

CHAPTER 5

CAREER SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Introduction

In this chapter, the support structures which assisted the women in the study are examined. The literature concentrates on the barriers faced by women in applying for promotion and there is no doubt that many obstacles to promotion were faced by the principals in the group studied. What was clear also was that support and encouragement were offered to most of the cohort in their application for promotion. This support was recognised much more clearly by the principals in the study than were the corresponding barriers. The women were gracious and generous in their gratitude to those who offered them assistance. In addition many support structures were readily accessible because of the small size of the schools and the diocese and the local selection process. Most of the group had shown an understanding of these structures and an ability to use them to their advantage in seeking promotion. They had all expressed satisfaction in their role as school leader although few were prepared to make a definite commitment to a continuing role in the senior levels

of educational administration. Reasons for this will be investigated further in Chapters Six and Seven. This chapter outlines the process of application for promotion and the support mechanisms available.

Encouragement to Apply for Promotion

Many people were mentioned as offering the principals support during their career (Table 8). 86% of the group were actively encouraged to apply for promotion by colleagues, family, priests or CEO personnel with only one woman claiming to have had no support or encouragement. Table 8 lists those who were mentioned by the group as offering encouragement. Most of the principals were urged to apply for promotion by several different people.

Table 8
People who offered Encouragement

Encouragers	Percentage of the Group
Colleagues	43
Principals	36
Family Members (other than spouse)	36
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Parish Priest	21
Friends	21
CEO Consultants	14
Spouse	14

50% received strong family support from their parents and spouses. Many paid tribute to their parents - both their

mother and their father although in one case the father actively discouraged his daughter embarking on any career which required further study. In another instance, a principal was reluctant to apply for a position because of her father's illness as it would mean a move further from home but he was insistent that she should grasp the opportunity.

In several cases the support of a spouse was essential as the family was forced to rely on the woman as breadwinner because of the husband's illness, retrenchment or business difficulties. Many of the women were generous in their praise of the support offered by their husbands. A woman who had undertaken her first principalship in a small village was very conscious of the assistance of her husband. She was told that her arrival in the town as a member of a family with a small child was also seen in a positive light. She reflected:

My husband is a real community man. Between the pair of us and the staff already there we took the town to the school... I had a very supportive husband... (The consultant) said before the interview that it would be a great thing for me, I would fit straight into the school and the community. I had a two year old. ... My personality, myself and my husband coming as a family would fit well.
(Interview 2, 3/6/95)

(While it was clear from subsequent research that the principal's appointment to this position was a success, the comment does reflect oddly on the agenda of the consultant and what he considered essential prerequisites for the position. The comment appears to be both patriarchal and patronising, placing the principal's qualifications for the position second to her standing as a wife and mother. This comment illustrates the essential problem for women in applying for positions of power.)

Another woman was grateful for the support of her husband who was running his business from home as she noted:

Having someone home based when you haven't got an extended family living nearby is important for us. Someone is there for the children at any time so there's no need for me to be home based and I'm enjoying my work enough to keep at it. (Interview 5, 27/6/95)

Sometimes the support of a husband was seen as essential. A married principal, who had moved away from a small community, commented that it would be a difficult thing for a single woman to cope there:

I really feel for the single female at Y because it would be difficult to break into a small town as a single female and then being a single female Catholic school principal on top of that brings a lot of community expectations. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

It is another sad but probably true observation about the view of women in society. Although there are many difficulties for married women who wish to pursue a career in educational administration in Catholic schools, single women do not avoid problems either as this comment illustrates.

Not only did these women encounter success but several had been targeted for promotions positions. In one case word leaked out that a woman was applying for a job in another diocese and she was asked to contact the director before accepting. She subsequently was offered and accepted an administrative position within the Catholic Education Office of this diocese. Another was encouraged firstly by her principal to apply for the principalship of a small school and was then visited by one of the consultants who tried to persuade her further. Although she was offered the position after the interview, she was still uncertain about accepting it and amazingly the position was kept open until her acceptance a month later.

Most (86%) received strong encouragement to apply for promotion. 57% mentioned "official" encouragement, i.e. from

the parish priest, a consultant or the past principal as the following comments illustrate:

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

The principal was on side. I was encouraged to apply (for deputy). It was sealed before the interview. (Interview 3, 4/6/1995)

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)

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

I was encouraged to firstly from the CEO, secondly by my then principal... (Informant 9, 12/94)

29% of the women mentioned the priest particularly as encouraging them to apply for the position. One noted:

The Parish Priest there almost invited me to apply which gave me a lot of confidence. (Interview 1, 28/5/1995)

In such cases, the chances of not gaining the position would have been minimal. In another case the fact that the teacher "was the only one who could get on with Fr X" (Interview 6, 27/6/1995) provided a strong likelihood that the principalship would be hers. In this case, such reasoning almost backfired as the woman concerned nearly decided against applying.

57% of the women were encouraged by more than one person to apply for promotion. In most cases these people spanned a variety of groups - family, priest, the ex-principal, other principals, Catholic Education Office (CEO) personnel and colleagues. More men than women were identified as providing support but this was hardly surprising as most of those in positions of power within the diocese are male. Only one woman claimed that she had no encouragement along the

way. This woman was one of the small percentage (21%) of single women in the group. She was in her fourth principalship and gave as her reasons for seeking promotion that she was "anxious to further (her) career" (Informant 4, 12/94).

29% spoke of the support and encouragement given them by their teaching colleagues both in applying for promotion and as members of their staffs. Speaking of their staffs two principals commented:

I find their assistance invaluable and in a school this size they are aware of most of the day-to-day events... the teachers I work with are very supportive of me. We try to work very closely as a team. (Interview 5, 27/6/95)

The staff encouraged me to apply. They knew I could do as well as other applicants. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Many of the women mentioned their previous principals as people who had encouraged them to apply for promotion and as people to whom they turned in times of need. Principals had also been instrumental in offering them preparation for promotion through their staff development and delegation of administrative tasks. This was an important support network for many of the group.

Support Structures

The literature makes much of the need for support structures for all those applying for promotion (Marshall 1984:38, Adler 1993:125). These structures can include preparation for promotion, networks, role models and mentors. Formal inservice or study courses as well as within school experience of administrative tasks provide preparation for a

promotions position. Networks are an important support structure and these may be formal such as professional associations or informal such as those provided by social groups. Mentors and role models are essential both as guides and as delegators to ensure the applicant has the requisite experience for the administrative position (NSW Ministry for the Status and Advancement of Women 1994). In this case, the size of the diocese and of some of the schools as well as the many organised communication networks allowed the principals in the study to have greater access to support networks, to be noticed by important gatekeepers and to gain the necessary administrative experience.

a) Preparation for Promotion

Some had formal preparation for their first promotions position. The diocese had run several executive development courses in the mid 1980s but these were only accessible to those already in promotions positions and some of the younger principals had not even started teaching at that stage. However, everyone in a promotions positions within the diocese at the time was invited to attend this residential course and 71% of this group had been involved. This contrasts with the findings of the literature which suggest that men are more likely to be invited to attend courses which are of two or more days duration or which would be useful for long-term career development (Burton 1991:17). There was however little formal training for administration available otherwise for the target group. One principal had been involved with the executive training course in state schools, "the first thing that really helped" (Interview 4, 18/6/95). One of the women had undertaken a Certificate in Management through UNSW but that was the only formal

course noted. Those applying for promotion therefore needed to develop their skills within the schools.

The importance of delegated tasks in preparation for promotion is mentioned frequently in literature (Rimmer and Davies 1985:160; Sampson 1987:34; Ouston 1993:33). All the principals noted a variety of administrative and organisational tasks which they had undertaken as classroom teachers. Some had organised major events such as musicals and athletics carnivals. One mentioned that she had been a tutor for the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) in the diocese. This contrasts with the findings of the literature (Sampson 1987:34; Ouston 1993:34) which suggest that women are given little chance to undertake tasks which would prepare them for administration.

As can be seen from Table 9, the women undertook many administrative tasks which would have been useful preparation for promotion.

Table 9
Types of Delegated Tasks undertaken by the Group

Task Type	Percentage of the Group
Sport	57
Supervision- rosters, resources	50
Curriculum (including RE)	43
Music	29
Acting Promotions Positions	29
Miscellaneous	43

Note: Many of the principals undertook several areas of responsibility

The tasks were not limited to those which, according to the literature, are often allocated to women, such as pastoral

care (Ouston 1993:34). A large variety of tasks were tackled and all were allocated more than one position of responsibility.

The close link between school and parish allowed parish work such as assistance with sacramental programmes and liturgy to be included among the delegated tasks. Curriculum coordination, the second largest category, includes the coordination of the parish sacramental programmes and liturgies. Liturgical music assistance is included under the heading of Music.

A majority of the women (57%) had been designated as sportsmistresses and given responsibility for sport and coordinating carnivals and other sporting events. 50% of the women handled administrative activities such as supervision of rosters, coordination of Government Stores and resources. Music provided the other main area for delegated tasks. 29% of the women were involved with eisteddfods and church music. Several of the women (29%) had been called upon to undertake acting positions such as that of Principal and Senior Primary Teacher. The other areas varied greatly between liaison with parent groups, assembly coordination, coordination of special purpose grants or, as one woman said, "other areas where someone was needed to organise" (Informant 10, 12/94). All taught in small schools with less than 15 staff so there were many tasks that needed to be completed - more than enough for all. Another woman commented:

The small school environment allows for the development of staff over ALL areas of responsibility. (Informant 12,12/94)

It was an observation echoed later by a principal of a small school who said:

As a teacher here in Kindergarten I helped (the Principal) with different tasks. I (now) find the teachers' assistance invaluable and in a school of this size they are aware of most of the day to day things. (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

The same principal felt that a similar view of administration in a small school was held by the Director of Schools as, during the interview, she claimed:

He (the Director) didn't seem to put a great deal of emphasis on that. "You would have enough intelligence to work it out and find out". (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

This was not a view held by others. Another principal was considering applying for deputy positions as she felt that she wanted to catch up with

all the things I'd missed out on by not taking the steps before... I missed out on things which would have made things a bit easier if I'd been in the other positions before. I've always felt I took too big a step. I've been able to cope and I guess... well I have done a good job but it probably would have been easier if I'd gone through channels. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

It depended very much on the individual school whether the women were delegated positions of responsibility during their time as teachers. This was a function not only of the management style of the school but also of the school layout. Delegation was not always a success. One of the women had been appointed Assistant Principal in a school and had a less than happy experience in her role. She commented:

It was the strangest time. I was not part of a team - higher than the staff but otherwise alone - a role on an island. The Principal didn't know what to do with me not having had an Assistant before... I had no support. I read madly and talked to staff. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Fortunately, this experience did allow her to develop her skills in administration and did not discourage her from applying for the principalship when it became vacant.

One principal, who spoke highly of her second principal, was given many responsibilities at his school as she noted:

I did a lot in Y, music in the primary, high school sport and high school music. I produced and directed the production that year. I was given a lot of scope... I had no training, no executive development whatsoever. The biggest role I had was when the Senior Primary Teacher was away I stepped into the role. I was sportsmistress for a term... If a decision had to be made, I made it. That was about it. I didn't use the Senior Primary Teacher's office or write letters or look for texts etc. Decisions and discipline problems came to me. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Another woman, who had worked in the same school, commented particularly on the layout. She reflected:

The Infants was physically separated. To a large extent it did not operate separately but it had a certain way of dealing with things. I was given responsibility for a lot of organising of the Infants section but no recognisable position... no allocation. That wasn't even thought of. It was just the way it worked. (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

A similar observation about layout was made by a woman who had taught in the state system. In recognition of her List 1, the first step on the way to a promotions position, she noted:

There was no position for a deputy but I did a lot of the deputy's jobs as there was a separate building for the infants. I gained experience helping young teachers as a buddy or a mentor. (Interview 4, 18/6/95)

The delegation of some tasks in her new school helped a woman who had suffered difficulties in her previous school to re-establish her self-esteem, as she commented:

The Principal used to get me to do a few administrative things especially in the RE section as we didn't have a Religious Education Coordinator. The Principal was it - so I used to do all of that. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

There is no doubt that those who had had some administrative experience felt more confident about taking on a management position. One who applied for her second principalship

commented that she "felt a lot better - happier for having had the experience" (Interview 4, 18/6/95).

b) Role Models and Mentors

Principals were key people in encouraging staff development and in developing confidence. Often they were the first to encourage the teacher to apply for a promotions position. In several cases it was clear that the principals had previously been approached by someone from the Catholic Education Office to broach the subject. Principals were also mentioned by all but two of the group, who had given no response to this section of the questionnaire, as important role models with 64% of the total group specifying that female principals filled that role.

Female role models were mentioned exclusively by 43% of the group while another 29% of the group specified both male and female role models. These role models were principals in most cases. Women religious received several mentions although the role models did not always come from Catholic schools. For one principal, her early experiences in state schools where her two headmistresses had been "Christian church-going people and this overflowed to the staff", made a strong impression (Interview 4, 18/6/95). One of the women attributed her vision to a previous religious principal. Another commented on the support offered by her new (female) principal after a forced transfer from her previous school. "I had a lot of support from the principal there and I was able to build up my self-esteem" (Interview 6, 27/6/95). Later her principal approached her about applying for the principalship of a small school and continued to offer support and advice after her appointment.

29% of the group mentioned male principals as significant role models for them.

As a teacher I always thought Mr X was the best principal I ever had. So if I was half as good as he, I'd be happy - openness, friendliness, not quick to judge, sits back and takes it in before he makes a decision so if anything I'd like to copy that. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Others mentioned the Director and consultants from the Catholic Education Office as people they turned to for support although a principal who had been in the diocese for a long time was critical of one of the early consultants, a woman, for her lack of flexibility. One of the consultants was specified as someone to be contacted in times of difficulty and another principal commented that a new consultant was "a breath of fresh air" (Interview 4, 18/6/95). Several of the consultants were mentioned as encouraging some of the principals to consider promotions positions.

Only one of the women mentioned males exclusively as providing role models and encouragement. This was interesting when all the consultants in the diocese are male (a long tradition) as are of course the priests. This would appear to support the findings in the literature which suggest that while male role models are in the majority, female role models are most significant for women (Shakeshaft 1987:115). The dominance of males was presumed by one principal who explained:

All my influences have been men and, even since becoming a principal, they have been men. They seem to be in the positions. All the consultants are male for a start. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

c) Networks and Gatekeepers

According to the literature, as men are in the majority in managerial positions, women are excluded from many networks (Veir 1993:67). Sometimes this is an active exclusion process but often it occurs because women do not move in the same social groups as male administrators. Lack of access to networks did not appear to have been as great a problem for the women in this study. Many appeared to have been very aware of the influential networks within the diocese when applying for promotion. The size of the diocese and the many networks established by groups such as the main religious orders, the Principals' Association, the Senate of Priests and the consultants could work to the advantage of all who were seeking promotion. Many of the principals in the study group had been noticed by these important "gatekeepers" (Evetts 1989: 197) during their time in the diocese as the following incidents illustrate.

A woman principal who had applied for a job in another diocese was asked to contact the Director before making any commitment. She was then offered a senior administrative position within the diocese although she was unaware that the Director had known of her existence. When pressed, she admitted that he probably knew of her through the nuns with whom she worked. Another principal who had undertaken large across-the-school tasks such as the school musical and who had been on the committee for the Outback Spectacular in 1988, had been targeted for promotion. She was also aware of her need to be noticed as she took heed of the remark that the Catholic Education Office might leave her at her small school because she was doing a good job there. She therefore applied for promotions positions immediately, "not wanting it but to let them know I wanted to come back" (Interview 2,

3/6/95). A woman who had undertaken several positions of responsibility before the principalship explained that she contacted the Catholic Education Office whenever a position was advertised to let them know of her interest. Another spoke of the need to impress these "gatekeepers" as she came from an isolated school. When asked of the factors which helped her gain promotion, another, who had undertaken several principalships as well as a period in the Catholic Education Office, mentioned her record of administration in the diocese.

The priest was always mentioned as an important gatekeeper. Although the Director confirmed all appointments and he or a consultant would have been present at most interviews, the position of the priest as manager of the school was paramount. It was also more likely that the priest would have been present at the interview as in the cases surveyed he was a panel member 86% of the time. Encouragement by a priest to apply for the job was almost a guarantee of success as this principal noted:

The Parish Priest almost invited me to apply which gave me a lot of confidence. (Interview 1 28/5/95)

Several were aware of the need to impress the priest and had researched the situation well before the interview. One of the principals was particularly well prepared as the following comments illustrate:

I had been warned Fr X was very hard to understand, which he was, and I had been told to read his lips which I did and I could understand him. I can't remember who gave me that advice - someone along the way. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

I'd been worded up. I'd been told by a woman that Fr Y was not very keen to have a lady principal because a woman would not handle the responsibility of the job and I knew he was the one I had to win over. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

I always researched the patron saint of the school and the church (before going for an interview) just in case the priest asked me. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Fr A was a great friend of Fr B who had taught my father... so I managed to drop that in. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Fr Z. fairly much asks the questions and answers them himself so it's "Yes Fr" and "I don't think so" as appropriate. (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

One question which he (the priest) always asked was "What is the Mass?" and if you didn't get it right you were out. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

This insider knowledge was very helpful for those applying for promotion. It assisted them not only in the interview but also in making decisions about applying for particular areas.

All the women were aware that willingness to live in the parish and to become involved in parish work were essential in applying for the principalship of Catholic schools. This was a less significant though still time-consuming issue for some of them as they were applying for a promotions position within the school where they were teaching. That living in the parish was an important factor was noted by one principal:

The Parish Priest's question in every interview was, "Where would you live?" and then he'd go on to parish and school. I can't think of an interview where I wasn't asked that ... I was always prepared to live in the town where I've worked and that was a big plus. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

The grapevine worked both ways and could backfire as one woman found out. A member of the panel, she remarked,

had known me for a long time- worked with my mother and uncle. Raised eye-brows so obviously she doubted me. She was the only eye-brow raiser (in response to an answer). (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

A later comment by another woman about those who were well qualified not reaching the interview stage could also be a reflection of this insider knowledge (informant 2, 12/94):

Short listing is not based on qualifications. I have had personal experience where a candidate with high achievement of desired criteria was not given an interview while others less qualified were. I do not imply sexual bias - only that the decision is made beforehand for whatever reason- (not according to the criteria) and the interview is window dressing.

That the interview was a mere formality for many of the women could also reflect this. Although several were invited to apply for promotion and some were later told that the decision was made beforehand, only one of the women had never had an interview. A woman who had been afforded a very short interview felt quite disappointed:

Overall I didn't find it particularly daunting. I was a bit surprised it was so quick... Ah, I mean, are you sure? It was a bit disappointing. It was almost as if they didn't need to ask. I just felt they knew. That's the impression I got. (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

It does not seem surprising then that for many (71%) of the women the interview itself was supportive and affirming.

I was made to feel relaxed. This was achieved with the atmosphere of the room and the rapport between all involved. (Informant 9, 12/94)

It made me think about my application and made me happy that that was what I wanted to do. (Informant 1, 12/94)

... given encouragement and made to feel that you were legitimately suitable for the position of principal. (Informant 14, 12/94)

Everyone was affirming and positive. (Informant 2, 12/94)

I was given time to talk about myself and my experience. All on the panel had read my CV. It was a very relaxed, friendly environment. (Informant 3, 12/94)

Education Office personnel saw that there was more to me than met the eye. (Informant 6, 12/94)

d) The Local Selection Process

Some of this encouragement occurred because of the small size of the diocese under study and the greater flexibility possible in the local appointment process. The size of the diocese allowed many of the important gatekeepers to become aware of talented teachers and administrators and to target them for positions. Many of the group studied also commented on the informality of the appointment system (see Ch. 4, p. 92), a factor of the developing nature of the diocese and the local selection process. Local selection also appeared to be a strong factor in encouraging married women in particular to apply for promotions positions. As will be seen in Chapter Seven, several of the group expressed no further career plans as they were unable to move to a larger school because of problems in relocating their families.

Qualifications for Promotion

Although most were diffident about their abilities and talents, it was clear from the variety of tasks they undertook and the fact that at least 64% were approached directly or indirectly about taking on a promotions position, that many of these women were very capable and their work had been noted by some of the important gatekeepers in the diocese. When asked to specify the factors which helped them gain promotion, they listed their experience and qualifications, their hard work and their strong commitment to Catholic education.

Qualifications were mentioned by 50% of the group as an important factor. Several had undertaken extra tertiary qualifications since they had started teaching. Two of the women specified qualifications in Religious Education as especially significant. The diocese had promoted the need for qualification in Religious Education through external courses at universities and through the Certificate "A" course, a series of units of work to be completed within the diocese and recognised by all Catholic dioceses in Australia. Some mentioned that being known was more important than paper qualifications (Interview 4, 18/6/1995) although this situation was changing. There were many unqualified teachers in the diocese in the early days of Catholic education when the huge gap left by the withdrawing religious needed to be filled, however, the need for qualifications increased as the job market in Catholic schools tightened. Many were aware of the need to gain qualifications not merely for promotion but "to stay where you were" (Interview 4, 18/6/95).

Experience was also an advantage mentioned by 50% of the group. For some it applied to the particular school as they had been teaching there for a while and were familiar with school policy and procedure. (50% of the group had never moved to take up promotion.) All of the principals had been fortunate in having received "in school" training through undertaking many administrative tasks while 71% of the group had participated in the diocesan executive development course. Most therefore felt comfortable about undertaking an administrative position.

Catholicity was always a very important factor in achieving promotion. The principal was seen not only as a leader in the Catholic school, but also as a prominent member of the parish and a support to the priest. Three of the women mentioned that they had been religious and one had felt that this

allowed her to be a bridge between the religious withdrawing from the schools and the lay people.

For all of the applicants, their willingness to live in the parish, to be involved in the parish and, in some cases to provide a lot of assistance with parish work, would also have been influential in their appointment. These were areas which were frequently queried by the priests during interviews.

This situation poses many questions. It could be asked whether principals were appointed because they were prepared to assist with parish demands and whether many women were so keen to be appointed to positions which fitted in with their family situation, that they were prepared to acquiesce to such demands. There appears to be some truth in this as most of the principals in the study appeared to be well aware of the demands which would be made of them and were prepared to apply under these conditions.

These questions, however, don't acknowledge the close liaison between the parish and Catholic primary schools in particular. Teachers there, as well as principals, have a role in the parish through preparation of students for the three stages, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation, of the sacramental programme. Demands from the parish vary with the parish priest and are not confined to the sacramental programmes. These expectations will not diminish quickly as they have been a traditional part of the role of the principal as leader in the parish. Religious principals have always met such expectations and lay principals are a very recent phenomenon. Such questions do acknowledge the male hierarchical structures of the church and the slow process of change.

Summary of the Findings

The women principals received a great deal of encouragement from a wide variety of groups to apply for promotions positions. It was clear that many were targeted for such positions by those in power within the diocese. Priests, Catholic Education Office personnel and principals as well as families and colleagues offered encouragement and support.

These women were typically well qualified, experienced and committed to Catholic education. Most had had some experience of administration before promotion through inservice, through their experience within school and through the influence of role models and mentors. Support structures such as preparatory courses for administration had been available and accessible for many of these women principals within the diocese. Prior to promotion, within their schools, all the principals had also undertaken a wide variety of delegated tasks which allowed them to develop skills necessary for administration. The target group nominated many people as role models and mentors although, interestingly, while most of those in positions of authority in the diocese were male, women were mentioned more frequently as role models.

Although most of the group studied mentioned qualifications as important in gaining promotion, none held more than one degree. The need for Religious Education qualifications had been strongly encouraged by the diocese and many of the group had undertaken extra study in this area. Experience within the school and diocese were also seen as important by the principals in the study.

Catholicity was always significant in achieving promotion. It was expected that the principal would show leadership not

only in the school but also in the parish. Catholic faith and involvement in the parish were always closely investigated by the priest on the interview panel. For the women in the study, this area did not pose any major problems although the demands of the parish could become excessive as will be seen in the following chapter.

In addition to their qualifications, most had managed to "trigger" the networks of support (Acker 1989:17) within the diocese. Factors such as their qualifications, talents and experience were significant in gaining that support. Their ability to provide Catholic leadership in the schools and their willingness to become involved in the parish were also important. Several were well known through their work in their school, parish and district or even the diocese itself. The size of the diocese and the established communication networks of principals, priests and religious had further increased the visibility of these women.

The principals in the study demonstrated a good understanding of the political forces at work in the diocese. They had developed strong links with many of the gatekeepers within the diocese and they demonstrated acumen in calling upon this knowledge. They were very aware of the need to impress the priests and they had researched likely questions before the interview. The local selection process, by offering women the chance to apply for promotion without the need to relocate their families, was also a crucial support mechanism for the married women (71%) in the study.

Although the women in the study nominated many avenues of support, they also needed to overcome many obstacles to their promotion. Chapter Six examines the barriers encountered by the target group on their promotion paths.

CHAPTER SIX

BARRIERS TO PROMOTION

Introduction

Although the percentage of primary women principals was greater than that of secondary women principals in the diocese under study, these women in primary principalships experienced many difficulties along their promotion path. As outlined in Chapter Five, they did receive much support and encouragement but they also faced many obstacles, similar to those cited in the literature for women in administration. The problems of balancing motherhood and the principalship, of relocation and of breaks in service for those who were married, negative expectations of their abilities in the role because they were women and their own lack of confidence in their suitability for the role were all mentioned by the study group. In addition, these women faced the special difficulties inherent in the employment structures of the Catholic diocese - the need to work closely with the parish priest as

manager of the school, the problems of budgets and the need to be a leader in the parish as well as in the school. These themes will be explored in this chapter.

a) Perceptions of Barriers to Promotion

Interestingly, many of the group recognised few barriers to promotion. It appears that some had genuinely been unaware of any obstacles along the way. 50% of those surveyed failed to identify any and one woman was moved to say:

I don't think Primary schools have barriers to promotion. Women are generally accepted and have done excellent jobs in their roles. High schools may be a different story. (Informant 10, 12/94)

Two women found difficulties only in themselves:

Lack of experience in administration... (Informant 6, 12/94)

This is my first promotion and I cannot identify any barriers externally! Perhaps within myself there are some doubts. (Informant 5, 12/94)

Interestingly, one of these women later commented on the difficulties she would have in relocating her family if she needed to move for another position. It was as though barriers were accepted rather than identified as areas to be overcome.

Two principals considered the lack of financial assistance from the parish and priests and lack of support from the Catholic Education Office at times a critical factor. (Principals within the diocese have always had to balance the school budget. School fees pay for everything besides the teaching salaries. This can be a particularly difficult problem

for a small school principal if no help is forthcoming from parish and priests.)

The remaining women in the survey identified a variety of barriers. These varied between the difficulties of balancing motherhood and the principalship and the demands placed on them by priests and parishes.

b) Marriage, Motherhood and the Principalship

29% commented on the difficulties of balancing a dual career and of the effect of interruptions to teaching. The following comments reflect these difficulties:

Only the fact that the extra long hours, overnight meetings etc take a toll on family life and it is more difficult as "MOTHER" to legitimise the time spent on the job away from the family. This takes away from job satisfaction. (Informant 12, 12/94)

I always felt that promotion would have been easier if

1. I was a young man
2. I was unmarried
3. My husband had been able to relocate. (Informant 2, 12/94)

No barriers other than delay because of family commitments when the children were young... (Informant 8, 12/94)

Another principal later echoed this last comment when she noted that "women are becoming principals later despite the fact that most parents are working nine to five" (Interview 3, 4/6/95). She was well aware of the irony that most mothers were obliged to take on paid work outside the home yet women who sought a career were still subjected to criticism.

A principal with a very supportive husband was obviously finding societal expectations of her family a burden. She claimed:

Having to upend my husband and daughter to move to a position and we're moving again next year! I am the so-called "breadwinner" and some people react to my husband in a way which I do not consider to be appropriate... always assumed that it is because my husband has been transferred or promoted... not me. I am also often faced with comments that suggest that I could not possibly be a GOOD mother because of my career path. (Informant 9, 12/94 - her emphasis)

Although family support was always mentioned as a strong factor by the women principals, this support was not always present and many had to battle patriarchal views of the place of women in society. Mothers were always given particular mention as being supportive although several fathers were ambivalent about the prospect of their daughters embarking on a career. The comment from one that you "don't educate girls" (Interview 3,4/6/95) demonstrates that patriarchal views of the place of women have not disappeared. Those who had married were generous in their tributes to their husbands although again all aspects of the promotion were not well received. One realised that her salary being larger than her husband's is a bone of contention and this fact is never mentioned in his presence as she commented:

My husband (is) very proud of my achievement and supportive in every way but he cannot cope with the fact that I earn more money than he does. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Another admitted that her husband's family has found her position difficult to countenance in spite of the fact that she was the only breadwinner at one stage. Although one woman was pleased that she could support the family during her husband's ill-health, he found the prospect of no longer being the breadwinner difficult to deal with and his support diminished. The burden of family responsibilities is always there as many had noted. A principal who always spoke of family support was pleased she lived near the school so she could pop home and take the washing off the line in case of rain.

c) Mobility and Relocation

Relocation is mentioned in the literature as a barrier which prevents women achieving promotion (Sampson 31:1987). It did not appear to have been a factor for 50% of the women in the group as they had never moved to take up promotion. This means they received promotion within the school in which they were teaching or in a school in the same town. (In the larger cities in the diocese, there are three or more Catholic primary/infants schools.) This does not of course take account of any opportunities missed because they were unable to relocate. Most of the group (72%) had held only one principalship (see Table 7, p. 87). 36% of the group had moved to take up a promotions position once and the remaining 14% had moved three times each for promotion. Table 10 outlines the number of relocations undertaken by the group.

Table 10
Number of relocations for promotion

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Number of Relocations	Percentage of the Group
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0	50
1	36
2	-
3	14
4+	0

The large percentage who had not moved or had only moved once for promotion suggests that the application system in Catholic schools does assist women to apply. Christie and

Smith (1991:223) would agree, explaining that "the Catholic school system employed locally and rarely asked for transfers".

It was clear that relocation posed problems for some of the married women. Relocation appeared to have greater effect on further promotion chances rather than on first promotion. One of the group described her family's reaction to her considering applying for another principalship in a nearby town:

I was thinking about it in the education of our children as I was very pleased with the educational opportunities offered there. It wasn't a huge traumatic move so I spoke to my husband. It was not a huge change but a little more challenge and a change.

"Don't know. I don't think the children would be happy to move" (said) a very reluctant husband. "Let's just mention it to the children".

"Oh no, mum, you'd have to travel" (they said).

I said I wasn't thinking of travelling, I was thinking of us moving..ah, dominant little lot. Big protests so at that point I said,"We might think about it down the track". (Interview 5, 20/6/1995)

Another woman was given little choice when her husband headed back to his home town:

I had to resign to join my husband back in Y. (Interview 1, 28/5/1995)

Her husband's redundancy made it easier for another woman to apply for a promotion which meant a relocation. The problems of relocation were summed up bitterly by one of the women:

Promotion of women will never be equal to men until husbands are prepared to relocate and give equal value to the wife's career. The Catholic Church official teaching still supports the husband's career as more important than the wife's. Women cannot apply for promotions positions in other towns. (Informant 2, 12/94)

This is a comment supported by Christie and Smith (1991:228). According to them, one of the reasons for the small proportion of women in executive positions in Catholic

schools is "the sex-role stereotyping of women in terms of the Catholic ideal of wife and mother". Motherhood is therefore the most important role for a woman. Paradoxically, although the percentage of women in management in Catholic schools is still low in proportion to the number of women teachers, the percentage is higher than in state or independent schools (Grady et al. 1994:5).

In addition to relocation, choice of location was limited for many of the women because of family considerations. Family included more than spouse and children. One principal, a married woman, still felt guilty about moving to take up promotion when she was so far from her mother who had been widowed. Her motivation in subsequent applications was to move closer to her parents' home. A single woman in the group did not want to move far from her current position as her siblings lived nearby.

Relocation did not appear to have been a barrier to these women in gaining their first promotions position although it appears that it would pose a significant difficulty for many who would consider further applications for promotion. These women were enjoying their principalships and experiencing success on a personal and professional level. Their work was held in esteem by the diocese yet, most felt limited by family considerations in applying for further promotion.

d) The Interview for Promotion

Many were first made aware of the barriers facing them during the interviews with 57% identifying a variety of factors which made them feel uncomfortable. Interview panels consisted of between two and six people although in

most cases there were at least three people on the panel, the priest, the Director or a representative of the Catholic Education Office and a parent representative. On some panels the previous principal was included. Table 11 outlines the attendance rates for those on interview panels.

Table 11
Interview panel composition

Personnel	Percentage Representation on the Panels
Priest	86
CEO Personnel	79
Ex-Principal	57
Parents	50

The priest was the most constant panel member, being present 86% of the time. Catholic Education Office personnel were present on 79% of the panels although parents were only represented 50% of the time. This meant that it was more likely that the panel would be male as all the Catholic Education Office personnel are male. The only women were then likely to be parents or an ex-principal of the school. The difficulties for a woman applicant, when all those on the panel are male or are women of different educational ability and motivation, have been noted by several researchers (Grant 1989:47-8; Sampson 1991:135). Several principals commented on the male composition of the panel with one reflecting the views of several when she said:

I went into panic in the interview. There was no woman. The parish priest conducted most of the interview. I'd had a run-in with him... It was scary. All male. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Another principal was less than happy that all the consultants were male as it would be difficult to discuss some issues with them. In addition priests and parents were less likely to be aware of anti-discrimination legislation (McNamara 1995:56) and were more likely to ask questions which could be intimidating or unfair. The principal who had earlier commented on her panic on finding that there was no woman on the interview panel added:

Priests need educating about interviews. Mine asked disgusting questions, to bamboozle. They were questions for effect. The Director expected you to be a Catholic but the parish priest's questions were pointed and unnecessary. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

43% of the survey group could not remember or did not answer the question about negative aspects of their interviews but the remaining 57% listed a variety of factors which made them feel uncomfortable. Some of these related to their role as a woman principal as several noted:

Emphasis was given to how I would cope being a woman in charge when a previous woman principal at the school had extreme difficulty. I had to constantly prove myself as a woman. (Informant 14, 12/94)

I sometimes feel there is a certain amount of discrimination - eg "We need a strong male type". (Informant 10, 12/94)

Several women found the formal aspects of the interview "daunting". Some mentioned the body language of the interviewing panel, another the formal atmosphere and the need for good communication skills and the third woman focused on the questions about religion being "deliberately phrased in an intimidating way by the priest" (Informant 7, 12/94).

Body language was a major difficulty at one interview even though the woman was close friends with the priest and she was unsure of any other support. She reflected:

It was awful - my first interview. I had the feeling that two people on the panel were trying to get me to say something so I wouldn't get the job. Fr X was on the panel and he had his back to me because everybody knew what sort of relationship we had with one another and he knew that so he cut me off... wouldn't acknowledge me in any way in the interview. Oh, it was awful... He sat with his shoulder to me all the time because everything I'd done - questions they asked about parish involvement etc - was with Fr X and yet he wouldn't acknowledge that I'd done it. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

In the difficult interviews, the women were also very conscious of the physical make-up of the interview room. According to one woman who had a "horrendous" interview for a teaching position,

I hated it. A lot of it had to do with the room set-up and the way you were made to feel. (It) was really cold, a really long room, cold. I felt it was just like a class with the way the chairs were arranged. The deputy at the time, a lady, half-turned to me. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

The same woman contrasted this with her interview for her first principalship:

...really relaxing. I felt very comfortable ... At X, we were in a circle, all on different chairs with different heights but that was the make-up of the furniture in the room as I discovered later. But nothing special - no telephones strategically placed or anything like that. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

A woman who had earlier complained about the panel being totally male mentioned that they "sat in opposition" (Interview 3, 4/6/95). Another woman who had been through "an intimidating interview" spoke of:

seven or eight against me. I was in the Bishop's chair and they were all lined up on the opposite side of a very long table. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

This interview was for two positions, one in a primary school and one in a secondary school. It was organised this way to save time so that all those concerned with the two schools came. To compound the problem, the woman wanted the

primary position which placed her in a difficult situation when responding to some of the questions.

Two of the women felt that the interviews were unprofessional and another was moved to attach a condemnation of the whole process to her questionnaire:

I did not feel encouraged or satisfied with the questions asked. They did not relate to teaching. (Informant 4, 12/94)

The questions asked were superficial and not related to the position. It seemed unprofessional.

The interviews in this diocese are not genuine. Short listing is not based on qualifications. I have had personal experience where a candidate with high achievement of desired criteria was not given an interview while others less qualified were. I do not imply sexual bias - only that the decision was made beforehand for whatever reason (not according to criteria) and the interview is window-dressing.

I would like to see a more professional approach to promotion based on merit and experience. (Informant 2, 12/94)

e) The Priests

Although priests were powerful allies and many of the group were grateful for their support, they could also make life very difficult for those applying for promotion as well as for those already in promotions positions. One woman looked at the role of the parish priest who, she claimed,

did not think a woman was a suitable leader of a large school. He stated he would not support me if I applied for a larger school. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Another principal when asked about barriers she'd encountered mused:

They could have been priests but they were not. They didn't intrude and were supportive until the last one. I was going to go to Queensland in the first year. He wasn't interfering in the school but wanted everything his way in the church. He didn't change things but he was adamant about the

way to do it. The parish was up in arms. I was the meat in the sandwich and I had to be loyal though I didn't feel like it... Came to agreement by discussion and cooperation - my cooperation with his way. (Interview 4, 18/6/95)

Several priests had been hostile because the principals were women and had family responsibilities. Does this reflect church emphasis on women as wives and mothers (Christie and Smith 1991: 228, 235)? Interestingly, such hostility was often accepted with great grace. One reflected:

X (the priest) declined to give me a reference as I was married and had six children. It was understandable. He probably had a point but I was desperate to work. I had to work. I was entitled to be offered a position. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

Many women were considered unable to handle the hard tasks which often included upper primary boys. A similar view has been noted in the literature where women are rarely in senior management positions in boys' schools (Askew & Ross 1988:49). One woman encountered overt hostility from the priest who, she claimed, said:

Only men should be in charge of schools. You're doing a great job but I couldn't entertain the thought of you if we went from Kindergarten to Year Six. (This was an infants school.) We'd need a man. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Later when a building committee for the school was formed, of course it was "We need a man on the committee" (Interview 3, 4/6/95).

Another found that the problems of her predecessor, a woman, were an obstacle to be overcome. Her predecessor's failure was related solely to her being a woman as her comment suggests:

Emphasis (was) given to how I would cope being a woman in charge when a previous woman principal at the school had extreme difficulty. I had to constantly prove myself as a woman. (Informant 14,12/94)

It was important to the priest that the principal lived in the parish and this of course provided an immediate barrier for married women who could not relocate easily. Relocation was not a problem for those applying for their first promotion but, as outlined earlier in this study, the situation made it impossible for married women in particular to apply for further promotion. One woman who was prepared to move to take up a position noted:

The Parish Priest's question in every interview was. "Where would you live?" and then he'd go on to parish and school. I can't think of an interview where I wasn't asked that. ... I was always prepared to live in the town where I've worked and that was a big plus. We had a house in Y built before we went to Z so it would have been very easy to go back to my home there (and commute) but we decided not to. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Little consideration was given to the fact that suitable rental accommodation was difficult to find and that it would be difficult to sell a house in such a small community. Part of the reasoning for this insistence on moving into the area was that there was an expectation that the principal would be a leader in the parish. One principal showed that she was very aware of this requirement, as, in outlining her reasons for applying for promotion, she noted that she was prepared to be "a leading member of a small community where I lived" (Informant 11, 12/94). This applied also to teachers as one of the principals found in her first appointment:

It is important to be seen, to worship openly. I actually got into trouble on my first time away from home as I wasn't being seen at church in X. Parents complained. I got into trouble with the principal and the Parish Priest. I found that very difficult but I knew from then on what the expectation was. Not that I wasn't going to Mass. I was going with my family (in another town) but it was not seen that way at the time. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

One of the principals in a two parish city encountered a similar problem. Although she lived in one parish and her children attended school there, she had her school in the other. This was a cause for concern as she noted:

Fr X saw it as a disadvantage that I belonged to the other parish. I guess I've experienced conflict over the years but overall what's important is living in a practical way and maybe that's why I don't see it as he does.
(Interview 5, 20/6/95)

She further explained that as a role model she was visible to as many of her students and parents in her home parish as many of them attended there. Two other women in similar situations agreed with the need to be seen as they explained:

I don't live in the parish but I make sure that most of the time that I'm down there. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

Nothing has been said but it's my feeling (that she should be seen at her school parish). I used to feel pulled between the two parishes.
(Interview 4, 20/6/95)

The need to be a role model and being constantly in view in a small community was also mentioned by several of the women although it was not seen as a direct barrier, more a "limitation" as one woman explained:

You realise you're a role model - which can be a limitation as it's small enough for people to know. (Interview 4, 18/6/95)

It would be difficult to break into a small town as a single female and then being a single female Catholic school principal on top of that. There are a lot of community expectations. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Would such demands would be less likely to occur in a diocese such as Sydney where most people commute to work?

There were many demands upon the principal from the parish and it depended greatly on the individual priest how intrusive these might be. During her interview one woman was questioned on the management structure of the school:

"Who is the manager of the school?"

"The priest is."

"Will you always remember that?" (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

Another, who had considered early retirement after a few conflicts with the priest spoke of him,

showing his authority... he still wants his own way but not in such a dramatic fashion. We come to decisions by discussion and cooperation - my cooperation with his way. (Interview 4, 18/6/95)

Principals were aware of their need to have a role in the parish. This could be through programmes connected with the school such as the sacramental preparation programmes but it also involved many other areas of parish life. They were involved in copying church newsletters, the ministry of welcoming and the Offertory processions, reading, liturgy preparation and music. In one parish, the priest scheduled a parish meeting during the Principal's release time so that she could attend and take the minutes! This however was a welcome contrast to her previous parish priest who expected her to attend to parish affairs during the holidays and had never asked whether she was too busy to assist. One principal was moved to give thanks for her lack of musical ability:

I can't sing or play the organ so I don't feel guilty there. People who can are called to give very generously. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

Similar ideas came from some of those interviewed although they had not looked upon the situation in a negative way. Many had high and realistic expectations of being appointed to the position prior to the interview as they had been approached about applying. One woman was later told that the decision had been made before the interview. The fact that the interview, a final part of the selection process should have been so affirming for so many of the women, could also lend credence to the suggestion that the decision had already been made.

Although barriers were only mentioned directly by 50% of the questionnaires, they certainly existed. They were alluded to

indirectly or spoken of more clearly in the interviews. Many of the barriers were not overt and were therefore not recognised. For most of the women their path was circumscribed from the time they were at school. Courses such as Science were not available for girls and this precluded a career such as that of a doctor for one woman.

Most of the women (64%) had started teaching between 1950 and 1970. For these, there were few career options deemed suitable for capable girls besides teaching, nursing and banking. 79% had married and marriage and family placed further constraints on their career. 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. Family support was no guarantee of a smooth path to promotion. Married and single women alike encountered prejudice against women. Women were deemed to be unable to undertake hard tasks or technical tasks such as building. The failure of one woman was interpreted as the possible failure of all.

The demands of school and parish provided further problems. Principals were expected to live in the parish, be a leader in the parish and assist wherever possible. This requirement varied with the priest. In the face of such difficulties, it is surprising not only that so many of the women managed to achieve promotion but that they were prepared to remain in these positions. It is likely that such obstacles could have a serious effect on their pursuit of a career in educational administration. Closer analysis of the data from the questionnaires and interviews suggested that this indeed was the case.

Summary of the Findings

Although barriers were only recognised by 50% of those surveyed, they certainly existed. Many of the barriers, such as the narrow career choices available for girls and the difficulty of relocation and of balancing dual roles of mother and principal for married women, were not overt and were therefore not mentioned. For most of the women their path was circumscribed from the time they were at school. Courses such as Science were not available for girls and this precluded a career such as that of a doctor for one woman. Relocation was an obstacle to further promotion for most of the married women as well as some of the single women although family support was no guarantee of a smooth path to promotion.

Married and single women alike encountered prejudice against women. Although these prejudices were discussed in the course of interviews, they were rarely mentioned in the survey. These principals had to counter views of them as incapable of undertaking tasks which demanded power and control or technical tasks such as building. One woman's failure was interpreted as the possible failure of all. The difficulty of juggling family and career in education and the disapprobation to be endured for having a career outside motherhood were also factors which discouraged further applications for promotion

The demands of school and parish provided further problems. Although a greater percentage of women achieved the primary principalship in Catholic primary schools than in state or independent schools (Grady 1994:5), they were clearly subordinate to the male manager of the school - the priest. In this study, it was clear that applicants were expected to

meet the needs of the parish as well as those of the school when they undertook the principalship. This meant living in the parish, being a leader in the parish and assisting wherever possible. The extent of this requirement varied with the priest in charge. In the face of such difficulties, it is surprising not only that so many of the women managed to achieve promotion but that they were prepared to remain in these positions.

The following chapter investigates the feelings and perceptions of the group about promotion and career and their future aspirations in teaching and administration.