful, even though I was offered the vice principalship rather than the principalship. I refused that position and went back into the classroom to teach. I found that I wasn't always satisfied with the education process I was involved in at that setting, so I had several choices offered to me. I could simply resign my position and go into a field that was completely different, or I could try and stay with education. I decided I would resign my position anyway, because I was no longer, I thought, as effective as I could have been. The setting as whole was not conducive to the type of thing I wanted to do.

I resigned my position and decided at this point, once I made that decision, it was a matter of deciding what I wanted to do after that. So once again I had a choice. I could quit education completely and try something else. Or I could have a go at implementing some of my ideas elsewhere. I decided I owed it to myself to have a go at that and started putting my ideas together on paper.

As I worked on paper I started to clarify my own position and my own philosophies. I started talking to people that were encouraging me and pushing me in the direction to start an alternative education system. They were very interested, so I had a basic support group behind me. I decided to have a go at it. So I began the usual process of looking for a place and looking for students; basically word of mouth. I started distributing my bulletin and having meetings. The parents that were interested came to the meetings and asked their questions and I ended up with a small group of students that were willing to have a go at this. So I went ahead and set up the school as a private institution, got formal approval from the Alberta Education department and everything else.

So now we have ninety-six students, and that's how I ended up in adminstration. What I wanted to do was teach in a setting that I could feel comfortable with and implement some of my ideas. I wasn't able to work within the standard system, so I figured I would have a go at it. If it works fine, if it doesn't , well at least I had a go at it.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE WOMEN GONE?

There is no doubt about it: the 1990's is the breakthrough decade when women will achieve positions of leadership throughout corporate America. (Naisbitt and Aburdene cited in McGrath, 1992).

Ironically Ella Flagg Young, the first woman superintendent of Chicago schools, predicted the same prosperous future for women aspiring to educational leadership positions in 1909.

> Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a majority of big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. It is a woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first woman to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show critics and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man (cited in Shakeshaft, 1989, p.18).

Unfortunately, neither Aburdene and Nesbitt or Young's predictions appear to be reality. According to Alberta Education, women are definitely present in the administrative arena, however their representation hardly illustrates a break through or a majority. As we near the end of another decade women continue to be underrepresented.

Why do males continue to dominate in all administrative positions in education? In order to shed some light on the imbalance of power, it is

necessary to briefly look at the history of women in administration. Despite the dismal figures reported by Alberta Education in 1994/95, women did not always experience such limited access to administration. In fact, the years between 1900 - 1930 are sometimes referred to us a golden age for women in school administration (Hansot and Tyack, cited in Shakeshaft, 1989). Not only were the majority of teachers female, but many influential women assumed leadership positions as well. Yet, according to Shakeshaft (1989) "as schools began to evolve into hierarchial organizations, the majority of positions of formal leadership were occupied by men" (p.30). The bureaucratization of the education system introduced by men virtually excluded all women from entering its gilded gates.

THE BARRIERS: PERCEIVED AND EXPERIENCED

Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome (Samuel Johnson).

In 1996, we find that not much has changed in terms of males dominating the positions of power in education. A number of researchers (Kanter, 1977; Marshall, 1984; Nixon, 1987; Schmuck, 1979; Shakeshaft, 1989; Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991; Swiderski, 1988) attribute the low representation to the "glass ceiling" or barriers which prevent women from achieving formal positions of leadership. Barriers are referred to as the limitations or restrictions which serve to hinder opportunities of advancement for women (FWTAO, 1991; Nixon, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1989). There appear to be three major types of barriers to women's upward mobility in the hierarchal organization of educational administration: internal factors, external factors, and androcentrism (Kanter, 1977; Nixon, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1989).

Internal barriers are those psychological barriers that are found within women themselves. Shakeshaft (1989) explains that these are barriers that can only be overcome by individual change. Some of the internal barriers ascribed to women are: lack of confidence, motivation, aspiration, low self-image, and the perception of some female teachers that the cost of being a good

administrator, wife and mother is too great, (Nixon, 1987; Schmuck, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1989). These factors essentially blame the victim for her lack of achievement in school administration. Although Shakeshaft acknowledges that these internal barriers do exist, she feels they take the focus away from societal roadblocks that deny women's advancement. Shakeshaft (1989) cautions, "If we accept that inequity is due to some inadequacy on the woman's apart, then there is a tendency to not look at any other external causes" (p.84).

External barriers to career advancement for women in education are factors outside a women's control, and as Shakeshaft (1989) states, require social and institutional change. These external barriers are numerous and include overt discrimination, dual-work role expectations for married women, openly expressing attitudes that discriminate against women, sex discrimination in hiring practices and organizational structure (Kanter, 1977; Shakeshaft, 1989; Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991).

Perhaps the most powerful barrier of all facing women aspiring to educational administration positions is androcentrism, described by Shakeshaft (1989) as:

> The practice of viewing the world and shaping reality from a male perspective. It is the evaluation of the masculine to the level of the universal and the ideal and the honoring of men and the male principle above women and the female. This perception creates a belief in male superiority and masculine value system in which female values, experiences and behavior are viewed as inferior (p.94).

Androcentrism allows and encourages inequality among women and men. Thus discrimination based on sex flourishes within this structure both overtly and covertly (Nixon, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1989; Swiderski, 1988). Androcentrism appears to be an all encompassing barrier which employs covert discrimination as its strongest obstacle along a woman's path in administrative advancement. Shakeshaft (1989) defines covert discrimination as "sex discrimination played out in a number of subtle ways - ways that limit women's mobility and advancement but aren't directly traceable to sex discrimination" (p. 106). Covert discrimination takes many forms including: lack of support and encouragement from family, peers, and superordinates; institutional barriers (lack of child care and finances, and poor medicare services for female related conditions); socialization and sex - role stereotyping; lack of appropriate and positive curricular materials for women to read; as well as lack of mentors and role models (Kanter, 1977; Nixon, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Swiderski, 1988).

Nixon (1987) also accepts that androcentrism is a major barrier for women aspiring to leadership positions in education. However, she separates covert discrimination into three distinct categories:

> Role discrimination - "This occurs when society conceptualizes what a "good" principal does and is in terms of masculine words and points of view" Slauenwhite and Skok, 1991, p.18).

> Treatment discrimination - Most often occurs after a woman has secured an

administrative position, but is still seen as a subordinate. She may be asked to serve coffee or clean up after a meeting, so that she is reminded of what her duties should be.

Access discrimination - This occurs because there is a lack of mentorship for aspiring female administrators. Therefore, there is no one professionally to encourage them. As well, females often do not have access to information on available positions because they are not part of a network. "The fact that women are systematically excluded from making use of this valuable 'grapevine' - and have no comparable 'old girl network' has serious consequences for them" (Berry, 1979, p.8).

In 1991 the Federation of Women Teacher's Association of Ontario conducted their own study concerning the barriers to women's promotion in education. After almost twenty years of affirmative action in the Province of Ontario the organization set out to identify the deterrents which continued to prevent women in Ontario from progressing in educational administration. The following chart identifies the top ten barriers cited by respondents. In keeping with the research previously conducted on the barriers to women in administration, the responses in this study can also be identified according to internal, external, and of course the all encompassing androcentric deterrents.

Figure 2

	CHART 10			
	Top 10 Deterrent for Promotion to Each Position - For Women Personally from Items Common to Each List **All Survey Respondents - By Position** [*]			
No	**Item**	**Vice-Principal**	**Principal**	**Supervisory Officer**
10	Family responsibilities[1]	53%	43%	54%
4	Informal male networks	49%	42%	50%
12	Concerns re political nature of job[2]	47%	42%	**60%**
9	Isolation of women at this level[3]	41%	**44%**	59%
18	Salary differential inadequate	41%	32%	(drops to 13%)
3	Night work/long hours	38%	28%	59%
11	Stamina required	37%	34%	48%
15	Seen as "not ready"	37%	38%	42%
1	Personal doubts re ability	34%	28%	50%
2	Additional responsibility of role	31%	28%	**60%**

Notes:
1. Top of range for promotion to Vice-Principal (item most frequently cited overall).
2. Top of range for promotion to Supervisor Officer (item most frequently cited within the common list of deterrents shown in this chart).
3. Top of range for promotion to Principal (item most frequently cited overall).

[*] Note: From "Go For It! Barriers to women's promotion in education," by The Federation of Women Teachers Association of Ontario (1992).

Despite the existence of a variety of barriers in educational administration, there are those who are able to break through the glass ceiling. Anne, Elizabeth and Maria are all survivors of the struggles which prevent many

women from entering the gilded gates of educational administration. They

offered their personal accounts and perceptions of the barriers which continue

to plague administrative aspirants. When asked to identify the barriers they had

encountered, only Maria described deterrents which she had personally

experienced. Initially Anne and Elizabeth denied the existence of barriers to

their administrative positions; even though Anne identified a barrier during her

description of how she obtained her administrative position.

> So I started off in that particular school and it was a very exciting time for me. But the barrier for me was the first jurisdiction that I was with and that there was not going to be room for me to move on, and so I just decided I would have to go outside the district.

Yet when asked directly about barriers that she may have encountered, Anne

replied:

> Well there really weren't any for me because it was just a matter of the ad was in the paper. So if there would have been any obstacles or barriers it would have been my own.

Elizabeth also could not recall having to face any deterrents:

> There really were no obstacles or barriers in getting my first position at school (a), but it did take four tries at applying for various administrative positions before I got this one. But the one at school (a), they only interviewed me, and then they asked the principal if he was happy, and he said, "Yes, definitely." So they didn't interview anyone else.

However, after being questioned further about her first four unsuccessful

attempts at administration, and whether she felt there were any barriers

preventing her from securing any of those positions Elizabeth did mention lack

of experience. She then went on to discuss another deterrent; all the while

denying their existence.

> I don't think there were any barriers. I think it was the experience that I didn't
> have. The first barrier; I didn't have my Master's. I was still working on it. So
> when a position came open, I didn't have the Master's but I applied for the
> principalship at this school. I only had one year experience as a vice-principal so I
> would understand why they wouldn't make me principal right away.

Having initially stated there were no barriers, Elizabeth suggested two, and

throughout her interview Anne continued to describe a number of situations

where her advancement was hindered.

Anne and Maria both experienced the limitations of the organizations with

which they were employed. Anne acknowledged that she had almost been

trapped by the system.

> Well the obstacle just really tended to be that they really liked what I was doing. When
> I left that position the person that came in refused to do what I was doing because they
> said that it was way too much work for the job role. Within two years that particular
> setting had actually been closed. They closed it down because the principals didn't feel
> they were getting the service that they wanted. So I think that they knew that they had
> had someone there that would do all of the extras, and so they were basically using me.
> I didn't mind going the extra mile, but I didn't want it to be abusive. If I would have
> bought into that and said, "No, I'll compromise all of my own goals for them," they
> that would have been an abusive situation. So I decided not to do that.

Women in administration are often directed along the wrong career path.

Choosing to remain in positions such as specialists or department heads rather

than principalships can lead to an administrative dead end. Although it appears

that women are advancing in these consultant-type positions, they are in fact

just being funnelled into low opportunity, dead end positions. "These positions allow them neither the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for advancement, nor the opportunity to demonstrate those skills that they do have" (Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center Digest, 1990, p.3). Fortunately Anne was able to see the light.

Although Maria did not experience Anne's exact situation, she was also penalized by the system for being "too good." Unfortunately the organizational structure almost smothered Maria.

> Well now you must realize that when I was teaching I was so immersed in my teaching and work with my students that I wasn't thinking in the direction of administration at all. So I wasn't really looking for possible barriers or ways to overcome them. Through my first attempt I found out because I was told by central office administration at the selection process that because, "I was so good in the classroom 'quote, unquote', they wouldn't take me out of there." So I said to myself, "Well I'm not going to be able to try some of these things because obviously it is not going to work. Maybe if I was not so good in the classroom according to their own opinions I would have a chance at this, but it looks like I might be staying here for quite a while." So that is the most obvious one. Simply because I was told in no uncertain terms. The fact that I was a woman did not seem to matter at that point in time. Later on, now that I had met some of the systemic difficulties in advancing to an administrative position I was more aware of them. They really started to become apparent. For as long as I was still oblivious to any kind of difficulties that might exist, it didn't bother me. I didn't even see them, but then all of a sudden they were forced upon me. So I had to start to face them. Basically being good in the classroom is an obstacle. People will tend to say, "Well you're doing a really good job here, we can't take you out of here to put you elsewhere." They don't see that those talents may be used in a wider scope and applied by other people. They just don't see it that way.

INTERNAL BARRIERS

Administrative aspirants often attribute their reluctance to pursue administrative positions to their lack of confidence in their abilities. Shakeshaft (1989) cautions that lack of confidence is often viewed as a personal failing of women. She does not accept that lack of confidence is due to a personality flaw in women. She asserts that it should be more accurately seen as a consequence of a sex-structured society that generates a belief that females lack ability - a belief reinforced by an organizational system that prevents women from developing confidence in public sphere activities through both lack of opportunity and lack of positive feedback" (p.85).

Anne admits to experiencing self-doubt when first encouraged to apply for her principalship position. Fortunately, she was able to convince herself that she did indeed have the strength of character and the necessary expertise to succeed in her application.

> So as it happened a principalship came in the paper about a week later and my husband said, "Hey here's a principalship, do you want to apply?" and I said, "Oh, I don't want to be a principal." Then I thought of course I do. I wanted to be an assistant principal, but thinking that I didn't have that type of administrative background in terms of working on a day to day basis. Then I thought about what I already was doing in the job. I had six staff members under me. I was doing in-servicing and training. I was working with students, and so while it was on a smaller scale I decided that I really had all of the skills.

While Maria feels secure and confident with who she is and in her abilities, she recognizes that not all women possess her fortitude. She believes that many women's aspirations are impeded by their feelings of inadequacy. Maria attributes women's feelings of self-doubt to traditional beliefs about a woman's role and place in society. In fact, Aristotle, who is recognized as the forefather of democratic freedom and educational thought, argued that a woman had no right to positions of leadership. He declared that "the male is by nature superior and the female inferior; the one rules and the other is ruled" (cited in Mahoney, 1993, p.10). Sadly, Maria explains, women today are still confronted with these age old tenets.

> Some women would like to try it but don't feel that they can make any progress, so why try? I think a lot of women are still not looking at themselves as multi-faceted individuals. A lot of women are still going by the societal stand by: Women know your place and it is not out there in the workforce. In the cut-throat world if you like, the higher administration, the higher positions, the bosses are basically male.

> The women just don't even begin to think that they could do something else; that they could be implementing new policies, could be developing new programs, that they could be managing, or be the leader in a group. They just don't seem to see themselves in that position. It's just societal, it's just the way society as a whole looks at individuals. Women are still relegated to traditional roles. I find that those women who want to do something else feel that they cannot.

Marion's statement also reflects her conviction that society inhibits a woman's career advancement. Perhaps because Elizabeth did not have to contend with societal barriers, she remains optimistic.

It never occurs to women that they would have a chance, because when they look

around it is mainly men. So hopefully now that there are four of us in this district they'll start to feel that, "Hey maybe I have a chance."

Respondents to the FWTAO's (1992) survey ranked family responsibilities as the number one deterrent for women in educational administration. The issues related to the dual responsibilities of work and career continue to plague women aspiring or maintaining an administrative position.

Women often feel as they are forced into the proverbial corner. Paddock's (1978) study found that family commitments relating to being a homemaker and mother were listed as the major difficulty for women considering making their move from teacher to administrator. "Over forty percent of the women in her study took sole responsibility for housework, cooking and child care in addition to their job as teachers. Only as those responsibilities lessened as their children grew up were these women able to add the additional tasks of school administrator to their limited day" (Shakeshaft, 1989, p.61). Marion's response explaining the underrepresentation of women in administration confirms these findings.

> I think because women tend to put their families first, and once the family is grown up, then they start thinking about maybe going into administration. But until they've dealt with their family responsibilities I don't think they feel the pressure to get into administration, and actually probably don't want to, because it would just be an added burden to the already long day of being a teacher and a mother.

Family responsibilities can become a double edged issue for some women.

Administrative aspirants often feel torn between family commitments and their desire to fulfill their career ambitions. Participants in the FWTAO (1992) study perceived that they were looked down upon and even discriminated against for choosing to pursue positions which took them away from family responsibilities. This remains a non-issue for men. Their career and family responsibilities are seen as one.

Unsupportive family members can only serve to intensify an already arduous situation. Many administrators in Edson's (1988) study reported that their career aspirations and increased time demands away from the home resulted in marital friction. While many husbands were outwardly supportive of their wives, they felt uncomfortable, and even threatened by their wives new role.

Anne commented on the impact family support can have on a woman's career choices. Her own experience has taught her that family support is vital.

> I think that family support is a really funny thing because people give verbal support, but they always don't give support. It's one thing for somebody to say to you, "Oh gee, I really hope you get the position, and you are going to make a really wonderful principal." I think that they really mean that and they truly believe that, but when it comes down to your being out four nights a week or having to go back to work at six, they're not sure.

> With my own children I will go and do the things right after school. Then I'll go back to school at nine o'clock in the evening and work until twelve. People are not always willing to live with these things. I find that's a major issue for males.

EXTERNAL BARRIERS

Associated with pursuing an administrative position is of course the interview process. While school boards may believe they are acting in a fair manner by inviting female applicants to participate in an interview, many of the questions and procedures are inequitable, even illegal. Edson found in her (1988) study that many aspirants reported experiencing interviews where they were asked inappropriate or illegal questions. While the participants expressed frustration at this discriminative practice, they also admitted they understood the cause for such action. They commented that many school board members believe that women are unaware, or do not comprehend the challenges and demands associated with being in a management position. Shakeshaft (1989) confirmed that many administrative aspirants reported being asked questions relating to parental status and how it will affect their job performance. She asserts that it is discriminatory hiring practices such as this that continue to exclude women from the world of school administration.

Anne also revealed that she had encountered discriminative interview questions in her quest for an administrative position. However, she did not quietly accept such an overt action. Anne feels strongly that she has never

equated her inability to obtain an administrative position with being female.

She has (almost) convinced herself that being female is not a barrier.

> I've applied for two different assistant superintendencies in our jurisdiction at two different times and was one of the two people. The other candidate each time that received the job; they were both male. Neither time did I feel that it was because of my being female. I never, ever in any of these instances sort of related to that. I always look at what other skills I would need to have and that type of thing. But by the same token, you never really know.

> I know in one of the interviews they actually asked me, "Well what would your husband and children do for meals?" I did answer and then afterwards I said to the superintendent that I really felt that they should review their questioning techniques with their board members, because that was in fact a biased question, unless they asked that of every single candidate.

> I'll say that I was a bit disappointed, but I had already been principal for twelve years. I was spending evenings out and my family had their nutrition; they were well taken care of. But people some how don't equate that.

Anne discovered later that they had not asked that particular question of

every candidate.

> I asked one of the other candidates what he was doing with his family? He said, "Well what are you talking about?" And I said, "You mean they didn't ask that question of you?" He just sort of looked at me.

Shakeshaft's research revealed that women administrative aspirants were not

hired based on their levels of competency or qualifications, but because of

direct discrimination. Coffin and Ekstrom (1989) reported that participants in

their study had been given the following reasons for not being hired for

positions which they feel qualified for. "Women were not hired because of

custom; men do not want to take directions from a woman, the community was

not ready for a women administrator. These reasons have nothing to do with quality or competence; they all use as their reason the woman's sex (Shakeshaft, 1989, p.97). While Anne never attributes her being female to being denied administrative positions, Maria can find no other reason.

> So really I felt I didn't have that much of a choice. It didn't really matter that I had proven myself. They were still looking for a male. Thinking back my experience has been "You are doing a great job, but you better know your place!" That's what it amounted to basically and it didn't matter that I had more experience in more areas, more successful educational experiences, more academic preparation, more parental support and involvement with the community. It didn't matter and basically it was a matter of deciding and obviously they were looking for a particular individual and it had nothing to do, at that point in time, with qualifications or anything else.

Anne and Maria realize that often discriminatory hiring practices are allowed to thrive because school board members may be uninformed regarding the accepted roles of women in society. The mentality that men are the managers and women are the workers in the hierarchal structure of educational administration continues to exist, as it has for the past one hundred years (Shakeshaft, 1989). In addition, administrative candidates are selected by school boards which remain predominantly comprised of men. These limitations for women in administration were predicted as early as 1919 by Connolly:

> A place - usually in the supervisorship of primary work, or domestic work, or welfare work - is set apart for some women and the woman is selected by a board of men (Shakeshaft, 1989, p.39).

Maria recalls how she came to recognize that her fate as an administrative

candidate was in the hands of those that held the position of power; and in her

district they happened to be male.

> I started to notice some difficulties. But basically the decision making powers are still in the hands of the administration which is still mainly male. As I met with other females that were in administrative positions and watched them operate, it became quite clear that the females were quite capable. They were actually doing tremendous work, but they were not getting the recognition or the credit that went along with the tremendous work...

Anne expressed how she felt qualified and competent candidates were not

being granted an opportunity to exercise their exceptional skills because school

board members were unable to see past the issue of gender. She contends that

members of selection committees should be considering the success of a

candidate based on what the candidate can do for the school board; not who

they are. Sherratt and Derrington (1993) also recommend that "district

selection committees should not only determine through the interview process

how the candidate can fulfill their dream for an effective school district, but

also how they can convince the candidates that the district can fulfill their

dreams as well" (p.7). Anne certainly supports this premise.

> I think that there is still some confusion with board members and senior administrators about whether a female is capable of that role...Let's look at what this person has to offer our district, and I personally really believe that that's something that superintendents are not doing very well. Boards are not being required to look at that part of it. So we do get into a question of gender, which is unfortunate. People still haven't reached that point in our society where they truly believe that there is an equality.

In the following chart Sharatt and Derrington (1993), recorded the most

frequently cited examples of discriminatory practices in the recruitment and

selection of female superintendency candidates.

Figure 3

**Examples of Discriminatory Practices
in Recruitment and Selection Procedures** *

- Recruiting through word-of-mouth" and the "old-boy" network.

- Questioning applicants about children or marital status.

- Using criteria with unproven validity as predictors of success, such as requiring a specific length of experience in a specific position.

- Permitting men to skip steps on the career ladder but expecting women to complete each one.

- Asking women irrelevant questions about child care or how male subordinates might react to them.

- Focusing upon the applicant as a woman, rather than as a qualified professional as in "Why would such a bright and attractive woman ever want to be a superintendent?"

- Regarding an aggressive manner in men as desirable but regarding women who display such traits as unfit.

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* Note: From "Female superintendents: Attributes that attract and barriers that discourage their successful applications," by G. Sharatt and M.L. Derrington (1993).

THE ANDROCENTRIC WORLD

The women interviewed for Russill's (1995) study tended to emphasize their dedication to hard work and commitment levels, as well as attention to details as requirements for moving up to the next stage on the administrative ladder. The female respondents assumed that their exemplary qualifications and hard work would secure their advancement. Some express their frustration over the fact that they had followed all of the rules, jumped through the necessary hoops and yet, somehow, they were still being overlooked for administrative positions. In an androcentric world, women learn soon enough that developing superior knowledge and skills does not guarantee advancement. The selection process is often based on who you are; not what you have accomplished. Maria expresses her growing resentment toward a structure which disregarded her relentless efforts.

> Basically they wanted me to stay there and continue to work, but I wasn't good enough, quote unquote to handle the responsibilities of the principalship, even though as acting vice principal I handled the whole school on my own. And I did three jobs at once, because my principal had suffered a heart attack at the beginning of September. Without any kind of guidance what-so-ever I managed a school of two hundred children and a staff of fifteen or sixteen, the principalship job, the vice principalship job, and taught 75% of the time; without assistance. I continued to do all of my extra-curricular activities with my students and that didn't seem to make any difference. So basically I felt I didn't have that much of a choice. It didn't really matter that I had proven myself.

When Maria was refused the principalship, but offered the vice

principalship she decided to no longer accept the school district's refusal to recognize her achievements. She declined the vice principalship and wrote a letter questioning their hiring practices. Although she was aware of that her course of action might not be well received, she did not realize that it would ultimately lead to her resignation.

> So what can you do? There isn't much you can do. But the fact that I spoke up took a lot of people by surprise. The fact that I refused an administrative position was quite unbelievable, for those people. For the first time I saw a high-ranking administrator with nothing to say. He was totally and completely taken aback. Basically I felt what he was saying was, "How dare you refuse an administrative position? You should be fortunate that anybody wants to give you anything, therefore you should be quiet and accept it."

Maria continued to explain how her feeling of powerlessness caused her to begin to question her ability to pursue administration. She began to internalize the rejection and almost allowed the system to control her choices. Fortunately through educating herself, Maria was able to understand that she was not to blame for the inadequacies of the system. She learned the androcentric world is based on masculine beliefs about a woman's role and place in society. She spoke of "removing it from the personal and placing it into the realm of society."

> It was pretty difficult for me to accept what I was seeing. Very difficult. It took me two years to work it out of my system. I was angry. I was very frustrated. I was very limited. I felt used.
>
> But what I did do; rather than become despondent and retreat into my shell and lock myself in my classroom was, I decided I was going to learn what this was

all about. Where it came from. I started to do a lot of reading, taking courses, and through that process I began to see that it wasn't me as an individual, but it was a societal issue. It was not me versus them: the males and the lonely female blowing in the wind by herself. It was a lot bigger than that. Some other similar experiences were brought to my attention, and that's how I dealt with it. I dealt with the whole situation by removing it from the personal and placing it into the realm of the society as a whole, and that allowed me to go back and work in that setting. If I had not been able to do that I would not have survived.

Finally, the working environment became too stifling for Maria. She saw no opportunity for growth or advancement, and made the decision to leave and forge her own destiny.

> Of course with a change in administration, came a change in ways of doing things. Within the previous administration I was given a free reign to do what I wanted to do, and if it worked, so much the better. If it didn't, I had to take the blame for it; which at least was given the chance to try things. In the new setting I felt that whatever I was doing was getting undone. Outside of my classroom things were not working very well. I really felt quite impotent in that setting, not being able to do much with my students. So I decided to try something else.

Not only does an androcentric world limit a woman's career opportunities, but its members dictate preconceived expectations of their leaders based on masculine values and beliefs. Nixon (1987) defines this barrier as role discrimination. The research conducted by the FWTAO (1992) confirmed that "female leadership styles are not the norm, and thus are not yet legitimized" (p.9). The Women's Educational Equity Act Digest also acknowledged the theory of male dominancy in administration. They concluded that "in spite of more than thirty years of data to the contrary, the myth remains that the ideal manager conforms to a masculine stereotype: self-reliant,

forceful, ambitious, and a strong leader" (p.3). A respondent in Russill's (1995) study argued that a woman's style of leadership often precludes her acceptance in administration. Although she admitted that a more collaborative style of leadership is being encouraged in schools today, this approach has cost the careers of many women pioneers. Anne explained how her team approach to leadership became a barrier. She was one of the collaborative pioneers who persevered, but had to work extremely hard to gain acceptance and respect.

> I think not in getting the position, but one of the barriers in being a female principal has been my leadership style. In the first years it was difficult because I tend to have a team oriented, collaborative leadership style. So that's very difficult for traditional teachers to relate to. They're used to someone telling them, "This is the way that it's going to be...go do it!" What I found was that my new teachers coming in could respond to that because they had never been under that. Basically the 50% of my first year teachers keyed into it quickly. I had a lot of resistance from other teachers. They would say, "That's not my job, you do that, that's what you are getting paid for."

> There was always this sort of underlying resistance. What I found is that now in the last, probably eight years, is that it is more acceptable because, in general, in our whole society concepts like site-based management, participatory decision making that type of thing has been more to the forefront in all areas, in all different groups of workers, that teachers also have been more exposed to that dialogue and are more in tune to it; or at least more receptive. So that I don't find the same type of resistance. But it also does require time for training, time for reflection, time to work with, and so that in itself can be a barrier.

Not only did Anne's style of leadership meet with opposition from her school staff, but her philosophy was also misunderstood by district administrators. They did not always provide the support necessary for Anne's team of teachers to assess situations and arrive at decisions collaboratively.

Yet, she did not compromise her beliefs. Instead she continually attempts to educate district administrators through clearly communicating her team's objectives.

> Before our province moved to site-based management, one of the barriers that I had was because once I got my staff working that way, we were ok; but then we would run into problems with policy at the school division level. I wouldn't always get support from administrators at that level because their thinking wasn't the same. Their thinking was, "Well why don't you just tell them what to do?" I would just say, "Because we work in a collaborative mode and we do participatory decision making, and we need some time to do this." They would say, "Well that doesn't fit with our time lines, we want this now." There was a lot of inflexibility about that, so it was a real barrier because you get yourself into a bind. You would look really bad to your staff and to other people you were trying hard to provide this opportunity for staff to be involved, to participate and to be heard. It was at moments really difficult. I am finding that even though we're site-based, because of the philosophical difference, we are still not getting the kind of support I would anticipate. Site-based doesn't necessarily mean collaborative, It means all the funds are there and in some jurisdictions they don't even do it that way. But my concept is always participation. So for me it is very difficult sometimes, even now.

While Maria undertook the position of acting principal, she discovered how unsupportive district administrators could be. Like some of the participants in Edson's (1988) study, she felt the wrath of her male superiors. Women in Edson's study reported that often their efforts were undermined by district administrators whose own insecurities caused them to feel threatened. Others reported experiencing open hostility toward their actions. Maria reveals how she was continually reminded, by some subtle and not so subtle behaviors, that her presence in an administrative position was unwelcome.

> When I ended up taking that one year as acting vice principal it became extremely

obvious that I was out there on my own. I literally did not have anyone to turn to and ask questions. I was left with a school of two hundred and a whole bunch of people counting on me to know what was going on, and I had no one to turn to. So basically what I did was roll up my sleeves and did what I thought should be done.

Once I called to get some advice; basically I needed to know what the position of the school was regarding some things. I was told, "Well it's in the manual." I said, "Well one of these days I'll have time to read it." That was the last time I called for assistance about anything.

Different things, like not letting me know where things were. Things like, "I can't get into the safe, would you please tell me the combination?" I tried for a whole day to get into that stupid safe with the wrong combination.

In an androcentric world selection committees are often comprised of men and women who continue to believe that discipline, especially at the junior and senior high level can only be administered by a physically strong, forceful male. The word discipline continues to be equated with a physical action. Therefore hiring committees are unable to accept that a woman's style of leadership which typically promotes education of the whole child could be effective in maintaining discipline. Respondents to Edson's (1988) study maintained that most often discipline is given as the reason for not hiring women in middle or high schools. Women participants in Gills' (1992) study of women in education administration in New Brunswick, confirmed that the public perception that an administrator of a junior or senior high school must be a "tough guy" continues to exist. Anne describes how this traditional view of leadership based on masculine beliefs and values prevented her from obtaining a

junior high school administrative position.

> I applied for a principalship in my own jurisdiction at a junior high level a few years ago and I did not get that job. Basically the reason I did not, was a 2-3 split with the board. It came down to the fact that I would not strap. I do not strap because I believe in student responsibility and I think that that's a philosophy that doesn't make sense to me in keeping with students being responsible for their own behavior. So if that was in line with the fact that I was a female, I think for one board member it definitely was an issue. He basically said that a female couldn't handle junior high kids. The other two I don't know. It did come down to the strapping issue though.

Maria found that women who had come to obtain administrative positions were surprisingly not supportive of her attempts. She explained that perhaps she understood why they were very protective of their domain, but had difficulty accepting their refusal to help. Mertz (1990) organized female administrators in her study into two groups. She discovered that the women whom she classified as the work hard, be loyal and you will be rewarded group did not volunteer to help other females aspirants. They felt that their assistance was unnecessary. However Mertz attributed their unsupportiveness to their admittance that they attempted to avoid situations and circumstances where they might be seen as advocates of females. Their inaction suggests that many women in administration realize that their positions are tenuous. Therefore they must not participate in activities which could be perceived as threatening to the male organization. These women chose not to overtly assist other women for fear of jeopardizing their own position. Maria's experience validates this

theory.

> From females in higher administrative positions I was disappointed to tell you the truth. The support, the mentorship that was supposed to be there; wasn't. Putting it frankly, this is what I felt was happening: they were basically saying, "I had to fight so darn hard to get where I am, I am not going to jeopardize it for anyone. So mind your P's and Q's, and stay where you are."

> I could not believe that some females in administration would actually stand up in front of the people that had experienced all sorts of negative responses and say they had experienced none. I was quite disappointed with the response form my female colleagues.

In an androcentric world "women nurture learners; men run schools" (Pigford, 1993, p.1). Several women in Story and Zellinsky's (1992) study provided accounts of this socially conditioned response. Although Elizabeth admits that she too had been confronted by society's stereotypical views, she did not equate this gender-based perception as a barrier.

> There aren't really any barriers but you do have to become aware of stereotyping. When our counsellor walked into the staffroom, one of the strangers in the room said, " Is that the principal or the vice principal?" Being that he was male. When I walked in, the woman said, "This is the vice principal?" So you still get that.

Elizabeth attributes much of the opposition for Southern Albertan women in administration to the fact that men are still in positions of power. Traditionally society still views men as the only gender capable of leading organizations. In an androcentric world, not just in Southern Alberta, society is not allowed to view leadership from any other perspective except that created and honoured by men.

Third reason is probably because this part of the country is very traditional. In this part of the country men are still seen as leaders and it is quite surprising if a woman becomes a leader of anything.

MENTORSHIP

"Come to the edge," he said. They said: "We are afraid." "Come to the edge," he said. They came, he pushed...and away they flew.

(Guillaume Apollinaire)

As the quote illustrates overcoming fear enables one to reach and soar to new heights. However for many women, the fear of taking the plunge from the edge of the teaching world into the realm of administration proves too daunting. The risk of personal injury and defeat are too great, so they return from the cliff to seek solace in the security of teaching. Others are not intimidated by the view from the cliff. With great determination and courage they attempt the flight to administration without assistance. Some auspiciously find their own wings and experience a seemingly effortless transition into the world of administration. Yet, a number of the women who attempt to fly solo find themselves spiralling dizzily toward earth. Unfortunately, they are never able to gain control. Their dreams of arriving in the land of administration are never realized. Still, another group of aspirants are encouraged to take flight by someone who has successfully completed the hazardous journey. Although these women may struggle or experience difficulty they are able to survive the perils of the voyage. Their safe arrival is guaranteed by a wise and experienced guide who continually analyzes their flight path and ensures that

their candidates are on the right course.

The women administrative aspirants who benefit from the encouragement and direction of an experienced guide are said to have been mentored. Mentorship is often cited in the literature as a significant factor relating to women gaining access to educational administration. While it has been demonstrated in some studies that it is possible for a woman to advance into an administrative career without a mentor, Luebkemann and Clemens (1994) concluded that a mentor can definitely be an asset, and can "significantly advance the time-table for entering the administrative ranks" (p.44). Harrigan (cited in Dodgson, 1986) goes even further and states that the chances of women administrative aspirants winning the political game associated with career advancement increases one hundredfold if they have the benefit of a mentor. Four women educators participating in a study conducted by Young (1992) confirmed that one of the most important factors in their career development was a supportive senior administrator who recognized their talents and provided them opportunities for experience and growth.

Ortiz and Covell (1978) reported that "a woman's advancement is more dependent on sponsors that men's. Without this type of sponsorship, promotion becomes very difficult" (p.234). Research conducted by Willis and Dodgson

(1986) supports Ortiz and Covell's findings. Their study concluded that women administrative aspirants <u>do</u> need mentors in order to advance their career. Willis and Dodgson (1986) based their conclusion on the fact that 58%, or over half the female administrators in their study concluded that women administrative aspirants <u>do</u> need mentors in order to advance their career.

Mentorship Defined

The literature overwhelmingly supports the theory that women administrative aspirants require a mentor if they wish to advance their careers. Mentorship is not a novel concept. In fact the origin of the term can be traced back to Greek mythology. Homer's poem "Odysseus" chronicles how a rewarding relationship develops between Telemachus and Mentor. Before Odysseus departs to fight the Trojan war he entrusts the care of his son, Telemachus, to a friend, Mentor. Odysseus directs Mentor to educate and discipline every facet of Telemachus' life. Mentor accepts the challenge and adopts a style of instruction where he guides, models, directs and advises Telemachus in his learning. Through time, Telemachus and Mentor develop a trusting and mutually respectful relationship (Mahan, 1993). The classical definition of a mentor is "a wise older person guiding a young person in all aspects of life" (Levinson, Cited in Dodgson, 1986, p. 29).

Throughout the educational research there exists a variety of mentorship definitions ranging from the classical to the more professionally expedient. Kanter's (1977) definition focuses more specifically on the political role of the mentor. She precisely defines mentors as "teachers or coaches whose functions are primarily to make introductions or to train a young person to move effectively through the systems" (p.181-182). For the purposes of their study Willis and Dodgson (1986) defined a mentor "as a trusted and experienced counsellor who influences the career development of an associate (called a "protege" in a warm, caring and helpful relationship" (p.1).

Chao (1991) explains mentorship as

"An involved working relationship between a senior (mentor) and junior (protege) organizational members. The mentor has experience and power in the organization. From this position, the mentor personally advises, counsels, coaches and promotes the career of the protege. Advancement of the protege's career may occur directly through hierarchal promotions in the organization or indirectly through the mentor's influence and power over other organization members (p.2).

Fleming (1991) reports that educational mentors usually share certain characteristics. She suggests that mentors are usually eight to fifteen years older than their protege's and are not usually blood relatives. Typically mentors hold positions of authority and prominence in an organization, and are able to influence other's decisions concerning promotion. She also acknowledges that the role of mentor is very demanding because they are

accepting responsibility for the growth and development of the protege.

Therefore, the mentor must be very dedicated and able to donate a large portion of their time to the protege.

Obviously becoming a mentor requires one to have a high level of commitment and willingness to serve in a variety of capacities. Schien (1978) listed seven possible roles for mentors: (a) teacher, coach or trainer, (b) positive role model, (c) developer of talent, (d) opener of doors, (e) protector, (f) sponsor, and (g) successful leader. Due to the comprehensive nature of the mentorship, it is little wonder why so few mentor relationships exist; especially for women.

Life and Career Mentor Relationships

All mentor relationships that develop are not the same. Willis and Dodgson (1986) classified mentor relationships described by participants in their study into two categories: Life mentors and Career mentors. Life mentorships developed and continued for a longer duration of time than career mentorships. Obviously, as the title suggests life mentors not only become involved in the proteges career development, but also shared in the protege's personal growth. Often life mentorships spanned almost twenty years. Therefore, life mentor relationships were found to be more personal and intense than career

mentorships. Career mentors assisted the protege exclusively in career advancement. Unlike life mentors, career mentors did not experience the same level of personal involvement with their proteges.

How Mentoring Relationships Develop

Willis and Dodgson (1986) reported that the mentoring relationships described by the participants in their study developed in one of three ways 1) serendipity, 2) mentor seeking, and 3) protege seeking.

Half of the participants in Willis and Dodgson's (1986) study reported that their mentor relationship developed serendipitously or by chance. Neither mentor or protege deliberately sought to establish an association. Usually this type of educational mentoring relationship evolved from a principal teacher relationship. Through working together over the years on a variety of projects and committees, the principal and teacher get to know and trust one another. The mentor relationship usually grows from this mutual association.

The second method of establishing a mentor relationship is through the mentor seeking a protege. In this situation an older, experienced person in a position of authority is deliberately seeking someone who has potential. Fifteen out of thirty-six mentoring relationships in Willis and Dodgson's study were established through this method. Often the mentor was reported to have singled

out a person who they believed had leadership potential and encouraged this person to take courses, serve on committees and generally ensure that the protege took the steps necessary to achieve an administrative position.

Thirdly, mentoring relationships were developed through a protege seeking a mentor. The women in these relationships recognized the need for a mentor and so chose to actively pursue an association with a superior. These aspirants let their career aspirations be known, and set a strategy for achieving their goals. However, only three out of thirty-six participants in Willis and Dodgson's (1986) study cited this method as the means to development of their mentor relationships.

The Benefits of Being Mentored

The literature suggests a variety of ways women administrative aspirants benefit from a mentor relationship. Marsha A. Playko (1990) succinctly describes the five areas in which she believes proteges benefit from being mentored. They are: confidence and competence, blending theory with practice, developing communication skills, learning tricks of the trade and building a collegial network.

Confidence and Competence

Often female administrative aspirants do not recognize that they possess

the ability to succeed in a position of leadership. The mentor plays a key role in reinforcing the protege's belief in herself and her abilities. "It is important for the mentor to provide support and guidance to help ensure the protege's successful transition" (p. 31).

Blending Theory With Practice

Achieving an administrative position not only requires knowledge of leadership theories, but the ability to translate philosophy into common practice. The mentor provides the protege the opportunity to put into practice what she has learned. The mentor guides the work of the protege to ensure successful practical application.

Communication Skills

An administrative position demands strong written and oral communication skills. Interaction with colleagues, superiors and the community at large is an integral part of the leadership package. The mentor can serve as a role model for the protege and provide feedback concerning communication skills.

Tricks of the Trade

One cannot deny that the world of educational administration is not only hierarchal, but highly political. Mentors are veterans of the battles in the

educational administration arena, and therefore, their advice and possible strategies are crucial to the neophyte administrator. Although no two situations, or people are alike, they can provide the protege with invaluable information concerning the inner workings of the political environment.

Daresh (1990) also documented the perceived benefits of the mentors involved in the Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals. The findings from his study suggest that mentors benefitted from the formal mentor relationships in the following areas: (1) Administrative mentors reports considerable satisfaction derived from their participation in the program. (2) One of the most satisfying aspects of working as a mentor was the ability to "be a teacher again." (3) Contact with candidates exposed mentors to ideas from a number of other school systems. (4) Mentors learned about recent research on effective school practices as a result of their contact with candidates (5) Administrators designated as Danforth Mentors viewed that role as an affirmation of their value to their local school systems (pgs. 12 - 15).

Why Few Women are Involved in Mentor Relationships

The research clearly indicates that mentoring relationships are both a benefit, and are gratifying for the protege and mentor alike. Therefore, one has to question why more women have not had the opportunity to develop such

alliances. Swiderski (1988) attributes the exclusion of women from mentorships, and the denial of access to the integral network to the androcentric, hierarchal nature of the school system. "The structural characteristics contribute to the perpetual exclusion of women from those social network systems which nurture the necessary relationships between the school personnel and provide opportunities for a display of skills and knowledge" (p. 30). Mertz (1987) concluded that women's inability to gain access to mentors and networks within the hierarchal organization is due to the fact that women are a poor "fit." The problem becomes circular in nature. Mentors are typically those persons in administration or prominent positions of power within the educational system. Statistics reveal that the majority of administrators are male. Valverde (cited in Nixon, 1987) suggests that because mentors choose their proteges, the mentors feel more comfortable choosing proteges in their own likeness. "Women are less likely to be chosen because they do not share 'white male norms' or male mentors in influential positions" (p.68).

Because women are not chosen by mentors they are less likely to advance their career to the administrative ranks. Therefore, mentors continue to be male administrators who choose to mentor other male proteges like themselves. Thus the "golden boy" phenomenon continues to thrive. The merry-go-round

of mentorship continues to deny women a ride. Until more women are allowed to hop on board and slow the merry-go-round down for other female passengers, men will continue to monopolize mentorship opportunities and educational administrative positions.

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE

Given Willis and Dodgson's (1986) definition that a mentor is a "trusted and experienced counsellor, who influenced the career development of an associate (protege) in a warm, caring and helpful relationship", Anne, Elizabeth and Maria were asked if they had a mentor or mentors in the educational careers. Interestingly, Anne and Elizabeth revealed that they each had two mentors to date in their careers, however, Maria had not experienced one professional mentor relationship. Consistent with the research findings, Anne and Elizabeth both hold administrative positions within formal school districts. Maria does not, Maria was forced to create her own administrative opportunity outside the hierarchal education system.

Anne and Elizabeth acknowledged that they would have probably never considered aspiring to administration, had it not been suggested by their first mentor. Willis and Dodgson's (1986) study found that 41% of their respondents had been singled out and encouraged to apply for administrative positions by their mentors. Most of the participants in the New Brunswick (1992) Teacher's Association study also had not considered applying for administration until they were encouraged by a colleague in school

administration (p. 22). Anne and Elizabeth also revealed that they would not have achieved their administrative positions without their mentors.

Chao (1991) defines a career mentor as one who is "directly related" to the protege's career advancement. The career mentor sponsors and coaches the protege by providing challenging assignments and ensuring the protege receives good exposure and visibility to others" (p. 5). Elizabeth explains how her superintendent recognized she had leadership potential and provided her with invaluable opportunities to test her wings. Her superintendent initiated the relationship and assumed the role of Elizabeth's career mentor. Unfortunately, the assistant superintendent left her school district and Elizabeth was denied what could have been a potential life mentor.

> The one was the assistant superintendent. He made me one of the five coaches when we had the Coaches Supervision Evaluation Courses. I was one of the teams of five who trained the other teachers. I was quite surprised he had chosen me. He said that I had leadership potential and that I should go for it. This was good exposure. I got a lot of positive feedback from him when I was doing the coaching. He also encouraged me to apply for different administrative positions that would come up. He would say, "You have to show you're interested and you probably won't get it, but at least they'll known you're out there." He has since moved out of town, so I have lost him as a mentor.

Anne's career mentor was also instrumental in her decision to pursue an administrative career. Her principal recognized her leadership potential and guided her career development. He encouraged her to enrol in courses which would enhance her chances of career mobility (Fleming, 1991).

The principal at the junior high school where I taught was really the person that identified my potential for career advancement. Administration was really never anything I looked at. I set out to be a high school English teacher, and would have felt totally successful having been a high school English teacher all of my life.

I went into a junior high situation which had a large number of students that had reading problems. I had a reading background, and when you are in junior high school and you have some reading background, you get all of the reading problems. But he noticed in me or I guess he saw some potential. So he asked me to do some workshops for parents, and then he asked me to do some workshops for the social studies teachers in content reading and the language arts. He began to work with me. He encouraged me to know that I had something to offer other people.

He said to me, "Have you thought about getting a Master's degree?" which of course I never had; and so then I pursued that. It was because of his interest in me as a person that I did all of these things. From the Master's degree I never went back to that school. My career just went from there. But I have always thought that he was a very important person in my development, and as a matter of fact, when I got my first principalship I wrote him a letter and thanked him for his input into my career and what he had done. That was really important. I haven't seen him in twenty years. But it was just really important in my life, it wasn't like we were really good friends or anything, it was just that he saw and acknowledged the development of a staff person, and really helped me to understand myself. What I could do for other people.

Unlike career mentors, life mentors remain a constant in the lives of their proteges. Willis and Dodgson (1986) reported that a life mentorship can span almost twenty or more years. Obviously, a career mentor cannot act as a life mentor. However, a life mentor definitely assumes the role of career mentor as well. Elizabeth acknowledged that the principal of an elementary school where she taught became her life mentor. Edson's (1988) research revealed that 69% of the women participants in her study identified a mentor in their work place, "usually their male principals"

(p. 72). Pavan (1986) confirmed that male principals are most frequently

mentioned as mentors. Elizabeth explains how her life mentor provided her

with the necessary guidance and direction. He recommended what committees

she should work on and advised her on how to increase her public image

(Fleming, 1991).

> It was the principal of the school who encouraged me to get my Master's and said that I was leadership material. He also pretty well insisted that I get on to the A.T.A. as part of the executive because he said that it is a way of getting out into the public eye. He also encouraged me to get on different committees working with different administrators and central office personnel. He has since retired, but he was one of the people that gave me the advice to come back to this school as a vice principal. He phones me every now and then and asks me how things are going. So he does still keep on the pulse of things. He also has told me to keep applying for all principalships because eventually I'll get one. So that's still an on-going mentorship.

Anne enthusiastically described how the superintendent who hired her for

her principalship position became her life mentor. Anne could not say enough

about how he continually supported and encouraged her development as an

administrator. He truly was as Fleming (1991) states "an opener of doors."

Anne has a deep respect and great admiration for her life mentor. She

continues to seek his guidance and considers his advice invaluable.

> Then the only person that I consider a mentor is the first superintendent that I had when I took on this principalship. Because I did not have even one administration course when I took this job, but at that point in time the principalship was defined as a person that would lead in curriculum development. Of course my first Master's degree work plus the doctorate I had started were in that area. I had all of the course work in curriculum design, so that was my strength. I had everything to offer people in that area. Basically what he said was that administrators aren't made. His philosophy was that you either knew how to

work with people in that sense, and you could learn the other skills. But the bottom line was you needed to know how to work with other people and he said that I had all of the information regarding curriculum design that I needed to know. He said I knew how to work with people, and anything that I didn't know, he would provide support for, and he did. He encouraged me if he saw something that he thought would be useful in the way of a workshop, he would call me. If I said, "I'm not sure really what to do in this area, where do you think I should go?", he would provide a contact person, if he couldn't provide the information himself. He was really very supportive.

I do think that he was a really good mentor in that sense because he also encouraged me to look for other positions if I was interested in them. He encouraged me to apply for the assistant superintendency when I did. I've continued to be in contact with him even though he is now retired.

Fleming (1991) reported that "studies have shown that the mentees gain in self-esteem and confidence, bolstered by the attention given to their ideas" (p. 30). "In some instances the mentors hold up mirrors to the proteges - reflecting the special contributions or leadership qualities that had become visible in the school system" (Willis and Dodgson, 1986, p. 4) Anne's life mentor also assumed responsibility in helping her feel more comfortable and secure about herself as an administrator. Anne explains how she will be forever grateful to her mentor for taking the time to assuage her doubts and fears.

Our schools were evaluated every three years by the Department of Education. When I had my first school evaluation I was just a nervous wreck. He (the superintendent) kept saying, "Don't worry about it, Don't worry." He knew that I was so upset that he actually asked the person that was the head of the evaluation team, before they left, to have a meeting with me. That wasn't something he needed to do, but he did it. He always made sure that I was feeling secure. I think that is the right word. He was very good at making people feel secure.

In fact Anne reveals that if it wasn't for her mentor's continued support and guidance, she may have abandoned her administrative career. Edson's (1988) study confirmed that "the support of a mentor validates a woman's choice and keeps her going in the face of negative odds." (p. 74).

> I know that there have been points in my career that I would have quit had I not had the mentor I had. Resistance from teachers sometimes, is very difficult to deal with, and when you are working really, really hard to provide a forum for their voice, and they are resisting you it makes you just a little bit nuts. It was, by just having some reassurance and someone pulling together the perspective and saying "But look at what happened here. Do you remember when you were here and now you've come this far." You need someone that is willing to have that kind of dialogue with you. You need someone to pull you up because your staff's not going to do it, and your family and friends don't have the background. They don't understand what we do during the daytime, and so you need that either from a close group of administrators that you can call on, or in my position a mentor.

Obviously, Anne had the utmost respect and admiration for her life mentor. She valued his integrity and ability to serve the needs of the school district with a rare objectivity. Natalie Gehrke (1988) equates the mentoring process with gift giving. She believes that the greatest gift a mentor can give a protege is wisdom, or a whole new way of seeing things. It becomes apparent through Anne's description of her mentors' abilities that she too cherishes his gifts of genuine concern and his sagacious nature most.

> This particular superintendent had a mindset that transcended whether you were male or female. He could bring to an interview situation an objectivity that boards had to listen to. I saw that in him and demanded of board members to be objective. I've served under five different superintendents and he was the only one of that five that was able to do that.

He really believed in people. He just had such a really sound philosophy about all of the aspects that are really important. He is still a person that believes in trust and relationships and honour. Those types of words that we don't hear a lot of anymore. But that's how he operated, and you knew that.

So that security, you can't beat that for security. I think that's what we're missing in a lot of senior administration. People don't feel that security, they always feel at risk, because they don't see the trust, the honesty and the honour being extended or reinforced all of the time. So you feel more at risk, you feel like you always have to protect yourself. That just never happened with him. He said what he means, and he meant what he said. Boards knew that, staffs knew that, consequently principals that worked under him knew that.

You knew that this person worked through some very difficult times. He has seen some political situations that were really ugly. I mean he had thirty five, maybe thirty eight years of practical expertise that a person could draw upon. He keeps very up to date. He has been retired for a while now but he keeps up to date. He reads and finds out about what is going on. He is so politically astute that even now, if I'm not sure I'm on the right track, I will call him and say, "What do you think?" He is still more than willing to provide advice. This relationship has spanned over the last sixteen years.

Unlike Anne and Elizabeth, Maria did not have the opportunity to experience a mentor relationship as defined by Willis and Dodgson (1986). Maria was also not able to advance her career in the traditional school system; perhaps because she did not have a mentor. As a participant in Russill's (1995) study advises "If you want to get ahead find a mentor, don't wait to be trained" (p. 135). Maria contributes her career advancement to the support gained from her family. She recognized that her aunt and uncle, both teachers, became her role models when she was just a child. She also attributes her dedication and perseverance to the encouragement and support provided by her mother. Not surprisingly, Shakeshaft (1989) reported that female administrative aspirants and

administrators cited their mother most often as their most significant source of support. Maria acknowledges that her husband plays a vital role in her career development, and she considers him a mentor as well.

> My uncle, I will always think of him as my mentor. Other than him I cannot see anyone else other than my husband. My uncle was the one who encouraged me to read, learn and question. He was a great debater. A great man; he was quite learned. He was a teacher; a very good teacher. My aunt was a teacher too. They had different personalities and different styles, but between the two of them they were very strong and very good at what they did. They were very well respected. I grew up in that setting and that's where my love of education started. I don't think I ever thought of being anything else, but a teacher since I was about three or four.

> My mother was always very supportive in what I wanted to do. She never imposed anything on me. She always allowed me to make my decisions. She always talked about the pros and cons. So I knew what I was getting into before I made the decision. She always stood beside me, I went from that setting, fortunately for me, into a marriage where the same thing applied. Where everything I wanted to try I had the freedom to try it. I had someone beside me that would support me in everything I tried, whether I failed or not; it didn't matter. It's always been like that. That support system makes it easier to attempt things. For me the mentor was my uncle first and my husband second. Professionally, not much .... not much.

Unfortunately, Maria became a victim of the androcentric, hierarchal nature of our educational administration structure. "Women have traditionally been excluded from these networks and therefore, have not heard about administrative positions, have not been known by others, and have had few people to approach for counsel" (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 116). Maria was denied access to the influential male network, and a mentor relationship. Thus, she paid the ultimate price.

Of course, you have to be one of the boys, there is no two ways about it. I have been witness to situations, one in particular, where the administrative position came up and it was supposed to be advertised, and everyone knew about it; everyone that was in line for the position. But the females that would have competed for it we not told. Basically, they just let people know who they felt should know and that was it. Eventually, the position was in fact posted, but it was gone before it was posted. You have to be on the inside circle, you just have to. The boys club is still strong, still very, very strong.

Anne did not deny the power or influence that the male network continues to possess. She too has been denied entry to its coveted core, however, she was fortunate to have been mentored by someone who had exclusive membership. Anne acknowledges that you need a professional support system. Her mentor relationship enabled her to strengthen her confidence enough to stand alone and pursue alternative support systems.

You need either a very close group of administrators that you can call on or a mentor. What I have found is that other male administrators can be collegial, they can be your friend, but you are never part of that group. I guess that I would say basically that I've continued to be there because I had a mentoring relationship with him (the superintendent). The last superintendents that I have had since his retirement have not been as strong. But I felt stronger, and I had reached a point in my development that it was okay. I have also generated some other avenues for myself through networking with other female administrators, that I now have a group that I can call on. So I guess that worked out all right.

Considering that research indicates that women in administration do need mentors, and the number of women in administration remains dismally low, I felt it necessary to examine whether Anne, Elizabeth and Maria felt obliged to act as mentors, particularly Anne and Elizabeth who reaped the benefits of a mentor relationship. While none of the three women felt pressured to act as

mentors exclusively for woman proteges, they did feel they had a responsibility to provide support for their teacher colleagues. Elizabeth believed that it was very important for her to become a mentor because she recognized the impact her mentor relationship had on her own career advancement.

> Without a mentor you will often head in the wrong direction, or maybe you'll feel that you shouldn't be doing it. So I feel that I'm a mentor to a couple of women teachers on staff, because I'm encouraging them the same way that my principal encouraged me. Like telling them to get their Master's degree and get involved on different committees. And I think that I am a woman vice principal makes them see that it is possible, because for a while there, you would have thought it impossible.

Maria shares Elizabeth's enthusiasm to act as a mentor, especially for women. Perhaps because she personally paid the price for not becoming involved in a mentor relationship as a protege. She states she does not feel an obligation, but a moral responsibility.

> I've never felt pressured to do anything. Morally, it is my responsibility. Not necessarily for administration, but for teachers as a whole; particularly women. That is a little bit of a sore spot that I can't seem to get away from. I will do whatever I can to be the support that they need, in whatever area, personal, professional, whatever, men and women on my staff, but the women I have a weak spot for them. They start to begin with severely handicapped. I guess it's part of the way I view myself and the way I view my responsibilities and society as a whole. If I can help, then I should help.

Although Anne agreed that she would provide support necessary to any teacher, or administrative aspirant, she felt it was not her responsibility to seek out and identify potential proteges; particularly only women. She also encourages both male and female colleagues to be teacher leaders, rather than

just mentoring administrative aspirants. It is her belief that those women or men who aspire to administration must express their interest to her, and be absolutely certain that they want to travel the administrative route.

> I don't feel pressured because my own philosophy is that your journey is really very personal and that if there is going to be 5% of the population that are females that 5% wanted that. If there are 55% then those 55% wanted it. I realize that there are barriers out there, but I also realize that a lot of being wherever you are in any career is that you wanted to do that. So I don't ever feel pressured in trying to pick out some people and getting them going. I always feel that if there is a female that wants to be an administrator I would be more than willing to give whatever information or support that I could.
>
> So I would always encourage people, but I continue to encourage them to be leaders, because we need really good teacher leaders too. But always letting them know that they have all of the skills, that they have all the expertise that they would need should they choose to be an administrator. I think that's maybe all I can do for some people, is let them have that knowledge, and then let it set. That's basically what my principal did. He made me aware of the fact that I had some skills that I didn't know about.

WOMEN'S WAYS OF LEADERSHIP

There is no freeway to the future. No paved highway from here to tomorrow. There is only wilderness. Only uncertain terrain. There are no roadmaps. No signposts. So pioneering leaders rely upon a compass and a dream.

(James M. Kouzles and Barry Z. Posner, The Leadership Challenge)

Jessie Bernard (1981) writes that not only do women and men experience "the world differently but also that the world women experience is demonstrably different from the world men experience" (p. 3). Therefore, the experiences and challenges of a woman in educational administration are also unique. As we move toward a more school-based collaborative leadership model in education, many researchers argue that perhaps women's ways of leadership are more conducive to developing committed, productive students and staff (Hargreaves; Loden, 1985; Murray and Simmons 1994; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989). Ortiz and Marshall (1988) cite over twenty years of investigation to confirm their theory that women educational leaders consistently contribute to higher teacher performance and student achievement. Even Sergiovanni (1992) suggests that women leaders are more effective at motivating students and staff to reach their potential when he states "My reading of literature on successful schools shows that while women are

underrepresented in principalships they are over represented in successful

principalships, so there must be something to it" (p. 48).

A number of researchers have theorized that the practices and

characteristics associated with women's ways of leadership are a consistent

reflection of effective school leadership behaviors. (Murray and Simmons

1994; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Shabbits, 1993: Shakeshaft, 1987). In a study

conducted by Sweeney (1982) where he synthesized the results of studies on

effective leadership behavior, the following six themes in relation to behaviors

associated with successful, well managed schools emerged:

(1)   Emphasize Achievement

(2)   Set instructional strategies

(3)   Provide an orderly atmosphere

(4)   Frequently evaluate student progress

(5)   Coordinate instructional programs

(6)   Support teachers (p. 349)

Shakeshaft (1989) asserts that the "traditional female approaches to

schooling look like prescriptions for administrative behavior in effective

schools" (p. 199). The realities of the female world of leadership which

Shakeshaft conceptualized, are directly related to Sweeney's six themes of

effective school leadership behaviors and are conducive to establishing what the

research defines as successful, highly productive and well managed schools:

(1)   Relationships with others are central to all actions of women administrators.

(2)   Teaching and learning are the major foci of women administrators.

(3)   Building community is an essential part of a woman administrator's style.

(4)   Marginality overlays the daily worklife of women administrators.

(5)   The line separating the public world from the private is blurred.

These realities however, create a sad irony. For the very characteristics

and approaches that often serve as internal barriers to a woman's career

advancement are recognized here as essential components of the school

leadership model. "Women tend to be more aware of their vulnerability and

lack of confidence, so are generally able to acknowledge people's feelings

without questioning their competence, and to encourage empowerment through

helping people to deal with their feelings" (Randall, 1990, p. 25). Helgesen

(1990) builds on the same premise and asserts that motherhood is an excellent

school for managers. She concludes that all of the demands, ranging from

organizational skills to teaching and handling disturbances, which are normally

associated with motherhood have taught women well how to organize and balance their time. Bach (cited in Shakeshaft, 1989) amalgamated women's ways of knowing, and effective school leadership attributes to define what she believes is today's ideal principal.

> The ideal principal must now cultivate all the virtues that have always been expected of the ideal woman. Women have finally lucked out by having several thousand years to train for jobs where muscles are out and persuasion is in (p. 201).

It became apparent, as each of the interviews was conducted, that Anne, Elizabeth and Maria had experienced each of Shakeshaft's (1980) realities associated with the female world of leadership. Not surprisingly, then, their responses also revealed that they often exhibited the behaviors most associated with effective school leadership. Yet, what was even more interesting was the marked similarity in their responses to my questions on leadership. Anne, Elizabeth and Maria consistently described common objectives and educational philosophies, despite the fact that they had been interviewed separately at three different times and locations. The evidence concerning women's ways and their constant commitment toward effective school leadership is even more convincing, considering the possibility that Anne, Elizabeth and Maria may have never even met before.

When asked about what they felt was their most important role as an

administrator, Anne and Maria responded by adamantly stating that their most

important role was not boss. Both felt strongly that they not be viewed in their

positions as "the boss" or authority figure of a hierarchal structure. Women

leaders often enter into administration motivated by their need to serve, rather

than to acquire status (Shakeshaft, 1989). Anne explains how she does not

perceive her position as a rung along the hierarchal ladder, as some men and

women do.

> There is probably a different group of males and females that want to be
> administrators because they see it as a hierarchy, and they see it as a ladder type
> of thing; and they are going to the top. I know females like that. They are
> administrators because they see it as a status symbol. I've always never seen it
> in terms career advancement; but always in terms of development. I tend to look
> at not administration, but I tend to look at job opportunity. So the job
> opportunity will be: If I can go into that school and work with the children, the
> community, and the teachers, that would be my focus. I have a vision of what
> I could do with that community. So I never see it in terms of administration, but
> just in terms of the educational opportunity.

Shakeshaft (1989) affirms that women in educational administration are

less committed to formal hierarchy. Sergiovanni (1987) states that educational

leaders must view themselves in their positions as possessing the "power to" not

the "power over" those individuals in working relationships. Maria shares this

philosophy and describes how she and other women educational leaders reject

the boss mentality in their capacity as leaders.

> The bottom priority for me is definitely not to be looked at as "the boss." as the
> one that's going to make all of the decisions, and have people walking on tip-toe
> around me. I'm not in it for the power. My door does not even have the word

"principal" on it. My top priority is to the people I work with and that includes the parents to the point where if they are having difficulties with something outside the school and I can help, why not? Personally as well as professionally. The same with the kids; personally and professionally.

I don't know, but I think a lot of us women feel that we really contribute. I don't think I've run into anyone that's tried or gotten into administration for the prestige or glory, because the ones that I have seen have been so darn involved at the grassroots that they carry two or three roles at once. I think the main reason is that they really do feel that they can contribute to a positive environment, to a positive educational experience. I can't really say that I have seen the same thing with the male administrators.

The Ethic of Care

Anne, Elizabeth and Maria unanimously agreed that their most important objective was to provide a safe, sound educational environment. Their top priority was to ensure that the children in their charge were provided total, quality care. This observation relates to Gilligan's "ethic of care" theory. She believes that women administrators are guided more often by "an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the real and recognizable trouble of this world" while male administrators are informed by an "injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the rights to life and self-fulfilment" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 209). Elizabeth explains how this philosophy guides her actions.

I want to provide a safe and caring environment, and as I mentioned before, be someone who is approachable. Deal with staff and students in a fair way. Listen to both sides of an argument when you have kids fighting, and see if they can come up with a way of solving their own problems. Establish a good rapport with parents and the public.

Anne's concern for positive growth and development extends beyond the students and encompasses the teaching staff as well. Her concern for establishing a supportive learning environment reflects Shakeshaft's (1989) findings which reveal that when women are in charge they are more likely to build a school community which stresses achievement within a supportive environment.

> I don't think that there is just one thing. I think that there are two very important elements. One of the elements is to make sure that that environment is appropriate for your students. That everything that happens is focused on providing a safe, sound developmental environment for the students to be in so that they're going to learn, not only academically, but socially. So that there's always that focus and you keep people focused on that.

> The other role that the principal has is to make sure that that environment is always there for the teachers and that's your personal role. So part of it is helping everyone else focus on the students, and then the other part of it is making sure that resources are available for teachers. Making sure that there is a safe, secure environment for your teachers. That they're getting along together, that people are not intimidating each other, or that there is not conflict. So those are the two areas that I feel are the most important that principals deal with.

Maria's response also reflects her commitment toward creating a positive, nurturing learning situation. Shabbits (1993) found that women principals often display a great concern for the social and emotional development of the students. Ortiz and Marshall (1988) also reported that women educational leaders were more oriented toward caring, rather than rights. Like Anne and Elizabeth, Maria shares their concern for both the academic and social development of the child.

What I've tried to do here is to provide an environment that is safe, and not just for the kids but for the people that work here in whatever capacity. A very safe environment in which they can grow, work, mature, get involved and feel good about whatever they are doing. A good place to be. And my role as administrator is to make it happen. To take away some of the barriers, to facilitate, to act as a resource, to go looking for things whenever they need it and they can't get it themselves.

Give these young people a chance to grow up in an environment that is supportive, that is positive, without the put-downs, the negatives, the do's and don'ts. I just want to give them a chance to grow intellectually, to become aware of the world around them.

Anne and Maria also acknowledged the importance of helping students to feel good about themselves. They both believe in the power of positive, self-esteem building. For Anne, high self-esteem is the foundation for a solid education.

My objective as an administrator, as an educator is for students to feel, and to have high self-esteem. Consequently, if you provide that kind of environment, then your teachers are also feeling good about themselves. If you deal with students that have high self-esteem, you have students that are succeeding. They are succeeding academically, they are developing nicely, and so that's always been my focus.

Maria's motivation for becoming a teacher and administrator was to help make a difference in the lives of her students. She recognizes the integral role self-esteem plays in her student's academic and social lives.

The practical reason is because I wanted to educate young people. Give them a good solid background, work on their self-esteem. Look after them, not just academically, I guess the underlying reason is I felt the compelling need to do something about preparing them for their role in society.

Another theme which developed over the course of the interviews was

that Anne, Elizabeth and Maria highly value the power of collaborative decision

making and team building within their respective schools. The female

respondents to Young's (1993) study on principals and collaborative curriculum

development also placed themselves more toward the collaborative end of the

scale. Helgeson (1990) reported that women administrators referred to

themselves as being in the middle of things rather than at the top. Shantz

(1993) found that collaborative schools tend to have feminine characteristics

reflected in the qualities of schools with collaborative cultures. These schools:

- constantly attempt to improve;

- utilize a power base shared by administrators and teachers;

- engage in group vision building;

- utilize problem solving to provide an array of solutions and then implement the best;

- provide ongoing teacher in service and development;

- are characterized by collegiality;

- are led by sensitive administrators who constantly provide a positive role model; and

- establish a safe, supportive environment that encourages risk-taking (p.4)

Porat (1989) believes that women do more "team building, communicate

more effectively and prefer contributive, consensual decision making" due to

being socialized to be more cooperative than competitive (p. 12). Elizabeth

views the relationship with her staff in much the same way. She believes that

everyone's contribution is important.

> I feel like a team member. I don't lay the job down on the staff and say this is
> what I want you to do. I'll say, "This is what we have to do, how can we go
> about accomplishing it?" So that they have the input as to how we are going to
> do it. For example, they may say, "Let's form a committee, or let's meet after
> school, or let's write our suggestions down, etc." I'm only, I think, a leader in
> name, in the sense that I try to work with staff, like I am a team player.

Shakeshaft (1989) states that women are perceived as more democratic

and participatory than men. Women also tend to use their power more to

empower, and display greater respect for teachers in their schools. "Effective

leaders today and tomorrow," according to Patterson, (1993) "value and expect

employee participation, and value diversity in perspectives" (Murray and

Simmons, 1994, p. 74). Erickson (1985) acknowledges that "collaboration is

the best conflict management technique for building trust and group solidarity

and for arriving at satisfying solutions to problems" (p. 289). Anne's

philosophy concerning her role as an educational leader is certainly supported

by a wealth of documented studies. She does not perceive herself as almighty

ruler and queen, but rather as a facilitator sharing in the process of decision

making with teacher leaders.

> It's collegial and collaborative. We're supposed to be a team, and if you want people
> to work in a collaborative way then they have to feel secure and you have to have trust.
> I very much believe in, participative decision making. I'm a real advocate of that. It

is a very difficult management style and will always continue to be; but it's worth it!

> I view my staff as leaders as well and so then I view myself as a facilitator in terms of trying to make sure that whoever has the strength is the person that is leading at the time. If we have a teacher that's really strong in math, or a group of teachers, those are the people that should be leading us. So that it's always to encourage those people, to step forward ... That's how I see myself. Everything is done together.

Like Ann, Maria sees herself as a facilitator, rather than a dictator of truths. She continually encourages her staff to develop new programs and to test various teaching styles and strategies. Restine (1993) suggests that "the role of leaders in learning organizations lies in the responsibility for creating conditions in which people expand their capabilities to shape their future" (p. 41). Maria recognizes the positive growth which can occur when her staff is allowed the freedom to explore their own potential. Maria, like many of the women administrators Shakeshaft (1989) has studied, ardently denies the notion that her way of understanding the world is the only way. She challenges her staff, and takes great pride and pleasure in planting the seeds of opportunity in her staff, and watching them grow.

> I see myself more as a facilitator. Somebody that removes some of the obstacles, more like a guide than the one at the top that tells everyone what to do, when to do it and how to do it. Basically, we are a group. We try very much to work together. Sometimes I find they would prefer I said, "Do this, this way now, do this, that way tomorrow." Then I say, "This is what we are trying to do and this is how it can be done. Do whatever suits your style best, and go with it, try it!" The worst that can happen is that it doesn't work. That certain amount of freedom, some people just do not seem to be able to do that. It takes a while for them to get used to the fact that I am not going to dictate, or tell them exactly what to do, and when to do it. I think that's part of being a professional. You

just have to take some responsibility for what's happening.

Anne, Elizabeth and Maria are also very much involved in the day to day activity of teaching. Interestingly, each of them reported that they spend 60% of their day teaching. Not surprisingly, Smith and Andrews (1989) found that staffs perceived women administrators to have a more instructional focus to their leadership style than their male counterparts. In a follow up study, Smith and Andrews discovered that 80% of those principals considered to be strong instructional leaders were women, while only 20% were men (Shabbits, 1993, p. 23). They concluded that women were more likely to be instructional leaders for the following reasons:

- Women tend to teach for long periods of time prior to becoming principals.

- Women observe teachers for a considerable length of time.

- Women value the productivity of their teachers.

- Women are concerned about the academic achievement of students and are knowledgeable about curriculum.

- Women demonstrate a great understanding of individual differences, developmental problems, and socio-emotional development of their students.

- Women are very likely to be of assistance to new teachers.

Gross and Trask (1976) also reported that "women have been found to be more knowledgable about curriculum than men" (Ryder, 1994, p. 33). Anne

views her position as principal more as that of a master or educational leader.
She attributes her success to the expertise she has gained in the areas of
curriculum and child development. Her knowledge guides her decisions and
she is able to feel confident about her selection of appropriate resource persons
and support materials. Anne definitely considers herself to be an educational
leader.

> I think my success is due to the fact that I've made sure that I'm well trained, and
> that I have really excellent expertise in the curriculum. I have expertise in
> information about child development so that when I am working with teachers
> they know that I know. We are not guessing. They feel secure that I have the
> information. They also know that if I don't have the information, I will get an
> expert in. I'm not one that tries to pretend.

> I see myself in terms of securing resources, making sure that's there. So our
> focus is education and I see myself as an educational leader; not a manager. I'm
> sure that they could get a manager in there that could do a lot of other types of
> things and keep themselves very busy. I mean if you walk into my office, people
> know that I have projects everywhere and basically they speak to education; they
> don't speak to management.

Maria also agrees that it is important to become immersed in the student's
learning. She continually tries to create programs that will challenge the
students to grow as learners.

> I just want to give them a chance to grow intellectually to become aware of the
> world around them. That is reflected in the programs in our effort to open doors
> for these young people in areas they wouldn't normally look at: politically,
> ethically, socially, looking at cultures. Let them try things, let them go beyond
> where they are at. Make them want to learn. Help them become responsible
> young adults with good strong skills.

A reality associated with being a female in the world of educational

leadership is that building relationships with people is an integral part of administrative practice. Shakeshaft (1989) concluded from a study conducted by Kimitz and Willower (1982) that 70% of an elementary principal's time was involved in communication of various forms. In fact, Shabbits (1993) asserts that women demonstrate good communication skills. "They are able to articulate their vision or voice of the school and to interact with teachers, parents, supervisors and community leaders" (p. 23). Anne also believes that communication is key to building a successful, productive school environment.

> I always make sure that the first period of everyday is in the office and I always make sure that I am accessible to whoever; parents, staff. Basically, people always come before paper. My door is always open. If it's closed, it is because I am having an interview with a parent, teacher or student.

> I have a lot of dialogue with people about programming for students. So I spend probably most of my day in dialogue with my staff, whether it be in the coffee room or whether it be in the hallway or wherever.

Myers and Hajnal (1995) reported that the participants in their study of women leaders in adult education employed methods to encourage and support an open door policy. They felt it was imperative that staff be allowed access to them whenever it was required. Elizabeth is also a firm believer in promoting an open, interactive relationship with colleagues, parents and students.

> I think my most important role is to be there for everybody. To give the word that my door is always open. You can talk to me about anything. If you want to. This is not only teachers, but the students as well. That I'm somebody they can come to.

Finally Anne, Elizabeth and Maria were asked to supply suggestions and or advice to other women wishing to apply for positions of added responsibility in their school districts. Again their responses were similar and focused on being persistent and confident, acquiring the necessary expertise, increasing your visibility and always being yourself. Anne, Elizabeth and Maria's recommendations are consistent with responses Patricia A. Kleine (1994) received in her study of 480 women principals in the United States. She categorized the women administrators suggestions into "The Taxonomy of Advice to a Young Woman Aspirant." She organized their recommendations into three basic categories: How to obtain? Who to be? and What to do to be?

Figure 4
Taxonomy of Advice to a Young Woman Aspirant

ADVICE TO A YOUNG WOMAN ASPIRANT ·			
WHO TO BE?		Be yourself	Yourself Self-belief
		Model someone else's behavior	Toughness Virtues Flexibility Goal-orientation Love Sense of humor Balanced Positive attitude
WHAT TO DO TO BE?	WHAT TO DO TO PREPARE?	Get help from others	Internship Mentor Network
		Get experience	Leadership opportunities Instructional experiences: a. Variety in situation b. Variety in content
		Get educated	College/graduate school Specific courses Research
		Get skilled	Time management Decision-making Human relations
		Be introspective	Soul-searching Mental preparation to deal with men
	WHAT TO DO TO KEEP?	Satisfy the faculty and staff	Team management Visibility
			Public relations
		Satisfy the community	Principal behavior Commitment to children
		Satisfy yourself	Personal life sensitivity to stereotypes Professional network Professional time management Self-talk Women principals

Anne, Elizabeth and Maria unanimously responded that who you have to be to gain an administrative position is yourself. They all passionately spoke of a woman aspirant's need to know and be comfortable with herself before applying for an administrative position. Anne emphasized the importance of being true to yourself and not allowing the opinions of others to compromise your ideals.

> I think that probably I would say to the other women not to be dissuaded by anything anyone says. Be true to yourself, know who you are, and know what your expertise is. The only one that knows whether or not you can actually carry a job off is you. And the reason is because you are the one that can gauge how much you want it. Other people never know that. They might think it is practical or impractical, and they might share that with you. And I think that what you have to learn to do is say, "Oh, that's really interesting, thanks a lot," and then walk away from it.

Anne then went on to provide what I feel to be invaluable words to live by as a female administrative aspirant.

> Choose the people that you think are valuable and listen to their opinion, and then if they say something that is not supportive ask <u>them</u> why.

Maria advised that you feel confident with who you are and your abilities, and then Go For It! She too believed in the importance of being yourself and not allowing others to dissuade your opinions or impede your progress. Similar advice was provided in a study conducted by Russill (1995) when one woman explained that women must be accepted on their own terms rather than trying to fit in as "men in skirts".

The one thing that I would honestly recommend is know who you are and I don't see the need in compromising one's ideals because it's not going to work. Anyway, if it's something you want to do badly enough, then Go For It! I would just simply say, go for it, whatever you feel you would like to tackle. Be confident in your own abilities. Don't let anybody intimidate you or put you down, or anything like that.

Don't literally try to be who you are not. I would hate to be in a position of authority and basically find myself simply taking up space. I've seen it and it is not very pleasant. If you are going to go for it, then stand up for yourself and basically be who you are, and do what you believe is right.

Anne and Elizabeth also addressed the need to make yourself known and visible in order to prepare yourself for an administrative position. Anne also recognized the importance of acquiring education and expertise in related fields. She suggested even creating your own leadership opportunities in order to gain exposure and experience.

I would say to another woman to make sure that you get your expertise. Get it in line and then every opportunity that you can, become a leader and show that expertise, do it! Whether it's convention committee, or whether it's the I.R.A., a specialist council, or within your own school. Take those opportunities and create some of them. There have been opportunities that I have just created. If you have some expertise, send out a brochure, and say, I'm going to do a workshop. You'll get five people the first time, but pretty soon people will know that you have this expertise. I would tell people to make sure that you expose yourself. No on is going to do it for you. You are going to have to provide those opportunities.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences and challenges associated with being a woman in educational administration in Southern Alberta today. Although the literature provided some insight into the world of women in administration, it did not truly reflect the personal realities of female administrators. Anne, Elizabeth and Maria's stories give "voice" to the experiences and challenges encountered by women who have aspired, and successfully achieved leadership positions in Southern Alberta. Through their rich narratives, I have been able to examine and gain a more thorough understanding of the female experience in educational administration.

The literature regarding effective school leadership clearly indicates that site-based management and participatory decision making styles are the recommended management strategies for the successful educational administrator of the 1990's. Apparently, Anne, Elizabeth and Maria were ahead of their time. They revealed that they had been practising a more collaborative team approach to leadership for years. In fact, Anne and Maria encountered great opposition because of their collaborative leadership philosophies. They were not alone. According to a number of researchers

(Loden, 1985; Murray and Simmons, 1994; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Restine, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989) women's ways of leadership have always been conducive to developing committed, productive students and staff through a collaborative team approach. It would seem obvious then that this innovative approach to leadership would encourage and allow more female participation, thus opening the doors for women in administration. Yet this is not so. The statistics reveal that the majority of women remain in teaching positions. Women have not made any significant gains in the hierarchal ranks of educational administration. True, there has been progress. Although when you consider the ratio of women in principalship positions in Alberta is approximately 50 to one in comparison to 10 to one for the men, you realize how very far we have to go. Anne, Maria and Elizabeth continue to be regarded as anomalies.

How was it then that Anne, Elizabeth and Maria were able to secure administrative positions while a significant number of women were not? Researchers attribute the underrepresentation of women in administration to barriers or the limitations and restrictions which serve to hinder the opportunities of advancement for women (FWTAO, 1992, Nixon, 1987, Shakeshaft, 1989). For some women candidates the barriers prove too

daunting, and the personal sacrifice too great. They abandon their aspirations believing the price to be paid for a leadership position is too high. Breaking the glass ceiling becomes absolutely undesirable as one woman executive revealed in Morrison's 1987 study.

> I think we're being terribly misled about how much success women as a group have achieved and about how real that success actually is. I think there may be a bitter day or reckoning for many of us that's not far off. A day where women will say, "I gave up my personal life, destroyed my marriage, didn't have children, gave up this and I gave up that and what was it for? I still haven't been able to achieve the way men do, in the same arena they do, the way I was told I could". Let's face it: women are no longer disenfranchised, but we don't have anything like the power of the white male corporate establishment. I don't know if we'll ever acquire that kind of power, but if we do it's not going to be anytime in the near future (p. 14).

Unlike this respondent Anne, Elizabeth and Maria did not allow the barriers to overpower and control their lives. Although at one point in Maria's career the barriers became almost overwhelming. She admitted that she considered relinquishing her administrative aspirations. Yet she did not concede defeat. Rather than become mired in frustration, Maria took a proactive stance. She sought information regarding her situation, and recovered her strength and faith in herself and her personal philosophies. Because of the strength in her convictions and absolute love of teaching, Maria transformed a potentially damaging experience into a positive, productive career opportunity.

Unlike Maria, Anne and Elizabeth asserted that they did not face any barriers in their career advancement. They admitted that the barriers are real

and do exist, but for other women, not themselves. Yet, throughout their interviews they cited examples of limitations and restrictions to their career advancement. I believe their denial of personal barriers also gives testimony to the fact that successful female administrators do not allow the barriers to obstruct their career advancement or diminish their vision of effective school leadership. Obviously women who enter administration are not naive. They are fully aware of the potential opposition associated with being a woman in a position of leadership. However, it appears that successful female administrative aspirants have the ability to perceive adversity as an achievable challenge, rather than an insurmountable obstacle. They refuse to become victims of an androcentric society.

I believe another influential factor regarding Anne and Elizabeth's successful career advancement was mentorship. Interestingly Maria did not have the benefit of a mentor and was denied the opportunity to rise through the ranks of the formal school district. Maria attempted the flight solo and almost experienced destruction. Anne and Elizabeth survived the journey almost unscathed due to a wise and experienced guide who continually analyzed and directed their career development. In fact, Anne and Elizabeth admitted, that if it had not been for their mentors suggestions, they probably would not have

chosen to pursue the path of administration.

Mentorship appears to be the key to the gilded gates of administration for women. Currently a majority of men are in possession of those keys. Research indicates that mentors tend to choose proteges in their likeness. Unfortunately for women, men typically choose other men; thus denying women access to the merry-go-round of mentorship. If in fact, men in positions of leadership do choose to mentor women aspirants, more women may soon be in possession of those keys as well. That certainly creates a dilemma for the women in positions of leadership, and places an awesome responsibility on their shoulders. Elizabeth and Maria recognized how their acting as role models and mentors could positively impact other female administrative aspirants. Both felt a sense of obligation or responsibility to serve as mentors to other women, although not exclusively. Maria was especially committed to providing guidance to her female colleagues, perhaps because she was denied the benefit of a professional mentor. Surprisingly Anne stated that she does not go out of her way to mentor other female aspirants. She explained that she would encourage and guide a leadership candidate based on their desire and ability, not their gender. It is unfortunate that more school boards do not adopt the same policy.

Of course these women are truly pioneers in educational administration in Southern Alberta. I am certain they recognize that at times, their positions are tenuous at best. Therefore they may not want to jeopardize all that they have worked for by appearing to be exclusive advocates of women. Further, aspirants must also assume responsibility for demolishing the barriers. Of course hundreds of years of socialization are certainly not going to be transformed over night. As we approach the new millennium we continue to dress baby girls in pink, and boys in blue, which sets the stage for the continuation of their development. However, as teachers and administrators we have the power to change these androcentric views. By creating opportunities for girls and boys to achieve success and aspire to a variety of careers we are impacting the imbalance. As Epp (1993) points out, "the male administrator surrounded by female teachers speaks volumes to little girls about the place of women in society, and confirms for little boys the societal assumption evident in other areas of their experience" (p. 20).

If we think that these subtle messages are not received by young girls and boys, we are deceiving ourselves. Elizabeth describes a conversation with an elementary student which provides the evidence.

> I think that it was significant that on the first day one little girl came up to me and said, "You are our new vice-principal?" and I said, "Yes." Then she said, "It's about time we got a woman." She was about ten years old.

I think it is ironic that the realities of women in administration
(Shakeshaft, 1989), also act as barriers to their career advancement. Perhaps
because as Anne, Elizabeth and Maria revealed, they have experienced
hardships and societal limitations they are better able to act in an empathetic
and understanding capacity. Like Anne, Elizabeth and Maria, women in
leadership positions tend to place the needs of their students, staff and
community above their own. As Anne, Elizabeth, and Maria explained they
work diligently to create a safe, productive academic and social environment for
their students and staff. The growth and development of the students, not the
budget, the schedule, or any other administrative duty, is their top priority.
Not surprisingly then, most women administrators are educational leaders.
Typically women do not become administrators until they have taught at least
fifteen years. Therefore a significant focus of their role as a school leader
becomes the classroom. Anne, Elizabeth and Maria revealed that they each
teach 60% of their time, in addition to their administrative duties. Ironically
though, as Pigford (1993) states, "the one criterion on which women would
have an advantage - years of teaching experience - is devalued in the
administrative process" (p. 15).

The message that Anne, Elizabeth and Maria spoke throughout their

interviews was Go For It! If you want an educational administrative position,

prepare to meet the challenge, and Go For It! They emphasized that they did

not seek an administrative position for the power. They accepted the challenges

of leadership because they loved teaching, enjoyed children, and they had a

vision to impact positive change. Anne, Elizabeth and Maria acknowledged

that the road to administration is not always a smooth, paved one. They

cautioned that there well be many twists and turns, potholes and detours along

the way. However, they advised that if you prepare yourself and believe in

your vision, you can successfully arrive at your destination: educational

administration.

I feel privileged to have had this unique opportunity to share Anne,

Elizabeth and Maria's stories. I have learned much about the realities of

administration from their experiences. Their words of wisdom and

encouragement have inspired me to examine more closely my strengths and

beliefs. I have become more aware of specific skills and personal qualities

which will require further development if I wish to advance to administration.

Yet, I cannot report that I have absolutely confirmed my decision to actively

pursue administration. My journey toward self-actualization continues. An

internal battle rages on inside me. My heart affirms, "Yes, you can do it! You

have come a long way on your journey and have grown to become someone who could provide the kind of leadership that is sadly lacking in many schools." However my head adamantly reminds the heart, "No there are too many barriers, too many people who constantly identify and reinforce your personal weaknesses that would ultimately lead to your destruction as a leader."

Currently, I must admit that my heart appears to be winning the battle for I have chosen to register in the University of Lethbridge Leadership Institute this summer, and I have also enrolled in our Medicine Hat Catholic School District #20 Catholic Principal's Preparation Program (CAPP). I attribute my decision to further advance my quest toward administration to the encouragement, hope and words of advice that Anne, Elizabeth and Maria provided in their conversations with me. I have become especially encouraged and empowered by Anne's invaluable recommendation which I have vowed will become my personal creed:

> Choose the people that you think are valuable and listen to their opinion, and then if they say something that is not supportive ask them why.

These appear to be simple words of advice, but they are very powerful to someone who allows the unsolicited opinions of others to discourage their dreams and goals.

Anne, Elizabeth and Maria's descriptions of their journeys have helped

me to set the course of direction for my own. It is my sincere hope that their

stories will inspire other administrative aspirants to continue their stalwart

journey along the path to leadership.

There is a sense among women
that we are on the brink of a future
that is at once known and unknown,
linked with our present experience
yet beyond it and different from it.

We have tapped our roots
and found them rich and deep.
We have made promises
and travelled miles to keep them.

We have been touched, called, challenged
by life and by each other
to a future of constant journeying into
wilderness that is not desolate but rich.

Our choices along the way create and shape
what we discover at the end.
What happens on the journey is what
human kind will become.

American Sister of Mercy

(Cited in Randall, 1990, p. 31)

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