

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical bases and the methodology used in the research. It draws on a feminist framework and outlines the case study methodology used. The purpose of the study, the value of using a case study approach and methods employed for data collection are outlined. Ethical considerations and the limitations and delimitations imposed on the study are discussed.

#### A Feminist Perspective: Giving Women a Voice

In accordance with Shakeshaft (1989) and Blackmore (1992), this study adopts a feminist perspective which rejects a patriarchal world view and challenges the gendered division of labour. From a poststructuralist standpoint, the perspective adopted also attempts to relate theory and practice. For these reasons it is important that women are placed at the centre of the discourse and given a voice.

Women have been ignored or viewed only as a homogeneous group in much of the research in educational administration. It is therefore important that the situation of particular groups of women such as women principals in Catholic primary education be recognised and that the factors which influence their career paths be explored.

In considering some of the underlying social causes for women's omission from the ranks of administrators, the study takes a feminist standpoint, questioning the patriarchal nature of society where women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men and "the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male" (Weedon 1987:2). Here women are viewed through a male lens which legitimises stereotypical perceptions of women and their place in society. This "'masculinist world view' is so endemic, ... that very few people are aware that it is a social construct and a part of sexism" (Stanley and Wise 1993:47). It permeates the structures of our society and persuades us to accept it unquestioningly as part of the natural order.

As part of this natural order, women are relegated to the private domain of the home while men are seen to belong to the public realm of paid work. Societal expectations of women as wife and nurturer place unacceptable demands upon married women who must either opt out of paid work or balance two careers, motherhood being pre-eminent. Such a view of women places barriers before all women, married or single. Women are judged according to a male paradigm where the failure of compensatory mechanisms such as affirmative action programmes can, within patriarchal world views, be used to bolster the idea of women's deficiencies.

This androcentric way of thinking lulls society into accepting aspects of our world as scientific and value free when this is far from the truth. Educational research has looked mainly at the experience of men and "has mistaken it for a universal

reality" (Shakeshaft 1989:324). Paradigms of management and career are also centred around male experience. The gendered division of labour in education is very noticeable. Schools are places where work is divided into 'men's work' and 'women's work' and where most of the senior staff are men (Milligan 1994:9). This situation has led the recent Inquiry into the Boys' Education (1994:17) to recommend that more young men be encouraged to enter primary teaching and more women be encouraged into management. This will not happen quickly as careers dominated by women, such as teaching and nursing, are looked upon as "semi-professions" (Acker 1983:123), which attract little public approbation and low remuneration. Most men use teaching as a step into management (Skelton 1991:287), an upward movement to a position of greater esteem and higher salary. Furthermore male careers prosper with the support of wives who remain at home.

When such an androcentric view of career and management prospers, it is hardly surprising that the structures of support favour men. Men benefit through the assistance of mentors, through being offered administrative inservice and through their own expectation and that of their supervisors that they are management material. Women have more difficulty in tapping into male-dominated support systems and they must battle perceptions of them as unsuitable for management.

This pervasive androcentric viewpoint cannot easily be shrugged off. It dominates our thinking, permeates our social structures and allows the contribution and ideas of women to be ignored. It even structures our approach to research.

Research-based knowledge is held to be scientific and value-free yet reviews of journal articles have shown that issues of gender have been ignored. A survey by Stanley (Stanley and Wise 1993:28) of three major sociology journals found that most of the work focused on men and boys. A similar study of

psychology journal articles by Chetwynd (ibid 29) notes that the articles contained

fewer females than males, generalise from male experience to the whole population and also treat women as 'non-men'.

This male bias is not limited to sociology and psychology. Blackmore (1992:2) alleges that "'objective history' was a history that ignored women's experience. Shakeshaft (1989:324) criticises educational research for looking mainly at the male experience, as men have "forged forms of thought within an all-male world and, perhaps without realising it, have mistaken it for a universal reality". Similarly, organisational theory, upon which many concepts of educational administration are based, has been criticised for its gender blindness (Blackmore 89:93). Organisational practices have been built "with men's typical life patterns as their foundation - including men's reliance ... on domestic support" (Burton 1991:14).

This patriarchal world view, where 'the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male' (Weedon 1987:2), has become so ingrained that it is accepted with little questioning. Non-recognition of the male gender bias in many areas of society is a particularly insidious force where ideas and decisions are deemed to be factual, technical and scientific.

This study places women at the centre of the discourse. For too long men's viewpoints have been represented as universal. Dorothy Smith (1988:17) refers to the "peculiar eclipsing of women";

Being excluded as women have been, from the making of ideology, of knowledge, and of culture means that our experience, our interests, our ways of knowing the world have not been represented...

Educational administration has been a particularly male bastion and most scholars have been men (Owens 1991:88). Not only has the world been seen through a male lens but

women have been uninvolved either as researchers or as subjects of investigation (ibid:89-90):

The underlying assumption is that the experiences of male and females are the same and thus research on males is appropriate for generalizing to the female experience.

According to Shakeshaft (1989:324), the theories and concepts which have emerged from such research "may be irrelevant for the female experience and inadequate for explaining female behaviour". In considering the gender gap in research, Shakeshaft traces the history of research on women in educational administration. She dismisses the first three stages identified - documenting the absence of women, searching for women administrators, considering women as disadvantaged or subordinate - as these "do not do much to improve practice or advance theory" (ibid:335). Within such views, women are merely judged in relation to a masculine norm and found wanting. Several writers discuss this "bi-polar scale" (Stanley and Wise 1993: 29) or the dualisms (Blackmore 1992:10) which affect our views of men and women. Male experience is taken as the norm and women are judged in relation to them.

To address this imbalance, many writers consider that to "add in and stir" (Blackmore 1992:3) women's issues or to adopt the "'women and ..' syndrome" (Stanley and Wise 1992:42) is sufficient. Such a filling in the gaps method relegates women to the ghetto rather than allowing them to appear mainstream.

Therefore in feminist research, women must be placed at the centre and women's concerns must be the starting point. They must be listened to, "to help us understand the way they think and speak about their worlds" (Shakeshaft 1989:335). As Blackmore (1992:10) illustrates:

A feminist approach consciously attends to the feminist position that women have been an 'absent presence' in history, and that this absence must be rectified.

Many women researchers have pointed to the need to employ feminist research methods in completing research with women and much discussion has taken place about the best way to promote a feminist methodology in research. According to Stanley (1990:14), feminism is not merely a way of seeing or of knowing but it is an "ontology, or a way of being in the world". This requires that all involved in the research project, travel together as equals. Feminist research must be "informed at every stage by an acknowledged political commitment" (Dickens cited in Scott 1985:83) or by "purity of feminist intent" (Stanley and Wise 1993:35) although such commitment is not adequate in itself. It is essential firstly that women are not exploited, "placed in the subject/object divide found in traditional researcher/researched relationships" (Adler 1993:63) or otherwise placed in a position of ignorance and powerlessness before the powerful and knowledgeable researcher.

Scott (1985: 71) also expresses concern about the power imbalance in educational research. She (ibid:69) is particularly critical of quantitative methods which can encourage "an unhealthy separation between those who know and those who do not" although she insists that a feminist methodology involves more than merely qualitative research by women on women (1985:69). Liz Stanley (1990:12) agrees:

... there is no one set of methods or techniques, nor even a broad category of types of method ('qualitative') which should be seen as distinctly feminist. Feminists should use any and every means available for investigating the 'condition of women in sexist society'. To this we add the qualifier: written accounts of feminist research should locate the feminist researcher firmly within the activities of her research as an essential feature of what is 'feminist' about it.

Other women researchers like Adler (1993:61) and Scott (1985:71), are also critical of some of the well accepted 'scientific' approaches used such as those where "the researcher often remains invisible in the research process" (Adler 1993:61). The notion of impersonal research and the

impossibility of total objectivity, as "all researchers operate from within a theoretical framework or overview and we affect the data at all stages" (Scott 1985:74) is discussed by many researchers. Stanley and Wise (1990:23) maintain:

..researchers' understandings are necessarily temporally, intellectually, politically and emotionally grounded and are thus as contextually specific as those of 'the researched'.

By placing herself within the research, rather than outside or above it, the researcher must be prepared to listen closely and, as evidence of her commitment, to ask feminist questions from the outset (Scott 1985:71). Feminism "must be present in positive ways within the research process", in areas such as the researcher-researched relationship, and the acceptance of emotion as research experience (Stanley 1990:23; Adler 1993:62). It must be research with women rather than about women (Scott 1985:81). Women must not be treated as "other" in relation to men. The research must be approached from the standpoint of women which, Dorothy Smith (1988:107) claims,

...creates the space for an absent subject, and an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds.

Women must be treated as "knowers and actors" rather than "objects of study" (ibid :105). To allow women to participate as "fully competent members" in the discourse (Smith 1988:61), their individual input must be valued. For too long this has not been the case, as Smith (ibid:35) explains:

Women have taken for granted that our thinking is to be authorized by an external source of authority.

Therefore the ideas of individual women must be able to claim equality of truth with "official sources" (Blackmore 1992:8).

Radical and post-structuralist feminism further argues that there must be a relationship between theory and practice. 'Muckraking research' which merely publicises the problems of institutional sexism or 'corrective research' which fills in the gaps in our knowledge about women, are of limited value compared with 'movement related research' (Carol Ehrlich in Stanley and Wise 1993:37) as the former do nothing "to improve practice or advance theory" (Shakeshaft 1989:335). A similar view is proposed by Stanley and Wise (1993:58):

... there must be a relationship between theory and practice which not only sees these as inextricably interwoven, but which sees experience and practice as the basis of theory, and theory as the means of changing practice.

As part of the feminist approach of this study, the purpose is not merely to consider the differences and to suggest areas for further study, but to look at institutional processes and structures in Catholic schools which affect women's entry into educational administration. By allowing women to voice their experience of Catholic education and to express their concerns and needs, the study will suggest areas for further research and ways of assisting women to achieve their ends.

The approach chosen to elicit the information required from the research questions, one that would best provide for the women in question a key voice, was case study methodology. The purpose of the study is to examine the factors which are perceived to affect Catholic women principals' entry into management. The field setting was a rural NSW Catholic diocese. The main aim of the study is to focus on the women's own understanding of their experience in becoming a Catholic primary school principal.



### The Value of a Case Study Approach

Case study methodology was decided on as it provided a triangulated approach to the problem under investigation. Survey techniques and interviews were used to examine in detail the case in point - the career paths of a group of Catholic lay women primary principals in one rural diocese in NSW. As little research has been completed with such groups, a case study approach would allow for in depth examination by employing "a variety of qualitative data-collection methods" (Borg and Gall 1989:402) and, in this case, limited quantitative methods. A variety of methods allows for a multiplicity of perspectives on the situation (Adelman et al. 1976:145). This is essential when investigating an area where no research has been undertaken previously.

It is acknowledged that case studies have their limitations. They are unique to the case being studied and therefore generalisations are problematic. Case studies never prove anything. However, one of the advantages of using case study approaches is that they "have the potential to generate rich subjective data that can aid in the development of theory and empirically testable hypotheses" (Borg and Gall 1989:402). They are "strong in reality" and "down to earth and attention-holding" (Adelman et al. 1976:148) because they illustrate the everyday occurrences in the study group and they tap into the thoughts and language of this group. Case studies "recognise the complexity and 'embeddedness' of social truths" (ibid:148) by recording, collating and analysing these events. Close analysis allows discrepancies and conflicts to be recognised and interpreted.

Case studies also provide "an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation" (ibid:148) A close, in-depth study would provide not only an understanding of the career paths of the women under

scrutiny but also some understanding of the wider group of Catholic lay women primary principals. By gaining some understanding of the life history and motivations of these women, a foundation for the development of "theory and empirically testable hypotheses" (Borg and Gall 1989: 402) would be laid and further direction for research could be suggested.

Case studies have the advantage of allowing a variety of techniques for data gathering, such as surveys and key informant interviewing, to be used, thus strengthening the internal validity of the study. They also rely heavily on ethnographic techniques in gaining a feel for the culture of the group. This allows for greater understanding of the group, for themes to be drawn out from the accounts and for discrepancies within accounts to be noted and explanations offered.

In accordance with its feminist perspective, this study places women at the centre by giving them a voice in the debate on women in educational management. This is particularly important as women in management positions in Catholic primary schools have had little opportunity to be heard.

Fourteen lay women primary principals in one rural Catholic diocese in NSW comprised the target group. This number represented 56% of the primary principals in the diocese. It did not take into account the women religious primary principals. Half of the target group were principals of village and small town schools which provided the only primary Catholic education in the district while the remainder of the women were principals of infants and primary schools in larger towns which offered a choice of Catholic schools.

## Data Gathering Techniques

### a) The Questionnaire

For the descriptive survey, written questionnaires (see Appendix 1) were formulated in line with the objectives of the research and these were pretested for validity with Catholic male and female principals outside the target group. The questionnaire was of a descriptive nature and was divided into 4 sections. These focussed on the professional background, teaching experience, promotion path and current position of the principals. 40 separate items were included with 16 of these items being in a closed form requiring a predetermined response. These were included to allow the respondents to complete the questionnaire quickly while still providing information necessary for the study. The remaining questions required an open response and respondents were invited to attach extra paper if needed.

The women were approached in person or by phone explaining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. As the women were colleagues, this presented no problems. Following this, questionnaires and return stamped addressed envelopes were mailed to all the lay Catholic women primary principals in the diocese in November 1994. The questions were designed to elicit information about the principals themselves - their background and motivation for entering teaching, their aspirations in teaching and promotion and their perceptions of career. Care was taken to ensure that questions focused on the women's professional lives. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured. An accompanying letter (see Appendix 2) explained the purpose of the study and requested that it be completed and returned in the enclosed envelope by the end of November.

In December, a short reminder letter (see Appendix 3) was sent to all participants and this resulted in 100% return of the questionnaires within a month of their first despatch.

There were few omissions and many answered the questionnaire in extensive detail. One woman was moved to append a page of comments on two sections about which she felt very strongly. Several added comments about their pleasure in being involved and volunteered to help in any way with further research.

As the surveys were anonymous, they were numbered 1 - 14 for ease of reference as they were returned. References to individual comments were therefore noted as deriving from Informant 1 etc. The survey results were subsequently collated and analysed. Much of the data was organised into tables. The data were compared with national data from recent surveys such as those of Grady et al. (1994) and the National Catholic Education Commission Report 1994.

#### b) Follow-up Interviews

To provide another source of data to help validate the survey and to provide more information about certain aspects of the survey, interviews were arranged with six of the key informants who had already completed the questionnaire. The women were chosen because of their varied background and teaching experience. All except one were married women with children. (Ten of the fourteen were married and had children, while one of the four remaining, married during the period of research).

All of the six women were again approached in person. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were addressed and permission was sought for the interviews to be taped. The women were told that they could withdraw at any stage and that they were not obliged to answer any question. Each participant was provided with a copy of the NHMRC Statement on Human Experimentation and was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 4) which further informed her of her rights and responsibilities. It was also explained that the interview time would allow for some mutual sharing of

experience as there was a similarity with the researcher's background.

Following the return of the questionnaires, possible interview questions were formulated. These were designed to meet the objectives of the study and to enrich the findings from the questionnaires. They were grouped according to the following themes: the women's teaching history, their background and motivation in entering teaching, their perceptions of career, their promotion path and the support received and obstacles faced, the interviews for promotion, the importance or otherwise of Catholicity and their future career plans. These themes were in accord with the the main aim of the study which was to focus on the women's own understanding of their experience in becoming a Catholic primary school principal.

A semistructured interview format was decided upon. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed these women to speak freely about their own situations, to set their own pace, to provide a broad account of their professional lives (Borg and Gall 1989: 402) and to draw connections between areas of their lives. Such an account allows the researcher "to get a feeling for ... how people view or choose to portray their own lives" (Wolcott 1988:196). The semi-structured interview also allows the researcher to follow up leads and to seek greater clarity and depth of information (Borg and Gall 1989: 446).

As the researcher was a colleague of the women in the study, the interviews provided not only a time for gathering information but also for sharing experiences. This, and the fact that the researcher was a woman and a principal, also helped to break down the barriers between the researcher and the women in the study and increased the chances of more valid responses (ibid:449). The researcher used the theme list as a checklist and only interrupted when greater

clarification was sought or when an untouched theme needed to be addressed.

It was decided to make each interview as informal as possible in order to set the interviewee at ease and to rob the situation of the strong power relationship which can exist between interviewer and interviewee (ibid:453). This was especially important as the interviewees were all teaching colleagues of the researcher.

In-depth accounts, rather than discrete responses to questions from the researcher, resulted from using the semi-structured interview and allowed the women to have greater control over the material provided. The situation also allowed for some sharing of experience between the key informant and the researcher, although this tended to occur at the end as there were few breaks in the account. The women often covered several themes at once, a factor noted by Scott (1985:72).

The answers were tape recorded in four of the interviews which took place face to face. There was negotiation about choice of venue and time. Two occurred in the women's school offices, one at the researcher's school and one at the researcher's home. All these interviews were transcribed immediately afterwards. Two interviews were conducted by telephone because of problems relating to distance. The two telephone interviews were recorded by note-taking and were re-read and annotated to avoid ambiguity immediately following the interview. All of the interviews took place between May and July 1995. The accounts were then reread and analysed in the light of the research questions and significant quotations were annotated for comment. To allow for ease of reference and to preserve anonymity, quotations were identified using the date and order of the interview eg Interview 5, 20/6/95. This differentiated the comments from those provided by the questionnaires which were

identified by the title Informant and the order of receipt, eg Informant 9, 12/94.

In subsequent informal meetings with the interviewees, many spontaneously expanded on comments and ideas from the interviews and suggested that these should be included. It was agreed that this would be the case.

The survey data and interviews were analysed and ideas were collated. Anomalies and questions for further research were noted.

### Ethical Considerations

Anonymity and confidentiality were assured for all the participants. A letter (Appendix 2) which explained the purpose of the study accompanied the questionnaire and issues of confidentiality and anonymity were addressed. The written questionnaires did not require names although several of the women appended notes to their questionnaire and signed them. The participants were assured that they would not be identified in the report and that a copy would be available for them to read when it was complete. The survey data were collated and the results and the originals kept in a secure place by the researcher.

Guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity were also given for the interviews. As already mentioned, each participant was provided with a copy of the NHMRC Statement on Human Experimentation. Permission was sought to tape the interviews and each woman was told that she could withdraw her consent or refuse to answer any question at

any stage. A consent form was provided for all participants and this informed them further of their rights and responsibilities. Audio tapes and transcriptions were kept in a secure place and transcriptions were identified only by date and order of completion. During transcription, names were omitted or identified only with a letter.

Confidentiality and anonymity were important both to provide protection for the participants and to make them feel secure in sharing information about their lives. Accordingly, not only are the women's names not recorded but place names by which they could be identified are not used.

### Limitations

Although the number of key informants was relatively small, an inevitable result of concentrating on one diocese, the in-depth richness of their life stories was extremely valuable. However, the women selected for the survey comprised the entire population of lay women Catholic primary principals in one rural diocese and the group was considered to be representative of the larger phenomenon of lay Catholic women primary principals.

Some limitations also existed because of the variation in school type, qualifications, experience and ages of the respondents. The informants came from a variety of primary school types - small isolated primary schools with less than five staff to infants schools and primary schools in large towns. The women held a variety of qualifications and had been teaching for between ten and thirty years. Some were in



their first principalship while others had held two or more principalships. Such variation was inevitable when the entire population of women lay primary principals in one diocese was the focus of research. Use of the entire population did however provide a common thread as each member of the population had undergone a similar selection process to reach the principalship.

### Delimitations

No judgements have been made about each principal's effectiveness. Success in attaining the level of senior management was interpreted as achievement of the principalship.

The study is not designed to make definitive statements nor statistical inferences about lay women in Catholic educational administration. Each interview provides a "snapshot of a woman at a particular time" (Adler 1993:71) in their respective career paths.

The next two chapters are grouped according to themes and they outline the key informants' perceptions of many areas - their motivation for entering teaching, their early experiences in teaching, their reasons for applying for promotion and the support, satisfaction and frustration experienced. Special emphasis is placed on the interview for the principalship as this is an important part of the selection process for promotions positions. Finally the barriers they had to face and their feelings about the principalship and future plans in educational administration are outlined. Comparisons with the experiences of women in educational management in the literature are made.

## CHAPTER 4

### EARLY CAREER PATHS

#### Introduction

This chapter outlines the range of principalships currently held and the early career paths of the women in the study group. It considers their motivations for entering teaching, their qualifications, early teaching careers and reasons for applying for the promotion.

#### Profile of the Principals Involved in the Study

As already noted, the fourteen women in the study were all lay principals of Catholic co-educational primary schools in one rural diocese. From Table 1 it is clear that most of the

group were very experienced teachers with 50% having taught for more than 15 years.

**Table 1**  
**Length of Teaching Service**

Years of Service	Percentage of the Group
1 - 5	0
6 - 10	14
11 - 15	36
16 - 20	7
21 - 25	21
26 - 30	14
31+	7

By far the majority (86%) had been teaching for more than 11 years with 43% having taught for more than 20 years. Most had started teaching in the late 1960s or early 1970s although the two youngest women had only been teaching since the late 1980s.

It is interesting to compare the length of teaching experience of the group (Table 1) with the number of years that these women had been in the principalship (Table 2) although it is difficult to define a relationship between the two as many of the principals had taken long breaks in service. By analysis of the individual questionnaires, it appears that 79% of the target group had been teaching less than fifteen years when they first became principals.

More than half of the group (63%) had been principals for less than 9 years with the remainder of the women having been principals for between 13 and 20 years (Table 2). Within the study group, 71% had always taught in Catholic schools and none had held promotions positions outside Catholic schools. Only one of the women had held a promotions position in another diocese and she too was the only one to have

undertaken any paid work outside teaching. Half of the women had moved straight into the principalship without experiencing any previous promotions positions.

**Table 2**  
**Years as a Principal**

Number of Years	Percentage of Group
1	21
2	14
3	0
4	7
5	7
6	0
7	0
8	7
9	0
10	0
11	0
12	0
13	0
14	14
15	0
16	7
17	0
18	0
19	0
20	7
21+	0

All of the women are teaching principals of small schools which have fewer than 15 staff members, with 79% of the schools having fewer than 10 staff members (Table 3). 87% of the teaching positions in these schools were held by women.

In 9 of the schools, the principalship was the only executive position, with 90% of the promotions positions in all of the schools being held by women. This may reflect the large

percentage of women teachers in these schools (87%). 5 of the schools were for infants only, i.e. Kindergarten to Year 2, although one of these schools was gradually adding primary classes. Seven of the schools provided Catholic education from Kindergarten to Year 6 in small towns and villages. The remaining two schools were primary schools in a large town.

**Table 3**  
**School Size**

Number of Staff	Percentage of Schools
1 - 5	50
6 - 10	29
11 - 15	21

71% of the study group were married and had children and all of these had taken breaks in service when their children were born. These breaks varied in length between 12 months and 9 years. Only 14% of the group had not taken any leave.

### Choosing a Career

All women spoke happily of their school days. Most had done well at school and had been encouraged by their families to pursue a career which required some further tertiary study. Several mentioned that their families were instrumental in their decision. Comments such as the following were typical of those advanced for entering teaching:

(I was) following my elder sister's footsteps. (Informant 11\*, 12/94)

My parents felt that it was an acceptable career for a woman.  
(Informant 10, 12/94)

Parental expectation - It runs in the family. (Informant 4, 12/94)

Most women received encouragement from their parents to pursue teaching although in two cases fathers were hostile or ambivalent about a career for a girl. Such hostility and the channelling of the women into what many called an "acceptable career" demonstrate very patriarchal views of women in society as noted in the literature (Ozga 1993: 48, 68). The following comments from the women in this study reflect this attitude:

Mum kept me going. She writes and speaks well although she had only two years of secondary education. My father was of the old school - "Don't educate girls" - so there was tension in the house. (Interview \* 3, 4/6/95)

My mother was encouraging, my father too but less so. (Interview 4, 18/6/95)

Although teaching is not held in high esteem today (Australian Teaching Council 1995:10), it was considered not only a suitable career for a girl 20 or more years ago but it was also deemed to be "a high role" according to one of the women interviewed (Interview 3, 4/6/95). This interviewee also commented that at that time the "odd (woman) doctor was exceptional". A similar view was expressed by another woman, who had achieved many promotions positions in education. She would have liked to have been a doctor but, as Science was not a subject on offer in girls' schools when she was growing up, she felt precluded from this option.

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\* Informant indicates that the comments were made on the questionnaires, whereas Interview indicates that these comments came from one of the key informant interviews.)

The influence of teachers was also important. In most cases it was seen to provide positive encouragement. These women all appear to have achieved well at school with three receiving teaching scholarships, and they were encouraged to tackle something which required further study. In many cases this was teaching. The influence of teachers both as role models and as those offering encouragement was noted in comments such as the following:

Looking back on it, they (the nuns) fairly much guided me, "You'd make a beautiful teacher". (Interview 5, 20/6/1995)

I did well at school. There was no competition. The nuns were keen that I make the best of my talents. (Interview 4, 18/6/95)

Many expressed admiration for their teachers:

I was very much influenced by teachers, mainly admiring them and their nurturing... I did enjoy my association with teachers. I suppose I have the nature of working with people. That was largely the influence of teachers. (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

My Kindergarten teacher was very dynamic. She made a big impression. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

It was the example of teachers I used to have. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

Three of the women had received scholarships which assisted them to become teachers. In these cases however, it was clear that the desire to teach had preceded the awarding of the scholarship. For one of these women the scholarship was essential to her embarking on teaching. She reflected:

After the HSC I didn't get a Teachers' College Scholarship and that was the only way I could do it but I managed to get a Diocesan Scholarship through my high school Principal and Parish Priest of the time. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

Only one principal, one of the the youngest, who completed her HSC in the early 1980s, spoke of being warned away from teaching by her teachers as "there were a lot of unemployed teachers at that time" (Interview 2, 3/6/95). However, she had always wanted to teach and was encouraged by her

parents to do so. Such a statement and the fact that the youngest women in the study did not mention their teachers as encouraging them could reflect the findings of several studies (Australian Teaching Council 1995:10; Skelton 1991:282) which forecast a change in career orientation for young women.

The love of children was mentioned by most (64%) of the group as another important factor in their decision to enter teaching. Comments such as the following illustrate this:

I liked working with children. (Informant 12, 12/94)

(I have an) affinity to (sic) children. (Informant 6, 12/94)

(I had) a desire to work with children. (Informant 10, 12/94)

(I had) a love for children. (Informant 11, 12/94)

(I) enjoyed children. (Informant 13, 12/94)

Other factors such as the attractions of holidays, the flexibility of location and the possibilities of part-time work also were important for some of the women in choosing teaching. Only one of the women had tried a job other than teaching during her working life and this was a short term position which provided a bridge until she found a teaching job again. Many of the women, particularly the married ones, had taken part-time teaching positions at some stage, usually immediately after their maternity leave.

One principal had entered a religious order where the only work was that of teaching. However, she too felt that she had an affinity with teaching and a love of children, a factor mentioned by most of the women in helping them to decide upon a career.

Although 71% of the group had been channelled into teaching by family, teachers and a lack of suitable career options, all were guided by a love of children and a desire to teach. All of



the group seemed to be happy with their eventual career choice.

### Teaching Qualifications

The "Meritocracy Model" of administration, according to Shakeshaft (1987:82), explains women's absence from administrative positions by their lack of competency. This would suggest that women are less qualified, as well as less capable, than men. Porter (1995:9) notes that women tend to have lower levels of education in their areas of expertise than men in equivalent positions, although recent studies (Birrell 1995) show that this is changing and more women than men are participating in higher education. Although this study has not taken a comparative view, all the women in the group are well qualified even though none holds more than one degree.

On completing secondary school, 79% of the group went to a teachers' college, CAE or University. The remaining 21% entered convents where two received training for teaching and the other engaged in "gardening and fancy work" (Interview 5, 20/6/95). For some, the choice of the initial teacher training course appeared to be governed by the location of the institute, as many of the women were country girls. Two of the group reflected:

I got a Teachers' scholarship to Sydney University but I was very much a country girl. It was a big wide world so I felt very protected in the early years (at a Catholic training college in Sydney).  
Interview 5, 20/6/95)

I went to X (rural training college) - my stipulation. It was not too far and I couldn't cope with the city. (Interview 4, 18/6/95)

Prior to the introduction of colleges of advanced education, teacher training courses were usually of two years' duration in the 1960s and early 1970s although one woman who had

entered religious life in the 1950s had a shorter training period. She claimed:

Some did a bit of practice teaching. I didn't do much. Some observed lessons. I didn't. I was practically untrained. No bits of paper. Certainly a lot of state teachers weren't trained either—particularly in needlework. Anybody who could do it was called upon. (Interview 1, 28/5/1995)

Many of the women undertook some further training once they had started teaching so that most held more than one qualification, though none held more than one degree as can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Post Secondary Qualifications**

Qualifications	Number of the Group
Masters	0
B.A.	1
B.Ed.	6
Dip. Ed.	1
Dip. T.	3
T.C.	2
Grad. Dip. R.E	2
Grad. Dip. Arts	1
A. Mus. A.	1
Cert. "A" R. E.	2
Cert. School Management	1
Cert. Gifted Ed.	1

Note: Many of the women hold more than one qualification

50% of the women had completed an undergraduate degree or an undergraduate degree and a diploma, a B. Ed. or a BA. Dip. Ed. 36% had a Diploma in Teaching or a Teacher's Certificate, which one woman was upgrading to her B.Ed. Many of the women had additional diplomas in Religious Education or Arts. 14% had completed Certificates in Religious Education, a course sponsored and promoted by the Catholic Dioceses.

One principal also had completed two certificate courses through UNSW, a Certificate in School Management and another in Gifted Education from UNSW. Another principal had gained her A.Mus.A. 14% were planning further study. Only one woman did not respond to this section of the questionnaire.

The women had also majored in many different areas as part of their study, although the greatest proportion of the group majored in Infants and Primary method and Religious Education, areas which were basic to their needs and the requirements of the diocese. Table 5 depicts the major areas of study for the group.

**Table 5**  
**Major Areas of Study at Tertiary Level**

Areas of Study	Percentage of Group
Infants/Primary Method	43
Religious Education	36
Special Education	14
Mathematics	14
PE/Sport	14
Curriculum development	7
History/English	7
Anthropology/Social Psychology	7
Music	7
Social Science	7

Note: Several had two major areas of study

Several had taken up study, mostly for their B.Ed. or a Diploma which incorporated Religious Education, after teaching. The diocese had always strongly encouraged all teachers to have qualifications in Religious Education, either through the Certificate "A" course which was offered in all Catholic dioceses or through a Graduate Diploma which was available through distance education.

One woman, who was spurred to complete her Bachelor of Education by her promoter, commented:

I started studying last year. That gives me a little room to move... I certainly have enjoyed studying, firstly for my own development. I enjoy the challenge of something new... I thought to have my B.Ed. was important (for promotion). It's fairly basic these days. ,  
(Interview 5, 20/6/95)

Another, who had gained a Dip. RE. after she started teaching in Catholic schools, remarked:

You had to do it to stay where you were. I didn't go ahead with upgrading to three year trained. I don't know how I'd have gone if I left X. I had no aspiration to leave X. As the years passed it seemed less important but I do regret that I didn't. (Interview 4, 18/6/1995)

This statement, and the fact that this woman was now in her second principalship, suggests that paper competence had not been a major factor within the diocese in the appointment of some of the women. The woman who had achieved List 1 in the state system was invited to apply for a principalship of a small Catholic infants school but she explained:

I don't think they knew about List 1. It was on the nun's say so.  
(Interview 4, 18/6/1995)

Being known within the diocese seemed to be a significant factor in appointment, a point that was made by many of the women later.

It would appear that although basic qualifications were necessary for appointment, the diocese considered them to be less significant than competence and Catholicity. The attainment of qualifications in Religious Education was however strongly encouraged by the diocese.

## Beginning Teaching

Following initial teacher training, 71% started teaching in Catholic schools while the rest went into state schools. The shortage of trained teachers in Catholic schools in the 1960s and 1970s had allowed the women who trained in Catholic colleges to find a full-time position in Catholic schools very quickly while those who had trained in the state system had been guaranteed a position there as a result of their training.

The situation had changed for the younger women in the group as several had their first appointments in leave positions and had moved between other leave positions to get work. Although some had trained in Colleges of Advanced Education, they had applied for and achieved their first appointments in Catholic schools, a reflection of the more open job market which had continued there. One woman had been a religious and she was moved every 12 months or two years at first to fulfil needs in the diocese. Some had moved when they got married. Many moved constantly between leave positions looking for work. A woman who had started in the state system commented on the forced transfers of single people to allow married women to move to be with their husbands, a situation which later worked to her advantage. Another had suffered a forced transfer within the diocese in her early teaching days when she and her principal were not in harmony. Such constant movement was not looked upon favourably by employers as one principal noted:

A lot of people said it was bad - not stable but I liked it... I looked on it as a positive thing. It showed I could fit into a new community and meet school and parish expectations. (Interview 2, 3/6/1995)

Not all had fond memories of their first teaching positions. One was moved as she had "a few problems with the principal. We didn't see eye to eye" (Interview 6, 27/6/1995). Another woman, who had trained as an Infants teacher, had had great support from the deputy but was "given a hard time by the

other third grade teachers" as they thought she was teaching "baby stuff" (Interview 3, 4/6/1995). One who had taught in many schools and had been given many responsibilities commented:

Everything hasn't been rosy. I had a very difficult time at Y. with the deputy. Looking back now I think that was more a personality thing. I felt there was no professional trust. (Interview 2, 3/6/1995)

Although a bonded position guaranteed a job, it had its drawbacks too. One of the principals who was sent to a small western school felt "isolated and lonely" (Interview 4, 18/6/1995). She lived with a farming family and had to endure this existence for two years until her bond expired. Religious life guaranteed a position and a place to live but there were many difficulties here too. A woman who had started as a religious was moved every year at first and she was usually the only teacher in the small secondary department of a central school. This required her to prepare students for the then Intermediate Certificate in all subject areas.

For the older women in the group, teaching had a stable beginning with the only moves being those initiated by them. Younger women had a less secure start to their career as the job situation was tighter and they needed to move constantly between maternity, long service and other leave positions to find work. Although some had a less than "rosy" (Interview 2, 3/6/95) start to their career in education, all appeared happy to continue.

### Breaks in Service

Breaks in service are noted by the literature as one of the reasons that women find it difficult to attain promotion. As a

result of these breaks, women are less experienced teachers or administrators than men of the same age, they are seen to be less committed to their career in education and such breaks have a negative effect on their career achievement (Blackmore 1989:106, Grant 1989:44).

Most (86%) of the women experienced some break in service. 29% of the group were single at the start of the study and half of these took Long Service Leave while the remaining 71% were married and typically breaks were for maternity leave and raising a family. This period varied between 12 months and 9 years. It is difficult to be precise about these breaks because some of the group only counted leave periods, and not the periods when they had resigned, as breaks in service. This of course means that there were greater periods of absence from teaching and administration than claimed by many of the women. During breaks in service some undertook some part-time teaching and one assisted with administration at the Catholic Education Office.

A variety of reasons prompted the married women to return to teaching. One had returned to the state system for a term because at that stage it was necessary to do so to gain paid maternity leave. She then resigned until after the birth of her other children and her subsequent appointments were in Catholic schools. She was the only woman to return to the state system after maternity leave. All the remaining married women, including those who had taught in state schools until then, undertook full-time teaching positions in Catholic schools after their initial leave for child-bearing and rearing.

There were several reasons for this. Positions were readily available in the local Catholic schools until the 1980s and in several cases, the women were approached by the principal of the local Catholic school to take on a position. In small communities it was known that they were trained teachers, their children were attending the Catholic school and the

family had been seen at Mass. Salaries did not equal those of the state system in the late 1960s, ("three quarters of the state school salary" in the case of one woman, Interview 4, 18/6/1995), another factor which led to vacancies being available locally (Christie and Smith 1991:219). Although these women were Catholic and they had been educated in Catholic schools, they found the transition to a new school culture difficult at first. Two observed that:

I expected things to be very different even though they weren't. I expected religion to make a big difference to the kids. Teachers were more respected everywhere then. All my experiences in state schools had been positive. My two headmistresses had been Christian, church-going people and this overflowed to the staff.  
(Interview 4, 18/6/1995)

Parent involvement was very different. Religion was expected to play a big part. I had had no contact with parents in state schools. (Interview 3, 4/6/1995)

The comments appear to be somewhat contradictory but the first woman felt the burden of ensuring the Catholicity of the school more heavily as she was given the principalship of a small school and shared the responsibility with another newly appointed state school teacher. Although her initial appointment was worrying, she was grateful for the change. She reflected:

Coming to teach in a Catholic school did a lot for me personally as a Catholic. I go to Mass and do all the right things but you realise you're a role model. (Interview 4, 18/6/1995)

For some of the women their return to work was governed by a threat to their husband's role as breadwinner. Three of these noted:

My husband was a wool-classer and was away too much. He wanted to come closer to home (to find work) so I went back teaching. (Interview 4, 18/6/1995)

Things didn't go well business-wise (for my husband). We had a financial crisis. While we were deciding what we would do, he had time out at home and I went back teaching. (Interview 5, 20/6/1995)

I hadn't many choices about working. We were financially dependent on



it as my husband was not well. (Interview 1, 28/5/1995)

Although they suggested that their family's situation provided the main impetus, the women concerned gave little indication that their return was unhappy.

86% of the group experienced breaks in service, which varied between 12 months and 9 years, and they were all promoted at least once after this period. It was also clear that the more open labour market in Catholic schools allowed all of them to return to teaching or administration following the break in service.

### Becoming Principals

The length of time before promotion was governed by many factors for the women. Many had not seen themselves as administrators, an idea noted in the literature (Shakeshaft 1987:90), as administration is typically seen as the prerogative of men. Motherhood was occupying time and concerns for many. 64% of the group had taken maternity leave or had resigned to raise a family early in their teaching careers. Promotion came for 79% of the women within the first 15 years of teaching with 43% achieving the principalship within their first 10 years of teaching. This does not count breaks in service and, as 64% of the group had taken maternity leave before their first promotion, it is likely that they would be older than men in a similar promotions position, a factor noted in the literature (Grant 1989:44, Freeman 1990:16).

For some of the women (43%), progress to the principalship was slower as it meant a movement through some of the stages of Senior Primary Teacher, Religious Education

Coordinator and Assistant Principal while the majority (57%) received their first promotion as principal of a small school. One still held dual roles of Religious Education Coordinator and Principal within her school. Only one woman had held a promotions position in another diocese and none had held one outside the Catholic system although one of the principals had gained her List 1 (the first step for eligibility for promotion) in the state education system.

Table 6 outlines the number of promotions positions held by the group. All promotions positions held, including all principalships, are included. From this it can be seen that 43% had been promoted directly into the principalship and had never held any other promotions position.

**Table 6**  
**Total Number of Promotions Positions held by the group**

Number of Promotions Positions	Percentage of the Group
1	43
2	29
3	14
4	-
5	7
6	7

79% of the sample were in their first principalship although the other four women had held 9 principalships between them (Table 7).

**Table 7**  
**Total number of Principalship held by the Group**

Number of Principalships	Percentage of the Group
1	72
2	14
3	7
4	7

In addition, one of the women was promoted to her second principalship during the period of research.

36% of the group had been principals for only one or two years with two of these holding an acting position which lapsed at the end of the year of the survey. 50% of the group had less than 5 years as a principal while 36% had held the position for more than 13 years (Table 2 - see p. 72).

All of the women had achieved their first promotion in the rural diocese which was the subject of the study and all but one had no experience of promotion outside this diocese. One of the group had six different experiences of promotion and four had held 2 or more principalships. It was clear therefore that the women were held in high esteem within the diocese under study, with 64% having held more than one promotions position within the diocese before completion of the study.

#### Reasons for Applying for Promotion

Many explanations were offered by the group for their decisions to apply for promotion with most suggesting that they had more than one motive. Comments about career and

the need for change demonstrated that reasons changed with the circumstances. Explanations offered for applying for promotion varied between the opportunity to contribute to the leadership of the school to obeying a request from the Catholic Education office.

For the majority (79%) the challenge and the opportunity to become involved in decision-making in the school and to test their own vision were the attractions of promotion as the following comments illustrate:

I wanted to test my leadership skills and my own vision of a Catholic school. (Informant 2, 12/94)

...an interest in school administration, scope to influence decision-making. A genuine desire to contribute more to the Catholic school ethos especially by being in control...(Informant 2, 12/94)

To add a challenge to my teaching career, to return to teaching in a small school, to become involved in a small amount of educational administration...(Informant 14, 12/94)

I needed a new direction in my life and the position came up at the right time. (Informant 6, 12/94)

I was anxious to further my career. (Informant 4, 12/94)

I thought I had the experience and qualifications to suit the position. (Informant 3, 12/94)

This contrasts with the findings of the literature which suggest that women are reluctant to apply for administration as they prefer teaching (Shakeshaft 1987:74). Of course the opinions noted in this study are expressed in hindsight and it is not clear whether they have been affected by the women's success in their roles. Half of those interviewed (3) expressed some diffidence about undertaking their first promotions position while the survey indicated that the majority (86%) admitted being strongly encouraged to apply for promotion.

29% of the group, while agreeing that the position offered them the challenge they were seeking, also indicated that the availability of the position within their own school was an

attraction. It meant they did not have to relocate and they felt comfortable, knowing the workings of the school. They observed:

Basically I wanted to apply for the position! I was teaching at the school when the position became available and it suited me to take the opportunity to try the role. (Informant 5, 12/94)

We were reduced in staffing by 1. The principal left our school so a vacant principal's position was to be filled within school. I had felt for some time I would like the challenge. (Informant 12, 12/94)

I felt I knew the running of the school. I was confident I could work with the staff. (Informant 7, 12/94)

The other reason proffered by the largest proportion of the group (50%) was a desire to contribute to the leadership, vision and decision-making of the school. 14% wanted to put some new ideas into practice. Another 14% wanted a change and, as the literature has pointed out, there are few avenues for change and extension in teaching except through promotion (Connors 1990:104). Remuneration was mentioned directly by two of the group and indirectly by another as it would provide "Opportunity which would benefit myself and the long term position of my family" (Informant 9, 12/94). Only one woman explained her application as the ability to "handle a position of authority" (Informant 4, 12/94). Generally the tone was one of excitement coupled with diffidence, as the following comments illustrate:

I felt I could manage the position. (Informant 7, 12/94)

I wanted to try the position and as I will be teaching for a number of years to come, I wanted to work at the level I'm best suited to - I like some administration and some teaching. I like working with people in different ways. I also believe I have good things to offer as a principal. (Informant 5, 12/94)

This diffidence is noticeable in the percentage of women (29%) who suggested that the decision was not theirs, an interesting comment as there was obviously an overlap with the group who had applied because of the challenge offered. Does this diffidence reflect this group's desire not to be seen as aggressive seekers of promotion as Burgess (1989:87) and

Shakeshaft (1987:90) suggest? The following comments by some of the group would appear to support this idea, as they suggest that the decision was not theirs:

I was invited to apply by executive in CEO. (Informant 11, 12/94)

It was requested of me by the Director and Parish Priest. (Informant 13, 12/94)

The first principalship was thrust on me as they needed someone to run a small infants school and as I was an experienced teacher I was happy to take this on. (Informant 1, 12/94)

I'm in an acting position and was asked to take this on for 12 months. (Informant 2, 12/94)

Many of the group mentioned that positions were filled by request from the diocese or the parish priest. One, who was appointed principal in the early 1970s, pointed to the informality of the procedure at this time. A nun she knew told her:

They want a Principal at Y (another Catholic school in the same town). I told the Parish Priest you'd be just right". There was no interview and no paperwork. I signed something eventually. It was a lot less formal. The salary there was three quarters of the state system. It was hard to get trained teachers. (Interview 4, 18/6/1995)

Less than two years later, she applied for another principalship and had to travel to the town, which was the seat of the diocese for her interview. There she faced a panel of 6 - 8 people. "How much things had changed", she noted, a comment echoed by many others. A woman, who had experienced very informal interviews early in her career, found the sudden introduction of a large interview panel very disconcerting, as she reflected:

Up to then I hadn't had an interview with more than one person. I wasn't told before. It was a surprise, an experiment. It was very intimidating. (Interview 1, 28/5/1995)

Another woman, who had her first interview in a Catholic school in the early 1970s, was invited to apply for a teaching position and had a "very laid back" interview with the principal (Interview 3, 4/6/1995).

Two more women mentioned encouragement as a major factor in their decision but only one woman maintained:

I didn't seek promotion. I was quite happy in the classroom.  
(Informant 5, 12/94)

Another, who had expressed excitement about the challenge of promotion, noted that:

It sought me!! As this situation developed and the other staff members didn't wish to apply... (Informant 12, 12/94)

Such comments point to the developing nature of Catholic schooling and the lack of bureaucracy at that time. There was difficulty in attracting capable trained teachers when salaries were lower than in the state system and when a large vacuum had been left by the withdrawal of the religious from the schools (Christie 1991:215, 218). An older principal, who had first entered religious life, noted:

Back in the 1950s training of teachers left a lot to be desired. It was just done through the novitiate...I was practically untrained. Certainly a lot of state school teachers weren't trained either.  
(Interview 1, 28/5/1995)

It could also explain why a woman who had started teaching as a religious was moved every year or even more frequently. In the years that followed too, the religious were continuing to pull out of schools and leaving a vacuum to be filled. In some places the last nuns to leave were already in their seventies or even eighties as it had been hard to replace them (Interview 1, 28/5/95). This led to the situation where the principal in one of the Catholic schools in the 1970s had to rely on a student teacher in the first month of the year as "It was hard to get trained teachers' (Interview 4, 18/6/1995).

It was also difficult to attract principals because at the time Catholic school principals, unlike their state school counterparts, bore a particularly heavy workload. In addition

to running the school, most completed all the clerical work, such as payment of accounts and organisation and collection of school fees. One of the older women in the group noted that she had been one of only three lay principals at Principals' Conferences in the late 1960s (Interview 4, 18/6/95).

The urgent need to attract suitable teachers and the division of Catholic education into smaller systems based on the dioceses encouraged greater informality. The size of the diocese still allows for this. One of the more recently appointed principals expressed some relief, but also disappointment, at the brevity and informality of her interview for promotion:

Overall I didn't find it daunting. I was a bit surprised it was so quick. "Is it really over? I mean are you sure?" It was probably a bit disappointing. It was almost as if they didn't need to ask. I just felt they knew. (Interview 5 20/6/1995)

It would appear that, although formal written applications, short-listing and interviews are the recognised procedures for promotion, some flexibility and informality are allowed because of the small size of the diocese and the good communications networks.

### Summary of the Findings

The cohort under examination held 56% of the primary principalships in this rural diocese, a percentage which is slightly lower but similar to Australia-wide figures for women in Catholic primary schools (59%) (Grady 1994:5). At the time of the study, they were all principals of small co-educational primary and infants schools with fewer than 15 staff with 79% of the schools having fewer than 10 staff. 50% of the group had been principals for more than 7 years.



Most of the women (64%) had started teaching between 1950 and 1970 and for these, there were few career options deemed suitable for capable girls besides teaching, nursing and banking. 50% of the group noted that they had been channelled into teaching by family and teachers although there was an overlap with the 64% who had chosen teaching because of their affinity with children. Those who had left school in the 1960s and early 1970s completed a training course at a Catholic or State Teachers' College or College of Advanced Education while the younger members of the group had enrolled in a degree course at a University. Most had completed some further course of study after this first qualification, although none held more than one degree.

For the older women in the group, teaching had provided a stable beginning to their working lives with the only moves being those initiated by them. Younger women had a less secure start to their career as the job situation was tighter and they needed to move constantly between leave positions to find work. Not all started teaching in Catholic schools although those who had started teaching in state schools moved into Catholic schools early in their teaching careers. This appeared to be more a matter of convenience than conviction at the time as jobs were readily available in Catholic schools especially in the days when the religious were moving out of teaching. Although some had a "less than rosy" (Interview 2, 3/6/1995) start to their career in education, all appeared happy to continue. None appeared dissatisfied with her choice of career.

In applying for promotion, it would appear that, although basic qualifications were necessary for appointment, the diocese considered competence and Catholicity equally important. Qualifications in Religious Education were, however, strongly encouraged. Formal written applications, short-listing and interviews are the recognised procedures for promotion but some flexibility and informality occurred,

because of the small size of the diocese and the good communications networks. Informal procedures abounded in the early stages of employment of lay people, because of the need to attract qualified Catholic teachers.

All had enjoyed some success in applying for promotion with 64% of the women having held more than one promotions position within the diocese. One of the group had six different experiences of promotion and four had held 2 or more principalships. Only one had held a promotions position outside the diocese and that was also in a Catholic school. Most (86%) had received strong encouragement to apply for promotion or had even been targeted for promotions positions.

79% had married (one married during the course of the study) and marriage and family placed further constraints on their career. Most (86%) of the women had experienced breaks in service which varied between 12 months and 9 years. Although not all had started teaching in Catholic schools, all but one had found positions in Catholic schools after taking leave. This was a reflection of the more open job market in Catholic schools at the time. All the married women had taken breaks for maternity leave and only two had, with the support of their husbands, relocated to take up promotion. The difficulty of relocation had not affected their early opportunities as 50% of the group had never moved to take up promotion but it would affect subsequent chances as few were free to relocate easily.

Some were diffident about their reasons for applying for promotion, but all expressed many aspects of satisfaction with their decision. These varied between the possibility of contributing to the leadership and being involved in the decision-making to the possibility of realising their vision for the school. 29% admitted that the availability of the position within the school where they were already teaching was an attraction of the position.

Only one maintained that promotion and administration had not been her goal. All had enjoyed change and had sought this in their teaching but for most promotion had "evolved" rather than having been sought. Most, although they enjoyed their leadership role and the realisation of their vision, were diffident about their success. It was as though they considered management something outside their experience, perhaps a reflection of the gendered division of labour (Al-Khalifa 1989:85). For some their attitude changed following their first promotion but as most were married, relocation for further promotion was a problem.

The following two chapters consider the support and encouragement received by these women as well as the many problems and frustrations which they faced in gaining and holding a promotions position.